



**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS:  
MARCH 28, 2023**

**PERIOD OF PROPOSAL SUBMISSION ENDS:  
APRIL 25, 2023**

ABOUT PROPOSALS. The U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (hereafter “the Commission”) invites submission of proposals to provide a concise, one-time unclassified report on the censorship practices of the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

ABOUT THE COMMISSION. The Commission was established by Congress in 2000 to monitor and report to Congress on the national security implications of the bilateral trade and economic relationship between the United States and the People’s Republic of China. Further details about the Commission are available on its website at: [www.uscc.gov](http://www.uscc.gov).

The Commission solicits this research pursuant to its Congressional mandate (contained in P.L. 113-291, Section 1259B), which states, “The Commission ... shall investigate and report ... on...”

(J) The implications of restrictions on speech and access to information in the People’s Republic of China for its relations with the United States in economic and security policy, as well as any potential impact of media control by the People’s Republic of China on United States economic interests.

This report’s key research requirements are:

1. **Assess the nature and extent of censorship in China.**
  - a. Describe the objectives of China’s censorship regime and how these objectives have changed over the last 10 years. What tradeoffs does the CCP appear willing to make in tolerating some degree of criticism?
  - b. Describe the scale of China’s censorship apparatus, in terms of breadth of agencies and personnel involved as well as technical and financial requirements. How has this apparatus evolved over the past ten years, and what constraints does it face?
  - c. Briefly describe and categorize key issues that the Chinese government censors. In what areas, such as economic data provision, has China increased its censorship over the past ten years?

2. **Methods and technologies underpinning China’s censorship apparatus.**
  - a. To what degree does Chinese government “censorship” involve the removal of content the government regards as sensitive from the domestic information space as opposed to the saturation of the domestic information space with content the government wants the Chinese public to believe? Please address any information that exists about the coordinating efforts between government bodies responsible for censorship and propaganda. In the proposal, offerors should describe sources and intended methodology they would use to answer this question.
  - b. Assess the manner in which the Chinese government saturates the domestic information space with content it wants the Chinese public to believe. What proportion could be considered negative or divisive messaging?
  - c. What are the key technologies China uses to censor domestic internet traffic? Please address technologies used to control social media platforms and online gaming platforms.
  - d. Which of the technologies used by China’s censorship apparatus are produced by U.S. companies or derived from U.S. innovations?
  - e. How are China’s censors adapting to the technical work-arounds (such as VPNs) used by the citizenry to circumvent information controls?
  - f. How have China’s data governance and internet content provider regulatory regimes evolved to support the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) objectives in controlling the domestic information space?
3. **Analyze how the censorship apparatus operates in three case studies. Be sure to address whether there are any differences between the way China censors discussion of domestic political issues versus foreign policy issues.** (Note: Offerors should identify and justify potential case studies in their proposals, but once a proposal is selected, the cases highlighted in the report will be determined in coordination with the Commission.)
  - a. What topics does China seek to censor altogether? Under what circumstances does the Chinese government tolerate limited discussion of censored topics, or attempt to redefine the universally-accepted definitions of sensitive concepts, such as democracy and human rights?
  - b. What trends are evident in China’s censorship of sensitive domestic political concepts, issues, and events? Please address China’s censorship of specific events as well as abstract concepts. Specific examples of the former could include domestic crises (such as food safety scandals and the Tiananmen Square Massacre) and recurring high-profile CCP political events. The latter could include concepts such as human rights, freedom, and checks and balances.
  - c. What trends are evident in China’s censorship of foreign policy narratives, issues, and events? Please address censorship of China’s relations with the United States, relations with U.S. allies, and Russia’s war against Ukraine in your answer.

- d. What trends are evident in China’s censorship related to the implementation and subsequent rollback of the “Zero-COVID” policy?
4. **Implications for the United States.**
- a. How is censorship shaping domestic narratives in China toward the United States?
  - b. Is there a difference between the way China censors domestic narratives about the United States versus those about U.S. allies and partners?
  - c. Are technologies developed or marketed by U.S. firms aiding Chinese censorship?
  - d. How is China promoting censorship technologies and processes abroad, and where has it had the most success?
  - e. How is China attempting to influence the development of the internet and social media platforms to be more conducive to centralized monitoring and information suppression?

The report should include an **executive summary** of the report’s key findings; a list of **recommendations for Congress**; a **brief overview of the sources and analytic methodology used for the report**; and a **brief explanation of the scope and limitations of the report**.

Deliverables:

| <b>Task/Deliverable</b>  | <b>Due Date</b>   |
|--|---|
| 1. Kick off meeting with Commission                                      | Within 2 weeks of award of contract                                     |
| 2. Interim Progress Report (IPR) and supporting enclosures defined below | Within 5 weeks of award of contract                                     |
| 3. Draft Report  | 60 calendar days from award of contract                                 |
| 4. Final Report  | Within 20 working days of Commission acceptance of a final draft report |

Additional Requirements:

1. Prior to the award of any contract, the contractor must be registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM).
2. Once the Commission selects a contractor for this project, and a contract is signed, public notice of this may be made on the Commission’s website.
3. The Commission’s goal is to publish a report on China’s censorship practices. Once the Commission selects a contractor and a contract is signed, Commission staff will work with the contractor through the following deliverables and tasks:
  - a. **Kick-Off Meeting:** Commission staff will meet with the contractor for a “kick-off meeting” one to two weeks after the contract is awarded to discuss

- the project, Commission standards and expectations for contracted research, and any challenges anticipated by the contractor for this effort.
- b. **Interim Progress Report:** Within five weeks of the award of the contract, the contractor will submit an interim progress report on progress made and challenges encountered. The report should include a detailed report outline, a summary of initial findings and challenges, and a written sample of the work completed to date. Commission staff will review the deliverables with the contractor and provide feedback as needed to support the Draft Report.
  - c. **Draft Report:** A complete first draft of the report—not to exceed 50 pages of text—must be submitted to the Commission for review no later than 60 calendar days from the award of the contract. The Commission will assess the first draft of the report to ensure that it satisfactorily answers all key research requirements contained in the Request for Proposals (RFP), incorporates feedback on the interim progress report, employs a clear methodology, makes appropriate use of evidence, is well organized, is well written, and includes all required elements. The contractor, in their contract proposal, may propose a different time frame for submission of the draft report.
  - d. **Final Report:** The final report must be submitted within 20 working days of the Commission’s certification that it has accepted the final draft report and must respond to additional guidance the Commission issued in conjunction with that certification. The final report should be free of typographical errors and conform to the Chicago Manual of Style.
4. Upon receipt of all drafts, the Commission will inspect the document to ensure that it addresses all key research requirements, includes all sections required by the RFP and the contract, and to identify typographical errors and deviations from the Chicago Manual of Style guidelines. At the discretion of the Commission, if a draft contains excessive deficiencies, the Commission will return the draft to the contractor and request the contractor cure the draft deficiencies within five (5) working days (not counting weekends and Federal holidays). The contract shall be subject to termination if the Commission deems that the work is of unsatisfactory quality.
  5. As work on the report progresses, the Commission’s Research Director shall act as the Commission’s representative in monitoring the progress, quality, and responsiveness of the report to the major issues of concern identified in this Request for Proposals (RFP). The Research Director shall, on request to the contractor, be entitled to informal briefings on the status of the research work and to readings of the outline and draft in progress.
  6. At the Commission’s discretion, the report procured via this RFP may be posted on the Commission’s website.
  7. Each organization or individual responding to this request must warrant they will perform this work solely for the Commission, and the resulting report will not be shared with other parties without the prior written consent of the Commission.

8. The Commission expects contractors to identify all personnel working on the contract, and that there will not be any delegation of responsibilities to other parties without prior written approval of the Commission.
9. At the discretion and request of the Commission, the contractor shall, within a year after publication of the report, agree to participate in up to two (2) separate briefings, and up to one (1) public hearing, held by the Commission, of up to two (2) hours each in the Washington, DC area, supported by at least one (1) individual affiliated with the contractor identified as “key personnel.” This could include, but not necessarily be limited to, briefing the content of the research to Commissioners and Commission staff, appearing as witnesses at a public hearing held by the Commission, and briefing the content of the research to Members of Congress and/or their staff. No additional remuneration will be provided to the contractor for these briefings or a hearing. The Commission will make a good faith effort to schedule briefings and a hearing at times that are subject to mutual agreement.

Primary Selection Criteria:

1. The Commission will determine which organization or individual responding to this request will be awarded the contract based on a comprehensive “best value” analysis of the proposals received, to include costs, technical value, and ability to complete the work satisfactorily and on time, and past performance with the Commission, if applicable.
2. The primary weighting criterion in selection shall be the assessed qualifications and ability of an organization or individual to address the fundamental research points enunciated above (“key research requirements”).
3. The cost and amount of time necessary to complete the report will also be considered as criteria in the selection process.
4. The Commission is a legislative advisory committee not subject to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR).

Proposal submissions should include:

1. A description of the research methodology the offeror proposes to employ. In describing methodology, the submission should provide detailed descriptions of the sources and methods that will be used to research the report’s topic and the extent to which Chinese language sources, if any, and other primary materials will be used. Offerors should endeavor to address each key research requirement individually in describing their intended research approach.
2. A statement of the offeror’s relevant qualifications to satisfy the terms of this RFP. Curricula vitae for personnel intended to work on the project are required, but may be included in a separate attachment.

3. Identification of the principal researchers who will be responsible for the preparation of the report. It is understood that the designation of the researchers is a critical element of the proposal, and any changes regarding which individuals will be involved in the report's preparation must be approved by the Commission in advance and in writing.
4. A list of any entities for whom the offeror has conducted research or provided consulting services in the past as well as a disclosure regarding whether the offeror is presently receiving compensation, directly or indirectly, from a foreign government, foreign corporation, foreign political party, foreign individual, or other foreign entity. The Commission understands you may be limited in providing such information by confidentiality agreements. This information may be included in a separate attachment.
5. For offerors who are already registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM), the offeror's Unique Entity ID (UEI). For offerors who are not already registered in the SAM, the offeror's responses to FAR 52.204-24, Representation Regarding Certain Telecommunications and Video Surveillance Services or Equipment (November 2021) available at: [https://www.acquisition.gov/far/52.204-24#FAR\\_52\\_204\\_24](https://www.acquisition.gov/far/52.204-24#FAR_52_204_24) and to FAR 52.204-26, Covered Telecommunications Equipment or Services—Representation (October 2020) available at: [https://www.acquisition.gov/far/52.204-26#FAR\\_52\\_204\\_26](https://www.acquisition.gov/far/52.204-26#FAR_52_204_26).
6. An estimate of the time the offeror will need to complete the required work.
7. The Firm-Fixed Price the offeror will charge to the Commission to complete the work set forth in this RFP.
8. The proposal shall not exceed ten (10) pages and may be shorter.

Organizations and individuals wishing to submit a proposal in response to this RFP must ensure that the response arrives at the location noted below by **5:30pm (ET) on April 25 2023**, or it will not be accepted or considered. Electronic submissions are acceptable.

Proposals, as well as inquiries or any other correspondence related to this matter, should be directed to:

Anastasya Lloyd-Damnjanovic  
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U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission  
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