

PART A – METHODOLOGY : 10 PAGES MAX**Executive Summary.**

Albany Associates has formed a Consortium that combines the formidable talent and reach of four partners, with M&C Saatchi, Enab Baladi, and ORB International combining cross cutting mutually reinforcing **local networks** with unrivalled and unique **regional and global reach** and market leading **target audience insight and sentiment analysis**. These assets will be deployed in a strategic framework based upon a single unifying proposition and core narrative that produces high volume and strategically coherent, authentic content via an increasingly capable, professional and independent Syrian media sector.

The Albany Consortium proposes a highly integrated approach to the *Syrian Moderate Opposition Resilience (MOR) Strategic Communications Project*, characterized by efficient and effective support to Syrian civilian and armed moderate opposition, flexibility to respond in a highly fluid context, leveraging project results through collaborative work with strategic communications projects in the region, building on past HMG investments, and a lean implementation methodology. The project requires a unique balance of scale and focus, targeting specific community-level audiences in Syria while also reaching a global audience of opinion-formers.

Our approach stands on the strength and credibility of our local networks, which provide extensive reach, coverage, and insight into all areas of opposition (and regime) held Syria. The networks of Enab Baladi and Saatchi will be incorporated, resourced, and strengthened while at the same time networks that have worked with HMG projects to date will also be included, creating a seamless transition. Through our existing local contacts including those established with the SNC through our work on Geneva II, we have also secured the participation of an extensive local network of over 55 stringers, reporters and videographers who have been working on existing CSSF and other donor funded communications projects. These will be impact-multiplied through a cooperative arrangement with a US funded local governance project run by Chemonics and a similarly funded local radio capacity building project run by IREX. This highly inclusive and expansive approach has the merit of building on HMG investments and achievements to date and expanding both output and impact. The networks overlap with each other, creating the benefits of coverage and redundancy in a high-risk environment.

The MOR Project envisions three strands of project work; (1) civilian, (2) moderate armed opposition, and (3) audience insight analysis and evaluation. The Albany Consortium proposes a methodology, which does not simply weld three separate projects to each other – we propose a realistic and integrated response to the immediate realities of Syria. Cognizant of the stated HMG goal of *contributing towards positive attitudinal and behavioural change through promotion and reinforcement of moderate values* (Objective 1) and *exposing abuses and excesses of the regime and its backers* (Objective 2), we propose an approach that relies on a Syrian constructed, owned, and led narrative, or master story, which will frame communications of both armed and civilian groups. Please see our **Theory of Change**, at **Enclosure 1**

Understanding and insight - target audience/media landscape

The emerging Syrian media (ESM), comprising the proliferation of citizen/activist/journalists and media outlets and platforms arising from the onset of the civil war in Syria in 2011 is heavily concentrated in opposition held areas and the countries bordering Syria. While some ESMs operate from regime or ISIS controlled areas, repression is so great and consequences so dire that numbers are limited and operations tend to be individual activist/journalists working over the internet. This is not to say, however, that opposition controlled areas represent a permissive environment for media and journalism – quite the opposite. Syria remains, wherever one is, one of the most dangerous places on earth for journalists.

The emerging Syrian media is young, small, and unsustainable generally speaking. A 2016 examination of women in the emerging Syria media conducted under the auspices of the Stichting Female Journalist Network found that the average emerging Syrian media entity has

been in existence for an average of 2.2 years, is small, with 3.7 full time staff (in print outlets), and has low levels of distribution and coverage.¹ The same study highlighted women's lack of representation and participation in the Syrian media, with only 4 percent of women characterized as senior journalists and 38 percent of women holding senior positions in media organizations. It also noted that women are inadequately involved in the decisions about communications and that stories tend to portray women as vulnerable and passive.

The MOR project seeks to contribute to positive change through reinforcement of moderate values. To accomplish this, a nuanced understanding of audiences is necessary. At present, there are three main opposition areas to be targeted by the project, Idleb and western Aleppo, rural Damascus, primarily Ghouta, and the southern area around Dera'a. Our research and interviews indicate that there are marked differences between these three audiences in terms of interests, concerns, and attitudes. Consortium member Enab Baladi has been effectively communicating across the spectrum and their online presence takes into account regional differences. Using their grounded experience, the HMG TAA, and the on-going work of ORB and other feedback mechanisms, the project will be responsive and sensitive to the need for content that is appropriately calibrated and targeted.

An always volatile situation in Syria's 6 year civil/proxy war has accelerated following the military intervention of Russia in support of the Syrian government in autumn 2015, a rising military and political profile of Iran, splintering and realignment of opposition forces, evolution of the Al Qaeda affiliate, Hayat Tahrir ash-Sham, overt military intervention by Turkey, ascendancy of Kurdish forces, a more effective pressure on ISIS physical (as opposed to philosophical) presence, and the fall of Aleppo in December 2016. The complexity of the number of actors, objectives, and agendas in Syria is unparalleled and this complexity is reflected in the communications 'noise'.

The sheer scale of human suffering, combined with ungoverned space, has opened the door to extremism and extremist groups. That said, many Syrians in opposition held areas (and also in regime held areas where it should not be assumed everyone is a regime supporter and much of the population falls into a gray area of practically based acquiescence) do adhere to the original revolutionary values and moderate political and social views. This is evidenced by the tenacity, however beleaguered, of the FSA and other non-Qaeda groups, the effective formation of the Southern Front, and the successful elections of technocratic local councils in a number of locations including Idleb City, Maaret Nuaman in Idleb and Darit Ezza and Atareb in Aleppo countryside. It is also worth remembering that the civilian bodies who governed Aleppo until its fall in December have moved to the countryside carrying their values with them.

The recent American decision to drop support to its previous partners amongst the moderate armed opposition has elevated the risk that the groups, or their constituent fighters, will align with extremist groups – either through dint of necessity, since many Syrian men fight as a livelihood, or due to disillusionment. This reality renders all the more important work that fortifies the bedrock of moderation that characterizes the world view of most Syrians and makes critical a project that can help unify opposition groups, civilian and military, around a series of shared and unifying narratives.

The unity of narrative is critical to the Albany Consortium proposal. The target audience and media landscape, as described above, are highly fragmented – and this granularity and absence of cohesive strategies and messages have bedeviled the opposition, civilian and military since the start of the conflict. We note that in environments where there is one story and one narrative, it is quiet and easy to understand – and that certainly does not characterize Syria. In environments where there are lots of stories and lots of narratives, it is loud and hard to understand what the

¹ Khalaf, Rana. Women in Emerging Syrian Media: A Critical Discourse Analysis (2011-2016). Stichting Female Journalists Network. Arnhem, Netherlands.

message is – and this characterizes the situation of Syrian moderate messaging at present. However, when lots of stories feed and are guided by one narrative, the messaging is both loud and easy to understand. We propose a methodology to support Syrian opposition messaging, which, by supporting one central moderate narrative or story, is effective and heard, domestically and internationally.

Albany Associates is familiar to some of the challenges of working with the cacophony of communications in Syria. In Geneva II negotiations in 2013/14, Albany worked with and mentored the Syrian National Coalition (SNC) communications team comprised of civil society and activist circles. Our approach was to 'Syrianise' output by mentoring, advising, and seeking opportunities for cascading products and information through their own civil society and activist circles, inside Syria and the region. The key outcome was to assist the Syrian team in disseminating material drawn from the mass of often contradictory information, curate it so that it flowed authentically, cascade it widely, while assuring it adhered to the SNC's strategic line at the talks. The project employed an Electronic News Gathering team which created products on a daily basis for dissemination through the networks, and we created bespoke purpose-driven platforms (e.g. Facebook for other activists and Syrian public, Twitter for opinion formers in the region, Europe and the US) under the branding of the Geneva Media Unit to underpin the unity of output and strategic aims. Our bespoke products were supplemented by the use of other relevant material supportive of the SNC's goals. Feedback on this work was gratifying.²

Strategy and planning, value of each component of the Consortium

The Albany Associates Consortium has been crafted to bring the long-time Albany experience of delivering strategic communications programming on behalf of HMG and in concert with communities in high-risk, conflict environments. This sector-specific experience will be enriched and amplified by the proven abilities of M&C Saatchi to deliver a focused professionalism in support of local networks on the ground and their reputation for developing compelling narratives through a single, unifying proposition.

Enab Baladi's superb position and reputation as a Syrian platform delivering award-winning news and stories to Syrians, and internationally, on a daily basis through a variety of media provides the Consortium an opportunity to materially strengthen an important Syrian media organization while at the same time, it robustly participates in all aspects of project delivery. ORB International will provide the deep audience understanding and insight that will enable the Consortium to support our Syrian partners to develop a powerful narrative made of stories that cut through the noise. ORB's work will also allow us to know what is working so we can invest in stories and platforms that have impact.

In short, the Consortium is constructed to authentically empower Syrian moderate voices to tell their stories - only better. By providing support, training and platforms for local actors we increase message quality whilst ensuring credibility and authenticity. We comprehensively combine the credibility of a grassroots network with the singular focus of a strategic communications

1. *Bridget Kendall, From Our Own Correspondent, 1 February 2014 (available here)*

"Then there was the noticeable shift in the power play between the two delegations. [...] When they [the Coalition] first flew in from Istanbul, they looked shambolic. But within 24 hours of arrival, their fortunes seemed to improve. [...] "From low expectations, the Geneva gave them status and parity with their opponent, and an ambition to improve their credibility. Every evening in the backrooms of the Intercontinental Hotel, they would confer with their Western media advisers, shaping messages to put out on social media and press briefings, coordinating policy." Also [http://world.time.com/2014/01/31/as-syria-peace-talks-conclude-opposition-officials-gain-credibility/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed:%20timeblogs/middle_east%20\(TIME:%20The%20Middle%20East%20Blog\)](http://world.time.com/2014/01/31/as-syria-peace-talks-conclude-opposition-officials-gain-credibility/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed:%20timeblogs/middle_east%20(TIME:%20The%20Middle%20East%20Blog))

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jan/23/syria-peace-talks-bashar-al-assad-rebelsand>

campaign. This means we're meeting both of HMG's objectives - promoting moderate engagement and influencing a global audience - within one strategic framework. The **Strategic Framework** that will underpin the Consortium's approach is shown in the graphic at **Enclosure 2**

Albany Associates, will manage the consortium, being ultimately accountable for results delivery and management of the tax-payer funds. Albany, supported by M&C Saatchi, will also contribute to the technical work in the civilian and armed opposition strands. Albany Associates has delivered high quality SMART communications projects throughout the region since 2004. Our dedicated focus upon strategic communications, including communications strategy development, grassroots and P2P engagement, media regulatory and development environments, research, and training positions us to deliver on all aspects of the Statement of Requirements.

Albany will take the lead on the Moderate Armed Opposition (MAO) strand of the work, noting that the practical approach of the Consortium is to support moderate Syrians – armed and civilian – to coalesce around and speak to one unifying narrative. The MAO part of the project is particularly challenging because of the highly dynamic environment. The reality is that the MAO is deeply divided politically, geographically, and in some ways ideologically. Tracking the positions of these groups and keeping them involved will be an exercise in diplomacy and understanding. It is because of this ongoing pressure and fragmentation, in part, that Albany is proposing a clear messaging methodology. With all Syrian opposition partners we will agree a clear, simple narrative or master story. This will move communications away from the phenomenon, which occurs so often with Syrian generated content, which is *'that is interesting but why are you telling me this?'* Communications need to add up – a single unifying proposition.

To effectively support selected MAO groups whose value systems and aspirations are in concert with those of HMG, three ingredients are essential. First, credible access to the groups will be key. Second, the approach must be relentlessly flexible, enabling the project and HMG to be nimbly responsive to change. Third, the project must be perceived to have on offer services and support felt as valuable by the MAO – and this third ingredient is tightly connected to the first.

In order to facilitate credible access, maximize flexibility, and ensure project resonance, Albany intends to hire a Syrian staff member, Mr. Ammar Kourany, who has a proven track record of managing relationships with armed groups in the context of stabilisation, development, and humanitarian programming. This MAO engagement leader has deep credibility with key groups including (north) Failaq ash-Sham, Jabha Shammiyeh, Jaysh Idleb al Hur, Ahrar ash-Sham, (center) Jaysh al Islam, Failaq al Rahman, and (south) Jaysh Tahrir in the south and experience in development, communications, research and analysis, as well as assessments and evaluations. The engagement leader will provide a conduit for Consortium support in developing communications skills and strategies appropriate for each group, with technical backstopping from Albany, M&C Saatchi, and ORB. A distinct advantage of an Albany-based engagement leader to engage with the MAOs is the inherent flexibility. As armed groups change allegiances, wax and wane, having this knowledgeable point of contact will protect the project from the risk of being wed to a particular institutional formula comprised of groups who may or may not be at any given time viable, effective, respected in the community, or, in fact, moderate. This approach will have the advantage, for which there is no substitute in this region, of the glue of human relationships and networks as we build a unified strategy and communications across moderate armed groups.

In addition, the proposed MOR project will build on the extensive experience that Enab Baladi has working with the MAO and their spokespersons. Enab Baladi has for years been reporting on and sometimes critiquing MAO groups. They will use their established relationships and reputation to encourage work towards a unified message and to ensure MAO spokespeople are incorporated in the discussion. This will be a matter of Enab Baladi doing more of what they already do, amplifying and sustaining this important Syrian media entity. We are confident that MAO partners will appreciate the improved product quality that will come from working through the M&C Saatchi production hub. ORB, conducting audience insight analysis, will support the armed groups in

developing the capacity to analyse effectiveness of their communications versus their strategic goals.

Albany is cognizant that the MOR project is unifying FCO supported work previously undertaken separately. The MAO strand of this work is the most sensitive and challenging due to the nature of the conflict and the armed groups. As Albany is proposing work that collaborates with other project and donor efforts, thereby amplifying impact (and reducing costs), it would be Albany's preference to also be able to absorb the current MAO capacity and talent to create the broadest and most seamless possible approach. Through this approach, HMG would enjoy robust capacity building on investments, reconfigured in a manner that responds to a very kinetic MAO terrain.

M&C Saatchi as a Consortium member assure the MOR project will have the benefits of strategic, polished communications and a state-of-the-art production hub. M&C Saatchi is the world's largest independent communications agency. It is internationally recognised as a leader in media, strategy and communications, and has a proven track record of delivering some of the world's most impactful CVE campaigns, such as their work in the Horn of Africa countering Al-Shabaab where they ran/developed/hosted a nationwide radio discussion show tackling issues such as the Somali Federal Government's approach to CVE, politics and gender inequality. Over 150 episodes were aired over the course of three years and included a selection of high profile guests such as the Somali Prime Minister. On average, the show received over 1000 SMS responses per episode from the target audience who had engaged with the content. M&C Saatchi's current work in Syria for the US Department of Defense positions it as the global choice for strategic communications in the region. From building digital-audio capabilities to developing hyper-targeted campaigns to undermine the influence of VEOs, the organisation is trusted, proven and immediately ready to deliver.

For this project, M&C Saatchi will be responsible for developing a cohesive, strategic narrative to influence the international audience and providing editorial oversight to the grassroots. M&C Saatchi's production hub in Dubai and operations centre in Istanbul empowers the consortium to deliver seamlessly upon award of contract. These facilities, in addition to the company's Syrian expertise, provide an unrivalled, fit-for-purpose offering.

It is of the utmost importance that the project create an iterative rhythm of capacity support and training to Syrians, civilian and armed, who are seeking to influence the agenda and their communities weighted to moderate values. For this to have impact, platforms, presentation, and communications must feel and be authentic, rooted in Syrian perceptions of priorities. In other words, it needs to be heavily Syrian driven and owned. Albany's extensive experience in conflict environments has demonstrated that strategic communications approaches which are 'platform driven' and in which messages are 'broadcast' to a population actually have little impact and in fact can influence negatively. We understand that message traction and legitimacy is developed through telling stories that are received, believed or rejected through multiple credible and mutually reinforcing sources within an information ecology where being seen to listen is as important as talking. It is critical that ordinary citizens and local stakeholders and influencers can hear their own voice in the discourse. Therefore, our consortium is proposing an approach to the MOR project that places Syrians right at the table. We are proposing a communicative approach based on exchange, with Syrians in the Consortium, Syrian networks, and a regular schedule of audience insight and associated follow on consultation. Albany has a well recognized strength in this regard captured in a well-received United States Institute for Peace Special Report, *Make It Theirs*, which illustrates the importance of local ownership in peace building and stabilization operations—not just in concept but in practice.³

³ Haselock, Simon. *Make It Theirs*. United States Institute for Peace Special Report, 2010. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2010/09/make-it-theirs>

Enab Baladi (EB) is an independent Syrian non-profit media organization, established in 2011 by a group of citizen journalists and activists from Daraya, the non-violence-cradle Syrian town in Damascus suburbs. EB's mission is to serve a role in educating Syrian citizens through in-depth public interest reporting, including investigative journalism and news reports that elevate important social topics at the local level. Enab Baladi aims to advance a democratic society in Syria by producing independent and credible journalism that informs the Syrian public about important issues and gives voice to the voiceless inside and outside Syria. Since its establishment, EB has focused on promoting peaceful resistance methods to counter the sectarian and violence narratives of the Syrian regime and extremist groups. EB succeeded in providing the Syrian people with reliable information about events including reports on human rights violations perpetrated by the Syrian regime and extremist groups, the inception of a nascent Syrian civil society, and political, economic, and social affairs news

Work started with publishing a newspaper aimed at covering news on the ground and conveying the peaceful message of the Syrian people. In January 2012, issue #0 was published and distributed in Daraya. Since then, the newspaper has been in print each week, growing exponentially from an amateur-run entity into one of the most prominent Syrian media organizations according to BBC Syria.^[1] EB is now an umbrella under which several media products are published, including: [Enab Baladi Weekly Newspaper](#),^[2] [Enab Online Arabic News Service Website](#),^[3] [Enab Online English News Service Website](#),^[5] [Enab Video](#), [Enab Baladi Investigative Journalism Unit](#), and The [Syrian Newspapers Archive](#).^[4] EB's publishing channels on social media include Facebook pages with around one million fans and mobile apps that receive millions of page views every month. These projects are supported by a large network of reporters and journalists on the ground in Syria.

Enab al Baladi as a member of the Albany consortium will be central to the iterative process throughout project life of assuring that the strategic communications developed and disseminated under the project are resonant with Syrian audiences. The project will employ all Enab al Baladi platforms, as well as their superb production capability to develop communications products. Enab Baladi's ongoing work can be utilized, strengthened, expanded within the MOR project, seamlessly integrating with the other Consortium partners to achieve MOR Objective 1 (moderate engagement) and 2 (international community better informed). For example:

Dissemination of MOR communications products through the following Enab platforms:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 video reports published every month including weekly episodes of TV show 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 news/articles/reports on average published on daily basis and disseminated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5,500 Weekly newspaper hard copies printed and distributed inside Syria and to Syrian refugees in Turkey every week (Digital copies of the newspaper are distributed through mailing list to 2000 subscribers) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 reports/news/articles on average translated every month and published on English news website and disseminated through social media to Western English speaking audience
Enab Baladi implemented training, mentoring and capacity building of Syrian journalists and media professionals, supported by Albany and Saatchi, so that they can produce more and better content in the areas of:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video Journalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing and Advertising for Media Organizations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobile Journalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced Editorial Policies and Journalism Style
Supporting and building a capacity in investigative journalism that support the notions of Syrian moderate democratic unity (Objective 1) and the abuses of the regime (Objective 2), with mentoring and coaching from Albany and Saatchi.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on In-Depth and Investigative Journalism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of 7 in-depth reports in collaboration/mentoring with/from UK

Journalists ⁴	
Providing local insight on the Syrian media landscape through monthly reporting provided by Syrian Media Archive (www.SyrianPrints.org) and integrating the project work of ORB:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct archiving operations to maintain all print-media issues and present them to Syrian public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send Monthly Newsletter to subscribers listing links to digital copies of recent issues of Syrian newspapers/magazines
Investing in and developing new and original content platforms and programs.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch Enab Baladi Live/On-Demand Channel which will focus on online broadcasting of live events, TV shows produced by Enab Baladi, and video reports from inside Syria produced by EB's in-country network of reporters. All content will be available on-demand as well on Enab Video platforms: enabbaladi.tv and social media channels. 	
Unifying advocating for and representing Syrian journalists and media professional via a union or professional association	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enab Baladi plays significant role as member of Board of Syrian Media Ethical Charter and Syrian Network of Print-Media and active partnerships with several Syrian media outlets and would be in the lead on this work, in keeping with the Syrian character of the project. Consortium partners Albany and Saatchi will support in the background with technical assistance. 	
Specific programs to enable and encourage the voice of ordinary Syrians, including women and girls, to be heard above the noise of broader narrative of civil war and absence of hope. We need to encourage the voice of the future Syria.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch 'Video-From-Syria' Festival, which would encourage Syrians to send videos of their daily lives from inside Syria to enter a competition, which will choose the best videos to be shown in a video festival conducted in Istanbul. 	

Albany Associates proposes a project of exceptional reach and coverage within Syria comprised of alliances and networks that will (a) assure Syrian character, (b) build the strength, sustainability, and capacity of the emerging Syrian media, (c) provide superb depth and reach, and (d) mitigate against the risk ensuing from shallow, exposed capacities. Enab Baladi brings its own very extensive journalist networks as well as a number of valuable alliances that will enrich project work and sustainability including (a) Ethical Journalism for Syria Alliance (EJSA) in partnership with more than 30 Syrian independent media organization and funded by Free Press Unlimited, which improves freedom of speech, thought, and expression in Syria via a gender sensitive multi-level approach, (b) International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC), (c) the Syrian Network for Printed Media (SNP) with seven other Syrian independent newspapers, and (d) the Syrian Regional Program (SRP) to provide media exposure to Local Councils in Syria.

Albany has, furthermore, identified a number of stringer networks including networks who have worked with past CSSF-funded projects, including the Dream Network. The Dream Network consists of over 55 stringers and citizen journalists across opposition areas and some regime controlled areas. See attached map at Enclosure no (?) M&C Saatchi because of their current, extensive engagement in Syria also has robust networks. Albany has informally agreed to

⁴ Illustrative topics for the 7 reports include: Alternative Economic Solutions for Humanitarian Catastrophe; Judicial and Legal Services in Liberated Areas; Education Options in Liberated Areas; Impact of Explosive Remnants of War; Local services and the efforts of civil organizations (water, electricity, sewerage system, emergency services, cellphones, and internet); Psychological, Social and Physical Effects of War on Children; Child labor and efforts exerted to protect children from the effects of the conflict; Family Health and Psychological Support Services. Each report will include:

Introduction
Citizens' stories
Phenomenon analysis and solutions
Narrative reporting
Data, infographics

Online polls and video interviews
Op-ed(s)
Investigative research
Interviews

cooperate with the SNC media network and Dr. Al Aridi, Head of SNC Communications, has agreed to put SNC activist networks at the disposal of the project. John Williams who has been working consistently with the SNC for a number of years as an HMG funded consultant will act as an advisor and interlocutor with the SNC to build and embed the single unifying narrative. Collaboration with the IREX program supporting Syrian radio stations and Chemonics communications in support of moderate local councils/governance will cast the net even wider.

Selected journalists within these various networks will be targeted by the project for capacity building, training, and, of course, support through purchase of product. Albany, while recognizing that the remote management situation imposed by the extreme violence and sealed borders, will work with Enab Baladi, on-the-ground trainers, the Dream network and through electronic platforms to build capacities of the individual stringers. Albany has agreed with IREX, that the high quality library of IREX online Arabic language training materials will be available to the MOR project through the Albany consortium.

One particular initiative, already receiving support by Canada through Enab Baladi, is to improve journalistic capacities in human rights and to develop broadly accepted codes of conduct and policies to help guide Syrian activists and journalists. Obviously this effort goes straight to the heart not only of reinforcing moderate values and good governance.

To assure a highly responsive project that is equipped with the data and analysis necessary to enable it to be both steadily proactive and nimbly reactive, the Albany consortium includes ORB International. ORB specializes in high quality research (quantitative and qualitative), in complex environments including fragile states, conflict zones, post-conflict zones, and developing nations. ORB has a demonstrated capacity to conduct polling, surveying, research, analysis, and monitoring and evaluation throughout Syria. In particular, ORB has recent experience supporting audience insight analysis in Syria, including opposition, regime, and ISIS held areas.

Scaleability, flexibility and adaptability enabled by independent, objective and appropriately safeguarded assessment

The Syria context is fluid and unpredictable, demanding that the MOR project be able to respond and adapt to new circumstances. It is important to note that international strategies in managing and responding to Syria are also changing and the project will need to adjust accordingly. All aspects of the Albany-proposed design speak to this need; a consortium that includes partners able to go to scale, proven delivery track records, multiple networks to create necessary redundancies, management configurations that value flexibility and professionalism, and a technically integrated approach (one narrative, many stories) across the moderate civilian and armed opposition. Truly integrating what was three management strands into one cohesive project also spells lean, cost-effective approaches, which can be easily expanded in response to demand but do not carry lots of weight that would need to be shed in realignments.

ORB is uniquely positioned to contribute to ensuring the MOR project remains highly adaptable based on their experience conducting surveys, focus groups, monitoring and evaluation in all parts of Syria, including opposition, regime, and ISIS held areas. As a member of the Albany Consortium, their intimate knowledge of the attitudes, opinions and sentiments of the target audiences across the region and in country will provide valuable leverage to one of the first tasks of the project; working with Syrian partners, networks, emerging media organizations, the moderate armed opposition, local councils, and civil society organizations to identify one unified narrative that will be the sea to which all communications flow.

The media landscape is crowded. To cut through, we need a full appreciation of what the different Syrian actors are saying and what is, being heard by our audience. The Albany Consortium proposes ORB will lead and undertake quarterly audience insight analyses to make sure that consistent measurement and evaluation will allow stakeholders to know what is working and what is not. ORB will be independent in formulating survey questions and instruments and we anticipate that their work will assure HMG full visibility and oversight.

Content creation and co-ordination, including pre-production, production, testing, delivery, dissemination and amplification

We are proposing a strategy to reinforce moderate values through Syrian's more engaged with moderate structures and international stakeholders better informed by developing, with Syrian partners, a unifying narrative. We will then support that narrative with resources, training, mentoring, coaching, and superb production back-stopping for Syrians who will be creating the basic content. Syrians will create and the project will curate in a collaborative manner. Practically speaking, Consortium member, Enab Baladi, offers an unparalleled platform in terms of content creation and co-ordination with its many platforms, clear editorial policy, values focus on women and groups who are likely to be voiceless, and its very significant audiences

The project will support networks, journalists, and other emerging Syrian media organizations with training and resources. We will encourage production of content, coach our interlocutors, and then, using the world-class M&C Saatchi production facility in Dubai, polish and reproduce stories in a number of media – print, electronic, video, and radio for dissemination. The

The Newsroom process:

Animating these networks is based on a well-established six-phase process: **Communicate, Cultivate, Curate, Disseminate, Evaluate and Recalibrate.**

- **Communicate:** Communications with the inside Syria networks are maintained by telephone, email, Facebook and WhatsApp. End-to-end encryption capacity make WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger preferred conduits. A two-way dialogue is maintained through these systems regularly not just to exchange information and content but also to manage the needs of the stringers/journalists as part of Duty of Care. This communication also provides vital real-time insight on the ground militarily and politically in each locality
- **Cultivate:** This is about the cultivation at the grassroots of ideas around possible news and human-interest stories. Initially it will focus on the development, through exchange and dialogue, of the **core narrative** critical to the **single proposition** that will drive the coherent volume central to our overall strategy and approach. Routinely ideas will be exchanged daily between the **Newsroom** and the stringers and citizen reporters inside Syria via the Enab Balabi and Dream networks. This exchange will mine stories from the ground driven by local events and developments as well as specific investigative journalism designed to identify game changing reporting opportunities that can be exploited through the **Production Hub**. These game changing stories are those that are thought most likely to leverage the desired narrative trajectory and positively impact behaviours both inside Syria and globally.
- **Curate:** This is about collecting and organising stories and content that support and reinforce the core narrative. The cultivated raw material will be collected by the individual network members and contributors and archived and assessed by the Newsroom and fed into the production cycle and either made available for rapid distribution or identified for further development and use via the Production Hub. This will be a constant mutually reinforcing iterative process that will continuously improve the speed and quality of production and distribution.
- **Disseminate:** The curated product will then be distributed directly from the Newsroom via local news outlets, various Facebook accounts and other online platforms or, after further development, via the Production Hub and the international media. Both the raw and more developed products will be recycled through all platforms including point-to-point communications to be aggregated on personal high influence as well curated social media sites and pages. Printed products such as newspapers, newsletters and cartoon books as well as promotional materials like tee shirts and hats will be distributed via specific plans according to product and target audience via established distribution hubs that ensure that the in country distribution teams receive their requisite allocations. A chart showing some of indicative platforms is a **Enclosure 3**.

- **Evaluate:** The production process will ensure that products will be pre-tested either – where rapid turn around is required – by an in house Syrian focus group or where time allows via a formal process led by our consortium partner ORB. The ORB M&E Framework will also deliver an integrated self-informing impact evaluation process.
- **Recalibrate:** The evaluation process combined with the local insight and formal ORB research, polling and analysis will act as a constant self correcting mechanism that will concentrate on keeping the volume of content relevant, resonant and rigorously focussed on the single proposition/core narrative.

Capacity building

Capacity building, including institution strengthening and improving individual skills will be integral to the project methodology as proposed and have been carefully budgeted . Albany will lead on training, drawing on its extensive conflict and post-conflict communications-training portfolio and by specifically leveraging the **Albany Academy** <https://tinyurl.com/y8excuwf> courses and training modules. These tools have been developed to provide training in Strategic Communications, media skills and CVE and to support media development initiatives with particular focus on, professional ethics and codes of conduct, reporting on violence, journalist protection and media business management. All these will be made available to Syrian emerging media partners and journalists. Albany has also agreed with IREX that the IREX library of online Arabic language training materials will be made available to MOR project participants and beneficiaries. In return project produced content will be made available for use by the five IREX sponsored Syrian radio stations.

The project's MAO engagement lead will also provide coaching to MAO groups in terms of the effectiveness and targeting of their communications, technically backstopped by the combined training resources of Albany, M&C Saatchi, and Enab Baladi. Developing MAO institutional capacity to carry out coherent Media Operations will be critical to building their unity of vision and purpose and we intend to invest generously in this area of activity. This will be supported by a Albany SME Military Media Operations consultant – Stephen Harley.

The project will also provide resources to reinforce Enab Baladi's already impressive capacity to provide training to journalists in Syria, with an emphasis on investigative journalism, electronic newsgathering and core professional skills. Building this institutional capacity within a Syrian entity will not just help to develop indigenous capability but will ensure that the training provided through the project is grounded on a demand driven basis and properly services the genuine needs of the Syrian media more broadly. Enab Baladi will also provide capacity support to the communications arms of MAO groups through existing contacts and local networks. M&C Saatchi will also coach and mentor Syrian journalists, stringers, emerging Syrian media organizations (including Enab Baladi) to help them improve the quality of product on the understanding that higher production values will contribute to better story telling and thus greater impact.

All Consortium partners are committed to a particular focus on building the capacities of female journalists and media professionals, recognizing that this may require special attention due to the constraints on women in Syria. Furthermore, the Consortium will also focus on empowering citizen journalism, which includes and enfranchises minority communities and those who perceive themselves as with out a voice or marginalised but aligned with the moderate democratic values the project aspires to espouse. In this regard the Consortium will be proactive in assuring that the voices of women, children, the elderly, and the disabled are enabled and heard above the clutter.