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## IO RESEARCHERS' GUILD

### MARKING PROMPT SHEET

**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?



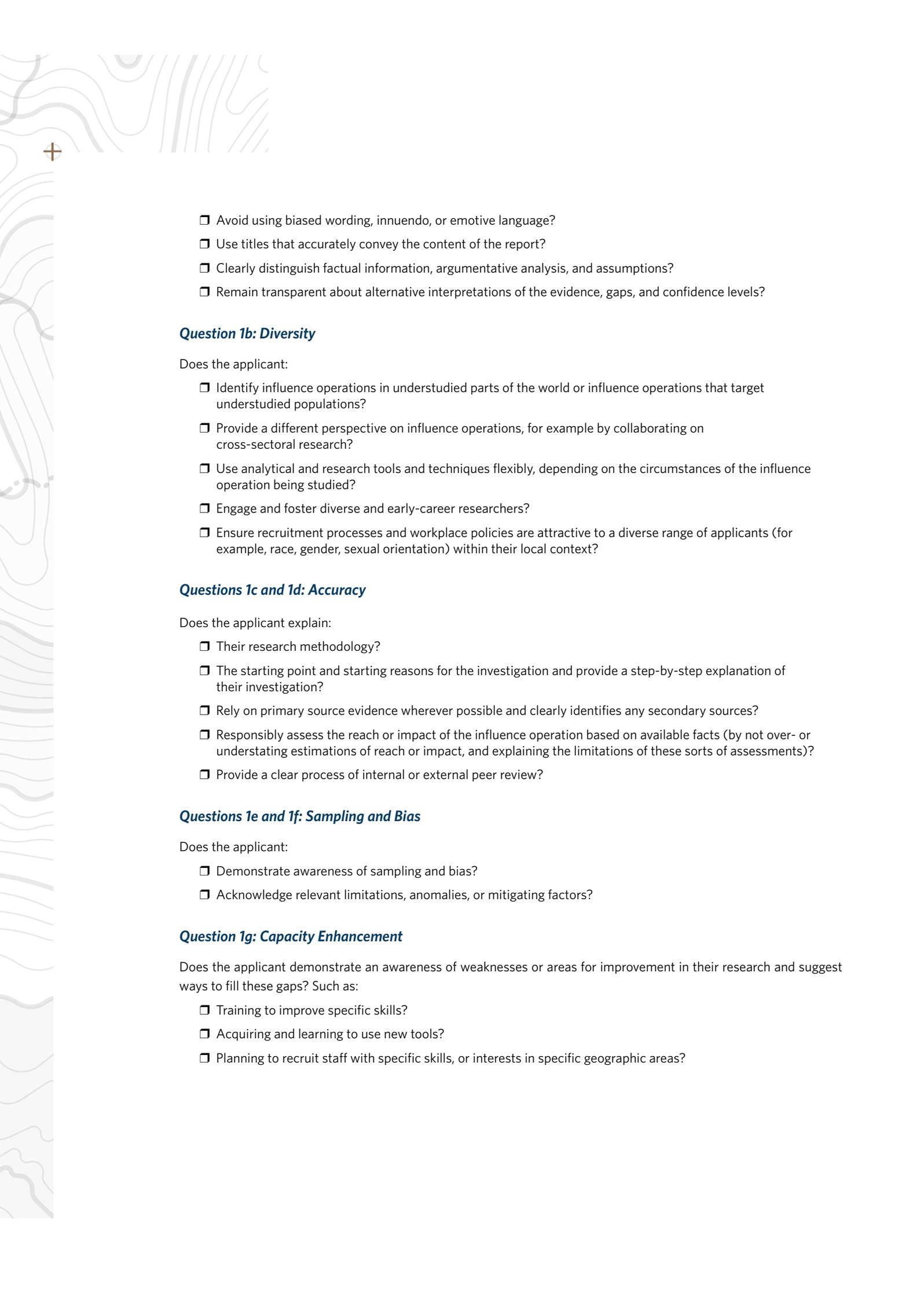
#### SECTION 1: RESEARCH APPROACH

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?

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- 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?



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