LIFEAFTERHATE

EXITUSA

Preventing Violent Radicalization and Supporting the De-Radicalization Process via Targeted Online and Offline Individualized Interventions

Life After Hate, Inc.

Managing Intervention Activities

I. Executive Summary

For the FY2016 Countering Violent Extremism Grant Program, Life After Hate, Inc., in partnership with a consortium composed of Moonshot CVE, Affinis Labs, Southern Poverty Law Center and Muflehun, proposes to identify those at risk of violent radicalization, craft individualized interventions, and engage in peer-to-peer messaging with at-risk users. More specifically, we will seamlessly integrate online interventions into community-based programs and social support through a data-driven, proactive approach, which can be replicated and applied by community-based intervention programs operating across the nation.

The proposed cost for the federal government for the activities included within the proposal is $478,350. Throughout the period of performance, we intend to identify a pool of at least 200 candidates for intervention, conducting an analysis of the online behaviors of each candidate to select those viable for outreach. Life After Hate and Muflehun will share outreach responsibilities equally.

Our proposed project is unique in that its geographic reach is nationwide through combining the online engagement with locally based coalitions who can employ community-based intervention activities. Through utilizing Moonshot CVE's *Digital Shepherds* technology, we are able to automate the process of identifying individuals at risk of radicalization, anywhere in the country, and assign each user a risk score. Once verified by a human analyst those deemed to be at risk and in need of outreach will be engaged with via social media, by Life After Hate's and Muflehun's Online Intervention Providers (OIPs) who can message them directly to intervene, engage in dialogue with the insight of local atmospherics, and, ultimately, change their minds. The online world can offer prospects for a much more robust risk assessment, and this project will develop the capacity of US community-based intervention programs to trial online assessment of those at-risk, and engagement. We believe that by substantively and specifically measuring the impact of this program, we will be able to prove that our approach provides a local response to a global challenge.

II. Technical Merit

When it comes to understanding the motivations that lead an individual to radicalize to violence, and the countering impetus to disengage and de-radicalize, Life After Hate's combined experiences are unparalleled; we understand that there is not a single activity that will support the disengagement and de-radicalization of all extremists. Disengaging from a hate group, or a violent ideology, is a multi-staged and demanding task - both for the individual and the interventionist. Founded and operated by former hate group members, who have disengaged and re-entered society successfully, Life After Hate provides support to individuals who are looking to leave racism and violent extremism behind. **Life After Hate, in partnership with a consortium constructed to explore the viability and efficacy of online and offline engagement with supporters and sympathizers of far-right extremism and Jihadism, proposes to identify and interrupt efforts to recruit and radicalize within these two contexts in the online space.** In order to achieve the goals of the Department of Homeland Security, the consortium will:

1. ***Identify those at risk of radicalization.*** Utilizing Moonshot CVE's *Digital Shepherds* technology, developed in partnership with the United Kingdom Home Office and Affinis Labs, our consortium has the capability to automate the process of identifying individuals at risk of radicalization, assessing vulnerability against databases of indicators of risk, and assigning each user a risk score.
2. ***Provide tailored online intervention through local partners within the consortium.*** Given the expertise regarding the radicalization process within our consortium, we will be able to craft individualized interventions based on the input received in stage one of the program and engage in peer-to-peer messaging with at-risk users.

We believe that by substantively and specifically measuring the impact of this program, we will be able to prove how and why our community-based interventions are sustainable and replicable for a variety of radical movements. The project will additionally allow for an analysis of metadata on the online behaviors of individuals deemed to be at-risk of far-right extremism and Jihadism.

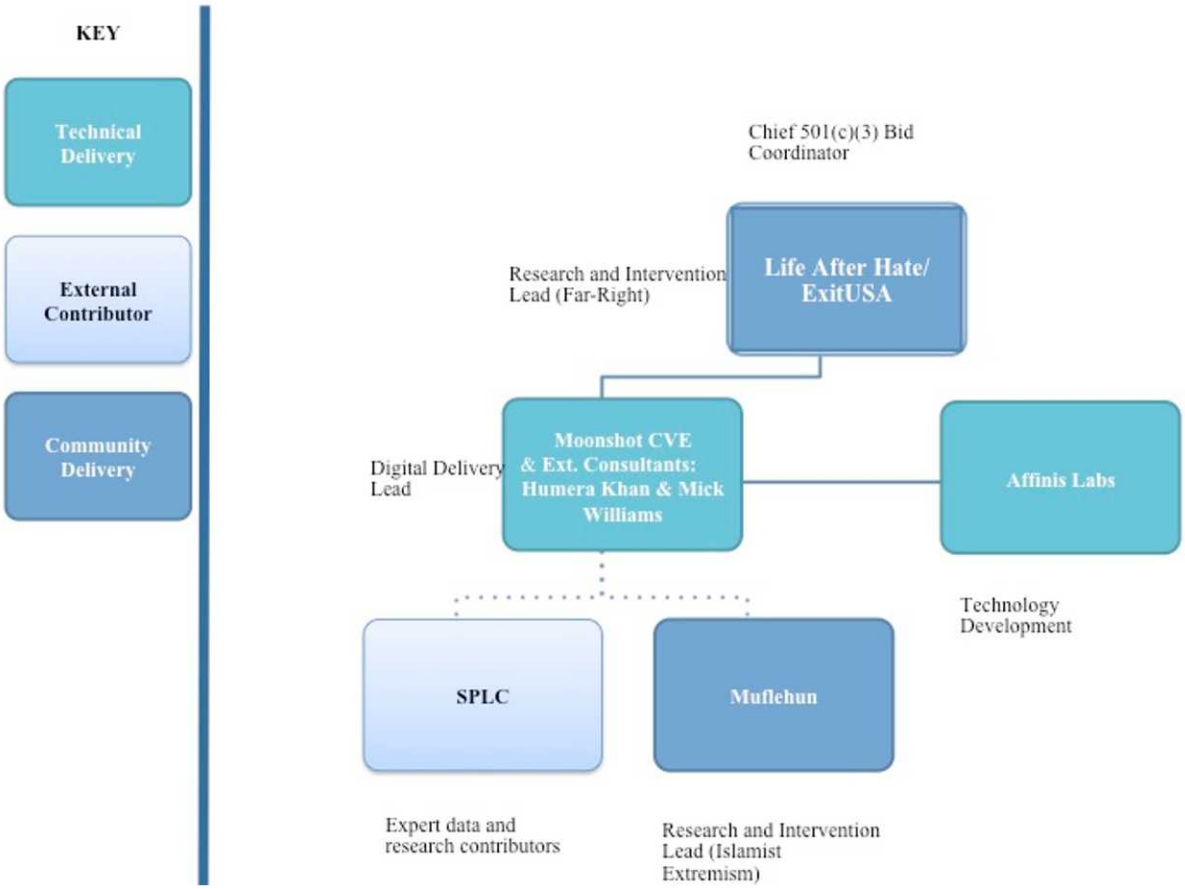
Since Life After Hate's inception in 2009, and through implementing its extremist "off-ramping" program ExitUSA, we have found that in order to multiply our impact, we must exponentially further our reach and our ability to identify at-risk individuals. By forming a consortium of leading experts through each stage of this program, we have provided an insight into countering violent extremism that we would not be able to achieve singularly, from identification through to intervention delivery. The consortium structure and roles will be broken down as follows:

Consortium Member	Roles and Responsibilities
Life After Hate	❖ Provide management and administration for grant activities ❖ Provide expert insight into issues surrounding the far-right, including experience of the radicalization process, narratives, structure and operations of far-right groups, and understanding of current far-right climate. ❖ Deliver peer-to-peer messaging methodology, focused on far-right users.
Moonshot CVE	❖ Develop and tailor *Digital Shepherds* software to the American context. ❖ Work with trusted experts Humera Khan to inform strategy, development of approaches, understanding of audiences, and Mick Williams to provide semi-independent advising on KPIs, monitoring and evaluation.
Affinis Labs	❖ Offer expert insight into design & delivery of grassroots collaboration and community engagement. ❖ Provide technical development to tailor software to American context.
Muflehun	❖ Play an unfunded role providing expert insight into issues surrounding Jihadism, including experience of the radicalization process, narratives, structure and operations of Jihadist movements. ❖ Deliver peer-to-peer messaging methodology, focused on Jihadist users.
Southern Poverty Law Center	❖ Play an unfunded role contributing over 40 years of data on far-right extremism in the United States, this data will be vital to the identification process.

Our consortium has found that there is a crucial piece missing in efforts to counter recruitment to extremist groups; the proactive utilization of peer-to-peer messaging systems online to engage with those expressing extremist sympathies. In order to be effective and to truly mirror extremist recruitment efforts, online interventions need to be seamlessly integrated into community-based programs and social support. More specifically, online interventions must become localized.

Moonshot CVE's *Digital Shepherds* technology, developed in partnership with the UK Home Office and Affinis Labs, semi-automates the process of identification of at-risk users on Facebook, while respecting civil rights liberties. The software uses publicly available data posted on Facebook to identify individuals at risk of falling into the orbit of extremist organizations. Each individual is assigned a risk score based on a unique risk assessment algorithm which weights variables such as identification with violent extremist ideology, frequency and depth of engagement, connectivity and environment of each user. For this project, once identified by *Digital Shepherds*, and verified by a human analyst those deemed to be at risk and in need of outreach will be engaged with via social media, by Life After Hate's and Muflehun's Online Intervention Providers (OIPs) who can message them directly to intervene, engage in dialogue and, ultimately, change their minds. As locally based coalitions, Life After Hate and Muflehun provide the capacity to address the way in which these online interventions streamline into a larger community-based intervention program. This partnership is symbiotic - the online intervention is backed up by a local support network, and the local support network is provided a nationwide reach it would not otherwise have via the online intervention. Critically, those receiving messages of this nature are under no obligation to accept a message request or to respond, so ultimately once the initial message has been sent, the engagement process becomes voluntary.

The below organizational chart further highlights the roles of each of the consortium members in implementing this project:



With funding from the Department of Homeland Security, our consortium proposes to implement activities that fall within five stages, outlined below:

- ***Stage 1: Set Up***

  This stage will involve setting up the *Digital Shepherds* software and developing the technical capabilities and back-end of the program for application in a US context.

- ***Stage 2: Workshopping***

  Consortium partners will workshop a series of online identifiers (including keywords, links, images and groups) to build a bespoke database of US-specific far-right and Jihadist extremist risk factors online. A custom risk rating system (for online identifiers) and algorithm to assign each Facebook user a risk rating will be developed specific to the US context. Offline approaches will also be mapped in order to gauge other opportunities for insight into best practices, and scope the possibility of integration with pre-existing offline

support structures. In this stage, we will also begin to prepare a core group of OIPs to engage in online messaging.

- ***Stage 3: Vulnerability Mapping***

The consortium will run *Digital Shepherds* software to identify long-lists of at-risk users. These long-lists will be filtered into short lists through a human verification process, identifying a cohort of US residents at risk of Jihadist and far-right radicalization, throughout the country. Each individual will be assigned a risk rating by *Digital Shepherds* unique risk assessment algorithm, and candidates for intervention will be selected on the basis of risk level and possibility for long-term localized engagement.

- ***Stage 4: Intervention Delivery***

OIPs will engage in peer-to-peer messaging with the selected cohort of at-risk individuals directly on social media. The methodology for messaging will build on the results of the pilot, focusing on highly personalized messaging and offers of assistance.

- ***Stage 5: Post-Delivery***

Monitoring and evaluation will be carried out to assess efficacy of messaging to refine methodology for scaling up and expansion, and inform future training for OIPs. We will also complete reports, future planning and impact measurement. Finally, in this stage, we will scope a formalized referral process to allow online conversations to be continued offline where appropriate and needed, and high-risk cases to be referred to authorities.

We believe that this project provides a unique capability: a data-driven, proactive approach which can be replicated and applied by community-based intervention programs operating across the nation. Most community-based programs struggle to identify those in the community who may be at risk but don't provide obvious clues. The online world can offer prospects for a much more robust risk assessment, and this project will develop the capacity of US community-based intervention programs to trial online assessment of those at-risk, and engagement.

III. Needs Analysis

The intricacies that lead an individual along the spectrum from radical thoughts to violent extremism are as unique as each individual. However, there is a growing body of evidence that shows commonalities between those that turn their thoughts to violence. Researchers have been able to identify both the environments that propel radical ideologies, as well as non-ideological risk factors. Understanding these sociological, economic, cultural and political risk factors is imperative to developing appropriate counter- extremism strategies, especially with regard to multi-disciplinary community engagement, or "off-ramping," and extremist recruitment prevention and disengagement strategies. Analyzing this need is potentially the most critical, as it supports the prevention of radicalization to violence.

Recent studies have shown that while political and cultural environment obviously play a role in leading individuals to violent extremism, additional non-ideological risk factors are commonly found amongst those involved with violent extremist groups. The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) has identified that the following are important motivations in joining these types of groups and turning to violence:

- Childhood trauma. In the study, 45 percent of those interviewed reported being the victim of childhood physical abuse while 21 percent reported being the victim of childhood sexual abuse; 46 percent of those interviewed reported being neglected as a child. In addition to childhood maltreatment, interview subjects also reported a range of other traumatic experiences including: parental incarceration (29%); parental abandonment (31%); and, family substance abuse (49%). START found these results to be statistically significant.
- Mental health issues. Almost two-thirds of interview subjects reported attempting suicide and/or seriously considering suicide. 57% of the sample reported experiencing mental health problems either preceding or during their extremist involvement. 59% reported a family history of mental health problems.

- High risk behaviors. 72% of subjects reported having problems with alcohol and/or illegal drugs. 58% of subjects reported truancy while 54% of the subjects reported academic failure in terms of either being expelled from school or dropping out.[1]

In order to combat this combination of individual internal tensions paired with environmental aspects, any proposed program and intervention activity must address the individual, the environment, and also the group.

We know that extremists themselves are adept at preying on the above vulnerabilities to identify those at-risk and recruit them. They do not simply produce and disseminate propaganda and then move straight to offline recruitment, they utilize peer-to-peer messaging applications contained within social media platforms to engage in direct personal contact with potential recruits to their cause. These online conversations sometimes completely displace offline recruitment.

Although extremists have thus far been adept at utilizing these tools, this shift to the online world also presents an opportunity for intervention. Whereas the radicalization process used to be a highly difficult to detect, the rise of social media means that those flirting with extremist ideas leave publically accessible clues as to the process they are undergoing; Facebook groups joined, Twitter accounts followed and YouTube videos shared. Despite this, systems designed to identify and engage with those at risk of falling into the orbit of violent groups often rely too heavily on offline interactions and take a reactive rather than a proactive approach.

We believe that creating a cost efficient and effective program that is able to address all of these factors requires pairing proactive identification of and engagement with individuals at-risk *online*, where individuals leave a data trail behind them in the radicalization process, with locally based coalitions who can engage in community-based intervention activities.

As the Global Counterterrorism Forum has identified, "The more aware communities are of potential threats to their security, the more empowered they are to be resilient against it and the

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[1] National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. (2015). Trauma as a Precursor to Violent Extremism: How non-ideological factors can influence joining an extremist group. Available from: https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_CSTAB_TraumaAsPrecursortoViolentExtremism_April2015.pdf

better prepared they can be to counter threats themselves. Community engagement and community-oriented policing initiatives should be tactfully and carefully tailored to the local conditions cultures, as well as every State's legal system…"[2] The key to implementation is an intimate understanding of the local requirements and a tailored approach to any activity. From our work, and our own experiences, we know that the business of changing minds is never "one size fits all." To achieve intractable change, yet effective and sustainable change, in places that are not always accessible, requires the flexibility and insight of local expertise.

By using Moonshot CVE's *Digital Shepherds* technology, we will have access to substantial data about each individual with whom our Online Intervention Providers (OIPs) will engage, allowing every intervention to be informed by data and tailored appropriately. The methodology of *Digital Shepherds* draws on research into online consumer behavior, interview and elicitation techniques, and studies of online and offline extremist behavior.

Our consortium provides us with the ability to pair this detailed insight with the reach of online engagement and local expertise. To ensure that we create effective individualized interventions, we must first understand the gaps in expertise and capability amongst locally based coalitions engaging in intervention activities. Life After Hate has a unique understanding of the expertise, capability, and knowledge held among locally based coalitions in intervention activities. Since 2009, we have been working with individuals who wish to leave a life of hate and violence and helping other organizations seek knowledge and insight on the roots of intolerance and extremism. As the only organization in North America founded by "Formers" and one of three organizations focusing on the far-right, we not only have this unique understanding, we also bring a credibility to our work that is unparalleled. When trying to engage in intervention activities, this credibility provides us with access to local leaders, parents, employers, social service providers, and even members of extremist organizations. Our partner Muflehun offers CVE-specific and CVE-relevant programs and services in several countries covering the Countering Violent Extremism landscape. Muflehun's holistic approach covers Prevention,

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[2] Global Counterterrorism Forum. Good practices on community engagement and community-oriented policing as tools to counter violent extremism. Available from: https://www.thegctf.org/documents/10162/159885/13Aug09_EN_Good+Practices+on+Community+Engagement+and+Community-Oriented+Policing.pdf

Intervention, Interdiction and Re-entry needs for particular geographies, within the policy & legislative context. Muflehun has a wealth of experience dealing directly with extremists online, with Muflehun staff having engaged directly with some of the best known extremists on twitter, such as @mujaahid4life.

We have already seen the success of the proposed approach for this project. A pilot study[3] carried out during the first half of 2015 among a target group of 160 individuals, half at risk of falling into the orbit of the violent right-wing extremism (based in the US), and half at risk of falling into the orbit of Jihadist groups (based in the UK), demonstrated that the practice of reaching out directly to those expressing extremist sentiment holds great potential. This pilot utilized former extremists in the US (Life After Hate) and the United Kingdom (Home Office approved Channel Intervention Providers), and saw 59% of those contacted responding directly or demonstrating a shift in behavior.

Dr. Mick Williams, a former Social psychologist at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, will oversee the monitoring and evaluation for this project. Acting with autonomy within the project team, Dr. Williams will ensure that the process for workshopping risk factors and weighting profiles meets the highest scientific standards and that all metrics are independently verified. For this project, we propose to evaluate our success on a number of key metrics, including but not limited to:

- Number of 'at risk' profiles identified
- Proportion of those profiles identified by the *Digital Shepherds* tool that were subsequently verified by human analysts
- Number of messages sent
- Number of messages seen
- Number of responses received
- Tone and content of response
- Proportion of cases that led to sustained online engagement

[3] Frenett and Dow. (2015). One to One Online Interventions - A Pilot CVE Methodology. Curtin University and ISD.

- Proportion of cases that led to sustained offline engagement
- Success of online intervention's integration with authorities and any existing referral processes.

Our consortium will work with the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that our measurement of progress and success is in line with the goals and objectives of the FY2016 Countering Violent Extremism Grant Program.

IV. Expertise

Life After Hate (LAH) was initiated in 2009 by early pioneers and former influential leaders of the radicalized American neo-Nazi and skinhead movements. Through LAH's signature program, ExitUSA, we use a variety of strategies, including public awareness campaigns, individualized education and job training programs, and leveraging strategic community partnerships to help individuals get their life back on track and on their way to making positive contributions to society. Inspired by EXIT Sweden, the team at LAH/ExitUSA all have at least five years experience working with people seeking to transform and disengage from extremist groups. Community based interventions and the use of formers have been studied and found to be very useful and effective. With our partners, and in building upon our own capacity, we will ensure all required financial and regulatory components to manage this grant are in place.

Our partner Moonshot CVE designs new methodologies and technologies to enhance the capacity of its clients to respond effectively to violent extremism. Moonshot brings fresh thinking and decades of experience from across sectors to push new boundaries. Their work ranges from software development and digital capacity building, to leading global counter-messaging campaigns. Key partners include the UK Home Office, Public Safety Canada, Jigsaw (formerly Google Ideas), and the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund.

Affinis Labs is a startup accelerator based in Washington DC, that helps grow innovative new companies that leverage lucrative market opportunities while providing social benefits to the markets they serve. They organize hackathons, incubate startups, and raise private equity for a unique ecosystem of innovation.

Our unfunded partners Muflehun and Southern Poverty Law Center also provide a depth of experience and knowledge for this project. Muflehun has extensive experience in directly countering extremist narratives; Muflehun's Viral Peace initiative has been implemented in seven countries. SPLC has committed to contributing over 40 years of data on far-right extremism in the United States, this data will be vital to the identification process.

V. Budget Detail and Narrative

The below budget demonstrates costs for the 24 month performance period, December 1, 2016 - November 30, 2018.

Budget Category	**Federal Request**	**Non-Federal Amounts**	**Total**
A. Personnel	$77,400	$0	$77,400
B. Fringe Benefits	$19,350	$0	$19,350
C. Travel	$15,000	$0	$15,000
D. Equipment	$0	$0	$0
E. Supplies	$0	$0	$0
F. Construction	$0	$0	$0
G. Consultants/Contracts	$266,600	$0	$266,600
H. Other	$100,000	$0	$100,000
Total Direct Costs	$478,350	$0	$478,350
I. Indirect Costs	$0	$0	$0
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS	**$478,350**	**$0**	**$478,350**

A. Personnel

Life After Hate ExitUSA Director (to be hired) @ 10% FTE LAH's Director will provide oversight of grant activities and dedicated support staff	**$9,600 for two years**
Life After Hate Manager (to be hired) @ 25% FTE Senior Interventionist and supervision	**$30,000 for two years**
Life After Hate Analyst (to be hired) @ 25% FTE Data collection and initiating interventions.	**$37,800 for two years**

B. Fringe Benefits

Fringe Benefits - 25% Fringe benefits include FICA, health care insurance, life and disability insurance, retirement program benefits, and paid time office. Fringe benefits are pooled at the end of each month and allocated based on time and effort spent on a given program	**$19,350 for two years**

C. Travel

Kick off meeting and end of project meeting for relevant consultants (including 2 x Life After Hate staff international travel, subject to prior approval from Contracting Officer)	**$7,500 per trip, $15,000 for two years**

G. Consultants/Contracts

Moonshot CVE	**$166,600 for two years**
Director @ 10% FTE Provide oversight of delivery of digital aspects of project and dedicated project staff	*$28,800*
Manager @ 25% FTE Lead on delivery of Digital Shepherds technology	*$30,000*
Analyst @ 25% FTE Analytical support for delivering of Digital Shepherds technology and intervention activities	*$21,000*
Humera Khan Lead on Jihadist expertise for Digital Shepherds and intervention activities	*$76,800*
Mick Williams Oversee monitoring and evaluation	*$10,000*
Affinis Labs Technical development and delivery	**$100,000 for two years**

H. Other Direct Costs

Intervention costs, ten cases Ongoing one to one intervention, support, and related activities	**$100,000 for two years**
Far Right Case (x5)	*$10,000 per case*
Jihadist Case (x5)	*$10,000 per case*

Annex One: Glossary

For the purposes of this proposal, definitions are as follows:

- "De-Radicalization": To remove one's self, temporarily, from an extremist or radicalized environment or influence, with the goal of eventually permanently de-radicalizing from all extremist activities, influence, and/or ideologies. Once an individual has become de-radicalized fully from all extremist influence and activity, he or she becomes "disengaged."
- "Disengagement": The status of an individual's complete disconnection from all extremist activities, influence, and/or ideologies. The individual may or may not be contributing positively to society, depending on the aftercare resources available to the individual, and the individual's willingness to participate
- "Former": An individual who has completely de-radicalized and disengaged from all extremist activities, influence, and/or ideologies. Often times, Formers are actively working to share their stories of transformation and can be useful bridge builders in the "off-ramping," or intervention process. Life After Hate is a nonprofit run completely by Formers, which helps at-risk individuals exit from violent extremism.
- "Off-Ramping": a process of intervention and aftercare of an individual at-risk of violent extremism

Annex Two: Letters of Support

Southern Poverty Law Center

Muflehun

SPLC Southern Poverty Law Center

Fighting Hate
Teaching Tolerance
Seeking Justice

Southern Poverty Law Center
400 Washington Avenue
Montgomery, AL 36104
334.956.8200
www.splcenter.org

August 26, 2016

Department of Homeland Security - FEMA
FY 2016 Countering Violent Extremism Grants
Funding Opportunity Number: DHS-16-0CP-132-00-01

To whom it may concern,

This is a letter in support of the application by Life After Hate, in consortium with Moonshot CVE, to the Department of Homeland Security Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 CVE Grant Program.

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) agrees to give the consortium access to select data from SPLC's databases on right-wing extremist activity across the United States. This will inform the technical delivery of Moonshot CVE's *Micro Trends* and *Digital Shepherds* and help with the attendant counter-narrative and intervention work.

The provision of this data will ensure the consortium's work is informed by SPLC's extensive database of extremist activity that has been collected over the past 40 years.

Best,

Heidi Beirich, Ph.D.
Director, Intelligence Project

muflehun
Universal Values, Individual Responsibilities

August 30, 2016

Department of Homeland Security – FEMA
FY 2016 Countering Violent Extremism Grants
Funding Opportunity Number: DHS-16-OCP-132-00-01

To Whom It May Concern,

Please accept this letter as a confirmation of Muflehun's support of the application by Life After Hate, in consortium with Moonshot CVE (jointly referred to as Consortium) to the Department of Homeland Security FY 2016 CVE Grant Program. Muflehun looks forward to supporting the Consortium in designing and implementing the project without any direct compensation expected.

Muflehun will apply its previous experience using its own resources which includes providing training to the Consortium for the technical delivery of the Micro Trends and Digital Shepherds program as well as support any relevant counter-narrative and intervention work.

Muflehun is rolling out a new intervention support service in September 2016 that will also feed into providing best practices to the Consortium. Muflehun's experience shows that peers and family members are often the earliest identifiers of behavior changes in youth being indoctrinated towards extremist world views. However, they often neither have sufficient understanding of the potential problem nor any support mechanism to turn to for information and guidance. To meet this unfulfilled need Muflehun has structured the new program, a multi-channel information, referral and advisory service to all concerned citizens as an institutionalized approach for continued and sustainable impact.

Sharing of previous and expected experience of Muflehun with the applicant Consortium will further support the successful implementation of the proposed program. As Director of Programs at Muflehun. I look forward to working together and am pleased to offer the requisite trainings as needed to the Consortium.

Best regards,

Adnan Ansari Director of Programs
Muflehun