



**Digital Frontiers
Request for Concept Notes**

Solicitation No.	2023-04
Issue Date	July 24, 2023
Title	Sourcing Social Media Analytics Concepts from sub-Saharan Africa
Issuing Office & Email	Digital Frontiers c/o DAI, DigitalFrontiers@dai.com
Deadline for Receipt of Questions	July 31, 2023, 5pm EST, to DigitalFrontiers@dai.com
Deadline for the Receipt of Concepts	August 14, 2023, 5pm EST, to DigitalFrontiers@dai.com
Point of Contact	DigitalFrontiers@dai.com
Estimated Budget	\$45,000 - \$50,000 USD (Not-to-Exceed)
Awards	Several Awards Anticipated

DAI, the implementer of the USAID-funded Digital Frontiers Cooperative Agreement, is seeking concept notes from organizations or individuals who are interested in using social media analytics or providing local stakeholders with social media analytics services in sub-Saharan African countries. Applicants whose concepts are selected via this process will be invited to participate in a co-creation process with USAID and DAI, and following that process, will be invited to submit full proposals.

Digital Frontiers is a \$90 million buy-in mechanism available to USAID Bureaus and Missions from 2017-2024. DAI implements the Digital Frontiers project, which works closely with USAID's Technology Division in the Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub (ITR/T) at the Development, Democracy, and Innovation (DDI) Bureau, USAID Missions, the private sector, and international and local development organizations to identify successful and sustainable digital development approaches and scale their impact globally.

Applications must be received via email to DigitalFrontiers@dai.com. Any questions concerning this call for concepts should be submitted in writing to the same email address. Award will be made to the responsible applicant(s) whose application(s) offers the best value and meets the eligibility requirements. DAI, as primary implementer of Digital Frontiers, reserves the right to fund any or none of the applications submitted.

Thank you for your interest in Digital Frontiers!

WARNING: Prospective Applicants who have received this document from a source other than the DigitalFrontiers@dai.com email address, should immediately contact DigitalFrontiers@dai.com and provide their name and email address in order that amendments to the solicitation or other communications can be sent directly to them. Any prospective Applicant who fails to contact DigitalFrontiers@dai.com assumes complete responsibility in the event that they do not receive

communications prior to the closing date. Any amendments to this solicitation, questions and answers, or other communications will be issued from DigitalFrontiers@dai.com.

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Social Media Analytics

Social Media Analytics (SMA) is an interdisciplinary research area concerned with developing, adapting, and extending informatics tools, frameworks, and methods to track, collect and analyze a large amount of structured, semi-structured, and unstructured social media data to extract useful patterns and information.

Digital Repression

Digital repression refers to the use of digital tools and technology to violate human rights, including civil and political rights, and includes [five techniques](#) — surveillance, censorship, social manipulation and disinformation, internet shutdowns, and targeted persecution of online users. While digital repression is common under authoritarian regimes, democracies have also used these techniques. Digital repression is not limited to government actors; non state and foreign actors (including private sector and special interest groups) can also deploy these techniques for political, social, and economic reasons. Digital repression can be deployed using various technological tools including surveillance cameras, commercial malware, social media “botnets”, and access-blocking firewalls. Censorship and surveillance circumvention technologies (e.g., VPN, encrypted messaging applications) are used by people in many countries to mitigate some elements of digital repression. ([DECA Toolkit](#))

Disinformation

Disinformation is false information that is deliberately created or disseminated with the express purpose to cause harm. Producers of disinformation typically have political, financial, psychological, or social motivations. (Shorenstein Center, 2018) ([USAID Disinformation Primer](#))

Section A. Program Description

BACKGROUND

In 2021, the Conflict, Peacebuilding, and Governance Division in the USAID Africa Bureau (AFR/SD/CPG) commissioned a Landscape Assessment to better understand the links between digital development and digital repression in sub-Saharan Africa and to develop strategies to counter such repression. Primary findings of the assessment pointed to a lack of literature that addresses the benefits and the risks of digital development. To help answer these challenges, CPG is in the process of drafting a Social Media Analytics Guide as a practical tool for USAID Mission Staff who want to set-up social media analytics in their mission or integrate social media analytics in program design. SMA is one practical tool that may complement USAID's other efforts such as qualitative research and pilot interventions, to identify and address digital repression

As noted in the Key Terms section above, Social Media Analytics (SMA) is a rapidly growing field within data science that leverages social media platforms to extract valuable insights, trends, and patterns. It involves collecting and processing publicly available content from social media platforms, including text, videos, and images, to generate valuable insights that support evidence-driven decision-making. Data scientists apply mathematics, statistics, probability, computing, and visualization techniques to organize and analyze social media data, developing algorithms and software to handle large-scale data analysis, which results in user-friendly tools for both commercial and open-source purposes. Though it has many uses and use cases, Social Media Analytics can be used to mitigate digital repression and related digital risks by providing a window into online and digital activity. Specifically, it can be used to:

- **Identify online abuses and harassment of individual users:** SMA can identify individual users who are frequently subject to online abuse and hate speech. By analyzing social media data, it becomes possible to identify patterns in the way that individual internet users are harassed online, including through targeted and coordinated campaigns.
- **Analyze censorship:** In some cases, SMA can help shed light on the extent of online censorship in a specific country, including identifying users whose content is frequently removed. SMA can also help identify alternative platforms or channels less subject to censorship. By analyzing which platforms or communication methods are still accessible and widely used, activists can adapt their communication strategies to reach their target audience while minimizing repression risks.
- **Detect online surveillance:** Social media analytics can help detect and monitor online surveillance activities. By analyzing monitoring patterns, it becomes possible to understand the scale and scope of surveillance.
- **Detect and mitigate social manipulation and disinformation:** SMA is best known for detecting and mitigating social manipulation and disinformation providing policymakers, researchers, and others with a better understanding of how disinformation spreads on social media and who is responsible for spreading it. More specifically, it can:
 - **Identify disinformation campaigns:** SMA can help identify patterns and anomalies in social media data that may indicate the presence of disinformation campaigns. By analyzing trends, keywords, user behaviors, and content-sharing patterns, SMA tools can highlight suspicious activities and flag potential instances of disinformation. Continuous monitoring can provide real-time alerts and

notifications when specific keywords, topics, or sources associated with disinformation are detected. This allows for prompt response and the implementation of disinformation-countering strategies.

- **Facilitate community mapping:** SMA can map and analyze networks of accounts or online communities involved in the spread of disinformation. By identifying connections, influencers, and patterns of information flow, researchers can better understand the structure and dynamics of disinformation campaigns.
- **Identify influencers:** SMA tools can identify key influencers with high engagement within a disinformation network. Identifying influencers helps in understanding the key players who are instrumental in spreading false information. Engaging with these influencers makes it possible to directly address their concerns, provide accurate information, and challenge misleading narratives.
- **Evaluate disinformation campaign effectiveness:** SMA can measure the effectiveness of disinformation and counter-disinformation campaigns by analyzing engagement metrics, sentiment shifts, and the reach of accurate information. This allows for continuous assessment and improvement of strategies to combat disinformation.
- **Conduct sentiment analysis:** SMA can analyze the sentiment expressed in social media posts related to specific topics or events. This analysis helps identify the spread of negative or misleading sentiments that may indicate the presence of disinformation.
- **Do geospatial mapping:** SMA can map social media data to geographic locations to understand the spatial distribution of disinformation narratives. This analysis helps identify geographic clusters, hotspots, or high social media activity areas.

Please note: Data collected under this award shall not be published or publicly disseminated without prior written approval. Similarly, DAI will not publish or publicly disseminate data collected under this grant activity. All terms and conditions will be outlined in the award and made known to the awardee prior to signature. All activities proposed for this solicitation must comply with [Do No Harm principles](#).

OBJECTIVE

Digital Frontiers seeks to fund organizations and individuals in sub-Saharan Africa to implement SMA activities similar to those listed in the above background. The outcome of proposed SMA activities should provide measurable progress in detecting, analyzing, and/or mitigating digital repression efforts and/or related digital risks.

DAI seeks concepts from the following organizations/independent consultants:
Workstream 1. Organizations/Independent Consultants who are using or would like to use social media analytics in their work, regardless of sector.
Workstream 2. Organizations/Independent Consultants that are interested in providing social media analytics solutions to local stakeholders.
Where applicable, upon award, workstream 2 applicants may be paired with workstream 1 applicants to achieve the overall program objectives.

PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE

The period of performance for each subaward is anticipated to be up to 6 months.

Section B. Concept Submission Instructions

Eligibility Requirements

All Applicants must meet the following minimum requirements to participate in this Request for Concepts:

Requirements for Organizational Applicants

- Organizational applicants must be a non-governmental organization, including for profit and not-for-profit businesses, think tanks, civil society, universities, and NGOs;
- Organizational Applicants must be registered to legally operate in a country in sub-Saharan Africa;

Requirements for Independent Consultant Applicants

- Independent Consultant Applicants must be legally registered in their country of operation

General Requirements for All Applicants

- All Applicants must be willing to forego profit per 2 CFR 700.13;
- Government Entities are not eligible.
- Concept notes must be submitted in English.
- We welcome applicants from any sector in sub-Saharan Africa including but not limited to health, education, economic growth, agriculture and democracy, human rights and governance.
- We welcome first time DAI and/or USAID grant applicants.
- All applicants must submit their data collection and data privacy policy

Responsibility Determination

Digital Frontiers will not award to an Applicant prior to ensuring Applicant responsibility. Required responsibility documentation for this Request for Concepts includes:

- Evidence of legal documentation or licenses to operate in Applicant's country of registration;
- Confirmation that products or services used in the performance of the sub agreement are not from a Prohibited Country (see below);
- Organizational Applicants only: Evidence of a Unique Entity ID (UEI) number, CAGE/NCAGE code, and proof of registration with the System for Award Management (SAM). If full registration is not received by the due date for concepts, applicants may submit proof that the process has been started.

Prohibited Countries: Prohibited countries are countries that the US Government does not do business with, previously referred to as foreign policy restricted countries. The Applicant may not procure goods or services from the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) comprehensive sanctioned countries: Cuba, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, and Syria. By submitting a concept note in response to this Request for Concepts, the Applicant certifies that proposed equipment will not be procured from vendors located in one the OFAC prohibited countries above, nor will the origin of any of the parts be from a prohibited country.

Deadlines

Concepts must be received via email to DigitalFrontiers@dai.com by August 14, 2023 at 5pm EST. Please include the Request for Concepts number (2023-04) in the subject line of the email.

Requests for clarification or additional information must be submitted in writing via email to DigitalFrontiers@dai.com by July 31, 2023 at 5pm EST. No questions will be answered by phone. Any verbal information received from a DAI or Digital Frontiers employee or other entity shall not be considered as an official response to any question regarding this Request for Concepts. Copies of questions and responses will be distributed via email to all prospective applicants who are on record as having received this Request for Concepts after the submission date specified in the Synopsis above.

Late Applications

All Concepts received by the deadline will be reviewed for responsiveness and programmatic merit according to the specifications outlined in these guidelines and the concept note format. Section C addresses the evaluation procedures for the applications. Concept notes which are submitted late or are incomplete run the risk of not being considered in the review process.

Issuance of this Request for Concepts does not constitute an award commitment on the part of Digital Frontiers, nor does it commit Digital Frontiers, DAI, USAID, or any of its funding Partners to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, Digital Frontiers reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received. Applications are submitted at the risk of the Applicant. All preparation and submission costs are at the Applicant's expense.

Section C. Concept Note Preparation Instructions

The deadline to submit concept notes is August 14, 2023 at 5:00 pm EST. A complete concept note consists of the following sections:

- **Basic Applicant Information.** Use Attachment A: Cover Letter
 - a. Organization registration and articles of incorporation should be annexed to the Cover Letter.
 - b. Organization data collection and data privacy policy should be annexed to the cover letter

- **Concept Note** (3 pages maximum* in word or PDF format, single spaced, Calibri 12 point font, one inch margins);
 - Workstream 1 should include:
 - a) Clear problem statement and objective the grant will achieve and how success can be measured;
 - b) Description of Applicant's current body of work and how that expertise will be utilized towards the achievement of stated grant objective;
 - c) Description of the social media analytics approach used to achieve the stated objective and a detailed description of the use and role of social media analytics;
 - d) Description of potential risks and assumptions associated with Applicant's approach and how the approach can be adapted should they occur;
 - Workstream 2 should include:
 - a) Clear problem statement and objective the grant will achieve and how success can be measured;
 - b) Description of Applicant's current body of work providing social media analytics solutions and services and how that expertise will be utilized towards the achievement of stated grant objective;
 - c) Description of technical methodology and type of analytics (i.e. Predictive, Descriptive, etc.) used to achieve the grant objective. How does the applicant ensure the social and political landscape of any country is integrated into their methodology?
 - d) Description of potential risks and assumptions associated with Applicant's approach and how the approach can be adapted should they occur; Sustainability plan, how do you ensure your solution is sustainable?

****If Applicant(s) apply to both workstreams, the page limit is 6 pages maximum. Applicants should justify their ability to complete both workstreams.***

- **Illustrative budget.** Includes staff labor, travel, materials and other direct costs.

<i>Item Number</i>	<i>Item Name</i>	<i>Description/Specifications</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Unit Price</i>	<i>Total Price</i>
1.	Labor				
2.	Travel				
3.	Materials				
4.	Other Costs				
Grand Total in Local Currency (specify currency).					
Grand Total in United States Dollars					\$

Section D. Selection Process

Concept Notes will be judged according to the following evaluation criteria:

- **Eligibility Screen:** All Concept Note applications will be screened by Digital Frontiers to ensure they meet Digital Frontiers' Eligibility Requirements.
- **Selection Criteria:** All Concept Note Applications that meet the Eligibility Requirements listed in Section B will be evaluated according to the evaluation criteria below. Workstreams are evaluated separately and applying to both does not garner a higher score.

	EVALUATION CRITERIA		MAXIMUM POINTS
1	Workstream 1. Organizations/Independent Consultants who are using or would like to use social media analytics in their work, regardless of sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach demonstrates a clear articulation of the problem the concept note proposes to address and proposes a concrete social media analytics strategy. • For the proposed country/region where the SMA activities will take place, how closely aligned is the SMA activity with USAID priorities and programs in the country/region? (Read about USAID Mission priorities and programs by visiting USAID country and regional websites). • The proposed social media analytics strategy is replicable and can be sustained after the project ends. The proposed way to measure success is logical and thoughtful. • Risks and assumptions are thorough and appropriate safeguards are proposed. 	9 points
2	Workstream 2. Organizations/Independent Consultants that are interested in providing social media analytics solutions to local stakeholders in Workstream 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a clear and effective social media analytics solution for local stakeholders. • Proposed methodology is logical and coherent. • Risks and Assumptions are thorough and appropriate safeguards are proposed. • The proposed approach is sustainable after the project closes. • Preference for an organization that can perform analytics in local languages. 	9 points
3	Feasibility (Workstream 1 & 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach can feasibly be implemented within a six- month timeframe and the activities proposed are culturally, socially and politically appropriate. 	6 points
4	Past Performance (Workstream 1 & 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach demonstrates the applicant's proven experience and record of past success. 	6 points

In order to have the potential to match Workstream 1 and 2 applicants, Digital Frontiers reserves the right to select concepts that cover a range of sectors and workstreams. Digital Frontiers will select concepts to move on to co-creation up to the available amount of funds ensuring a mix of workstream concepts are selected. All applicants who proceed to the co-creation stage will undergo a vetting and due diligence process to ensure that their current use of SMA aligns with basic [Do No Harm principles](#). If the vetting and due diligence process turns up evidence that applicant SMA tools do not align with human rights standards outlined by those principles, the applicant will be disqualified from co-creation, and their concept will not be funded.

Attachment A: Cover Letter

[On Firm's Letterhead]

<Insert date>

TO: DAI Global, LLC

We, the undersigned, provide the attached concept note in accordance with **Solicitation No. 2023-04** issued on July 24, 2023. We attest to the following:

- We are willing to forgo profit under this activity.
- Our organization is neither government-controlled or a parastatal entity.
- The submitted concept is not affiliated with a political party or engaged in political activity.

Our concept note shall be binding upon us subject to the modifications resulting from any discussions.

We understand that DAI is not bound to accept any application it receives.

Yours sincerely,

Authorized Signature:

Name and Title of Signatory:

Name of Firm:

Address:

Telephone:

Email:

Annex 1: Articles of Incorporation and Registration

Annex 2: Data collection and data privacy policy