



Government To Sift Social Media Posts For Background Checks

TN Note: The government is getting more sophisticated in analyzing public data such as social media. The original intent of social media simple enough but the unintended consequence now includes massive data mining. If it's there, it will be examined. This massive store of global data is a Technocrat's playground.

The Office of Personnel Management is preparing for a pilot program to automatically track public social media postings of people applying for security clearances.

OPM is conducting market research to find companies that can perform automated social media tracking and other types of Web crawling as part of the background investigation process, according to an April 8 [request for information](#) posted online. Responses from interested

companies are due by April 15.

OPM is looking for companies that can automatically browse “publicly available electronic information,” which includes information posted to news and media sites; Facebook, Twitter and other social media postings; blog postings; online court records, updates to photo and video-sharing sites; and information gleaned from online e-commerce sites, such as Amazon and eBay.

OPM is interested in companies that have fully automated capabilities — “with no human intervention,” according to the RFI — with the ability to search for information “in the parts of the World Wide Web whose contents are not indexed by standard search engines.”

Companies should also have a “robust identity matching algorithm” that won’t get tricked by similar names and return irrelevant results.

The pilot project tests the feasibility of obtaining social media tracking from commercial vendors and will be a joint effort between OPM, which is responsible for performing most federal employee background checks, and the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, according to an OPM spokesman.

Testing of the new tech will be conducted on a population of 400 investigations, the spokesman said, although there’s still no word on when the pilot project is set to get underway.

The new solicitation is the latest in a series of government initiatives to explore the use of social media in the background investigation process. Some of these efforts have been stymied by missed deadlines and unclear policy.

Pentagon and intelligence officials are leading an effort to establish “continuous evaluation” of clearance-holders using automated data checks to replace periodic reinvestigations that currently occur only once every five or 10 years.

Intelligence officials had planned to have a continuous evaluation capability in place for the most sensitive clearance holders by December

2014 but missed the deadline, according to progress updates [posted on Performance.gov](#). Officials now plan to roll out the new program in phases, with at least 5 percent of top-secret clearance holders being continuously evaluated by March 2017. As of December, about 225,000 personnel undergo the automatic checks.

A public-records continuous evaluation project is also currently underway at the State Department, according to the Performance.gov update.

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