

Request for Proposal: Diversity Data Consultant

08 April 2025

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SECTION 1: THE REQUIREMENT AND CONDITIONS

INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to invite you to take part in this Request for Proposal (RFP) for a diversity data consultant.

Launched in January 2023, ARIA is a Research & Development (R&D) funding agency. We fund teams of scientists and engineers to pursue research at the edge of the possible. From climate change to AI and bioengineering, society faces enormous challenges and opportunities that can be uniquely addressed by science and technology. ARIA was created to activate the UK's world-class R&D talent in new ways, so that we can meet these head on.

To fulfil our mission, we must ensure our scientific and technical breakthroughs translate into widespread impact. As a critical part of this, ARIA aims to increase the diversity of the individuals that our programme directors have meaningful interactions with during the discovery stage. The hypothesis is that by broadening the diversity of interactions at the top of funnel (i.e. the discovery stage), this will result in a more diverse set of applicants to programme funding calls and, in turn, those who get funded (i.e. outcome from the bottom of the funnel).

This RFP seeks proposals from either an individual or an organisation with robust research credentials, to conduct research on the R&D ecosystem. This will be across approximately 15 different [opportunity spaces](#), with the aim of providing benchmarking diversity data on the respective industries/fields/sectors that form part of this opportunity space, based on gender and geographic metrics. Proposals that can evidence experience of working on ED&I research and/or in the science, innovation or R&D ecosystem would be beneficial but not essential.

THINGS TO NOTE ABOUT OUR DISCOVERY PROCESS AND OPPORTUNITY SPACES

All our Programme Directors go through a discovery process - actively engaging and consulting with various stakeholders, across the UK, in their emerging opportunity space - to develop and refine their opportunity space. Once the opportunity space is established (and published on ARIA's website), Programme Directors will continue with their discovery process to develop their programme (a more focused area of research within their opportunity space), until their programme is approved. At this point, a funding call, based on the programme, will be launched. More detail on [our research model](#) is available on our website.

The 15 opportunity spaces that we are seeking diversity benchmarking data on, are at different stages of formation - 8 will be at the more nascent stages of development and will be in a more fluid state; and another 7 will be more established. The latter set are the ones currently set out on our website. The priority is to support the 8 Programme Directors that are yet to publish their opportunity stages, and are currently in the early stages of discovery.

THE REQUIREMENT (THE 'SERVICES')

Every Programme Director is required to meet the following diversity metrics during their discovery:

- **Gender:** Discovery interactions with women or non binary individuals must exceed the industry norm (based on those working in this industry) associated with the specific opportunity space.
- **Geography:** Discovery within the UK must be evidenced as covering the length and breadth of the UK (i.e. as across all nine regions and nations).

You would support us in:

Benchmarking diversity data to understand industry 'norms' in our opportunity spaces

- Spend time with ARIA and the Programme Directors to understand the respective opportunity space they want to explore - focusing on the sectors, fields or industries within the opportunity space.
- Working with ARIA's ED&I leads to understand the diversity metrics, ensuring they are defined in such a way so that they can be benchmarked against those available in the relevant sectors/fields/industries within the opportunity space.
- Undertaking research in each of the emerging opportunity spaces, with the aim of providing benchmarking diversity data on the researchers that work in these spaces, based on gender and geographic metrics. Given the timeframe (some opportunity spaces will be launched sooner than others), it is envisaged that this will predominately be secondary research, however, we're open to primary research being conducted also.
- In addition to providing benchmarking data based on the people working in the respective opportunity spaces, to also provide benchmarking data based on other R&D funders in the UK ecosystem and those with similar modes of operation internationally.
- Identify key stakeholders in the opportunity spaces that the Programme Directors could engage with as part of their discovery to ensure their programmes are well informed from a diversity perspective.

Expected output

Short report benchmarking diversity data on each opportunity space:

- Providing context and diversity data, on gender and geography, that can be used for benchmarking purposes by ARIA.
- Outlining any gaps in the available data, which are required to meet the desired outcome, and suggesting mitigations should any gaps exist.
- Making recommendations for useful key stakeholders in the diversity landscape of the opportunity space.
- Any other contextual information that may be relevant to support ARIA to achieve its wider EDI aims.

There may be the opportunity for us to engage the appointed consultant or organisation for an evaluation 9 - 12 months after the initial engagement. This secondary piece of work would evaluate the approach, hypothesis and impact of the projects selected from each programme funding call. Terms of service would remain the same, but a separate requirement would be outlined.

IMPLEMENTATION AND DEPLOYMENT TIMELINE

The supplier must be able to start work immediately after the Target Award date.

We imagine this initial work to take up to 20 days, spaced across three months. The majority of our opportunity spaces are already established, but some are still to be confirmed within this timeframe.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The contract will be placed on terms and conditions (T&Cs) provided by ARIA to the preferred bidder. The proposed terms will include the following principles:

- ARIA shall have the right to terminate the contract or part of the contract for convenience upon ninety days' prior notice.
- ARIA shall have the right to terminate the contract or part of the contract where the supplier fails to provide the service contracted, upon thirty days' prior notice.
- Any Intellectual Property generated in the performance of the contract shall vest in ARIA.
- The supplier shall indemnify ARIA, its employees, officers and agents against the supplier's infringement of third party Intellectual Property Rights.
- All information shared with the supplier shall be subject to confidentiality terms.

SECTION 2: PROPOSAL RESPONSE STRUCTURE

Bidders are invited to set out how they propose to deliver the Services outlined within this RFP.

The format below is set out as a guide and represents a maximum length response. If bidders choose to respond in a different format this will be acceptable as long as sufficient information is provided to be comparable to this format of response.

Executive Summary

Summarise how you will deliver the key services you are proposing and how these relate to ARIA's requirements set out in section 1 above.

Criteria A - Background, Profile and Experience

- A brief overview of your professional history and approach to research, and experience of working in complex areas where there is a lack of clearly defined or easily accessible data. Experience of working on ED&I related research and or in the science, innovation or R&D ecosystem, would be clearly beneficial but not essential.
- Provide information on your overall client base.

Criteria B - Your Approach to Service Delivery

- A clear articulation of what you see as our requirements and how you would meet them, setting out the methodology you would use for this service including your proposed plan for delivery and any tools to be used.

Case studies:

- Provide a minimum of two examples/reference customers, where you or your organisation has provided a similar service. With their consent, provide a summary of key successes, and overall learnings for the ARIA contract. ARIA may choose to verify case studies with the reference customers as part of the proposal review process. We will ask for your consent and suitable contact details beforehand.

Criteria C - Demonstration of Resource

- Provide examples of your ability to provide the operational and executional resources required to deliver without requiring ARIA internal resource

Criteria D - Commercial Proposal

- A rate card setting out the various roles within your organisation and their daily or hourly rate, please also identify the number of hours within your organisations working day, these will form part of any resultant contract
- All costs should exclude VAT
- Any additional costs which are likely to be incurred through the life of the contract
- Identify any critical assumptions, dependencies and exclusions required by the bidder in order to successfully execute any resultant Contract.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

The Bidder shall confirm as part of its submission adherence to the following requirements. Evidence in the form of copies of relevant certification must be provided as part of the submission and can be uploaded directly into the spaces provided in application portal:

Mandatory

- All ARIA data to be stored within the UK or EEA
- Confirmation of adherence with the [Government's Supplier Code of Conduct](#)

FORMAT OF PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

Format	PDF. Pages should be numbered, and the response should include the bidder's name inserted as a header
Page Guide	3 pages.
Responses to	ARIA's application portal In case of any technical issues with the portal please contact clarifications@aria.org.uk

SECTION 3: TIMELINES, REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

PROCUREMENT TIMELINE

The dates in the following timetable are provisional and may be subject to change at the reasonable discretion of ARIA.

Event	Date
RFP live	8 April 2025
Deadline for submission of clarification questions	28 April 2025 (18:00 BST)
Deadline for proposal submission	6 May 2025 (9:00 BST)
Notify shortlisted bidders	9 May 2025
Presentation by bidders to ARIA selection panel (to be held virtually)	w/c 12 May 2025
Preferred bidder informed	16 May 2025
Target Award date	27 May 2025
Target Contract Start date	27 May 2025

REVIEW STAGES

This review is intended to consist of 4 stages:

- Stage 1 - Written proposal.
- Stage 2 - Presentation by shortlisted respondents to ARIA selection panel. A maximum of 5 bidders will be shortlisted to present to ARIA at this stage.
- Stage 3 - Preferred bidder chosen and informed.
- Stage 4 - Discussions and negotiations with preferred bidder, onboarding planning and contract agreement.

The ARIA selection panel will be chaired by the Director of People Operations and the Strategy and Policy Lead.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The appointed provider will be selected against both their written response and presentation according to the following criteria:

- A. Background, Profile and Experience [20%]** - A clear demonstration of delivering similar requirements, including existing client information.

- B. Your Approach to Service Delivery [40%]** - A clear articulation of what you see as our requirements and how you would meet them, including any tools or approaches to be used.
- C. Demonstration of Resource [20%]** - Demonstrate that you have (or have access to) the expertise and resources required to deliver the services required.
- D. Commercial Proposal [20%]** - Commercial terms that demonstrate value for the tax-payer, including market comparables.

SECTION 4: CLARIFICATION AND CONDITIONS

CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS

Bidders are urged to review the RFP documentation, identify and submit any clarification questions no later than 18:00 (BST) 28 April 2025, via email to clarifications@aria.org.uk. Clarification questions received after this date will not be reviewed.

Any clarification questions or responses containing information that is of relevance to all bidders will be provided to all bidders that confirm their intention to participate. Answers to clarification questions will also be posted to the [ARIA website](#), following the deadline for submission of clarification questions. If bidders do not wish a query or response to be disclosed to other bidders, they must communicate this and the reason why, with the clarification question.

If you require this document in an accessible format, please contact clarifications@aria.org.uk.

CONDITIONS OF RFP

Confidentiality, Publicity, Conduct and Conflicts of Interest:

The contents of this RFP are confidential and must not be copied, reproduced, distributed or passed to any other person at any time except for the purpose of enabling the bidder to submit a proposal. ARIA may use the information included in a bidder's response for any reasonable purpose connected with this RFP. In particular, once a bidder has been excluded, ARIA reserves the right to use any ideas contained in that bidder's proposal in any ongoing discussions with other bidders but undertakes not to reveal the identity of the provider of these ideas. No publicity regarding the subject-matter of this RFP or the award of any Contract will be permitted unless and until ARIA has given express written consent to the relevant communication.

ARIA reserves the right to: a) waive or change the requirements of this RFP from time to time without prior (or any) notice being given by ARIA, in the event ARIA makes material changes to this RFP, ARIA may choose to extend the deadline for submission. b) reject any bidder that does not submit a compliant Proposal in accordance with the instructions in this RFP. c) disqualify any bidder that is guilty of serious misrepresentation in relation to its Proposal, d) withdraw this RFP at any time, or to re-invite Bidders on the same or any alternative basis; e) choose not to award any Contract as a result of the current procurement process; and f) make whatever changes it sees fit to the Timetable, structure or content of the procurement process, depending on approvals processes or for any other reason. ARIA will not be liable for any bidder's costs, expenditure, work or effort incurred by them in carrying out enquiries in relation to, proceeding with, or participating in, this RFP, sourcing process or procurement, including if the procurement process is terminated or amended by ARIA.

Any attempt by bidders or their advisors to influence the contract award process in any way may result in the Bidder being disqualified. Specifically, bidders shall not directly or indirectly, at any time: a) enter into any agreement or arrangement with any other person as to the form or content of any other Proposal, or offer to pay any sum of money or valuable consideration to any person to effect changes to the form or content of any other Proposal; b) enter into any agreement or arrangement with any other person that has the effect of prohibiting or excluding that person from submitting a Proposal; c) canvass ARIA or any employees or agents of ARIA in relation to this sourcing process; or d) attempt to obtain information from any of the employees or agents of ARIA or their advisors concerning another bidder or proposal. Bidders are responsible for ensuring that no conflicts of interest exist between the bidder and its advisors, and ARIA and its advisors. Any Bidder who fails to comply with this requirement may be disqualified from the procurement at the discretion of ARIA. Bidders recognise and accept that it will be at ARIA's sole discretion as to which, if any, proposal is accepted.

Clarification Questions and Responses

This section will be updated during the RFP process with clarification questions and responses that contain information that is of relevance to all bidders.