

Terms of Reference for contractors to develop a network of NGOs exposing disinformation

INTRODUCTION

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office is looking for a consortium of contractors to build a network of actors who expose disinformation across Europe, provide core funding to NGOs with the most potential for impact and build the legal/ethical, tradecraft, communications and security capacity of these organisations.

OBJECTIVE

This project is part of the FCO's Counter Disinformation and Media Development (CDMD) Programme, which implements new and innovative projects to counter disinformation and propaganda. The CDMD programme seeks to build media plurality in Northern and Eastern Europe, engage with populations groups vulnerable to disinformation, expose disinformation in a variety of ways and to monitor and understand disinformation activity and its impact.

The overall objective for this project is to expose malign state disinformation in European countries that are targeted by it.

A scoping study has identified 56 different organisations from Georgia to Spain who research, identify and expose state disinformation activity in a variety of ways.

1. Project Scope

It is anticipated that the project will work will be conducted across European Union and Eastern Partnership countries.

Project recipients will be non-governmental organisations.

The winning consortia will be expected to

- Deliver outcomes to part of a theory of change specified by the FCO
- Develop a results framework and risk management strategy for their work
- Conduct due diligence on each of the 56 potential network members
- Assess the training needs of each organisation
- Deliver tailored capacity building on legal/ethical issues, open source information gathering, communications/pr and physical and personnel security to organisations in the network
- Provide targeted core support where it is likely to achieve the strongest possible outcomes
- Bring the diverse collection of organisations together as a network to increase their mutual understanding of disinformation activity, allow them to share information and to more thoroughly expose and frame hostile state activity.
- Ensure the outputs of the network is used by a wide range of media outlets as possible and gains prominence on social media

2. Activities

DRAFT

The preferred consortia will have established networks, be prepared to work in a consortia, and will be able to demonstrate:

- Demonstrable track record in capacity building on the ethical and legal considerations around mass communication
- Demonstrable record in capacity building on open source intelligence gathering
- Track record in delivering proportionate security consultancy and capacity building to organisations
- Track record in improving the ability of NGOs to reach wider and new audiences
- Extensive project management skills for managing large value projects, this will include the ability to keep risk registers, conduct due diligence, contracts with sub-contractors, and produce detailed reports of activity on monthly/quarterly basis as required.
- The ability to show sufficient resources to complete the project, on-time and on-budget.
- Ability to handle sensitive information, an awareness of acting on behalf of HMG and acting accordingly, and be party to strict non-disclosure agreement;
- Ensure thorough due diligence is conducted on potential partners including on conflict sensitivity on their content.
- Provide a secretariat for a formal governance board that will scrutinise delivery and prioritise interventions.
- Working with other international donors and partners with financial contributions and assistance.
- Allow for flexibility to allow for ad-hoc tasking to support tactical opportunities as directed by the FCO or to task elements of the network if there is a disinformation campaign underway.

3. Dependencies

The supplier is asked to assume that they will deliver an entirely independent set of services should they win the competition. Items such as office space, translation costs, security, legal fees, insurance, transport and accommodation costs should be included in the pricing model.

The supplier is responsible for due diligence of potential partners and for assessing, reporting on and mitigating all risks at a project level. A Risk register should be produced and updated monthly.

4. Reporting and M&E

The supplier will meet at least monthly with the FCO and provide minuted records of these meetings. There will be flexibility on the location of these meetings e.g. in London or in-country capitals. For costing purposes, the supplier should include the costs of their representatives attending London based meetings in the pricing model.

The project will report to a quarterly board consisting of suppliers and representatives from different FCO stakeholders. This Board will hold a veto over parts of the project it deems as sensitive or unsuitable for the Programme. The supplier will need to report on progress against their theory of change, project plan and results framework. In advance of the quarterly meeting the supplier will submit a written report setting out progress made. It

may be necessary to have more regular contact outside of the monthly and quarterly meetings. The successful contractor may be required to report to the FCO for additional information e.g. increasing audience figures, on an ad-hoc basis.

The supplier will be asked to submit financial reporting and monitoring and evaluation reports. A lessons learnt document will be required at the end of Q3 each year to allow assessment of the project before the break clause point at the end of the FY.

The supplier will also be expected to present any external audited reports as and when requested by the FCO.

5. Financial Management & Payments

The supplier will be reimbursed as per an agreed activity based budget, which we expect to show day-rates and the time for each individual employed on the contract, following the submission of monthly line by line fee and expense reports. Invoices should be submitted with a brief financial report on a monthly basis.

The supplier should expect FCO staff to make site visits to company premises (at least once a year) and to allow them access to financial accounts and bookkeeping as requested.

6. Budget

The proposed budget for a contracted amount of £2m a year for 3 years (£3m+£3.25m+£3.5m), to start in August 2018 (FY18/19) and to finish in March 2021 (FY20/21). Bids will be invited to not exceed the following:

- £3,000,000 for year one (UK FY 2018/2019)
 - £3,250,000 for year two (UK FY 2019/2020)
 - £3,500,000 for year three (UK FY 2020/2021)
- = £9,750,000 over 3 years

7. Timeframe

The project is expected to start in the summer 2018 and be completed by March 2021.

8. Duty of Care & Security

The FCO has no specific knowledge of any direct threat to the implementers of this project. The implementer will hold the duty of care responsibility for its staff and the security of the project; it is to ensure that all reasonable security measures (physical, information and communication) are taken to reduce the threat to as low as is reasonably possible, and to expose any risks that are identified. The project is overt, no attempt should be made to disguise activity. The project board will approve an outline engagement/communication plan for the project.