

Bellingcat

Policy Plan 2019 - 2021



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Foreword

This document presents the Policy Plan for the years 2019-2021 of Bellingcat Foundation (Stichting Bellingcat, established on 11 July 2018 in Amsterdam with Chamber of Commerce KvK registration number 72136030, RSIN number 859000515).

The purpose of this policy is to describe our organisation and its structure (including management, financing and governance), its ambition and the strategies we employ to achieve our goals and amplify the effects and impact of our work. The policy also states broadly our principles and vision, and more specifically how our activities are implemented and supervised.

I. Introduction

In the course of just several months in 2014, Bellingcat turned from a one-man initiative (which used open source material to examine the conflict in Syria) to an international collective of volunteers whose open source investigation delivered groundbreaking evidence for the downing of flight MH 17. Research into this and other incidents (most notably, the poisoning of the former Russian spy Skripal in Britain early last year) and their aftermath acted as a catalyst for both the rapid growth of Bellingcat, as well as the growth of the field of online open source investigation in general¹.

In the next several years the demand for Bellingcat's expertise and the use of its research and findings increased exponentially and many international organizations and actors were drawn to its work – from news organisations, lawyers and human rights activists to the International Criminal Court, Europol and the Joint Investigation Team, investigating the downing of MH17. The growing reputation of Bellingcat as a trusted source of information and uncovering crucial evidence in conflicts and crimes led to requests to train journalists, jurists, news agencies, the United Nations, police, academia, investigators and many others on the use of online open source investigation. The research of Bellingcat in Syria, the uncovering of the Skripal poisoning perpetrators, the Dutch arms trade with Saudi Arabia and others made international headline news. Next to growing demand for training, Bellingcat also attracted the attention (and financial support) from international funders and donors (Open Society Foundations, National Endowment for Democracy, Adessium) to both expand its work in research and training, and to professionalize its organisation.

To manage the work and finances, at the end 2015 Bellingcat registered as a UK Private Ltd company by guarantee without share capital use of 'Limited' exemption to run as a non-profit entity as part of its professionalisation process. In 2018, as the cooperation with Dutch organisations and stakeholders intensified (including also with international organisations based in the Hague), the necessity occurred to establish Bellingcat also a Foundation in the Netherlands.

The purpose of establishing Bellingcat Foundation is three-fold:

- 1) the foundation has the ambition to become the global hub for training and research and aims to centralize (and professionalize) all activities run by Bellingcat internationally
- 2) to intensify and grow the international network of partners and contributors
- 3) to increase collaboration and cooperation with local and international donors

The expanding donor base of Bellingcat Foundation (both institutional as well as individual) necessitates acquiring of a charity status, as the majority of activities are aimed at enhancing the public good.

II. Mission, Vision and Objectives

Bellingcat is an independent international collective of researchers, investigators and citizen journalists using open source and social media investigation to probe a variety of subjects – from Mexican drug lords and crimes against humanity, to tracking the use of chemical weapons and conflicts worldwide. With staff and contributors in more than 20 countries around the world, we operate in a unique field where advanced technology, forensic research, journalism, investigations, transparency and accountability come together.

Bellingcat's **vision** is to play a trend-setting and pivotal role in the developing (but still nascent) field of online open source investigations into crime, conflict or corruption by inspiring and supporting a global community to

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/09/world/europe/bellingcat-skripal-poisoning.html>

conduct high-quality, responsible and transparent open source investigations anywhere in the world. Our **mission** is to hold power (corporate, government, transnational) to account to advance transparency and justice. Our **strategy** is to become the leader in the field by providing top-quality investigations and training, and establishing recognized standards.

The core principles and objectives of our work are based on:

Passion - be the pioneer in the conduct of open source and social media investigations in a variety of topics and geographies

Dedication - to contribute to building the field of open source investigation in terms of governance, standards, community, process and distribution

Innovation - to develop tools and methodologies transferable to different topics and regions of investigation

Allegiance to Truth - we pledge allegiance to truth and evidence and abide by the principles of transparency and accountability



Poster of the Bellingcat documentary about Bellingcat featured at the European Parliament

III. Strategy & Methodology

To achieve our objectives, we produce and publish high quality investigations², train stakeholders³ and seek cooperation with diverse actors (inter-government and non-government, local and international, media, academia, activists and many others)⁴.

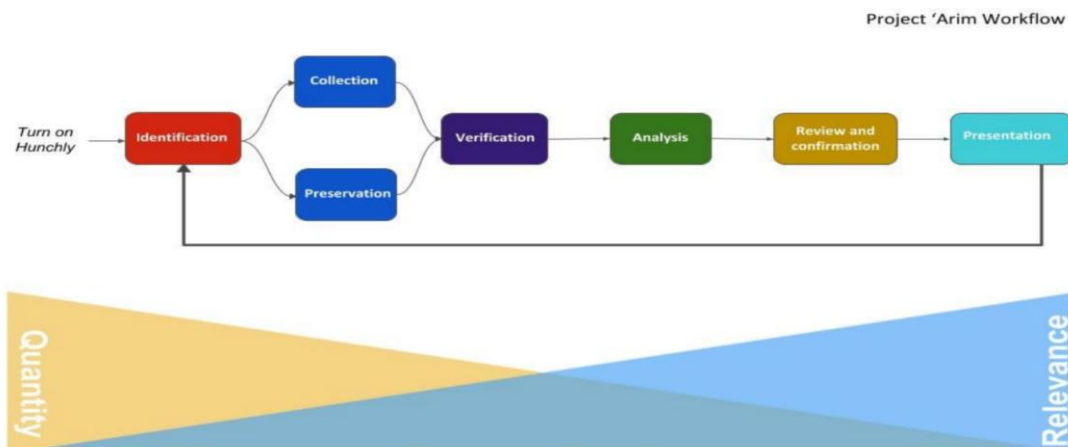
Bellingcat's strategy to lead the development of open source and social media investigation is built on our unique

² <https://www.bellingcat.com/>

³ <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/how-to-conduct-an-open-source-investigation-according-to-the-founder-of-bellingcat>

⁴ <https://www.residentiesinrecht.nl/en/residentie/eliot-higgins-bellingcat/>

IVA approach (a three-part process known as *Investigate, Verify, Amplify*) and our distributed, collaborative model.



We research various topics (war crimes, conflicts, human rights abuses, corruption, corporate misconduct, environmental crimes) using a variety of platforms to collect data (online and publicly available sources). The data and information collected is then rigorously verified by applying strict standards & principles. Our methodology for verification is developed in cooperation with the Global Legal Action Network (GLAN) and is based on the Electronic Discovery Reference Model (EDRM)⁵ by Duke Law School. This serves to ensure that each Bellingcat investigation follows a quality and consistency process and structure – identification, collection & preservation, verification, analysis, review & confirmation (including multiple source corroboration & cross referencing) and finally, presentation (publication).

To amplify further the investigations, we conduct demand-driven and tailor-made training & capacity building to different stakeholders, and by seeking cooperation and collaboration with wide and diverse public, parties and actors with the ultimate aim to service transparency, seek solutions and use hard evidence as basis for forming opinions and making decisions.

IV. Impact & Recognition

Bellingcat's innovative approaches have been particularly significant for advancing narratives of conflict, crime, and human rights abuses. We have produced investigations on these issues in coordination with partners and allies and expanded our training so that a growing corps of citizen journalists is poised to pursue these stories alongside us.

Our most popular posts of the last year included analysis of the April 7, 2018, **chemical attack** in Douma, Syria; exposure of a fake persona who had been widely cited in Ukrainian and anti-Putin Russian media as a Pentagon official; the illegal shipping of precursors of the nerve agent Sarin to Syria by Belgian companies; the Syrian Arab Army's armoured vehicle losses; and the use of drones by non-state actors in Syria and Iraq. Our most significant publications have included identifying a key suspect in the **Malaysian Airlines Flight 17** investigation as a high-ranking Russian intelligence officer, and identifying suspects in the Skripals poisoning as Russian intelligence officers as well. Our reporting has also been covered extensively by a range of international news media and garnered official responses from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defense, and Presidential Administration office.

After the **poisoning of MI6 double agent** Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in Salisbury in March 2018, Bellingcat has been able to unmask three suspects that we've identified as high-ranking Russian military intelligence officers. In October 2018, our researchers appeared at a press briefing at the House of Commons. The investigation into the attacks, which is ongoing, continues to receive significant global attention, from media outlets and governments alike.

⁵ <https://www.edrm.net/frameworks-and-standards/edrm-model/>

Bellingcat has led the way in the use of open source investigations in examining the conflict in Syria. Because of that work, we have become involved with the International Criminal Court's **(ICC) Technology Advisory Board** to help them understand how open source investigation could be applied to their work. The newly created International Independent and Impartial Mechanism (IIIM) on Syria, created by the UN General Assembly to gather evidence of potential war crimes and other violations in Syria, has also become very interested in the work of Bellingcat and the use of open source material and investigation in their own work.

Bellingcat partnered with Transparency International to uncover the misuse of Scottish Limited Partnerships ("SLPs") as the preferred vehicle for corrupt officials and organised crime figures to **launder billions of pounds** through the UK — most prominently the Moldovan bank raid and the Azeri Laundromat. Our work was featured in The Guardian newspaper due to SLPs connections to the Azeri Laundromat.

Our work has achieved wide recognition and acknowledgement. Over the past four years we have won a series of prestigious awards: the Hanns Joachim Friedrichs Prize (2015), the European Press Prize (2017, Innovation category), the Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE) Medal in collaboration with other organisations (2017) and the The Ars Electronica Prize for Digital Communities (2018). Most recently, our Investigative Team won the London Press Club Prize (April 2019, Digital Journalist category) and, for the second time, the European Press Prize (May 2019, Investigative Journalism category). Finally, the high level international recognition for the work of Bellingcat led even to the unusual step of the parliaments of three Baltic states jointly nominating Bellingcat for a Pulitzer Prize⁶

Our breaking news and high-end investigative work has also received extensive coverage by leading international and Dutch media (New York Times⁷, BBC⁸, Wired⁹, The Guardian¹⁰, Wall Street Journal¹¹, Volkskrant¹², NRC Handelsblad¹³ and numerous others).

V. Beneficiaries & Partners

The core of Bellingcat's work is to search and assist others in developing methodologies for searching for truth and evidence to advance transparency and accountability with the purpose to encourage action for positive change (be it in the form of uncovering crimes, demanding justice for wrong-doing or building capacity of citizens to contribute meaningfully for solutions to local problems). In that sense, the **beneficiaries** of what Bellingcat delivers and shares are on a numerous and global scale – academia, practitioners, experts, media, lawyers, researchers, activists, human rights defenders, non-government and inter-government organisation and institutions from North and Latin America, Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and Australia.

A wide range of organizations, individuals, companies and different entities, both in the Netherlands and globally, were drawn to the work of Bellingcat, especially after the breakthrough work on the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17. We have become a trusted source of information, and this reputation led to ever increasing requests to Bellingcat for training and capacity building on the use of online open source investigations.

Aside from training journalists, researchers, students, activists and experts, Bellingcat has also focused on collaborative projects as a key aspect of its work, working with a range of **partners** and on a number of topics. Bellingcat has collaborated with a range of both regional and international organizations, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, The New York Times, The Guardian, International Media Support, Global Legal Action Network, Syrian Archive, Mayday Rescue in support of the White Helmets in Syria, the Open Society Justice Initiative, International Criminal Court, and many more. In Eastern Europe and Eurasia, our work on MH17 and the Ukrainian conflict, along with our parallel Russian-language site, has led to widespread demand for our expertise, leading to collaborative projects with regional outlets that include The Insider (Russia), 112 Channel (Ukraine), and many more organizations that have participated in our Russian-language workshops since 2015.

6 <https://eng.lsm.lv/article/politics/diplomacy/baltic-states-jointly-nominate-bellingcat-for-pulitzer-prize.a307959/>

7 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/21/world/europe/nato-social-media.html>

8 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-45665380>

9 <https://www.wired.com/story/bellingcat-documentary-south-by-southwest/>

10 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/audio/2019/mar/13/syria-skripal-mh17-how-bellingcat-broke-the-news>

11 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/how-the-british-hit-back-against-russian-agitprop-11552344805>

12 <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/onderzoekscollectief-bellingcat-komt-naar-nederland~be070e83/>

13 <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2018/11/02/bellingcat-oprichter-wij-helpen-degenen-aan-de-andere-kant-a2753704>

Bellingcat has both trained and collaborated with Dutch organisations, including trainings with VOGIN-IP, Free Press Unlimited, De Correspondent, PAX for Peace, NRC Handelsblad, De Consumentbond, the Netherlands Public Prosecution Service, the Royal Academy of Arts, Hoffmann Bedrijfsrecherche, National Coordinator for Security and Counterterrorism, De Balie, Residenties in Utrecht, Netherlands Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, University of Amsterdam, and many more. In a recent collaboration with KRO-NCRV and Lighthouse, Bellingcat investigated the Dutch arms trade focusing on weapons that ended up being used in Yemen, investigating 17 arms deals, resulting in 5 cases being published, and discussion about the Dutch arms trade in the media and among Dutch politicians.

Finally, Bellingcat has used its online network to support projects needing online research expertise, such as Europol's Trace an Object Stop Child Abuse campaign. This project asks the public to help identify objects taken from abuse images, and Bellingcat's work has been instrumental to identify and arrest perpetrators. Along with our investigative articles, much of Bellingcat's work calls for reader involvement to improve the public's investigative skills through crowdsourced research and verification projects. Our near future plans include more ways of directly involving our audience with investigations, as it forms an important part of spreading the use of open source investigation.

VI. Activities & Ambition

The current activities of Bellingcat can be categorised in three major areas: conducting **investigations**, **training** practitioners and establishing **standards**.

Investigations

Back from the time of its founding, the core work of Bellingcat has been to conduct in-depth research (based on open source online sources and publicly available data), focusing mainly on conflicts (in Syria, Yemen, Ukraine, Iraq and more recently Venezuela). Our thematic range of investigations has widened over the past five years, with a large portion of our investigations focusing on environmental issues, the issue of far-right movements in the United States and Europe, and pedagogical guides that teach investigative methods and techniques to our readers. Our research is not unique in terms of topics and areas, but is unique in terms of approach (IVA), depth, transparency of process and evidence. We have developed our own tools and methodologies, which distinguishes the work we do from current and potential competitors in the field.

Our investigators identify publicly available information and gather data from a variety of different media & information channels and formats (pictures, video images, maps, satellite imagery, reports, articles, blogs and other text forms). Subsequently, the identified data is archived, analysed and verified. Data is shared among the collaborative Bellingcat community, where investigators, experts and volunteers jointly verify the authenticity. A variety of software tools and supporting data are also used to triangulate and further corroborate the information. In the last stage (amplification), the verified data is disseminated by publishing (articles or blogs on Bellingcat's website, distributing specific datasets or reports) and directly sharing with audiences.

Training

As part of Bellingcat's vision to inspire and build a global community to conduct high-quality open source investigations, we conduct extensive capacity building and training to partners, stakeholders and interested individuals and groups. Our training is both open application format, as well as tailor-made (on-demand). In the past three years, the demand for our expertise in the IVA approach and the "*Bellingcat Method*" has increased significantly.

Currently, we organize workshops for a wide variety of participants (legacy/traditional & online media, law enforcement, on the ground organisations, networks, journalistic entities, students, lawyers, universities, technology companies, intergovernmental and international agencies, think tanks, NGOs, individual citizens and citizen journalists, etc) in almost 30 countries across four continents. The open application training courses (announced on the website) usually sell out completely within hours of publication and we have waiting lists in almost all locations.



Bellingcat training workshop

The training courses of Bellingcat consist of a 5-day module (on-site or in-house), conducted by our own trainers and investigators. The income received is invested back into the organisation to cover operational costs (including salaries of researchers around the world) and fund various initiatives (to advance transparency and accountability)¹⁴. We offer training courses in five different languages (English, Dutch, Arabic, Spanish and Russian) and the workshops are generally divided into profit (the income of which we reinvest in the organisation) and non-profit (costs for which are covered by grants). For the training course we partner with a wide range of organisations, including the UC Berkeley School of Law, University of Toronto, University of Amsterdam, Agence France Presse, The New York Times, Süddeutsche Zeitung and numerous others.

Standards

The field of online open source investigations is an emerging one and as such represents a largely unknown (and still unused) area for many stakeholders. At the same time, the potential is significant, especially in the legal and judicial arena, human rights monitoring & accountability, law enforcement, formal education and even general media literacy.

As a pioneer and trend-setter, Bellingcat aims to establish both informal and formal technical (including quality, verification and evidentiary), ethical and privacy standards for the use of open source data, investigation and analysis (especially as additional evidence in legal cases). To advance work in that area, we cooperate with actors like the International Criminal Court, UC Berkeley School of Law, Amnesty International Crisis Response Team and many others.

The growing importance of online open source investigations in the area of education, journalism, intelligence, legal, and even politics necessitates that strict standards are established. In that way, Bellingcat can ensure that its work is credible and legitimised.

Ambition

We pledge allegiance to facts, completeness and transparency. We consider this essential in the current realities of fact-free politics and fake news, which are increasingly on the march around the globe. In many countries, an era of post-truth is gaining ground with an all-out war on transparency and an armed conflict against accountability, where justice & solidarity are pushed to the margins and in the corner.

Drawing on our unique approach and collaborative global community model, our ambition is to make open source investigation a **mainstream discipline** that can be employed by educators, politicians, law makers and law enforcers, media and the general public to advance transparency, accountability and justice.

To achieve our ambition, we will work on three main areas in the coming two years:

1) Organisation scale up & professionalisation

The historic background and strength of Bellingcat lies partly in its closely connected virtual network of online-

¹⁴ <https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/events/2019/05/06/new-bellingcat-workshops-announced-for-munich-berkeley-and-zurich/>

based contributors and volunteers and its lean management and administrative structure. However, the increased demand for our expertise and the broadening of the size and scope of our activities (including conducting high-end investigations) necessitates **professionalisation and formalisation** of the organisation. This process has already started at the end of 2018 and will continue in the course of 2019 (expanding and hiring of key management, financial and research/training staff, setting up of procedures and processes, improved structure and physical infrastructure, defining policies on grant acceptance, HR, safety protocols, financial guidelines etc). Additionally, efforts and investment are needed to strengthen the business management, fundraising, compliance, technology, as well as monitoring and evaluation. The objective is to build a strong core team without losing the strength and uniqueness of the wide community of contributors, volunteer and content providers.

2) Strategic focus & alliances

Bellingcat has built strong credibility with the quality, depth and transparency of its investigations. To maintain our leadership position in an increasingly competitive environment, we need to define a **sharper focus** and engage in strategic alliances to advance our products and expertise and further legitimise the field of open source investigation. We will revisit both the topic and geographical scope of our work (i.e. currently focused mainly on conflict and humanitarian issues in the Middle East), as well as the balance between providing training/ capacity building and efforts in setting (international) standards for conducting evidentiary open source investigations (for use in judicial litigation, for example). But as these specific foci and subjects might change, common and constant is Bellingcat's commitment to open source investigation's potential to pursue justice for those affected by conflict or human rights abuses, and to lift up the voices of those underserved by more conventional investigative methods.

In terms of strategic alliances, partnerships will be sought not only in the investigative activity area of Bellingcat, but especially in setting standards and advancing open source investigations from a marginal field to mainstream discipline, and that can maximize the potential of this work for real-world impact.

3) Growing & sustaining our audience

The audience is the lifeline of Bellingcat. We depend on it to maintain the high-standards in our investigations, to **stay independent** from corporate or government influence, yet to be able to monetize certain products and expertise to be able to run a professional organisation and increasingly large network. In the coming period, we will work to create a membership system (creating more added value to readers and users of our output), while reaching out to expand both the current end-user community (media, journalists, governments, investigative committees, courts, lawyers, academic institutions) and the wider audience (general public, academia, educators, certain media and government entities, etc)

VII. Business & Operating Model

Our operating model consists of four elements: our team, partners, audience and funders

Operating Model			
Team	Partners	Audience	Funders
<i>Core team</i> (board of directors, fundraising manager, finance & admin team, investigations & research team, training team) and <i>network</i> of contributors & volunteers	Thinks tanks, media, journalists and citizen journalists, NGOs, international and local organisations, intergovernmental bodies (UN, ICC), lawyers, associations, academia, law enforcement, various others	User community (all under partners) and wider community (general public, media, interest groups)	Postcode lotteries, private and family funds, national and international foundations, investment funds, social entrepreneurs, contributing members/individual donors

The business model describes the rationale of our value proposition, as well as the way Bellingscat creates, delivers and captures value. The business model canvas¹⁵ below illustrates schematically how these blocks are constructed and interact with each other:

Business Model				
Value Creation		Value Proposition	Value Delivery	
<u>Partnerships</u>	<u>Activities</u>	Distributed, collaborative model curating expertise from around the world and across an eclectic array of issues and geographies to interpret social media and other publicly accessible data to shed light on global governance and conflicts in service of justice and accountability	<u>Customer Relationships</u>	<u>Customer Segments</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - with global community of contributors and volunteers - with direct & indirect audience (including customers) - with variety of stakeholders- (including like-minded organisations, beneficiaries, funders, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - research and investigation - training and capacity building - setting standards for open source investigations 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -direct and indirect contact - membership system (in process of creation) -collaborative interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -experts -amateurs -professionals -beginners (including students) -individuals -groups -entities
	<u>Resources</u>		<u>Channels</u>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -intellectual property & data -sufficient financial assets -stable physical infrastructure -exper staff/HR 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -website -newsletters -targeted information -direct and indirect distribution 	
Value Capture				
<u>Cost Structure</u>		<u>Revenue Streams</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fixed costs (general administrative overhead, office rent) - Variable costs (staff salaries, consultancies, training costs, operational costs, project costs, investigation costs) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Earned income from training (own generated from providing training and capacity building, about 60% of total revenue) - Contributed income (grants, philanthropy, membership/individual giving, about 40% of total revenue) 		

The targets framework below relates to the business and operating model of Bellingscat and illustrates the

¹⁵ Business Model Canvas based on "Business Model Generation" (by Alexander Osterwalder & Yves Pigneur, 2010)

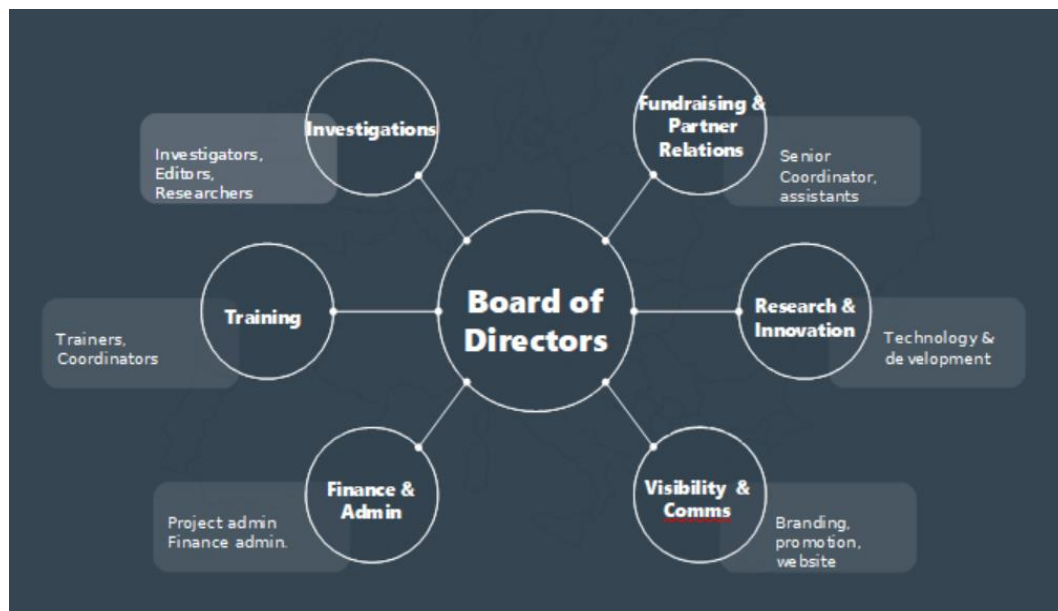
concrete results/deliverables we plan to reach in the course of three years (current year including). The 2019 column indicates results already achieved (from January to May 2019), as well as planned deliverables until year end. The targets include qualitative and quantitative value, and are linked to the three year (2019-2021) consolidated budget (see chapter X).

Targets Framework			
	2019	2020	2021
Value Creation	<p>Partnerships: media: (\geq) 2 contributors: (\geq) 60</p> <p>stakeholders: universities, higher education institutions</p> <p>Activities: <u>investigations</u> topics: local news/issues, money laundering, corruption regions: MENA expansion (Yemen)</p> <p><u>workshops:</u> (\geq) 21</p> <p><u>standards:</u> setting of deployable and transferrable model</p> <p>Resources: staff: (\geq) 16 office: 1 May finances: positive result</p>	<p>Partnerships: media: (\geq) 3 contributors: (\geq) 65</p> <p>stakeholders: same as 2019 + NGOs, multi & bilaterals, tech</p> <p>Activities: <u>investigations</u> topics: tax evasion, corporate fraud regions: Latin America, India, Lybia</p> <p><u>workshops:</u> (\geq) 25</p> <p><u>standards:</u> setting up parallel curricula in multiple languages (Spanish, Russian, Arabic) to expand workshop reach</p> <p>Resources: staff: (\geq) 20 office: bigger size finances: positive result</p>	<p>Partnerships: media: (\geq) 2 contributors: (\geq) 65</p> <p>stakeholders: same as 2019& 2020</p> <p>Activities: <u>investigations</u> topics: government corruption, corporate fraud, extractive industries, environmental issues, foreign state-supported and private military company activities regions: Sudan, Africa</p> <p><u>workshops:</u> (\geq) 32</p> <p><u>standards:</u> producing various tiers of training content, ranging from beginning – intermediate – advanced, in English, Russian, Spanish, and Arabic</p> <p>Resources: staff: (\geq) 26 office: same as 2020 finances: positive result</p>
Value Delivery	<p>Customers: members: (\geq) 1500 website views: 3.5 mln</p> <p>Channels: website: update, add community part podcasts: 6 episodes on MH17 newsletter: update</p>	<p>Customers: members: (\geq) 2500 website views: 5 mln</p> <p>Channels: website: update & re-design others: expansion of community engagement newsletter: update</p>	<p>Customers: members: (\geq) 3000 website views: 7 mln</p> <p>Channels: website: update others: additional language support and localization through subdomains (e.g. es.bellingcat.com) and translators newsletter: update</p>
Value Capture	<p>Cost structure: Fixed/overhead: 14% Variable: 86%</p> <p>Revenue Streams: Earned: = 40% Contributed: = 60%</p>	<p>Cost structure: Fixed/overhead: 15% Variable: 85%</p> <p>Revenue Streams: Earned: > 60% Contributed: < 40%</p>	<p>Cost structure: Fixed/overhead: 15% Variable: 85%</p> <p>Revenue Streams: Earned: > 60% Contributed: < 40%</p>

VIII. Organisation & Governance

Bellingcat Foundation is incorporated in July 2018 in Amsterdam and registered at the Dutch Chamber of Commerce. Our organisation consists of a board of directors (board) and different teams. Currently, there are three teams - investigations team, training team and finance & administration. In the coming year we will add three more teams – fundraising & partner relations, research & development (including technology & innovation) and marketing & communications.

The organogram below illustrates how the organisation is structured including both current (left side) and future (right side) teams:



In compliance with Bellingcat's Foundation statutes, the governance structure is comprised of board members and supervisory board members. According to the policy of the foundation, no board or supervisory board member receives financial compensation other than covering of travel costs for board meetings or other small expenses related to performing board member functions.

The board of directors (board) consists of three members (chairman, treasurer and secretary) and the supervisory board consists of two members (with the intention to appoint a third member in the next couple of months). The supervisory board advises and oversees the work of the board to ensure that Bellingcat meets the goals set out in its founding documents and is compliant with statutes, guidelines and other requirements and regulations.

All board members and supervisory board members are compliant to the integrity requirements as formulated by the Dutch Tax requirements for ANBI status. The board members have the following tasks (but not limited to):

Chairman: (Eliot Ward Higgins)

- Ensure the effective and efficient functioning of the board;
- Represent the organisation to external stakeholders;
- Ensure tasks and responsibilities are well distributed between board members;
- Manage critical path / tracking decision making;
- Chair quarterly board meetings (or delegate in case of absence);

Treasurer: (Dessislava Lange-Damianova)

- Manage finance;
- Prepare annual budget and annual account;
- Prepare annual report;
- Review and approve project budgets;
- Ensure compliance with guidelines, statutes
- Assign a reserve board member as backup treasurer

Secretary: (Aric Toler)

Ensures minutes of meetings are made and filed;
Backup treasurer (assigned by treasurer);
Support in preparing annual report, policy & business plans
Support in review project budgets

Supervisory board members:

Joseph Peeraer (chairman) – entrepreneur and philanthropist
Marietje Schaake (member) – former member of EU Parliament (Foreign Trade & Tech)
Yoei Albrecht (member) – Dutch journalist, director of the cultural centre De Balie

IX. Managing Funds & Funding Structure

To ensure the organisation meets its objectives, we generate two main types of income – earned income (from workshops), which is re-invested for further development and growth, and contributed income (funds).

We strive to maintain a healthy balance between earned and contributed income. The current ratio is roughly 40:60 (earned versus contributed income), with longer terms (5+ years) targets for funding range (donations, grants) between a minimum of one third to a maximum of half of the total budget/turnover. That will allow us to attract grant to develop projects or cover costs for capacity building for those that cannot pay, on the one hand, and not make is fully dependent of grants only with eye on sustainability, on the other hand.

The contributed funds consist of strategic partnerships with larger funders (national and international), private family foundations, some institutional donors (National Endowment for Democracy), Postcode Lotteries (currently the Dutch Postcode Lottery) and donations from individuals (smaller and larger).

In the coming months we will develop a comprehensive Donations Acceptance Policy (DAP), which will include some of the following (but not limited to) criteria:

- compatibility of the donating entity and fund with the goals of Bellingcat
- transparency of sources, nature and reputation of funder
- conditions for granting a donation
- unrestricted or loosely-restricted funds to the greatest extent possible, to maximize partnership potential (many potential editorial partners will not work with us if restricted funds specify work on a particular project/in a particular region) and allow us to pursue urgent and emerging subjects
- non-earmarked donations will be used primarily for start-up of specific projects or investigations
- donations and grants can be refused if there are grounds to do so

In line with the transparency, high quality and accountability principles of Bellingcat, we report to our funders and donors by means of regular narrative and financial reports, quarterly progress updates, and annual statements and final reports. Annual financial reports are prepared by the financial administration in collaboration with a member of the board and reviewed and approved by the supervisory board.

Funds are managed with responsibility, integrity and in compliance with the policy of the organisation and the requirements of individual donors or funders.