Requirements: Tender for measuring the impact of disrupting online terrorist material

The Home Office is seeking to fund a number of small innovative research projects in order to measure the impact of disruption and removal of online terrorist content.

**Background**

The internet has transformed the way that terrorist and extremist organisations can spread their message, influencing and radicalising individuals across borders. It enables groups such as Daesh to reach a global audience, with compelling and tailored messaging, exposing people to illegal and dangerous content.

Groups like Daesh are using the internet to inspire, radicalise, recruit and enable attack planning. We have also seen evidence of young and vulnerable people having online conversations with radicalisers who aim to take them into closed online spaces to discuss issues such as, how to prepare for and travel to Syria and how to carry out terrorist attacks in the UK.

Tackling terrorist and extremist content on the internet is vital in restricting access to and preventing the spread of propaganda and messaging. Government and police are undertaking a range of measures to tackle such content including referring terrorist and extremist material to Communication Service Providers for removal from the internet, as well as promoting countering narratives and positive alternatives.

In the UK, our dedicated police Counter Terrorism Internet Referral Unit (CTIRU) refers content that they assess as contravening UK terrorism legislation to industry. If industry agree that it breaches their terms and conditions, they remove it voluntarily. Since its inception in February 2010, CTIRU has secured the removal of more than 200,000 pieces of terrorist-related content this includes removal of propaganda videos, suspension of Twitter accounts propagating terrorist and extremist views and removal of literature such as Dabiq and Inspire, magazines which have provided practical attack planning advice. The Europol Internet Referrals Unit (EUIRU) established in July 2015 replicates this model at European level and provides the same service for all Member States.

**Research Requirement**

The Home Office would like to establish a stronger evidence base on the impact and effectiveness of activity undertaken to disrupt terrorist and extremist activity and influence online. In support of this we would like to invite expressions of interest from research partners to meet our aim of this tender – to measure the impact of disrupting or removing online terrorist material.

To help guide your thinking, there are a number of areas that we are interested in. This includes the short and long term impact disruption activity has on its:

* Availability/accessability (e.g. speed of reposting of content following takedown; ease of finding terrorist material)
* Reach and influence (e.g. viewership; number of social media followers; impact of the message and narrative; real world effect; effectiveness of content removal versus link removal)
* Quality (e.g. video / image quality; file size)
* Durability (e.g. the resilience and following of key accounts and networks promoting and disseminating extremist content)
* Location (e.g. diversification of platforms; shift to closed forums or dark web)
* Producers and disseminators (e.g. the frustration caused versus enhancement to their credibility; do individuals change the approach that they use for disseminating extremist content following disruption activity)
* Target audience (e.g. what is being said about online disruption activity on social media and online forums)
* Wider population (e.g. public attitudes to the role of Government with online disruption or takedowns)

We are also interested in understanding where disruption activity is most effective. For example, whether the removal of content from certain platforms or the removal of certain types of content are more effective than others. Also, the window of opportunity when a removal will have most impact before it is widely dessiminated.

**Your proposal(s) may cover more than one of these categories and please do not limit your research ideas to the examples provided.** We are also keen for research proposals to be innovative and novel – however we will also consider research projects that employ more traditional methodologies (e.g. surveys or interviews). This call for tender will consist of two stages:

**Stage 1**

Interested parties are invited to complete an Expression of Interest (EoI) Form detailing a research proposal in 800 words (see Annex A). Please submit one EoI form for each research proposal. Expressions of interest will be evaluated by HO officials and will be judged on what impact your proposal seeks to measure, the methodological approach, proposed outputs and estimated costs and timeline.

**Stage 2**

If successful, you will be shortlisted to proceed to stage 2 and be given a further three weeks to provide a more detailed research proposal including a cost breakdown of a fixed price (max 8 pages). No additional information will be provided at this point but there will be an opportunity to ask clarifying questions.

Table 1 details an **estimated** project timetable for the project.

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| **EXPECTED DATE** | **Activity** |
| **STAGE 1 – EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST** |
| 9th August  | EoI call issued by the HO. |
| 9th – 29th August | Period of question and answers for EoI |
| 29th August | Closing date for EoI submissions  |
| By 5th September | Submitted EoIs evaluated by the HO and the short-listed Tenderers invited to formally tender. |
|  **STAGE 2 – FORMAL INVITATION TO TENDER (ITT)** |
| W/c 5th September  | ITT issued by the HO to short-listed Tenderers. |
| 5th - 14th September | Period of question and answers for short-listed tenderers |
| W/c 26th September  | Closing date for submission of ITT responses |
| By 3rd October | Evaluation of ITT responses completed. |
| W/c 10th October | Appraisal meeting to discuss and clarify ITT responses |
| W/c 17th October | Tenderers notified of outcome of appraisal and preferred Tenderer (or Tenderers) identified |
| 24th October | Contract awarded and signed. Project commences |
| End of February | Reporting of the project findings |

Funding and Timings

Our intention is to fund a number of projects to identify a range of different approaches and metrics to understand the impact of online disruption activity. It is expected that bids will be no more than £20,000 (excluding VAT) and the work will need to be completed by the end of February 2017. There is the potential to fund multiple proposals if the quality of bids is high. Outstanding proposals that require funding above this amount may be considered however if the benefits are sufficiently demonstrated and outlined.

Returns

Please send any questions and documents to sstcommercial@homeoffice.x.gsi.gov.uk

Annex A – Expression of Interest Form

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| **Measuring the impact of disrupting online Terrorist material – 9th Aug 2016** |
| **Company Contact details (including named point of contact, telephone number, email address and postal address)** | If applicable, other organisations making up the respondent team and points of contact |
| **Research Proposal** *(max 800 words)*Please briefly outline what impact your proposal seeks to measure, the methodological approach, proposed outputs, estimated cost and timeline, limitations of the work and any key ethical considerations. |