The purpose of this prompt sheet is to provide a clear set of guidelines to support the assessment of applicants for the Influence Operations Researchers’ Guild.

As far as possible, the standards in this document aim to be objective; the focus is on identifying good practices and sound methodology. The development of these guidelines drew on the methodology of DFRLab’s Foreign Interference Attribution Tracker, the International Fact-Checking Network’s Code of Principles, and NewsGuard’s Rating Criteria for assessing websites.

The six categories—diversity, collaboration, attribution, collection, privacy, and accuracy—reflect the core values as stated in the Influence Operations Researchers’ Guild Charter.

Please note: some of the guidelines below relate to more than one question in the application form.

PRELIMINARY DUE DILIGENCE

Reviewers should consider the following basic due diligence questions before assessing an application.

Does the applicant:

- Have a diversified and transparent funding stream?
- Maintain transparency about their content creators and editorial leadership?
- Have a good reputation in the community?
- Maintain a nonpartisan stance?
- Not promote mis- or disinformation?
- Have an open and honest corrections policy?

SECTION 1: RESEARCH APPROACH

This section assesses the diversity, accuracy, and quality of applicants’ work.

**Question 1a: Quality Assessment of Submitted Work**

In the work submitted as evidence of high-quality and respected analysis and reporting, does the applicant:

- Provide open access to a data set or archived links of alleged assets?
- Provide a clear illustration of the methods, tactics, and platforms involved in the alleged information operation?
- Provide research replicable through publicly available information?
Avoid using biased wording, innuendo, or emotive language?
Use titles that accurately convey the content of the report?
Clearly distinguish factual information, argumentative analysis, and assumptions?
Remain transparent about alternative interpretations of the evidence, gaps, and confidence levels?

**Question 1b: Diversity**

Does the applicant:
- Identify influence operations in understudied parts of the world or influence operations that target understudied populations?
- Provide a different perspective on influence operations, for example by collaborating on cross-sectoral research?
- Use analytical and research tools and techniques flexibly, depending on the circumstances of the influence operation being studied?
- Engage and foster diverse and early-career researchers?
- Ensure recruitment processes and workplace policies are attractive to a diverse range of applicants (for example, race, gender, sexual orientation) within their local context?

**Questions 1c and 1d: Accuracy**

Does the applicant explain:
- Their research methodology?
- The starting point and starting reasons for the investigation and provide a step-by-step explanation of their investigation?
- Rely on primary source evidence wherever possible and clearly identifies any secondary sources?
- Responsibly assess the reach or impact of the influence operation based on available facts (by not over- or understating estimations of reach or impact, and explaining the limitations of these sorts of assessments)?
- Provide a clear process of internal or external peer review?

**Questions 1e and 1f: Sampling and Bias**

Does the applicant:
- Demonstrate awareness of sampling and bias?
- Acknowledge relevant limitations, anomalies, or mitigating factors?

**Question 1g: Capacity Enhancement**

Does the applicant demonstrate an awareness of weaknesses or areas for improvement in their research and suggest ways to fill these gaps? Such as:
- Training to improve specific skills?
- Acquiring and learning to use new tools?
- Planning to recruit staff with specific skills, or interests in specific geographic areas?
**Question 1h: Attribution**

Does the applicant:

- Provide compelling evidence to justify the identification of actors allegedly responsible (if relevant)?
- Provide confidence levels and support them with evidence?
- Take care not to amplify narratives or actors involved in the influence operation?
- Seek to clearly explain the strategic goal and rationale of the actors who conducted the alleged information operation (if relevant)?

**SECTION 2: COLLECTION AND PRIVACY**

**Questions 2a and 2b**

Does the applicant:

- Show an understanding of and commitment to GDPR compliance?
- Show how they acquire and store data legally, and in compliance with social media policies, including details of any data collection tools they use?
- Demonstrate ethical and legal practices for storing data and protecting personal information?
- Have work processes to protect personal data and the integrity of individuals whose user data is studied?
- Protect the identity of unwitting social media users?

**SECTION 3: WORK CULTURE AND COLLABORATION**

**Questions 3a-e**

Does the applicant:

- Demonstrate ethical considerations that guide their work?
- Credit researchers fairly?
- Give examples of training activities they have for interns and junior staff?
- Mentor or partner with any other organizations?