KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER NETWORK

Safety Tech Sector - Skills and Capability, User Research

Request for Proposals
Statement of Works
KTN-RFP A0514-1-21

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1. Background

Across the world a new wave of companies are developing a huge variety of innovative products and services that help businesses better protect their online users from harm.

The online 'safety tech' supplied by these companies help to pinpoint and tackle disinformation, deliver safer online experiences for children, help moderators detect potentially harmful behaviour, and block known illegal imagery.

UK companies are already world-leaders in safety tech. DCMS research reveals that the 70 UK safety tech companies make up 25% of the international market, and that the sector is growing by 35% per year. Upcoming regulation is likely to further increase interest in the sector.

The UK safety tech sector however remains at an early stage of maturity; and will need to scale rapidly in coming years if it is to keep pace with industry demand and requirements of legislation.

In coming months DCMS and KTN will therefore be working with a range of stakeholders within safety tech, civil society and the wider tech sector, to ensure the foundations are laid for sustainable growth. This will be delivered via the Safety Tech Innovation Network and through the wider Safety Tech Sector Growth strategy.

Sector skills and capability will be one of our key considerations. Almost 2,000 people work in safety tech in the UK, and many of these roles involve the need to grapple with some of the most complex issues facing society today. For example, how can AI accurately detect harmful behaviour such as grooming or bullying, without restricting freedom of expression? How can products and datasets used to detect harms mitigate bias and reflect diversity? How can data be shared in a way that supports innovation but protects privacy? What support do content moderators need? Through the Safety Tech Innovation Network we have begun to explore many of these issues; and emerging themes are reflected in our challenge areas.

To supplement and inform these sector discussions, we would like to develop a deeper understanding of the current skills and capability landscape - and in particular, of the specific areas to which we need to respond to ensure growth is sustainable, and sector products are trusted by citizens.

2. Objectives

We would like this project to:

- **Develop a working model through which we can understand, measure and prioritise skills and capability needs within the safety tech sector.** As part of this, we would like the provider to explore:
    - The main job, skills and capability groupings relevant to the UK safety tech industry.

        - This should cover staff working within the industry, and also those providing specialist advice or services to it (eg legal, data privacy, analysis).
        - Which roles, if any, are specific to safety tech, and which are generic across multiple sectors?
    - CEO views of the highest-priority issues to address relating to:
        - Capabilities - in which specific areas do companies struggle to find additional capacity or expertise to perform core functions;
        - Skills - issues relating to recruitment, retention, skills and development of staff within these groupings
    - Needs of staff working in high-priority areas for networking, support, training and development,
    - How the above findings differ to published skills and capability profiles of related sectors - for example, cybersecurity or AI. You may want to refer to, for example, the DCMS Cybersecurity Skills in the Labour Market report or the Microsoft AI Skills in the UK report.
    - In your analysis, bring out which roles are key to the growth of the sector, and/or which are most influential within the sector. We would like you to pay particular attention to issues of diversity.

- **Explore how we might design a programme through which we can work with industry to address priority areas of skills and capability needs.** As part of this we would like the provider to:
    - Develop proposals for low or no-cost ways in which capability needs might be tested or met through existing resources or support programmes. These might include through the Safety Tech Innovation Network; linking up with established training programmes in related areas such as cyber or AI; development of communities of practice; or developing detailed shared guidance to address specific 'shared problem' areas,
    - Identify where further research and development is needed to shape a longer-term approach, potentially involving funded packages of training, and scope between 3-5 research projects that would help move discussions forward,
    - Develop an outline roadmap setting out how we might best work with industry to test, develop and refine these proposals, and implement a coordinated skills and capability programme.
    - Propose a model for how skills and capability needs can be assessed and coordinated on an ongoing basis, and KPIs against which we might perform this assessment.

3. Scope of work

This project should use as its basis the safety tech sector scope and taxonomy as defined in the May 2020 safety tech sectoral analysis. It should focus in particular on exploring needs relating to data-sharing, machine learning and product design; and the relationship between diversity, inclusion and the creation of products that are trusted by industry and customers.

There are currently around 80 safety tech companies in the UK, employing almost 2,000 people. DCMS maintains a central list of these and has established channels of communication with senior management of all companies, as set out in this list.

For reasons of cost effectiveness for this project, we suggest that qualitative research work should cover a representative sample of around 25-30 of these companies, and should consider challenges of companies at all stages of the growth cycle (eg startups, SMEs and large businesses).

DCMS and KTN can support the provider by:

- advising on segmentation of companies within the market,
- facilitating communication with our existing industry contacts; or example, we can share online surveys or request the provision of specific information, and
- providing access to relevant information provided by cross-stakeholder stakeholders during our innovation research in summer 2020.

This brief is designed to be flexible, and in responses we would welcome thoughts from providers on how it could best be focused. Given the exploratory nature of this project we would expect the provider to maintain constant dialogue with KTN/DCMS to ensure research plans are aimed at the areas of greatest value, and to adjust the approach if needed.

You may want to use the 'Cybersecurity Skills in the UK Labour Market' report as an example of the type of approach that we are envisaging, although we appreciate that the safety tech market is smaller and currently less mature.

3.1 Content

The central deliverables for this project are:

- **A Safety Tech 'skills and capability' ecosystem report** that meets the objectives set out in section 2, above. The report should include an executive summary; a detailed account of discovery findings; and recommendations for future action (the Safety Tech Sectoral Analysis is one model of this). This report should be written for an external audience, and to be published on GOV.UK.

- **Executive summary slides** of key findings for use in internal briefings.

3.2 Audience

DCMS will use this report to:

- inform the work programme for the Safety Tech Innovation Network during 21/22 (eg how do we build a 'market square');
- inform the priorities in our Sector Growth strategy (late 2021); and
- shape our 'asks out' to wider industry for support - eg Microsoft, Cyber and AI training programmes.

KTN will use this report to:

- advise on development priorities for STIN.

Safety Tech companies will use this report to:

- understand shared capability needs, and to develop a programme to respond to these.

3.3 Key deliverables

The key deliverable of this project will be the report summarised in section 3.1.

As part of this we would expect the provider to deliver a systematic programme of user research. These should be based on the methodologies and approaches outlined in the Government Service Standard - although you will not formally be assessed against this standard.

Within this user research phase, we would expect to see:

- Segmentation and prioritisation which is primarily drawn from desk research, org charts, interviews with CEOs and heads of HR,
- Qualitative analysis of needs of priority areas which is primarily based on interviews with staff, and
- Recommendations for future programmes, which are based on lessons from parallel areas and which incorporate feedback from sector stakeholders.

The development process should be iterative; and allow as much as possible for findings to be tested and validated by industry experts.

DCMS/KTN is aiming to kick the project off with a cross-sector discussion group on or around 10 March 2021.

4. Timeline (proposed)

● To market	Monday 1 February 2021
● Responses back by	Wednesday 3 March 2021
● Contract commences	Monday 8 March 2021
● STIN Focus group discussion session	10/11 March 2021
● Final deliverables sign off	Friday 26 March 2021
● Contract end	Wednesday 31 March 2021

5. Budget

£37,000 inclusive of VAT.

6. Submission requirements

In response to this RFP, please provide the following information:

Technical Approach
- Initial research methodology
- Initial list of documents to be reviewed
- Initial work plan

Technical Capability
- A description of how you would meet the deliverables
- Evidence of past or current relevant work
- Evidence of domain knowledge in the service sector,
- Evidence in domain knowledge in AI and data analytics applied to the services sector.

Staff Resources
- Staff resources and CVs of professionals who will undertake the work

Legal Information
- Professional insurances in place
- Partnerships or joint ventures with other organisations

Schedule of Rates
- A proposed contract value, including a cost breakdown for all the deliverables detailed above. Prices and financial data must be provided in £ Sterling.

Additional Information
- Any additional services you could provide to enhance the project scope.
- Publicly brochures will not be accepted as responses.

Service providers must submit an electronic copy (in PDF format) of their response to this RFP to Iwona.wilk@ktn-uk.org no later than 17:00 (GMT) on Wednesday 3 March.

7. Contract and Expiry Date

The work must commence immediately and is envisaged to conclude by 31 March 2021.

The Contract will be awarded in accordance with a pricing proposal for the successful service provider. Payment will be dependent upon the successful delivery and approval by the KTN as below:

- 50% on signature of the contract
- 50% upon approval of the publication version of the report

8. Principal Contact for the Request for Proposal

Please direct any questions or communications on this RFP to Iwona.wilk@ktn-uk.org

9. Terms and Conditions

This Request for Proposal is subject to “KTN’s Terms and Conditions of Contractor Engagement – Company Edition”, which can be provided separately.