REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

for

Audit Database RFP for Southern Poverty Law Center, Inc.’s Intelligence Project

**Issued:** Friday, February 4, 2022

**Due:** 5 p.m. ET on March 25, 2022 *(Deadline Extended)*

**Inquiries:** intelligence@splcenter.org

**Submissions:** rfp@splcenter.org
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

1. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) is a national civil rights organization with offices in five states and the District of Columbia. Our organization has grown substantially over the last several years, with staff nearly doubling in size. We have undergone significant internal transformation and leadership transitions over the previous two years. After a national search, our board of directors named Margaret Huang as the president and CEO effective April 2020.

We have been actively refining our vision, mission, and impact statements as a 21st-century social justice organization and finalizing how to monitor, evaluate and learn from our work moving forward. We are eager to launch this new chapter in our history, and 2021 marked our 50th anniversary.

The SPLC is a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements and advance the human rights of all people.

The SPLC’s Intelligence Project (SPLC-IP) currently tracks more than 1,600 hate and antigovernment extremist groups operating across the country. SPLC-IP maintains files on these groups and others under monitoring in a database that is used for research and analysis on the far-right in the United States. The database is a core resource for SPLC-IP’s analysis, investigative reports, and news articles. Information gathered in the database is frequently shared with governmental and non-governmental partners and forms the basis for expert analysis provided to the media and public.

In the coming year, SPLC-IP seeks to replace its existing database with a new platform that will incorporate existing data, while also being more reliable, stable, and user-friendly, and offering opportunities for future expansion. Accordingly, we have initiated a Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify a qualified vendor to create a new database solution.

2. WHO MAY RESPOND

The SPLC seeks a diversity of vendors, including but not limited to minority-owned and women-owned businesses. In addition, we seek vendors who have:

1. A strong understanding of system and application security design and architecture.
2. Experience transitioning organizations from legacy databases without loss of data.
3. Proven record of designing clear and accessible user interfaces.
4. Familiarity with OSINT research techniques and needs.
5. Demonstrated experience integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into their work to minimize bias and oppression and address systemic inequities.

3. ABOUT THE SPLC-IP

Founded in 1971, the SPLC is a 501(c)(3) organization that envisions a world where everyone can thrive, and the ideals of equity, justice, and liberation are a reality for all. It seeks to bring about systemic change through four program departments: Legal, Learning for Justice, Policy, and the Intelligence Project. This RFP is to provide deliverables for the Intelligence Project.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the SPLC broke new ground suing white supremacist groups, including the Ku Klux Klan. An outgrowth of that work was the Intelligence Project, which tracks and exposes the activities of hate and antigovernment extremist groups. Each year, the project produces a census of active hate groups in the U.S. The SPLC-IP also publishes intermittent reports on far-right extremism in the United States, and near-daily web-based content through the platform Hatewatch. Its investigations and research are widely used by lawmakers, corporations, and the media.
The Intelligence Project team of approximately 25 staff are distributed in different locations in the United States, including at SPLC offices in Washington, DC, Atlanta, GA and Montgomery, AL. Several staff members are full-time remote workers who will access SPLC systems remotely.

Theory of change
To protect our democracy and the rights of exploited and oppressed communities in the South, we must ensure that governments and institutions are responsive to the needs, hopes, and futures of all. We must create a culture in the South that allows all residents to thrive. We must dismantle systems that oppress the most vulnerable and deny accountability for human rights violations. To achieve institutional effectiveness, we need to partner with and support communities that demand accountability and take action to achieve change. We recognize that there are many entangled barriers to these demands. The SPLC’s role is to overturn and eliminate barriers and align ourselves with communities to demand and effectuate change.

We have identified four areas of work that offer the greatest opportunities to achieve our mission. While there are many urgent needs, we recognize that one organization cannot do everything very well. We choose to prioritize these areas of work to achieve maximum impact. With this focus in mind, we adopt the following goals:

1. Eradicating poverty
2. Decriminalizing and decarcerating Black and brown people
3. Protecting voting rights and civic engagement
4. Dismantling white nationalism and protecting democracy

We are in the process of developing strategies in service of these goals. They will include litigation, advocacy, education, research and analysis, narrative change, and more.

4. SCOPE OF WORK
SPLC-IP seeks a vendor who can provide a database solution for the project’s daily monitoring of hate and antigovernment extremist groups in the United States. The new database must have incorporated existing data and be operable for monitoring use by January 2023, and preferably sooner.

A. Minimum Deliverables:
1) A new database solution for daily use by IP staff conducting monitoring of hate and extremist groups in the United States:

- Ability to integrate IP’s existing data without a loss of information.
- Ease of use for analysts who are updating group files, creating new files, and auditing the files of others as part of the verification process.
- Reliability, stability, and speed.
- Native viewing and playback of photos and videos uploaded into the database.
- Robust search abilities within the database.
- Efficient platform workflows to allow analysts to quickly and seamlessly input screenshots, videos, and other information without redundant steps outside of the platform.
- Layered permissions to allow external researchers to view selected portions of the database.
- Excellent security capable of addressing threats from sophisticated actors eager to penetrate SPLC’s systems and gain access to SPLC data.
- Excellent and responsive customer service.
2) Ongoing support to SPLC for modification of the database’s functions to potentially include:

- The ability to link data held in the database to searches of public records databases.
- The ability to incorporate passive data collection from social media feeds, websites, and other sources.
- Incorporation of additional data from SPLC’s archives, including videos, photos, and documents. *These assets are not currently digitized or coded, and processing is not envisioned as part of this RFP, but the vendor should design with a view to incorporating a large amount of additional historical data at a later date.*
- The ability to adapt and meet new vulnerabilities with alacrity.

B. Proposals Must Include:

A.) Description of your organization.

1. Describe the general nature of your work and how the racial and gender composition of your staff help create greater value, insights, and viewpoints in the work you produce for your clients;
2. Provide examples of similar work, along with contact information for organizations you have served;
3. Describe the qualifications and experience of staff who will be assigned to this project. Provide a more detailed background of the proposed project manager, including their CV;
4. Tell us about a situation where you were failing to meet the client’s expectations, why that happened, what you learned and how you were able to successfully change course; and
5. Tell us about an attack on a system you provided and maintained, and how you responded to it.

B.) Proposal details

1. **Methodology:** Detail what your process will be for understanding IP’s work and work processes, and how you will integrate that understanding into your design of a new system.
2. **Limitations:** Identify problems or limitations that you see in the proposed scope of work. Are there areas that you think are not feasible, and why? Are there deliverables that cannot be executed in the same timeline, or have outsized budget implications? SPLC-IP will consider and welcome tiered or phased proposals.
3. **Previous work:** Provide examples of previous comparable work that you have undertaken and completed successfully.
4. **Roadmap:** Detailed roadmap for replacement, including timeline and cost estimate for the roadmap items.
5. **Governance & Support:** Establish the governance and support model for the solution.
6. **Work plan:** Estimate how many hours will be needed to complete this project, propose a timeline, and list what information and people you will need to access.
7. **Budget and deliverables:** Provide a detailed budget, description of the specific deliverables that will be produced, and estimated delivery dates. Provide an estimated budget for ongoing customer support.

The vendor will not be able to subcontract any of the work without the explicit, written pre-approval of the SPLC.
5. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA AND TIMELINE FOR THIS RFP

Responses will be evaluated along several dimensions:

- Vendor qualifications;
- Understanding and practice of diversity, equity, and inclusion;
- Work plan and methodology;
- Budget; and
- References.

We may request one-hour phone and/or video interviews with the intended project manager and the proposed team for a limited number of submissions.

6. PROCESS FOR PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

1. **Closing date:** Proposals are due by **5 p.m. ET on March 25, 2022 (Deadline Extended).** Proposals must be a single PDF document, no longer than 10 pages, and the file name must include your organization's name. Email submissions to rfp@splcenter.org.

2. **Inquiries:** Inquiries are due no later than 5 p.m. ET on February 18, 2022. Email inquiries with the subject line “Database RFP” to intelligence@splcenter.org.

3. **Conditions of the proposals:** All costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this RFP are the responsibility of the bidder and will not be reimbursed by the SPLC.
APPENDIX

CONSOLIDATED QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

Is there a preferred technology stack?
SPLC prefers a SaaS or PaaS Azure hosted solution. The technology solution is expected to be intuitive to use with modern security technology protocols, with extended API connections and AI functionality for system growth, data integrations, and automation to optimize workflow processes.

Can we (The Vendor), look at SPLC’s current technology solution?
SPLC will not be able to show you the operational system or processes at the phase without a NDA; however, the current solution is web based.

What are the roles and responsibility of the roles in the current system workflow process?
Currently, SPLC employees in various roles work in their realm of application responsibilities, and SPLC expects for the role based access functionality of data viewing and data reporting to persists in the new application.

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<th>ROLE</th>
<th>RESPONSIBILITY</th>
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<tr>
<td>RESEARCHER MEMBER</td>
<td>• Collect information on people, organizations, and chapter level activity so that I can build the yearly group list for my respective desk.</td>
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<td>• Preserve assets so that I don’t lose evidence of hate activity, as many groups often pull their content down after very little amounts of time.</td>
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<td>• Monitor, organize, scrape, and capture information from social media so that I can find evidence of hate occurring.</td>
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<td>• Have a place to store and retrieve assets, like flyers, images, video, and audio content, that can be accessed by internal teams for research, editorial, and external sharing purposes.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Search the database so that I can find information on organizations, chapters, people, and assets so that I can activate, understand connections, and enter new data or edit existing data.</td>
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<td>• Import and export data so that I can bulk upload information and pull reports for areas of the website.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Link entities so that I can make connections between organizations, people, groups, and events to direct my workday and prioritize where I need to focus on current hate activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>IP MANAGER</td>
<td>• Have awareness of progress along the research cycle so that I can ensure teams stay on deadline.</td>
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<td>• See across multiple teams so that I can understand what is happening across the IP team.</td>
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<td>• See activity highlights that happen throughout the year across desks so that I have it readily available for my end-of-year summary.</td>
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<td>EDITORIAL TEAM MEMBER</td>
<td>• Locate artifacts, like images and articles, as supportive materials for leads and developing stories.</td>
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<td>• Find connections between people and entities easily so that I can identify real-time opportunities for breaking news or developing a story.</td>
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Are there regulatory requirements for data access and storage?
SPLC needs the capability to query lengthy historical data directly from the system or application, while adhering to country, government, and state Privacy and Data Regulation compliance requirements.

What are the internal control requirements for the technology solution?
SPLC requires a permission based controlled environment (e.g., users will be assigned to roles that have applicable to permissions to view data modules), risk and audit assessment, control based activities, data protection (e.g., encryption, masking, etc.), system monitoring, and data information and communication sharing.

Are you looking for a vendor to build the solution then hand it over to your internal team or do you envisage a vendor holding ownership and support responsibilities over a long period of time (multi-year)?
Looking for a vendor provide expertise but also partner with SPLC business and IT organizations to architect, build, and implement the final solution. SPLC will retain Intellectual Property of the system entirely (code, database, etc.).

What security threats does SPLC face today?
SPLC faces targeted threats from malicious actors that may have a particular interest in SPLC due to its line of work. These threats consist of but not limited to well known common industry security threats (e.g., ransomeware; malware; DoS; etc.)

Who are the SPLC customers in the process?
The customers are internal SPLC employees

Do you have a preference for onshore/offshore resourcing for the services work/implementation?
The SPLC seeks a diversity of vendors, including but not limited to minority-owned and women-owned businesses. The expectation of the selected vendor will provide resources that align to US CST.

Can multiple proposals be submitted from the same Vendor?
Yes.

What frequency do you expect the database to be updated with new content/data?
SPLC requires for daily loads and a process to manually ingest data.