2021 OPEN CALL

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

FOR

TECH COALITION SAFE ONLINE RESEARCH FUND:
UNDERSTANDING AND FIGHTING ONLINE CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION & ABUSE

Subject: Tech Coalition Safe Online Research Fund
Issue date: 4 February 2021

Submit Proposal at:
https://form.jotform.com/endviolencefund/techcoalition-safeonline-research

I.   Summary

End Violence and the Technology Coalition (TC) invite **Proposals** focused on **research to better understand and fight online child sexual exploitation and abuse (online CSEA).** This collaboration is part of Technology Coalition's Project Protect: a plan to combat online CSEA through a renewed investment and ongoing commitment to combat online CSEA in different ways.

The objective is to advance the understanding of experiences and patterns of online CSEA for child and adolescent victims as well as offenders and would be offenders, and learn from effective efforts (behavioural, technological, educational) to prevent, deter and eradicate it. **We are interested in innovative research that produces actionable insights that can impact product and policy development, with a priority given to research that can help inform the technology industry's approach to combating online CSEA**.

Eligible research for this call will help deliver actionable insights that contribute to practitioner understanding of online CSEA, with a priority on technology industry practice across four specific areas. We encourage research in all areas to consider heterogeneity of childhoods and cultural diversity.[1] We will seek to fund academic and/or applied research which may draw from a range

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[1] This should consider the (i) age, gender, disability, literacy, geographical location and socio-economic status of the child victims and perpetrators and/or the adults with sexual interest in children; (ii) links with other types of violence against children; (iii) socio-economic, technological and cultural drivers that underpin online harmful practices and

of quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. Research should increase our understanding and provide application of:

(1) **Efficacy and impact** of online CSEA deterrence and prevention interventions and frameworks including understanding of offender pathways and children's digital experiences. This includes increasing the evidence base for: effective, actionable industry reporting to and investigation by the appropriate authorities; impactful education and outreach strategies; and strengthening the capacity of all stakeholders in preventing, disrupting and responding to online CSEA.

(2) **Evolving technology** may present new or exacerbate existing threats by contributing to changes in offender or children's behaviour or creating new challenges and risks. Research could provide solutions to respond to implications of evolving technology, for example abuse detection in encrypted environments or real-time reporting in livestreams. This area of focus also includes potential solutions and opportunities offered by technology developments for risk mitigation and better tools and strategies around behavioural interventions.

(3) **Well-being, collaboration and support** including meaningful resources for survivors, improving well-being and resilience for staff such as content moderators and others as well as enhancing collaboration among all sectors working to end online CSEA.

(4) **Policy and legal considerations** are critical to shaping online CSEA deterrence and response. Research could include: assessment of policy implementation over time and upstream interventions such as public health or safety-by-design approaches; addressing age-appropriate design and experiences; and understanding how privacy and ensuring children's rights intersect in the fight against CSEA.

If your work is aligned with our general criteria above, we want to hear from you!

What we will fund

We are actively seeking submissions of proposals from **non-profit organisations**, such as research institutes and academic institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international organisations. Consortia are also encouraged to apply; however, the organisation submitting the application will be considered the main grantee, bearing all the contractual responsibilities *vis-à-vis* End Violence.

Organisations are asked to list partners and advisors. Collaboration with other stakeholders such as private companies, law enforcement, government, etc. is encouraged, however the primary

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protective factors; and, (iv) the types of digital tools and platform used to abuse the child or disseminate the child abuse material.

applicant must be a non-profit organisation (i.e. research institutes and academic institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international organisations). We encourage maximising synergies across jurisdictions/sectors/communities, as well as awareness of and sharing with existing research.

We encourage proposals from researchers, or collaborations with researchers that are based in or with situational awareness of the country/countries being researched, include cross-cultural approaches, respond to a clear need/gap, and reflect principles of a *Human Rights Based Approach to Data*. End Violence and the TC encourage applicants from diverse contexts, countries and cultures and with specific research focus on vulnerable populations, as well as applications with representation from or inclusion of Global South countries, underrepresented populations such as BIPOC[2], LGBTQI+[3], people with disabilities, and those with relevant lived experience including survivors of online CSEA.

End Violence and the TC encourage research projects that are open access[4], where appropriate to the research and governed by the necessary data and ethical frameworks. We will also help support the dissemination of research outputs to a wide range of actors both within and outside of industry - as part of the TC and End Violence's on-going multi-stakeholder engagement.

Submissions to this full proposal will be reviewed by technical experts at End Violence as well as an Advisory Group of external experts, as applicable. Please note that your organisation may be invited to provide more details before funding decisions are final. All submitted proposals must meet the criteria required to be eligible for funding, as detailed in General Conditions below.

What we will not fund

End Violence does not provide core organisational funding for non-profit organisations (including such as research institutes and academic institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international organisations).

Multiple proposals from the same institution are acceptable; however, consideration will be given to ensure diversity of grant recipients and therefore applications from the same institution will be carefully evaluated with this in mind. A maximum of two grants will be awarded per institution. Researchers may only be named project lead on one application; however, project leads may be a supporting researcher on another application.

The priority of this Call is on actionable research for enhancing the capacity of the technology industry to prevent, deter and eradicate online CSEA; however, consideration will be given to enhancing the capacity of all stakeholders, such as hotlines, educational organisations and

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[2] Black, Indigenous and People of Color

[3] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex

[4] The Tech Coalition Safe Online Research Fund will consider occasional exceptions to the open access rule as justified by the nature and/or sensitivity of the proposal.

first-responders and other similarly-focused organisations, to address online CSEA and make children safe online. The proposed research should not duplicate existing research. Documentaries, journalism, and oral history projects are **not** eligible for this solicitation.

II.   General Conditions

End Violence and the Technology Coalition invite non-profit organisations (research institutes and academic institutions, CSOs, NGOs, international organisations) to respond to this Request for Proposals (RfP). Consortia are also encouraged to apply; however, the organisation submitting the application will be considered the main grantee and must be a non-profit organisation (i.e. research institutes and academic institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international organisations), bearing all the contractual responsibilities *vis-à-vis* End Violence.

Eligibility criteria

The Tech Coalition Safe Online Research Fund is looking to provide project grants for research to non-profits as well as consortia with non-profits (i.e. such as research institutes and academic institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international organisations) as the primary applicant. Only entities that fulfill these mandatory requirements will be considered eligible:

- ☐   **legally registered** non-profit entity
- ☐   the research addresses one or more of the **four areas** of the 2021 Open Call
- ☐   all funding will be directed to an **institution**, not to individuals
- ☐   the research project lead may submit **one proposal**
- ☐   at minimum, the applicant organisation should have **demonstrated relevant prior expertise and/or research experience**
- ☐   the organisation has a **safeguarding policy[5]** in place or is willing to develop a policy *

*Researchers are also responsible for obtaining ethical approval for their proposed project, such as approval from a university's ethics/ institutional review board (IRB) or when not available, include a detailed description of their ethics policy (e.g. embedding a [UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research](#) in the research design) which will be evaluated carefully as a part of the criteria for selection.

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[5] End Violence is committed to supporting organisations to improve their safeguarding capacity and practice. As part of this, we will ask all grantees to comply with all the applicable End Violence safeguarding requirements. Collaborators receiving less than 50% of the funds will answer questions around safeguarding. Collaborators receiving more than 50% of the funds, will be required to undergo a microassesment and due diligence similar to the main applicant. The primary applicant is responsible for all issues that may arise with partners or contractors in regards to safeguarding. End Violence's Safeguarding Policy is available for all applicants to consult here on our website.

Please note that if you are selected for a Grant award, your organisation will be asked to submit *two years* of the latest financial audit reports. If your organisation does not have this readily available, a description of why audits are not available and further financial documentation will be requested for the required due diligence by End Violence. As End Violence is hosted administratively by UNICEF, organisations without a risk rating within UNICEF's financial management system may be required to undergo a financial micro-assessment during the grant period.

Awards

The 2021 Tech Coalition Safe Online Open Call funding will be made available as grants from the End Violence Fund. See the details of the available funding in the table below:

Funding modality	Funding Focus	Who can apply	Total funds available	Max duration	Allocation amount	Award
Grants	Independent research into trends around online CSEA and measures to combat it that deliver actionable insights for technology industry	NGOs, CSOs, academic institutions, research institutes, and international organisations	Up to US $800,000[6]	2 years	US$20,000-US$250,000	Grant Confirmation Letter for a period of up to two years and up to US$250,000

Award amounts will range from US$20K to US$250K. End Violence encourages applications that fall anywhere within this range. There is more limited opportunity for larger funding amounts. Most significantly, proposals will be evaluated for alignment of the scope and activities outlined with the proposed budget. Payment will be made to the applicant's institution, and in the case of a consortium, to the main grantee organisation. Grantees' installments are determined based on their proposed budgets, with 1-2 installments depending on project duration and budget. Indirect costs are limited to 7% for grants.

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[6] The total amount to be awarded will depend on the quality and volume of received applications i.e. the Tech Coalition Safe Online Research Fund may decide to slightly increase or lower the amount if specific opportunities arise or as a result of the initial assessment of applications.

The Tech Coalition Safe Online Fund research awards provide support for independent research projects designed to be shared with the larger scientific, policy, and industry communities. These awards will be made as grants to allow investigators the freedom to deepen and extend their existing research portfolios to better understand, prevent and combat online CSEA.

End Violence will actively monitor the progress of all supported projects during the period of the grant, and periodic evaluation of progress. Specifically, all grantees will be required to:

- Report on project progress during annual reporting periods using End Violence's reporting templates, which will be provided to grantees;
- Establish and report on key milestones according to qualitative and quantitative indicators selected by the grantee based on their research project proposal using End Violence's Monitoring & Evaluation template which includes suggested indicators;
- Report on key potential barriers or obstacles included in the Proposal in the related question on the application. Identify challenges encountered and steps taken to address them throughout the project;
- Attend ad hoc webinars, bilateral (online) meetings or other discussions relevant to the project, including field visits by End Violence team members, as applicable.

III.   Submission of Proposals

All submissions must be made in English. Interested entities that meet the eligibility criteria are required to complete and submit the RfP Application form and provide the information and supporting documents indicated in the form. Proposal applications must be submitted through the online Application Form.
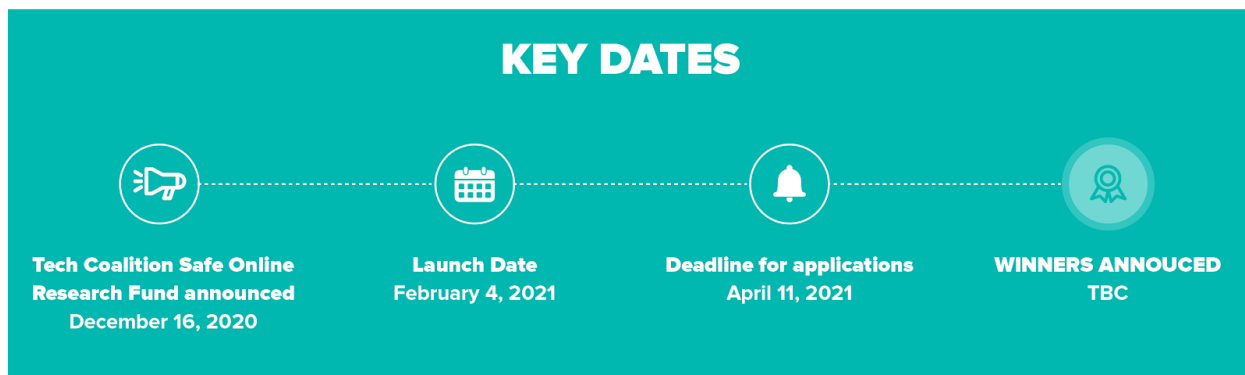
Proposals will be reviewed after the close of the call. The last day for submissions of applications is **11 APRIL 2021 MIDNIGHT EST**.

Only shortlisted applicants will be contacted and may be requested to provide additional clarification, as applicable. End Violence may come back to applicants with feedback and/or requests to reshape or rescope their proposal if needed.

If you have any questions about the Request for Proposals, please submit questions through this FAQ FORM. Answers to all questions submitted will be shared publicly.

IV.   Timeline & Dates

KEY DATES

Tech Coalition Safe Online Research Fund announced
December 16, 2020

Launch Date
February 4, 2021

Deadline for applications
April 11, 2021

WINNERS ANNOUCED
TBC

V.   Terms & Conditions

Please read these terms carefully before proceeding.

● By submitting this proposal, you are authorising End Violence and the Advisory Group to evaluate the proposal for a potential award, and you agree to the terms herein.
● You agree and acknowledge that personal data submitted as part of the proposal, including name, mailing address, phone number, and email address of you and other named researchers in the proposal may be collected, processed, stored and otherwise used by End Violence for the purposes of administering the website, reporting to donors and evaluating the contents of the proposal.
● You acknowledge that neither party is obligated to enter into any official agreement as a result of the proposal submission, End Violence is under no obligation to review or consider the proposal, and neither party acquires any intellectual property rights as a result of submitting the proposal. End Violence reserves the right to withdraw at any time and the applicant agrees to not take any action to bring End Violence into disrepute.
● Applicants represent and warrant that they have authority to submit a proposal in connection with this RFP and grant the rights set forth herein on behalf of their organisation. Any problems that arise related to IP or data privacy are solely the responsibility of the applicant.
● A sample grant confirmation letter with its legal stipulations and conditions is available here for interested applicants.

VI.   Additional Information

Applications will be scored according to the following criteria:

Criteria	Specific Criteria	Score and Key Data Points

MANDATORY CRITERIA		
1. Legal registration	Registered as a legal entity (non-profit organisation, including research institutes and academic institutions, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international organisations).	Yes/No
2. Alignment with key areas of exploration	The proposed research addresses one or more of the four areas of exploration of the Tech Coalition Safe Online Fund's 2021 Open Call.	Yes/No
3. Safeguarding	The entity has a Safeguarding Policy[7] and procedures in place or is willing to develop a policy. *End Violence's Safeguarding Policy is available for all applicants to consult [here](#) on our website.*	Yes/No
4. Relevant prior experience	At minimum, the applicant has demonstrated relevant prior research experience and/or methodological expertise. *Qualifying criteria include at least 2 previous research outputs, such as journal articles, publications, Master or PhD thesis. To provide evidence of this criteria, you should include*	Yes/No

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[7] End Violence is committed to supporting organisations to improve their safeguarding capacity and practice. As part of this, we will ask all grantees to comply with all the applicable End Violence safeguarding requirements. Collaborators receiving less than 50% of the funds will answer questions around safeguarding. Collaborators receiving more than 50% of the funds, will be required to undergo a microassesment and due diligence similar to the grantee. The grantee is responsible for all issues that may arise with partners or contractors in regards to safeguarding.

	links or direct uploads of attachments.	
SCORING CRITERIA		
1. Relevance of research for tackling online CSEA	i. Alignment between problem described and proposed research ● Relevance for improving the technology industry, and related practitioner's capacity to prevent, deter and eradicate online CSEA	**20 Points** - Is the research addressing the defined problem areas? - How relevant is the research for the role of industry in understanding and fighting online CSEA?
2. Novelty & feasibility of the research	i. Generating innovative and useful research by: ● Developing new research; ● Expanding existing research; or ● Developing a new application / use case of existing research ii. Ensuring feasibility of the research and outputs ● Required data access in place including any necessary agreements ● The proposed research complies with existing and relevant regulatory frameworks - e.g. local/national laws and regulation - for data privacy and protection applicable to the work based on where the research is taking place, data is being	**25 Points** - Is the project developing / expanding existing research or solutions? OR - Is the research working on a new application / use case of existing research or solutions? - Is the research applicable to improving product and policy development in industry? - Are the necessary data access modalities and agreements in place to perform the research? - Does the proposed research comply with existing and relevant regulatory frameworks for data privacy and protection? - Is there a clear research ethics policy outlined and have the appropriate ethical reviews been completed?

	collected/stored and where the organisation is based (for example, if an organisation based in the UK or EU won the bid and was performing research on local communities, the research would have to be GDPR compliant) ● Evidence of ethical approval for their proposed project, such as approval from a university's ethics/institutional review board <u>or</u> when this is not available, a detailed description of their *ethics policy (e.g. embedding a [UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research](#) in the research design)*	
3. Applicability & inclusivity of research	i. Concrete outputs of the research ● The practical applications, especially for technology industry, of outputs are clearly described and are feasible and actionable in how they impact understanding, preventing and combating online CSEA ● Producing open access research and outputs * ii. Representation of traditionally underrepresented groups in the research ● Describe implications of the work for vulnerable groups	**25 Points** - Are the projected outputs and impacts of the research sustainable? - Will / can the research be widely shared in the field (at local, national and/or global levels) to ensure maximum reach to different audiences (i.e. making it accessible, briefings on key findings, etc.)? Are these plans realistic? OR - If outputs cannot be widely shared due to sensitivity of research, is the impact clear for specific stakeholders?

	of children and how underrepresented geographies or populations (BIPOC[8], LGBTQI+[9], children out of school (traditionally or now due to Covid), children living in poverty, children with special education needs and disabilities, and those with relevant lived experience including survivors of online CSEA) and age and gender-disaggregation, i.e. sex and/or gender analysis, are taken into account in the research and may have different experiences with platforms • Describe considerations of cross-cultural and context-specific approaches	- How does the research address and include vulnerable groups, heterogeneity of childhoods, and unique interactions by different groups with different platforms? - How does the research consider cross-cultural and context-specific approaches for diverse populations and geographies? - Is the research project expected to result in actionable insights that can impact understanding, preventing and fighting online CSEA in its outputs?
4. Suitability of the team to implement the project	i. Alignment of team members' proficiency and experience with skills and time commitment needed to implement the research ii. Team is diverse, including across gender or underrepresented groups iii. Team is primarily composed of individuals with direct local knowledge and connections to the country where the research is being performed. We encourage proposals with researchers from	**20 Points** - Does the team have the right skills and experience to perform the research? - Is there gender and other diversity in the leadership and research team? Does the team include members of traditionally underrepresented groups? - Is the team from the country/countries where the research is being developed? If not, does the

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[8] Black, Indigenous and People of Color
[9] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex

	diverse contexts, countries and cultures as well as applications with representation from or inclusion of Global South countries, underrepresented populations such as BIPOC[10], LGBTQI+[11], people with disabilities, and those with relevant lived experience including survivors of online CSEA iv. Existence of key advisors filling team's expertise gaps v. Existence of relevant partners	team have strong local networks showing in-depth understanding of the context required for achieving effective research outputs? - If skills are missing in the core team, do advisors help fill the gaps? Is this enough? - Does the entity have partnerships in place that they need for successful completion of the research and translation to recommendations/ applications?
5. Alignment between budget ask and project goals	i. Budget is within the range of $20,000-$250,000. ii. Matching of overall budget ask for End Violence investment with main objectives of the project ** iii. Balance of funding sources: entity's own contribution to the research project (human, capital, assets) and other investments	**10 Points** - Is the budget ask consistent with the cost of conducting this research? If the ask is insufficient for conducting the project proposed, does the team have enough resources or partners to cover gaps?
TOTAL SCORE		**100 Points**

* All intellectual property and other proprietary rights including, but not limited to, patents, copyrights, and trademarks, with regard to products, processes, inventions, ideas, know-how, or documents and other materials which the Grantee develops using the Grant will be managed in a way that maximises public accessibility and allows the broadest possible use. End Violence and the TC encourage research projects that are open access, where appropriate to the

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[10] Black, Indigenous and People of Color

[11] Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex

research and governed by the necessary data and ethical frameworks. If this is not possible given the sensitivity of this research area, please elaborate why in the proposal.

*** End Violence may come back to applicants with feedback and/or requests to reshape or rescope their proposal if needed.*

More background:

Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children

The End Violence Partnership is a public-private partnership launched by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2016 to accelerate progress towards Sustainable Development Goal 16.2: ending all forms of violence against children by 2030. End Violence comprises 450+ partners, including governments, civil society organisations, United Nations agencies, the private sector and research institutions, and acts as a global platform for advocacy, evidence-based action, and investments to end all forms of violence against children.

Through its Safe Online work, End Violence provides funding, policy and advocacy guidance, and coalition-building to significantly advance national, regional and global efforts to prevent and respond to online CSEA. In 2020, End Violence's Safe Online investment portfolio reached US$45 million in grants to projects achieving tangible results in nearly 70 countries.

The Safe Online's grant portfolio as of December 2020 can be found here.

The Technology Coalition

The Technology Coalition (TC) was formed in 2006 when industry leaders came together to fight online child sexual exploitation and abuse. TC believes that by working together, they can have a greater impact combating these horrific crimes than working alone.

The TC brings together companies across the technology industry. Together, TC members tackle risks to online child safety by sharing best practices, providing mentorship opportunities, and pushing coordinated efforts to improve the detection and reporting of sexual abuse imagery and other exploitative practices that put children at risk.