

CALL for Expressions of Interest:

Building tools to strengthen pluralist, inclusive and fact-based public discourse

1 December 2023



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Building tools to strengthen pluralist, inclusive and fact-based public discourse

LIRNEasia (hereafter referred to as Client) is a regional, non-profit digital policy and regulation think tank. Its mission is “Catalysing policy change and solutions through research to improve the lives of people in the Asia and Pacific using knowledge, information and technology.”

LIRNEasia stands out as one of the few organizations in the Global South experienced in using data analytics for public good. Examples include using satellite imagery to analyse the spatial patterns of urbanization to understand how cities evolve and change over time, as well as exploring the integration of remote sensing indicators with mobile call detail records to gain a comprehensive understanding of the geographical variations in socio-economic levels, which can provide valuable insights for urban planning and resource allocation

Building on its existing work in these areas, the Client is undertaking a project to develop a set of digital tools which can potentially promote social cohesion through strengthening a pluralist, inclusive and fact-based public discourse in Sri Lanka.

LIRNEasia invites expressions of interest (EOIs) from qualified firms and organizations to conduct the work herein described, in order to identify organizations with the technical capabilities to carry out the work specified herein.

EOIs for the project must be received by LIRNEasia by **1600 hrs Sri Lanka time on 8 December 2023**. EOIs should be submitted using the template provided as an Annexure to this EOI.

EOIs should be submitted by email to info@lirneasia.net, with the subject header “<FIRM NAME> - **EOI: DIGITAL TOOLS FOR PUBLIC DISCOURSE**”

Short-listed applicants will be invited to submit full proposals (including detailed methodology, costing, timelines, etc.), through the issue of a request for proposals; applicants will be notified by **14 December 2023**.

EOIs received by LIRNEasia after the deadline may be rejected. LIRNEasia reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EOIs without assigning any reason whatsoever. LIRNEasia will evaluate the EOIs, and our decision shall be final and will not be subject to any form of appeal.

This Call for EOI contains the following sections and annexes:

Section 1	Instructions to Applicants
Section 2	Project Description
Annex 1	Template for submission of Expression of Interest

INSTRUCTIONS TO APPLICANTS

1.1. INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 Definition of Terms used in this document

Unless otherwise specified, the following terms used in this document have the following meanings:

- *Authorized Entity or Consultant* means the firm that is signatory to the contract in case of successfully winning the evaluation process. The Client will entertain invoices from and make payments to the Authorized Entity. This will be the single point of contact with the Client.
- *Applicant* means the firm that files an application in response to this call for EOIs; this Entity will be the single point of contact with the Client for the EOI process.
- *Client* means LIRNEasia or another party contracted by LIRNEasia to manage the Study.
- The *Project* or the *Work* refers to the work that is the subject of this call for EOIs: *Building tools to strengthen public discourse*.

1.1.2 Scope of Work

The Client has issued this call to invite expressions of interest from applicants to develop a set of digital tools, and a set of companion outputs based on the tools, as described in Section 2.0 (Project description) of this Call.

1.1.3 Cost of Preparation of Applications/EOIs and Liability

The Applicant shall bear all costs associated with preparation and submission of the EOI as specified in this call, regardless of the conduct or outcome of the evaluation of the EOI process. The Client shall have no obligation to any applicant to reimburse any costs incurred in preparing the EOI, whatever the result. Submission of an EOI by an applicant will be interpreted by the Client as the Applicant's acceptance of this condition.

1.1.4 Clarifications

Requests for clarifications of specific items of this EOI shall be directed by e-mail to info@lirneasia.net, with the subject header "<FIRM NAME> - CLARIFICATION – EOI: DIGITAL TOOLS FOR PUBLIC DISCOURSE". The Client will respond to all such requests by email. Both the clarification/questions and responses will be sent by email to all applicants and kept for records.

At any time prior to the deadline for the submission of the application, the Client may amend the call for EOIs for any reason. All applicants will be notified in writing (i.e., via email) of the amendments and all applicants will be bound by the amendments. Applicants are required to acknowledge receipt of any amendment within one business day of such receipt by email. The Client will assume that the information contained in any amendment is taken into account in the applicant's EOI.

1.2 PREPARATION OF THE EOI

Applicants should prepare their EOIs in the format provided in Annex 1 to this EOI. EOIs should be submitted electronically as a portable document format (PDF) document.

The EOI should be accompanied with a covering letter signed by the applicant, clearly indicating the validity for a minimum of 12 weeks from submission.

If an applicant believes that any portion of the EOI is to be treated in confidence, it shall identify such information clearly in the EOI. The Client will make every effort to treat such documents in confidence to the extent possible and necessary, consistent with an open and transparent evaluation process.

1.3 EVALUATION OF EOIs

The following table provides an **indicative** marking scheme for the evaluation of the EOIs.

Table 1. Indicative marking scheme

Criteria	Marks allocated
1. Applicant organizational profile	20
2. Demonstrated understanding of the issues that the tools are trying to address, and how the tools can be used to generate social cohesion and relevant experience of the applicant which demonstrates capability to conduct the work described in Section 2. This may be demonstrated through examples of previously developing digital tools of a similar nature, or conducting work using similar methods to that described in this Call, or other relevant experience as described below.	35
3. Relevant experience in applying data science and data analytics, and/or developing digital tools to address social or developmental or public policy problems	15
4. Relevant experience/capabilities to communicate research to policy through the development of communication outputs (e.g., podcasts, documentaries, written articles, talks, social media content, etc.) based on analysis of data and other material.	10
5. Proposed project key team member qualifications, skills, and relevant experience that demonstrates competency in carrying out specific/assigned tasks	20
Total	100

Relevant experience can include:

- Proficiency in using modelling and simulation software to model complex systems (physical, social, or environmental)
- Systematic development of wikis for agriculture related topics
- Development of comprehensive curricula for fact-checking, journalists or other related professionals
- Using satellite remote sensing at large scale to study environmental and/or social phenomena

The Client's decision will not be subject to appeal.

2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Client has initiated this call to invite Expressions of Interest (EOIs) from organisations keen on developing tools to strengthen pluralistic, inclusive, and evidence-based public discourse. The overarching objectives of the Project, within this consultancy, are to strengthen such discourse by facilitating public access to digital tools, research, and analysis. This effort aims to foster social cohesion in Sri Lanka.

The overall objectives of the Project (i.e., this consultancy) is to strengthen pluralist, inclusive and fact-based discourse by promoting public access to digital tools will, research and analysis to promote social cohesion in Sri Lanka.

The specific objective of the project is to increase access to knowledge among diverse communities through artificial intelligence (AI), simulations, and availability of data/information, including capacity building through learning and knowledge platforms.

The work under the Project is organized into four distinct workstreams. Each workstream will constitute:

1. The development of a digital tool which can potentially help to improve public discourse in Sri Lanka
2. A series of companion outputs (e.g., longform articles, podcasts, social media campaigns, etc.) to
 - a. help to demonstrate use cases by applying them to a specific problem and analysing the findings, as well as to
 - b. raise awareness of on the tool and the use cases (e.g., through longform articles, podcasts, and other communication outputs)
3. The collection of monitoring, learning and evaluation data relating to the workstream to measure effectiveness of the project.

The four workstreams are as follows:

Development of a 3D Simulation Model of Colombo to empower CSOs and others to co-create inclusive solutions to urbanization, congestion, among others.

This will utilize available map data of Colombo 1-15 (augmented by primary data if needed), create a 3D simulation model of the city. The resulting output shall be interactive and accessible to the public.

The 3D Simulation Model of Colombo shall be:

1. accessible to the public and available for download
2. Exported to an open 2D/3D (static) format
3. Contain explanations and download links, and using Github for file storage
4. Useable by technically sophisticated users to interact with, to reiterate on public transport policy planning and visualization

In addition to the simulation model, the following will be developed based on the workstream:

- A longform article
- A podcast episode
- A short edited documentary
- A social media campaign
- A demonstration workshop for CSOs, researchers and journalists
- Collection of monitoring and evaluation data (e.g., usage stats, social media shares, etc.).

Development of a public wiki of crops ('Agri-wikis') that grow in Sri Lanka to provide information for individuals and groups to engage in agricultural production to help alleviate the rising cost of food and food security issues, but also to drive a public conversation and providing the authorities with necessary data and information to implement solutions to malnutrition. This will be accompanied by the development of an IOT-based sensor that can report essential conditions - soil moisture, sunlight, air quality - to design an open-source assistant technology that aids attempts of backyard and organic farmers.

The Agri-wikis will be:

1. Provide comprehensive and practical information on the process of how farming happens, and how it manifests across the world, to encourage those who are interested to take on planting food through well-researched and guided means; this shall also include optimal harvest times, companion plants and growing conditions for a minimum of 70 crops
2. Be publicly accessible through a weblink, on a suitable platform to be decided on in consultation with the Client

In addition to the Agri-wikis and IOT based sensor, the following will be developed based on the workstream:

- Two podcast episodes
- A short edited documentary
- Targeted outreach campaign to journalists
- A social media campaign
- Collection of monitoring and evaluation data (e.g., usage stats, social media shares, etc.)

Development of series of publicly accessible periodic annotated land cover maps of Sri Lanka reflecting environmental changes using European Space Agency satellite imagery.

The series of publicly accessible maps of Sri Lanka shall identify the following:

1. land cover (built-up areas, water bodies, vegetation, at a minimum)
2. the most populous urban areas of the country
3. the largest forests and waterbodies in the country
4. the change in urban development and forest cover from 2015 onwards

The final number of Annotated Maps will be decided in consultation with the Client prior to contract finalisation.

The annotated maps shall also:

- Clearly indicate features such as water bodies, trees, crops, built-up areas, bare ground, etc.
- Be annotated in such a way that they're clearly interpretable to the general public; it is expected that the Consultant works with experts to ensure the annotations are accurate.
- Be at a resolution of no less than 10 metres squared per pixel
- Be published on LIRNEasia's website.

In addition to the annotated maps, the following will be developed based on the workstream:

- Three longform articles
- Three podcast episodes
- A short edited documentary
- Targeted outreach campaign to journalists

- A social media campaign
- A workshop for CSOs, researchers and journalists
- Collection of monitoring and evaluation data (e.g., usage stats, social media shares, etc.)

Development of a free online course on investigative journalism (designed for platforms such as Udemy or similar).

This course should cover topics such as (but not limited to) information verification in the digital age, advanced OSINT platforms and their uses: from satellite imagery to company lookup and leaked databases, deciphering statistics, political systems, economic systems, inter alia. The course should also be:

1. In English language
2. Contain content as text, images, and links
3. Made available for paid access on Udemy.com

In addition to the journalism course, the following will be developed based on the workstream:

- Targeted outreach campaign to journalists
- Collection of monitoring and evaluation data (e.g., usage stats, social media shares, etc.)

2.5 Tentative timelines

The work will commence in early January 2023 and will end on 31 December 2023.

ANNEX 1: TEMPLATE FOR SUBMISSION OF EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (TECHNICAL)

<p>EXPRESSION OF INTEREST</p> <p>Building tools to strengthen pluralist, inclusive and fact-based public discourse</p> <p>For submission to LIRNEasia</p> <p>1 December 2023</p>	
<p>Applicant summary details</p>	
<p>Company name</p>	
<p>Registered address</p>	
<p>Contact person</p>	
<p>Email</p>	
<p>Mobile number</p>	

Key submission information for applicants:

- This EOI contains only technical aspects to assess the applicant’s capability to carry out the proposed work.
- Page limits indicated in the template **must be strictly adhered to**; the evaluation committee will be instructed to stop reading below the indicated page or paragraph limit. The minimum allowable font size is 10 (Calibri).
- EOIs for the project must be received by LIRNEasia by **1600 hrs Sri Lanka time on 8 December 2023**.
- EOIs should be submitted electronically as a PDF to info@lirneasia.net, with the subject header “<**FIRM NAME**> - **EOI: DIGITAL TOOLS FOR PUBLIC DISCOURSE**”

Please refer to the detailed Call for EOIs for full guidance.

Section 1: Applicant's organizational profile

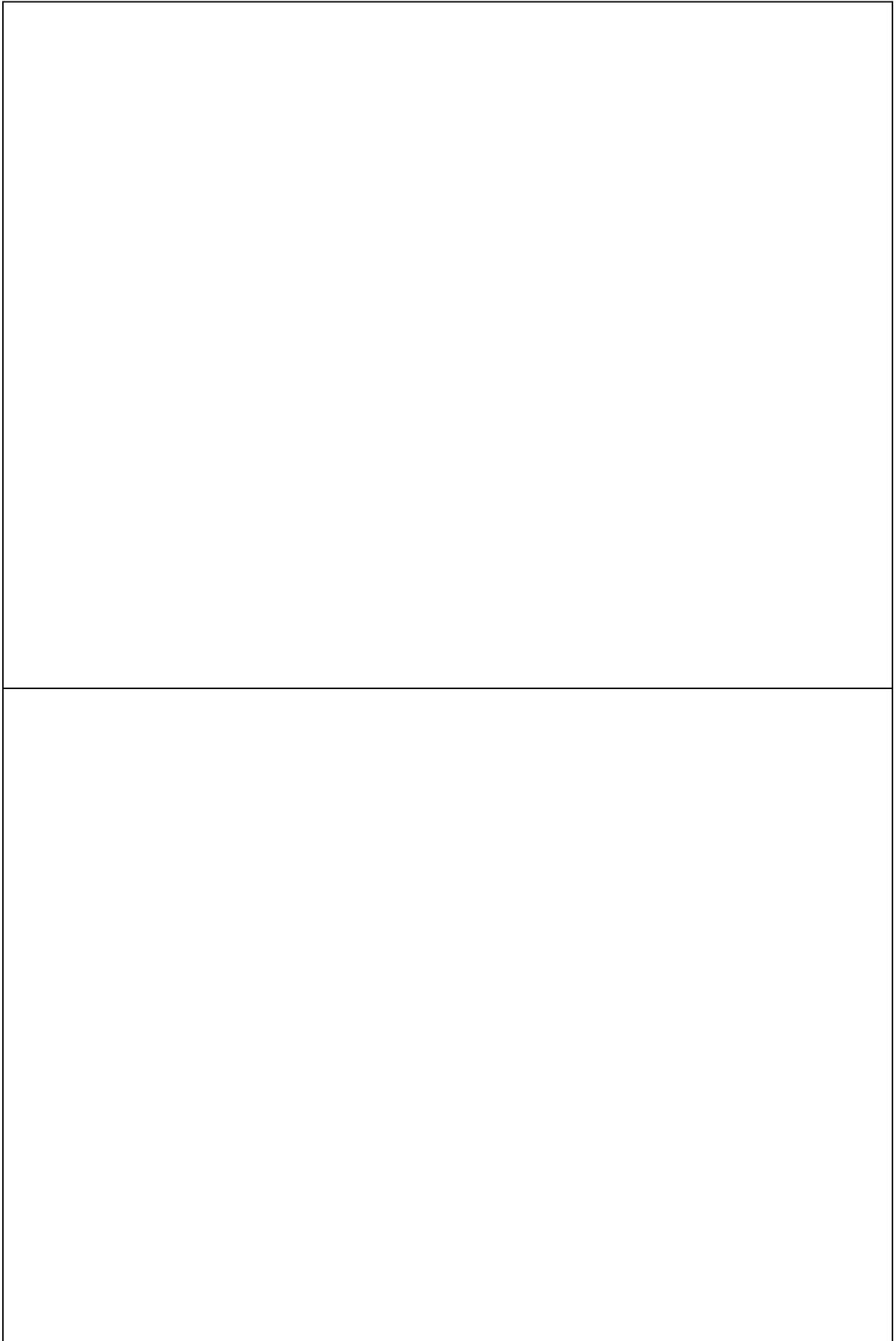
Brief profile about the firm submitting this expression of interest, indicating clearly the **key organizational parameters, areas of expertise, types of work engaged in, organizational capabilities** (including core skill sets), etc. Please attach scanned copies of applicant's current and valid business registration. **No more than 1 page.**

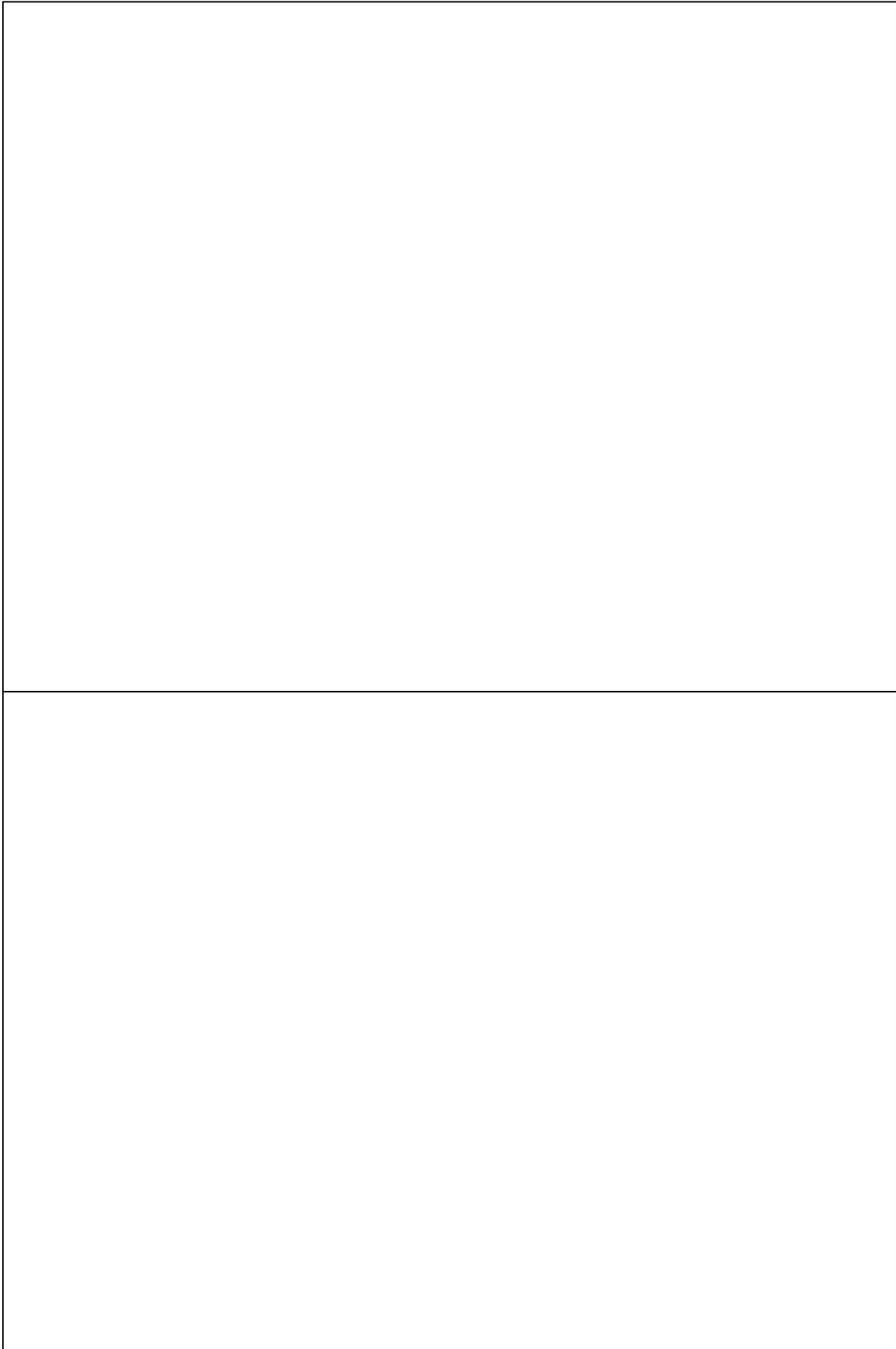
Section 2: Applicant's Experience and Capabilities

a. Details of **previous experience in carrying out similar or relevant work** which demonstrates the applicant's ability to carry out the proposed work. This includes developing digital tools of a similar nature, or conducting work using similar methods to that described in this Call, or examples from the following:

- Proficiency in using modelling and simulation software to model complex systems (physical, social, or environmental)
- Systematic development of wikis for agriculture or related topics
- Development of comprehensive curricula for fact-checking, journalists or other related professionals
- Using satellite remote sensing at large scale to study environmental and/or social phenomena

No more than 5 examples from within the past five years; no more than half a page each





b. Demonstrated understanding of the issues that the tools are trying to address, and how the tools can be used to generate social cohesion.

No more than half a page.

c. Details of **previous experience in applying data science and data analytics, and/or developing digital tools to address social or developmental or public policy problems. Describe examples from within the past five years.**

No more than half a page.

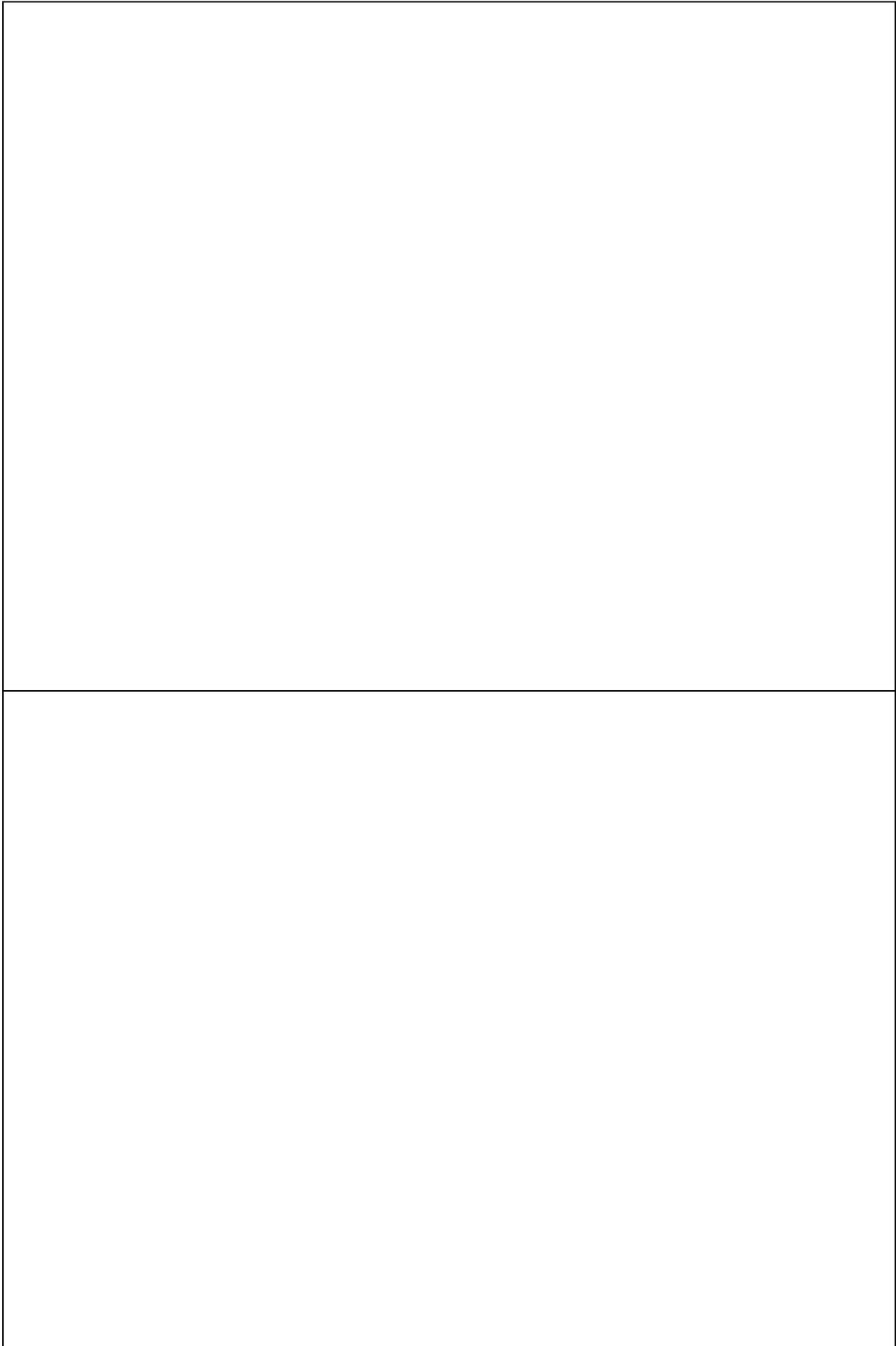
d. Describe/illustrate relevant experience/capabilities to communicate research to policy through the **development of communication outputs** (e.g., podcasts, documentaries, written articles, talks, social media content, etc.) based on analysis of data and other material; provide **up to five links** to illustrative examples.

No more than half a page (excludes links; links may be provided below the half page description)

Section 3: Proposed team

Proposed key team member profiles, highlighting qualifications, **skills, and relevant experience** that demonstrate competency in carrying out specific/assigned tasks, as well as indicating **proposed role** in the project team.

No more than half a page per team member; up to four team members can be included.





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