

Bellingcat Global Hackathon Participant Guide

March 20, 2023

This guide contains all the information you'll need before participating in Bellingcat's Global Hackathon.

April 21-23, 2023 (inclusive)

The goal of the Hackathon is to increase the accessibility of software tools used in digital investigations. This can be done either by contributing to an existing tool, developing an easy-to-use interface for an existing tool or developing a new tool. See our [What is a Digital Investigation Tool](#) document for more info.

SCHEDULE

Friday, April 21

[16.00 CET](#) - European kickoff session (will be recorded)

[17.00 PST](#) - American kickoff session (will be recorded)

You can start working anytime, but we try to accommodate different time zones into the event.

Saturday, April 22

On Saturday we will allocate blocks of time from which you can schedule up to two talks with staff in case you want to discuss your ideas or ask for advice.

Sunday, April 23

[07:00 PST/16:00 CET](#) - Deadline for submissions

We will send the link long before and you can submit when ready

[07:00 PST/16:00 CET to 11:00 PST/20:00 CET](#) - Judging

Judges will evaluate the projects, which Bellingcat staff will also check for plagiarism or false claims about the tool and its capabilities

[11:00 PST/20:00 CET to 11:30 PST/20:30 CET](#) - Award announcements. Participants will have time to present their tools if they wish to.

After April 23

We will send out prizes and goodies, and liaise with participants about including some of their projects in Bellingcat's GitHub and further developing their tools if interested.

Deliverables

When the hackathons are over, you should have prepared and submitted the following deliverables in our submissions form (you will get the link during the event):

1. A GitHub repository (or a fork of an existing GitHub repository) with
 - a. Your code and analysis
 - b. A README that contains information on your project, based on [our template](#)
 - c. An open source software licence from this list: [MIT](#), [Apache 2.0](#), [GNU GPL 2.0 or 3.0](#), [BSD-3](#)
2. A screen recording video (maximum three minutes), where you demo how your project works and what it does

Do note that the judges will not evaluate the aesthetics or visual appeal of your submissions. At this stage, we're interested in the technical content of your proposed tool.

After both hackathons are over we plan to write an article about some of the projects developed. By participating you agree that your project might be profiled. We'll also ask if you're interested in your tool being included in [Bellingcat's GitHub](#) organisation.

Grading and Prizes

See our [Grading Rubric](#) for more information about requirements and grading criteria. Don't forget to read out [What is a Digital Investigation Tool](#) guide.

Code of Conduct

We want the hackathon to be a moment where you can meet new people, exchange ideas and learn in a mutually supportive environment. Please be mindful of how you treat others and know we have a zero tolerance policy towards verbal abuse or trolling directed at any of the other participants, teams or members of staff. See our [code of conduct](#) for more information.

A Few Tools to Inspire You

- [EPIEOS](#): perform reverse email search to find accounts across many platforms that are registered to a given email address. Browser interface for [holehe](#) command-line tool.
- [blackbird](#): search more than 500 websites for a username. Browser interface for [blackbird](#) command-line tool.
- [plane-notify](#): track the movements of a specific plane
- [Socnet Dynamic Image Search](#): (Bellingcat hackathon winning project) search for images shared by VKontakte accounts in a social network
- [osm-finder](#): (Bellingcat hackathon winning project) create OpenStreetMap queries based on distances and angles of real-world objects

For more information about the tool needs we've identified among the open source researcher community, read the results of our recent survey [here](#) and read our articles on submissions for our [first](#) and [second](#) hackathons.

Advice

Throughout the event you will be able to chat with Bellingcat staff to ask questions and discuss your ideas. Still, here are some dos and don'ts which may help you prepare for the hackathon:

Do's

- **Do check online to see if your idea has not been implemented already** - we will check this ourselves; if we find it elsewhere online it may impact your *Imagination* score.
- **Do focus on a functional prototype** - avoid projects that consist only of mockups and visuals, although we also leave a lot of space if you need to mock parts of your code or data in order to materialise your ideas
- **Do consider how a new user will interact with your tool** - try to avoid overly complicated interfaces, keep it simple
- **Do try to create a hosted instance of your tool (if possible)** - since a big motivation for this hackathon is making it easy for non-programmers to use software tools, having a version of your tool that people (and judges) can try out is very helpful. Talk to an organiser for more information or to get your hosting costs reimbursed.
- **Do try to use only tools that others have access to too** - this is not a show stopper but ideally your project minimises the number of proprietary or non open source software and tools
- **Do talk to the staff when you need it** - we are here to help you about rules, ideas and technical questions
- **Do take time to rest**

Don'ts

- **Don't spend too much time designing the perfect software architecture** - you only have a weekend to work on this, focus on getting a functional prototype working
- **Don't submit things after the deadline** - this one is self-explanatory. We need to hold everybody to the same standard to ensure your tools are judged fairly.

Apply at <https://www.bellingcat.com/april-hackathon-announcement-mar-2023> and Happy Hacking!