



The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation Call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) Advancing the Research Agendas of Civic Monitoring Platforms

Issuance of the EOI: November 30, 2017
Submissions Date: December 15, 2017
Email EOI to: dsasaki@hewlett.org
Evaluation of Responses and Shortlisting:
Issuance of RFP: January 3, 2018
Submission Date: January 17, 2018
Evaluations of Responses/Selection Process: January 31, 2018
Tentative start Date of Contract: February 12, 2018

Summary of the Expression of Interest (EOI)

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation's Global Development and Population Program seeks three-page expressions of interest (EOI) for a six-month consulting engagement to do background work for the design of a potential, longer-term research collaborative to study the application of behavioral insights to civic monitoring platforms.

We expect this work to be undertaken by a small team over a six-month period (February – July, 2018).

Background

Throughout this year we've spoken with dozens of government officials, researchers, technologists, and civil society organizations that have experimented with online and offline reporting mechanisms to collect citizen feedback about the performance of public services. (Some of those platforms were featured in a [2016 evidence review](#) by Tiago Peixoto and Jonathan Fox.) Three common challenges surfaced throughout the discussions. First, the vast majority of platforms haven't managed to attract a critical mass of users. Second, the majority of users report only once without engaging further. Third,

most active users come from the wealthiest neighborhoods, leading to concerns that such platforms drive public resources away from poorer neighborhoods.

These three challenges, common across more than a dozen platforms, prompted Flora Family Foundation Summer Intern Maya Delaney and me to wonder if some fixes might be found in behavioral research. We wrote a [blog post](#) in September that sought input on whether we should fund a research initiative to apply behavioral insights research to attract more active and diverse engagement on civic monitoring platforms. The rich feedback we received challenged our initial assumptions and ultimately convinced us that a lot of additional work is required to design a research initiative that will provide useful knowledge to decision makers hungry for greater evidence.

Three pieces of constructive criticism stood out:

1. The research should focus more on optimizing the responsiveness of public officials than encouraging greater uptake by citizens. We don't have evidence that increased citizen participation leads to greater government responsiveness. The behavioral experiments should prioritize the behaviors of public officials first and citizens second. How can we get better at using feedback and technology to nudge public service providers to be more responsive?
2. In our original blog post, we conflated two different but related feedback pathways. In one form of feedback, the citizen describes her experience with a service to provide information that informs the decision of other citizens (similar to a restaurant review website). In the second form of feedback, the citizen registers a complaint with the expectation that it will be resolved by the relevant authority. We need to unpack the assumptions of each pathway (and how they relate) to design experiments that yield useful insights.
3. We should consider the tradeoffs between research that applies a number of behavioral experiments to a single platform versus comparative research that explores different approaches across different types of platforms. If we study fewer platforms, it's likely the findings will be easier to apply but less generalizable; they will be more useful to fewer people and less useful to many people.

This helpful criticism convinced us that we should first commission a design phase to consult with relevant stakeholders from technology companies,

governments, researchers, and civil society organizations to inform the design and scope of such a research initiative.

Purpose

The purpose of the background research, consultation and scoping is to inform the design of a research collaborative to study the application of behavioral insights to civic monitoring platforms. We seek smart partners to help us think through the following questions, and surely many more:

- Should the research initiative focus on just one platform where government officials are eager to learn how they can test behavioral insights to increase responsiveness to citizen reports? Or should the initiative compare insights across many platforms? Should those platforms all have similar or different approaches?
- How do the operators of citizen feedback platforms currently commission research and impact evaluation? What are their priority learning questions? This should include at a minimum input from administrators of relevant citizen feedback initiatives in [Mexico City](#), [Cape Town](#), [Sao Paulo](#), [Buenos Aires](#), [Montevideo](#), [Los Angeles](#), [New Delhi](#), [Austin](#), [Madrid](#), [Palmares](#), Kenya's [Huduma Program](#), Indonesia's [LAPOR](#), UNICEF's [U-Report](#) and [Maji Voice](#).
- How do technology providers of citizen feedback platforms test and experiment to optimize for responsiveness, user satisfaction, and veracity of reports? What are the priority learning questions of citizen feedback technology providers including [FixMyStreet](#), [Accenture](#), [Nyaruka](#), [SAP](#), [SeeClickFix](#), [SalesForce PublicStuff \(Accela\)](#), [everythingcivic](#), [Microsoft](#), and [CitySourced](#)?. How have these technology solutions integrated social media as a feedback channel, and what research methods does such integration enable? Which of these companies are most interested and best positioned to be involved in such a research initiative?
- What can be learned from private sector technology companies that have already studied and applied behavioral insights to increase responsiveness and engagement on their platforms? This includes but is not limited to Yelp, TripAdvisor, Foursquare, SurveyMonkey, Facebook, Google Maps, and Uber. Are researchers from any of these companies interested in participating in the research initiative in some capacity?

- What are the priority learning questions from academic researchers who study citizen feedback platforms? Which researchers are interested in and best positioned to contribute to the research initiative?
- How are existing networks currently positioned to facilitate peer learning between researchers, technologists, and public officials interested in citizen feedback platforms? This should include but not be limited to the Open Government Partnership's Subnational Program, Feedback Labs, What Works Cities, and WeGO.
- Finally, given our interest in supporting research that could inform the decisions of platform administrators, technology providers, public officials, and policymakers, what organizations might be well positioned to host and coordinate such a research initiative? What would a sensible size and duration be? What are risks and challenges, and how can they be mitigated?

Period of Assignment and Approach

The consultancy is anticipated to start in February 2018 and conclude in July 2018. The findings of this work will be made public and will, we expect, inform the terms of reference for the resulting research initiative, assuming it still seems like a good idea at the end of the design phase.

We anticipate the engagement to involve:

- Summary emails of findings every two weeks
- 60-minute check-ins with the Hewlett Foundation every two weeks
- Desk research
- Interviews via phone, Skype, etc.
- A draft report submitted in mid-June
- A final report submitted at the end of July
- Two 60-minute final presentations of findings delivered via video conference at the end of September

- 10-20 hours of follow-up questions and discussions (with donors and other relevant stakeholders) after the report is completed

The consultancy may also include travel to a relevant conference or related activity if deemed relevant.

Desired profile

We're looking for a group that can prioritize quickly, move fast, and communicate clearly. The following are essential criteria for the consultant/s

- Demonstrated ability to delivering high-quality, concise and timely results that inform strategic decisions.
- Familiarity with the fields and actors of academic research, civic technology, and transparency and accountability.

The following are preferred criteria

- Prior experience working with private foundations.
- Prior experience working in the Global South with relevant language capabilities .

Submission of EOIs

Interested consultants should answer the questions below and complete and submit the form to dsasaki@hewlett.org no later 5:00pm (Pacific Time) on Friday December 15, 2017. Please put "Civic Monitoring EOI" as the subject line in your correspondence.

- 1. In no more than three pages, please describe the organizational and financial profile of your institutional entity, including:**
 - a. The full legal name and type of entity if applicable (e.g. University, private consulting firm.)**

- b. **Organizational structure, including any associates, partner firms, etc. and the number of years it has been in the consultancy business.**
- c. **What is your organization's experience applying behavioral insights to improve governance? Please also briefly describe your recent experience running experiments with government officials and civil society organizations.**
- d. **What is your organization's technological experience and capacity to run experiments on digital and mobile platforms, including any use of A/B testing, user surveys, and social network analysis? If you don't have this capacity in-house, please describe any relevant partnerships.**
- e. **What is your international experience, especially in Latin America, South Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa?**
- f. **Please describe recent experience delivering rigorous, concise and timely results that informed strategic decisions.**

2. Please include the curriculum vitae of all team members.

Please note that this EOI does not constitute a solicitation. We do not require bids or proposal at this time. We are only seeking your expression of interest in participating in the tender. A response to this EOI is not a guarantee that you will be selected to participate in the tender. Further details can be made available to interested institutions upon request. A Request for Proposal with detailed Terms of Reference will be provided to those invited to submit a full proposal. Following the RFP, shortlisted institutions will be invited to participate in an interview. Please note that the foundation reserves the right to make adjustments to the requirements in this call and also to require compliance with additional conditions as and when issuing the final tender document.

If you have any additional questions about this EOI, please email David Sasaki (dsasaki@hewlett.org). Please emails only; no calls.