# Bellingcat Fall Hackathon Participant Guide

Apply [here](here).

This guide contains all the information you'll need before participating in Bellingcat's first in-person Hackathon, taking place in November 2023. All hours are in Amsterdam local time for November – CET.

**When is the hackathon? November 14-17, 2023**
**Where is the hackathon? Amsterdam, NED**

**What's the deal with the event?**
Our first-ever in-person **Hackathon** aims to bring open source research enthusiasts together to collaborate in teams on a project and share their findings. Teams can have up to 3 members.

This hackathon will **focus** on three broad themes. Teams can choose one or combine several into one idea:
1. Making **public open data** more accessible and useful
2. Visualising **climate change and its consequences**
3. Understanding the **visual culture of disinformation**

There is a large scope to what you can work on. Some examples include:
- Create a guide to a public tool
- Visualise a topic, story, or dataset
- Prototype a new tool idea
- Explore a new digital research idea

This hackathon is broader in scope than our previous ones, which have focused more on developing technical tools and accessibility. Still, you may find reading our articles on submissions for our [first](first), [second](second), and [third](third) hackathons useful. For more information about the tools open source researchers say they need, read the results of our recent survey [here](here).

## SCHEDULE

There will be snacks and drinks at the venue, but participants are responsible for their own meals.
All times are CET.

Tuesday, November 14

17.30 to 20.00 — Venue open for teams to work and staff will be present
18.00 — Kickoff session

Given this is a weekday, the hackathon's official launch will be at 18.00 CET. Participants are welcome to arrive at the venue between 17.30 and 20.00 CET. Members of staff will be present to chat with teams.

Wednesday, November 15

08.00 to 20.00 — Venue open for teams to work and staff will be present


Thursday, November 16 (off-site)

On Thursday, <u>the venue will be unavailable</u> for in-person work. Teams are welcome to work on their projects off-site, and staff will be around Discord to answer queries or do feedback calls.


Friday, November 17

08.00 to 20.00 — Venue open for the final day of the event
17.30 - Deadline for submission of the projects
17.30 - 18.00 — Break before the project presentations
18.00 - 19.00 — Project presentations to judges
19.30 — Announcement of the results

Presentations can be in any format. We will have a projector for teams that want one. Each presentation should take two to three minutes, with one to two minutes for questions from the judges.
Participants are welcome to stick around and mingle after the results are announced.


After November 17

We will invite participants to include some of their projects in Bellingcat's GitHub or on our website and help them further develop their tools, visualisations and guides if they are interested.

# Deliverables

When the hackathon is over, you should have prepared and submitted a GitHub repository (or a fork of an existing GitHub repository) with:

1. The files that are part of your project: guide, visualisation, code, etc.
2. A README file that contains information on your project, namely:
    a. Team name and, optionally, members
    b. A brief description of the project including goals and issues faced
    c. What you would work on next (if this is an open-scope project)
3. An open source software licence from this list: MIT, Apache 2.0, GNU GPL 2.0 or 3.0, BSD-3

Although it is not mandatory, you may also include any materials you use for your in-person presentation in your repository.

After the hackathon, we plan to write an article about some of the projects developed. By participating, you agree that your project may be profiled. We'll also ask if you're interested in including your tool in Bellingcat's GitHub organisation.

# Grading and Prizes

Given the broad scope of the projects, we will ask judges to grade them based on the following general criteria:

1. Accessibility
    a. How widely could the project be used? Can it only be used in very niche investigations or for more general purposes?
    b. How significantly does the tool help people without context knowledge to use or think about new open-source research approaches?
2. Imagination of solution
    a. Does a similar project already exist?
    b. How well does the project address a need in the digital investigation community?
3. Potential positive impact
    a. Would applications of this tool have a clear positive impact on the world? Could it be applied to advance human rights, tackle climate change, address inequalities, improve transparency or make headway for other causes?

We will announce the exact prizes closer to the date, but you can expect them to include free spaces at Bellingcat workshops, tools and resources that are useful for open source research (think VPN and other subscriptions, Yubikeys, books) and, of course, swag :-)

# 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 staff members. See our code of conduct for more information.

# Advice

Throughout the event, you can always chat with Bellingcat staff to ask questions and discuss your ideas. As well, here are some dos and don'ts which may help you prepare for the hackathon:

## Do

- **Do check to see if your idea has already been addressed by someone else**—we will check this ourselves and, if we find it elsewhere, this may impact your *Imagination* score.
- **Do consider how researchers will interact with your idea**—try to avoid overly complicated explanations and designs, and keep it simple.
- **Do try to create something that others can learn from or use in new contexts**—one of the goals of the hackathon is to produce something that advances the open-source research field; this can happen in many shapes and forms, but ideally there is a reusable element to your work.
- **Do try to use only accessible tools**—this is not a show stopper, but ideally your project should minimise the number of proprietary or non-open source software and tools required.
- **Do talk to the staff when you need it**—we are here to help you navigate the rules, listen to your ideas and answer technical questions.
- **Do take time to rest**.

## Don't

- **Don't spend too much time perfecting minute details**—you only have a few days to work on this; focus on getting something across the line and not about a visually appealing or highly tested project.
- **Don't submit things after the deadline—**this one is self-explanatory. We need to hold everybody to the same standard to ensure your projects are judged fairly.

Apply [here](#) and Happy Hacking!