Advanced Research + Invention Agency

ARIA

Request for Proposal:

Exploring Climate Cooling Public Engagement RFP

04 April 2025
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ARIA

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Research
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Agency

SECTION 1: THE REQUIREMENT AND CONDITIONS

Introduction

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

Launched in January 2023, ARIA is a Research & Development (R&D) funding agency designed to take bold bets that complement and amplify the UK's world-class research ecosystem. We fund transformative science and technology capabilities that will benefit the UK and help humanity thrive.

This RFP seeks proposals to upskill ARIA's creators on the Exploring Climate Cooling programme in community engagement and collaborative co-design of outdoor experiments at both a cohort and a project-specific level. The desired outcome is to empower ARIA's creators to conduct thorough and meaningful engagement around their projects, and also to allow them to discern circumstances in which they may need to hire-in dedicated support for undertaking their engagement activities. The service provider will be commissioned by the ARIA programme team and will be required to report to both the ARIA programme team and the programme Oversight Committee.

The Requirement (the "Services")

The ARIA Exploring Climate Cooling programme aims to answer fundamental questions as to the practicality, measurability, controllability and possible (side-)effects of approaches that could cool the Earth. Where necessary and justified, ARIA will consider funding small, controlled, outdoor experiments to assess these approaches. Any such outdoor experiments will have to comply with the scientific and governance decision trees presented in the Exploring Options for Actively Cooling the Earth programme thesis and will also be subject to scrutiny by the programme Oversight Committee (see here for a description of the role of the Oversight Committee and the governance principles for the programme). In particular, any teams proposing outdoor experiments will be required to undertake suitable public engagement activities with stakeholders and local communities. It will be the responsibility of the teams proposing the outdoor experiments (not the providers of this request for proposal) to ensure that their engagement activities are carried out to the satisfaction of ARIA's leadership. Failure to do so will result in ARIA's leadership deciding not to release funds to allow the outdoor experiment to go ahead.

The services required of this request for proposal will give all the teams funded through the programme an overview of what effective and comprehensive engagement is in the context of the programme. The provider will produce best practice guides and toolkits that can be shared both within and outside the programme. Furthermore, the service provider will work with our creator teams to help them devise bespoke engagement plans for their projects.

The four specific required outcomes are:

1. Allow the teams that ARIA supports to develop suitable engagement plans relevant to their projects, empowering them to take full responsibility for their engagement plans
2. Where teams identify a need for additional, project-specific engagement or social science support, to assist those teams in finding suitable local partners and/or providers of these services, and equip them to be discerning customers of such providers
3. Conduct cohort-wide training to upskill our creators and to allow effective peer-to-peer support and learning across the cohort around engagement and inclusion
4. Produce a practical engagement toolkit that can be made publicly available for use by our creators and the wider community.

To these ends, consideration should be given to the following in proposals:

Developing and delivering training + resource products for all our creators (service providers should assume that 25 teams will require this training):

1. Delivering a collaborative "fundamentals of community engagement" workshop for our creators (2 days, in person in the UK with hybrid option), covering (at a minimum) sessions on:
   a. Community engagement workshop formats and workshop facilitation
   b. Approaches to project co-design
   c. Cultural competency and inclusive engagement practices
   d. Handling difficult conversations and contingency planning for challenging engagement situations
   e. Ethics in engagement and co-creation
   f. Applying the outputs of engagement
2. Developing practical tools for structured engagement, including:
   a. Materials to facilitate comprehensive mapping of potential stakeholders and collaborators
   b. Materials on data collection and feedback integration methods
   c. Materials on accessible communication strategies + best practices for facilitating informed deliberation of technical content, and communicating around risk assessments and environmental impact assessments
   d. Case studies of previous examples (or from analogous sectors) indicating best practices (especially for inclusion and involvement of local communities)
3. Facilitating peer learning opportunities through:
   a. Peer-to-peer mentorship/reflection on engagement practices/case studies of collaborative or challenging environments

b. Developing tools + systems for capturing the engagement that our teams perform, illustrating how engagement strategies change over time and how the specific engagement plans pursued map on to outcomes (e.g. funding for an outdoor experiment approved or not, an outdoor experiment is successfully implemented or not) to allow our creators to assess the strengths and weaknesses of their approaches

4. Consolidating the various materials and learnings from points 1-3 above into best practice guides or toolkits that can be made publicly available for others outside of the ARIA programme to use.

Specific support for teams undertaking outdoor experiments, including:

1. Assisting our creators with designing bespoke engagement plans (i.e. at the project/experiment level). This will include deep dives on the goals of their engagement process and how they plan to use the outputs of engagement; stakeholder mapping; public awareness + education activities; targeted consultation; co-design with local communities; digital and in-person engagement options; routes for ongoing dialogue and routes for presenting results back to communities and stakeholders.

2. Undertaking deeper dives on templates + best practices for transparent communication (education + briefings, public updates, accessible summaries of technical findings, clear explanations of how community input influences decisions).

3. Assisting our creators with defining their requirements for, and procuring, additional support. The process of drawing up these bespoke engagement plans should allow our creators to determine if they will need to hire local partners, or to procure the services of engagement specialists or social scientists to assist with conducting the engagement activities and community-led components. If such a need is identified, the service provider should be prepared to assist our creators in producing a shortlist of those who are suitably qualified.

Iteration, responsiveness + feedback

The service provider, the ARIA programme team and the programme Oversight Committee will work together to define success criteria for the services that are being delivered at both a cohort competency level, and at a project/experiment level for the teams for whom specific support is provided. The service provider should monitor the effectiveness of the services that they are delivering at a cohort and project/experiment level against these success criteria. Where practices need to be revised, this should be captured and documented.

The service provider should be prepared to share their approach, materials and learnings with both the ARIA programme team and the programme Oversight Committee in a spirit of constructive cooperation and collaboration in a challenging field. This may include attending meetings of the Oversight Committee and other ARIA events as necessary. The service provider should take a proactive approach to communicating with both the ARIA programme team and the programme

Oversight Committee with regards to the effectiveness of their training programme, and the development of creators and their engagement plans.

Supporting other ARIA programmes

In addition to the above requirements there will be opportunities to broaden the service and explore support to other ARIA programmes. This activity does not form the scope of this RFP but will be subject to discussions between ARIA and the successful bidder.

Who you are

You will be an organisation (or a consortium of organisations) that:

1. Specialises in bespoke community engagement, with a track record of training technical teams to conduct inclusive and collaborative engagement in potentially challenging situations
2. Is comfortable working with our creator teams to devise cohort-wide training activities and materials, and can point to examples where you have performed similar activities in the past
3. Is comfortable working with individual creator teams to devise project-specific engagement plans, and can point to examples where you have performed similar activities in the past
4. Has experience working with partner organisations for practical community engagement in the UK

Ideally, you will also be able to demonstrate that:

1. You have experience working with partner organisations for practical community engagement outside the UK
2. You have previous experience in community engagement around solar radiation modification or an allied field.

Implementation and Deployment Timeline

The initial contract will run for 36 months. The supplier must be able to start work immediately after the Target Award date, and ARIA will need to introduce the provider to the programme creators at the programme kick-off meeting in late June 2025. The service provider will be required to give a short introduction and participate in a Q&A at that workshop.

The "fundamentals of community engagement" workshop will need to be held within three months of the programme kick-off meeting. Specific support for individual project teams will need to be delivered to meet the requirements of those teams.

ARIA shall have the option to extend the contract beyond the initial contract period for up to a further 24 months, in 12 month increments, if required and subject to mutual agreement. ARIA and the programme oversight committee will conduct a review of the activities provided by the service provider on an annual basis.

Key Contract Terms

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:

- Pricing will be on a time and materials basis with a cap on costs.

- ARIA shall have the right to terminate the contract or part of the contract for convenience upon sixty 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 or at the direction of ARIA, be made public.

- 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 chose 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 the company structure, history, values and mission statement.

- What are your approximate revenue, staff numbers and client numbers linked to the Services?

- Provide information on your overall client base; for example, other clients supported, including relevant experience for similarly-sized, fast-paced and rapidly-scaling organisations.

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 delivery model you would use for this service including your proposed plan for delivery and any tools or technologies to be used.

- Provide details of your management, oversight structures and quality assurance processes that you would apply to this service.

Case studies

- Provide a minimum of two (and no more than three) examples/reference customers, where your organisation has provided a similar service in particular experience of community engagement on contentious or sensitive projects where local communities are concerned. With their consent, provide a summary of key successes, issues, mitigating actions and overall learnings (please attach these case studies as an annex to your proposal, which will not be included in the maximum page count). These should be no longer than two pages per case study.

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 resources (people, tools, etc) required to deliver.
- Provide a summary of your existing networks and access to local partners/service providers and/or evidence of your strategy and ability to identify and engage new local partners/service providers.
- Short bios on the proposed individuals supporting this requirement should be included as an annex.

Criteria D - Commercial Proposal

- Pricing will be on a time and materials with a cap on costs. To support evaluation (and negotiation) of your proposal you should include an estimate of costs for developing and delivering training + resource products for all our creators (service providers should assume that 25 teams will require this training). These costs will be used for the purposes of evaluation only.
- 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

- Confirmation of adherence with the Government's Supplier Code of Conduct

- Cyber Essentials

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	**4 pages**, plus annexes.
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
Issue RFP document	04 April 2025
Deadline for submission of clarification questions	28 April 2025
Deadline for proposal submission	02 May 2025 (13:00 BST)
Notification of selection for presentation	15 May 2025
Presentation by bidders to ARIA selection panel	20 May 2025
Preferred bidder chosen and informed	23 May 2025
Target Award date	30 May 2025
Target Contract Start date	30 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 responses 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 Programme Director (Mark Symes).

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 [30%] - A clear demonstration of experience working with comparable organisations in the R&D/innovation sector and delivering high impact, effective communications/engagement.

B. Your Approach to Service Delivery [30%] - A clear articulation of what you see as our requirements and how you would meet them.

C. Demonstration of Resource [30%] - Demonstrate that you have (or have access to) the expertise and resources required to deliver the services required.

D. Commercial Proposal [10%] - Commercial terms that demonstrate value for the tax-payer through transparent pricing models with no hidden costs.

Clarification Questions

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

Any clarification request 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 requests will also be posted to the ARIA website, following the deadline for submission of clarification requests. 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.

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.