

**Role title: Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Consultant – MENA, Short Term****Location:** Any location in North Africa or the Levant**Start date:** end July 2021**Duration:** 9 Months**Deadline for applications:** Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2020, 23.59 GMT**About us**

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We create friendly knowledge and understanding between the people of the UK and other countries. Using the UK's cultural resources, we make a positive contribution to the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust.

We work with more than 100 countries across the world in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year, we reached more than 75 million people directly and 758 million people overall, including online, through broadcasts and publications.

**About the programme****Background**

National mass media in MENA is seen as partisan, co-opted and not trusted, especially by youth, for whom it has failed to convey their voices, realities and priorities. Young people are increasingly migrating to social media where they look for alternative content at a time when the “Networked Public Sphere” (NPS) is more contentious, polluted and polarized than ever. Fueled in part by the economic logic of “surveillance capitalism”, as well as broader social, cultural and (geo)political contexts, the MENA NPS is increasingly fragmented - made up of self-segregated online networks, where similar voices interact more frequently and where spreadable spectacle (image, text, video) is produced and circulated, which confirms the ideas, values, prejudices and ideologies of these networks; this generates more attention, engagement and interaction whilst limiting exposure to alternative voices, perspectives and experiences. Audiences have more and more ‘control’ in shaping their media flows, but this is within an ecosystem of platforms designed to align them with peers and channel attention through often sensational and polarising content. Under these conditions, affective polarisation is something that is happening to users of social media – it is built into the very logic of the social media platforms. Highly polarised audiences are more susceptible to: stereotypes and vilifications; a diminution of important relationships and trust; adopting a ‘siege mentality’ to ‘out-groups’; and viewing their opinions as absolute and indisputable. These emerging norms of digital culture present a risk to the type of shared public discourse and mutual understanding required to build strong democratic cultures and inclusive social action. They provide an enabling environment for the proliferation of disinformation/information influence, divisive narratives and identity-based attacks, which in turn further polarize different clusters and groups.



As the UK's cultural relations organization, the British Council believes that Education, Arts and Culture has an important role to play in this global challenge. In terms of Arts and Culture, as a problem arising at the intersection of technology and culture, the role of the digital media arts is an under-examined space in policy and civil society-led responses. The role of artists and cultural actors to bridge divides, challenge divisive narratives, create shared and inclusive spaces, and provide challenge, voice and diverse representations, is well understood. However, as digital media spaces are becoming increasingly ubiquitous as channels for artistic and cultural expression, the capability to do this in an impactful way involves increasing levels of digital media literacies. Within the UK, DCMS, in their *Culture is Digital* report, do highlight the role of cultural sector organisations in addressing this problem: *"In the echo chamber of social media where content and commentary can be chosen to confirm existing views, cultural organisations can provide challenge, interrogate our opinions, reveal our history and support our sense of community"*<sup>1</sup>. They also emphasize the importance of forging partnerships between cultural organisations and technology companies to help "provide creative thinking, to scrutinise tech development or to connect to new audiences". This raises the question as to what role partnerships between civic media arts initiatives and tech companies could play in providing a sophisticated "challenge" and response.

### **Programme Purpose**

The British Council intends to explore this question through a six-month pilot programme, entitled *Digital Media Arts for an inclusive Public Sphere* (Digital MAPS) covering Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Syria and Yemen. Digital MAPS will run between September 2021 and March 2022, focusing on network development, research and engagement, and the development of dynamic media literacies. Subject to end of term evaluation and subsequent funding availability, the pilot may form the basis of an expanded intervention over multiple years. The programme will draw together a multi-country and multi-disciplinary network of experts and practitioners consisting of: i) academics and researchers from the UK and MENA in the area of digital media literacy; ii) private sector technology actor(s) with expertise in online media mapping and analysis; iii) one or more international digital peacebuilding NGO; and iv) a network of local grassroots youth-led civic actors, with interests and experience in digital peacebuilding and the media arts.

Through human centered design approaches, the network will be supported to develop and deliver a mixed methods research programme, with the aim of i) providing a deeper understanding the dynamics behind polarization in the NPS in their respective countries/communities and ii) developing the digital media literacy of local network members for civic agency. Through a combination of online network mapping techniques and qualitative methods, such as netnography, the research will provide actionable insight and analysis to inform locally owned strategies, designed to bridge social divides and/or foster more civil and productive engagement between partisan groups. If possible, within the time constraints, the programme will seek to pilot at least one initiative in each country that builds on the strategies developed. Finally, a dissemination and engagement plan will be developed during the course of implementation drawing on the broad network of partners, their platforms, publications, conferences etc. as well as one funded event as part of the programme, providing research, insight and policy dialogue.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/culture-is-digital/culture-is-digital#future-strategy-unleashing-the-creative-potential-of-technology-2>



## **Role description**

As Research, Monitoring and Evaluation consultant, the short-term Consultant will be responsible for technical design, planning and evaluation of the programme. (S)he will oversee the work of the various partner/supplier organizations indicated in the programme purpose section above, to ensure quality and timely delivery in line with the programme plan. In developing the network of partners and participants referenced above, (S)he will provide a range of support with procurement, from conducting market research, to providing recommendations on possible suppliers, and briefing successful bidders.

The Consultant will be expected to have relevant knowledge and experience in one or more of the following areas: youth development programming, new media arts, media development, media literacy, online network/social media mapping, and must have evidence of managing and undertaking original research of drawing on recognized standards in research design and delivery and of conforming to research ethics, demonstrating best practice throughout.

## **Deliverables**

1. Work with the programme SRO and in-country leads to refine the Digital MAPS project purpose, scope and outcomes, into a final and agreed project design, ensuring that the regional framework is adapted and contextualized to the British Council country contexts and expectations.
2. Define the procurement plan and sourcing strategy to arrive at the optimal mix of UK/MENA delivery partners to most effectively support the project purpose and outcomes, including: market research on appropriate suppliers; development of ToRs and the evaluation criteria for tenders; support with the evaluation of tenders; briefing and onboarding of successful suppliers.
3. Work in collaboration with the British Council project manager, SRO and selected delivery partners to agree a finalized workplan and finalized deliverables for each of the selected partners, as well as appropriate governance and coordination mechanisms to ensure partners are working collaboratively and efficiently in the delivery of the project outcomes.
4. Support the project manager and in-country leads on local partner identification, including development of selection process and selection criteria for local network formation and lead the assessment process to ensure that the local partners selected are those most suited to effectively contribute to and benefit from the project.
5. In collaboration with the selected delivery partners, lead on the overall M&E plan and embed requirements of this into partner contracts and reporting requirements.
6. Lead on the final evaluation of the programme including coordinating all supplier inputs/contributions into a final report. The contents of the report will be agreed based on the plan detailed in deliverable 5, which will be signed off by the SRO by October 2021 at the latest.
7. Oversee and quality assure all project delivery approaches and products, including network formation and workshop design, research design, strategy development, as well as the engagement and dissemination strategies, products and events.
8. Provide monthly reports on progress against the workplan and deliverables, including risk, issue and change logs.

Other *ad hoc* deliverables may be agreed in writing during this consultancy between the British Council SRO and supplier.



## Additional requirements

The applicant:

- must be based in the Levant or North Africa
- will be responsible for any tax payments due under local legislation
- will be required to provide the British Council with proof of payment of any tax due under local legislation.

## Duration

This short-term consultancy will run from 29<sup>th</sup> July 2021 to 30 March 2022.

The number of days worked in a calendar month will not exceed 15.

The maximum number of total days for this consultancy will not exceed 135.

## How to apply

Please send a CV together with:

- a supporting statement (max 1000 words) demonstrating your suitability for this role;
- professional references from i) a government body ii) a university and iii) an international donor;
- proposed daily rate.

## Applications must be in English.

Submissions to be sent to: [menaprocurement@britishcouncil.org](mailto:menaprocurement@britishcouncil.org) before the deadline for applications indicated above.

*Please note, we can only respond to successful applicants and not earlier than **5 working days** of the application deadline.*

