

Request for Proposal: Standardisation, Translation, and Replication (ST&R) Partner | Precision Mitochondria

v1.0

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 from organisations able to build and operate the shared measurement, method-transfer and replication capability that allows nineteen parallel research efforts in our Precision Mitochondria programme to build on a collective, rapidly advancing state-of-the-art and to produce evidence that is comparable between teams, transferable between laboratories, and independently verifiable. We are seeking a partner/consortium of partners to enable the programme as opposed to a supplier of a defined service.

The Requirement (the “Services”)

The programme, and what it is trying to prove

ARIA’s Precision Mitochondria programme exists to make the mitochondrial genome programmable in vivo. Its galvanising demonstration is **the persistent, reproducible expression of a novel gene from engineered mitochondrial DNA in a mammalian system, independently replicated across teams.**

The programme funds 19 research efforts, running between 12 and 60 months, against a first-phase commitment of approximately £50M at the point of award. They are organised around four technical areas:

TA	Description
TA1 - Deliver	Getting nucleic acids across both mitochondrial membranes into the matrix. <i>The primary bottleneck, and deliberately attacked with the most diversity and the earliest decision points</i>
TA2 - Express	Expressing a novel gene from engineered mitochondrial DNA

TA	Description
TA3 - Maintain	Ensure introduced mtDNA persists, replicates, and maintains functionality.
TA4 - Transfer	Achieving <i>in vivo</i> mitochondrial engineering via transplantation or direct toolkit delivery.

The portfolio is built on high-risk parallelism: many mechanistically distinct attempts at the bottleneck, with funding structured so that unsuccessful approaches release capital for reallocation to those that show promise. Sixteen of the nineteen efforts address delivery.

This RFP concerns a capability that straddles all technical areas, **ST&R — standardisation, translation and replication**. It was deliberately excluded from the 2026 funding round so that it could be scoped against a live portfolio rather than designed in the abstract.

ARIA intends to award a single contract. That contract may be held by a consortium; see Institutional Type below.

The role of ST&R

Achieving the programme’s galvanising demonstration requires advances in delivery, expression, maintenance and transfer to work together. A capability developed by one team may unlock progress for several others, provided they can assess the evidence, reproduce the method and adapt it to their own systems. Enabling that exchange is central to the programme’s design.

ST&R provides dedicated capacity to turn individual advances into dependable, shared capabilities. Working with Creator teams, it supports the documentation and distribution of methods, materials and practical know-how; helps establish shared benchmarks, evidence and reporting standards; and coordinates independent evaluation and reproduction. This may involve transferring an assay to another laboratory or supporting the team that developed it with additional resources to evaluate other teams’ results.

Its value lies in helping the programme use its collective capabilities: making specialist expertise accessible, enabling teams to build on one another’s results, and supporting the integration of successful components. As technologies mature, ST&R should also help prepare them for wider use beyond the programme.

Shared needs across the programme

Creator teams are developing tools, methods and expertise with potential value across the programme. Realising that value requires dedicated work to make results comparable, methods

accessible and successful approaches transferable. Discussions with teams have highlighted several shared needs that the ST&R partner can help address.

A shared basis for interpreting results

Teams are developing assays and measurement platforms across different experimental systems. Comparing their results requires clarity about what each readout demonstrates, under which conditions and with what limitations. Shared benchmarks and reporting standards need to support meaningful comparison while preserving scientifically valuable differences between approaches.

Methods and materials that can move between laboratories

Teams need to build on the collective state of the art from the outset, including established capabilities such as mitochondrial isolation. As the programme produces new methods, these too need to become accessible and usable elsewhere. Transfer often requires characterised materials, quality specifications, demonstrations, troubleshooting and hands-on training alongside written protocols.

Known early needs include specifications for mitochondrial preparations covering purity, intactness, health, heterogeneity and usable lifetime, and an approach to comparison across cell lines, mtDNA haplotypes and cell ages, potentially including a small voluntary comparison panel. Teams have repeatedly identified mitochondrial isolation as the obvious first target: a comparison of the leading protocols, including commercial kits, against a common reference line would be useful to most of the portfolio within months rather than years.

Teams have also identified physical reference materials as an early priority, held as a quality-controlled, lot-tracked bank with certificates of analysis. Candidate contents include rho-zero and mtDNA-depleted lines, a heteroplasmy ladder at defined set points, a reference synthetic mtDNA cassette carrying a standard reporter, a positive-control carrier, and a deliberately non-delivering negative control.

These are illustrative starting points, not an exhaustive list or fixed priorities; the partner should refine them with Creators and ARIA as needs evolve.

Resources and coordination for independent evaluation and replication activities

Evaluating another team's result takes scientific time, materials and access to specialist capabilities. ST&R should help organise and resource this work, including matching teams to relevant expertise, supporting method transfer and agreeing appropriate evaluation designs. Depending on the method, this could mean enabling another laboratory to reproduce it or supporting an assay's developers to evaluate samples from other teams.

Shared learning and adaptation for wider use

Teams need visibility of available capabilities and previous work, including unsuccessful experiments. A minimum information package for shared results—including methods, experimental conditions, failed attempts and negative findings—would help others interpret the evidence, build on successes and avoid repeating failed approaches.

Progress across biological contexts also requires an explicit translation ladder connecting isolated organelles to live cells and ultimately in vivo models. Teams need clarity about the evidence, adaptations and capabilities required at each transition to plan how successful components can be combined and developed for wider use.

Key Terms used in this RFP

- + **Shared evidence and reporting standards:** An agreed description of the evidence and reporting needed to support a particular claim. It does not require every team to use the same experimental method.
- + **Acceptance criteria:** Conditions agreed in advance for interpreting the outcome of a specific evaluation or replication activity. These are **not** Creator Team milestones or Go/No-Go criteria.
- + **Method transfer:** The transfer of a method, materials and practical know-how so that it can be used by another laboratory.
- + **Independent sample evaluation:** Evaluation of a team's samples by another laboratory or established assay platform.
- + **Evaluation and replication activities:** An umbrella term covering independent sample evaluation, cross-laboratory reproduction, independent replication and orthogonal confirmation, undertaken individually or in combination.
- + **Independent replication:** Repetition of a relevant experiment by another laboratory with sufficient independence to test whether the reported result is reproducible.
- + **Orthogonal confirmation:** Testing a claim using a method based on a different measurement principle.

These activities are complementary rather than sequential. Each activity should state which form is being undertaken and what conclusion it is capable of supporting.

Section 2: Scope

Scope of the Services

The ST&R partner will work alongside ARIA and Creator teams to make existing and emerging capabilities accessible, comparable and usable across the programme. Its role combines technical coordination, support for method transfer, management of shared resources and organisation of evaluation and replication activities.

Creator teams are already developing assays, measurement platforms and other enabling technologies. The partner should build on these capabilities and relevant expertise elsewhere, working with their developers to support wider use. Applicants should distinguish activities they would deliver directly from those requiring contributions from Creator teams or other laboratories, and identify the resources needed for each.

Proposals should address the following scope areas, explaining their proposed priorities, sequence and delivery arrangements.

Note: we do not expect any one team to address all areas of scope, nor do we attribute equal weighting to each of the below. We are interested in how proposals prioritise the following scope areas, and their rationale for doing so. We also want proposals from those who have narrower expertise, and can introduce you to complementary teams if you would like us to.

- + **S1 - Identify roadblocks, capabilities and connections.** Maintain a current picture of the technical roadblocks teams face and their mechanistic basis, and of the methods, materials, platforms and expertise available across the programme and beyond it. Scope capabilities against roadblocks rather than cataloguing them in isolation. Help teams access relevant capabilities, drawing initially on the existing state of the art and incorporating new programme outputs as they emerge. This record is live and updated continuously as teams progress, not a one-off survey.
- + **S2 - Establish shared evidence and reporting standards.** Convene relevant teams and specialists to agree benchmarks, controls, reporting requirements and criteria for interpreting distinct claims: that cargo reached the mitochondrion; that it reached the matrix rather than the intermembrane space or surface; that delivered nucleic acid remained intact; that it was transcribed; that its transcripts were translated by mitochondrial ribosomes into functional proteins; that engineered mtDNA persisted and heteroplasmy was controlled over time; that transferred organelles or toolkits reached and functioned in recipient cells or

tissues; and that the organelle remained viable and functional, retaining its genetic identity. Work with assay developers to document what their methods demonstrate, their limitations and where complementary or orthogonal confirmation is needed. Develop this framework in stages across all four technical areas.

- + **S3 - Support access and method transfer.** Work with capability holders to make methods, materials and practical know-how available to other teams. These may include reference protocols, detailed standard operating procedures, shared reagents, cell lines, assay kits and characterised mitochondrial preparations. Support their use through quality specifications, video demonstrations, training, laboratory exchanges and troubleshooting, including records of deviations that affect performance. Where transfer is impractical, facilitate access to the originating team's platform or expertise.
- + **S4 - Coordinate evaluation and replication.** Using the definitions above, work with ARIA and participating teams to identify and prioritise claims for evaluation and aid in selecting the appropriate form or combination of activities: independent sample evaluation, cross-laboratory reproduction, independent replication and/or orthogonal confirmation. The partner will recommend activities for prioritisation, with ARIA retaining approval over programme priorities and funding. Recommendations should consider relevance to upcoming decisions, value across the portfolio, maturity and testability, availability of appropriate controls and capabilities, cost and Creator burden. Each activity must have an agreed plan covering the claim being tested, participating parties, study design, controls, acceptance criteria, resources, information-sharing arrangements and handling of discrepancies.
- + **S5 - Enable shared learning.** Establish and maintain an accessible, appropriately controlled record of capabilities, protocols and results. Agree a minimum information package for shared results, including experimental conditions, failed attempts and negative findings, with suitable metadata and versioning. Work with ARIA and institutional contacts to address practical barriers to sharing, including confidentiality, attribution and publication arrangements. Agree a practical process specifying what is shared, when and with whom; the agreements needed for data and material transfer and replication; publication review and credit; and named contacts and routes to timely technology-transfer or IP filing support.
- + **S6 - Support integration and translation (nice to have but not yet essential).** Help teams identify and address the adaptations needed to combine successful components and use them across biological contexts. Develop with Creators an explicit translation ladder connecting isolated organelles, live cells and in vivo models, identifying the evidence and capabilities required at each transition. As technologies mature, help identify requirements for wider adoption, including relevant quality, scale and regulatory considerations. Teams consulted generally placed this area beyond their first twelve months priority. Applicants should sequence it accordingly.

Out of scope

The Services do **not** include:

- + Optimising any team's method on its behalf;
- + Creation-stage or high-risk research and development, including developing new delivery approaches;
- + Any work that falls within the contracted scope of a funded team, or that would duplicate work already funded across the portfolio, except justified backup provision agreed with ARIA to maintain access to a shared capability.
- + Programme management of the funded portfolio. E.g. auditing funded teams, policing their milestones and gates, mandating what any team uses, etc.;
- + Owning or brokering any team's intellectual property;
- + Making a regulatory submission on behalf of any team;

Incremental and translational development to support shared use is in scope, including adaptation, characterisation and troubleshooting to make an existing result work elsewhere, at a different scale, or to a defined specification.

Operating a standing wet laboratory is not necessarily expected. However, the applicant may carry out discrete wet-lab work to produce a reference material, characterise a reference protocol or resolve a discrepancy between laboratories, when appropriate and in consultation with ARIA. Applicants should say how they would do so and at what scale.

Hard lines

This is a condition of the Services and is not negotiable.

The supplier works with funded teams, relevant specialists and ARIA to agree evaluation designs and acceptance criteria; supports access to reference protocols, specifications and materials; and coordinates evaluation and replication activities across participating laboratories, reporting results to ARIA and to the teams concerned.

The supplier's outputs are not determinations on any funded team's milestones or Go/No-Go decisions. **Decisions to continue, vary or stop a funded project rest with ARIA alone.**

How Creator Participation will work

Creator participation falls into three categories:

- + **Existing contractual obligations.** This RFP does not change the obligations of funded Creator Teams under their existing agreements with ARIA. ARIA alone is responsible for interpreting and managing those obligations
- + **Voluntary adoption.** The ST&R partner may recommend shared methods, standards, platforms and reporting approaches, but it will not have authority to mandate their use. Adoption should be earned through demonstrated scientific value, proportionate implementation effort and meaningful involvement of participating teams.
- + **Additional activities.** Method transfer, production of materials, additional reporting, experimental evaluation or replication that falls outside a Creator Team’s funded scope will take place only where the activity is scientifically justified, agreed with the team and ARIA, appropriately resourced, and subject to the necessary institutional permissions. The ST&R partner cannot create unfunded obligations or an additional reporting relationship for Creator Teams.

Decisions concerning the disclosure or transfer of specific unpublished results, materials or background intellectual property remain subject to the relevant funding agreement and the approval of the rights-holding institution.

Existing capabilities and the ST&R partner’s role

ST&R is funded through two routes: this contract and a separate route for contributing activities carried out by funded Creator teams. Capabilities already being developed within the programme include assays and measurement platforms intended for wider use. Applicants should explain how they would work with these teams to make their capabilities available across the programme, identifying any additional resources required without duplicating work already funded.

This contract is for an independent partner with no stake in which technical approach succeeds. Its role is to work with capability holders and coordinate access, evaluation and replication across the programme.

Who owns what

The table below summarises how ARIA, the ST&R partner and Creators will work together on activities within the scope of the ST&R partnership. It does not transfer ownership of Creator IP, materials or data to the ST&R partner, or give the partner authority over the wider programme.

	ARIA	ST&R Partner(s)	Creators
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ST&R priorities and work planning	Sets priorities, approves significant changes	Develops and maintains the delivery plan	Provides input on needs and feasibility
Roadblock and capability mapping	Provides programme context	Leads the mapping and keeps it current	Identifies needs, capabilities and gaps
Evidence standards and measurement	Advises and approves programme-wide requirements	Develops proposed frameworks, benchmarks, and reporting approaches	Advises on scientific relevance and practicality
Access, method transfer and training	Supports and approves where programme decisions or additional funding is required	Coordinates study design, commissioning and reporting	Provides technical input and participates where agreed
Evaluation and replication activities	Approves priorities and funding	Coordinates study design, commissioning + reporting	Provides technical input + participates where agreed
Knowledge, data and sharing governance	Owens the programme-level approach and requirements	Operates the agreed repository, processes and access arrangements	Contributes agreed information and uses the shared infrastructure
Integration, translation and wider adoption	Leads programme direction, identifies and coordinates opportunities, supports integration	Supports integration efforts and coordination	Provides expertise, materials and evidence where agreed
Programme sharing policy and contentious matters	Makes final decisions on confidentiality, attribution, publication and IP policy, and resolves disputes	Supports implementation and escalation	Is consulted on decisions affecting its work
Asset-specific permissions and institutional agreements	Supports and advises where needed	Facilitates the process but does not make decisions on behalf of rights holders	Retains authority over own data, materials, protocols, publications and background IP
Programme Decisions and escalation	Makes funding, contractual final escalation decisions, technical assessment of milestones	Raises issues and provides evidence or recommendations	Is consulted or informed as appropriate

Responsibilities for individual transfers, evaluations and replication studies will be agreed separately with the participating organisations, including who is responsible for experimental delivery and approvals.

To reiterate, the ST&R partner will facilitate and administer agreed sharing processes but will not determine, negotiate or take ownership of Creator Team intellectual property. ARIA will retain responsibility for programme-level policy and the resolution of contentious matters. Decisions concerning the disclosure or transfer of specific materials, data or background intellectual property remain with the relevant rights-holding institution.

What we ask applicants to propose

- + **Priority and sequence** — which scope areas you would address first, what your first useful outputs would be, and why, given that most binding decision points in the portfolio fall between month twelve and month twenty-four of each project.
- + **Approach to standardisation** — how you would work with Creator teams to identify where standardisation would add value and agree appropriate measures. What information would you need, and how would you weigh improved comparability against implementation overhead and scientifically meaningful differences between approaches?
- + **Creator participation and burden** — Explain how you will earn participation without creating unnecessary administrative or experimental burden. Distinguish the contribution expected from your own organisation, Creator Teams and commissioned laboratories, and identify how additional Creator activity would be scoped, agreed and resourced.
- + **Residual value** — what the engagement leaves behind that has value beyond the programme, who would hold and maintain it, and how continued access and any ongoing activities could be funded.
- + **Failure** — what would constitute failure of this capability, and what ARIA should measure at twelve months to know. Measures should include inter-laboratory reproducibility of at least one programme-relevant claim, with within-laboratory and between-laboratory variability quantified; successful use of transferred methods and materials by recipient laboratories; turnaround times; and resolution of shared-capability dependencies.

Institutional Type

ARIA is agnostic as to institutional type. We will consider proposals from established service providers; research institutes, metrology institutes and national centres; consortia hosted across existing institutions; startups; and organisations proposing to constitute a new body for the purpose. The only thing we mandate is for the provider(s) to have or establish a UK-based entity and perform the bulk of the work in the UK. We welcome providers headquartered outside of the UK thinking of setting up UK-subsidaries to deliver this work.

ARIA intends to award a single contract under this call. That contract may be held by a consortium of organisations, in which case the proposal must name a single lead contracting party and set out how the consortium is governed, how its members are bound to the Services, and what happens if a member withdraws. ARIA may run further calls for this capability in future; bidders should not assume this is the only one.

Eligibility

Funded Precision Mitochondria Creator Teams may not apply to this call, whether as lead or as a consortium member. It does not mean funded teams are excluded from ST&R. ARIA intends to fund ST&R-contributing activities carried out by Creator Teams through a separate route and no team's eligibility for that route is affected by this RFP.

Implementation and Deployment Timeline

The initial contract will run for 36 months.

The supplier will ideally be able to start work immediately after the Target Award date (February - March).

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 [note, this is the maximum amount of extensions allowed], if required and subject to mutual agreement.

Sample deliverables

ARIA envisages the following deliverables within the first six months. These are a sample minimum; applicants should propose what else lands in the same window, and should say which of these they would bring forward.

By day	Deliverable

60	+ Capability map v1. + Roadblock and challenge map v1 — what each team is working on, what is blocking it, and where exchange would accelerate progress most. + Gap analysis v1 — distinguishing the gaps identified from the plan to address them. Critical dependencies, required availability and fallback arrangements identified. + First transfer or evaluation pilot selected, with participating laboratories named and provisional sharing arrangements in place.
90	+ First method-transfer or cross-laboratory reproduction pilot initiated, using an existing capability. + Working groups identified convened
120	+ Reference materials, kits and protocols to be developed or acquired, identified and prioritised, with a delivery plan. Evidence criteria agreed for the first pilot.
180	+ Metadata and data infrastructure strategy identified. + Evidence ladders v1 — the modular claim-by-claim evidence structure described under shared evidence and reporting standards, in a publishable draft. + One end-to-end method-transfer or cross-laboratory reproduction pilot completed using an existing capability, with performance, effort, discrepancies and lessons documented

The capability maps are to be maintained continuously thereafter, not delivered once.

Indicative scale

An indicative envelope of at least £5.0M is reserved for the full contract period for ST&R shaped activities. This will be split between funded teams already in the portfolio, as well as the successful ST&R partner. This envelope also includes funds for existing teams to carry out any work identified by the successful partner.

ARIA expects to award up to £4M in this contract.

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:

- + 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.
- + The default expectation is that no new IP will accrue to the partner(s) onboarded as part of the ST&R call. Partner(s) will retain any background IP they use in performing the Services. The default expectation is that in the event any new IP is developed it will accrue to the relevant Creator(s) on a case-by-case basis. In some circumstances Creator(s) may agree to grant bespoke IP to the partner(s) on a case-by-case basis if all relevant parties agree and subject to separate bespoke terms being agreed.
- + 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 3: PROPOSAL RESPONSE STRUCTURE AND SELECTION CRITERIA

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.

The appointed provider will be selected against both their written response and presentation according to the criteria as set out below with the following weightings.

The appointed provider will be assessed against the criteria listed below and, if shortlisted, a working session with ARIA.

Executive Summary

Provide a concise summary of your proposal, including:

- + your understanding of the purpose of the ST&R capability;
- + the operating model you propose;
- + the first useful outputs you expect to deliver;
- + your priorities for the first 180 days;
- + the organisations and key individuals responsible for delivery;
- + your proposed total price and its principal components;
- + the most important assumptions and dependencies; and

Criteria A - Scientific and Measurement Credibility (20% Weighting)

Demonstrate that the proposed team has the scientific judgement, measurement expertise, motivation and experience required to deliver the Services.

Your response should cover:

- + relevant biological, measurement and experimental-design expertise;
- + experience of standards, inter-laboratory studies, reference materials, method transfer or replication
- + how you will access expertise or facilities not held by the core team; and
- + up to two comparable case studies, provided as an annex.

Deep mitochondrial expertise is welcome but not essential where the bidder can demonstrate credible access to it and relevant experience in establishing shared capability in an unsettled field.

Criteria B - Approach, Priorities and Delivery Plan (30% Weighting)

Set out how you would deliver the Services.

Your response should cover:

- + your understanding of the programme's need and the role of ST&R;
- + how you would prioritise and sequence the six scope areas;
- + your plan and intended outputs for the first 180 days;
- + how you would develop shared evidence and reporting standards without unnecessarily prescribing methods;
- + how evaluation and replication activities would be selected and delivered; and
- + what ARIA should measure at twelve months to determine whether the capability is succeeding.

Bidders should demonstrate a credible route to cover the full scope over the contract period. This does not mean that all six scope areas must begin at the same time or receive equal emphasis.

Criteria C - Operating Model, Resources and Creator Participation (20% Weighting)

Explain how the capability would operate across ARIA, Creator Teams, participating institutions and external laboratories.

Your response should cover:

- + how you would implement and govern a hub-and-spoke operating model;
- + the core team, consortium members and specialist resources available;
- + access to wet-laboratory, analytical and reference-material capability;
- + how you would earn Creator participation while minimising administrative and experimental burden;
- + how additional Creator or third-party work would be agreed and resourced; and
- + how responsibilities, decisions and escalation would be divided between the parties.

Provide a proposed RASCI or equivalent responsibility model as an annex.

Criteria D - Independence, Governance and Lasting Value (15% Weighting)

Explain how you would maintain trust and neutrality across a portfolio containing academic and commercial participants.

Your response should cover:

- + actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest and how they would be managed;
- + how you would remain independent of the success of any particular technical approach;
- + how you would operate within ARIA-led arrangements for data, confidentiality, sharing and contentious matters;
- + how information, protocols and results would be maintained and made appropriately accessible; and
- + what useful capability would remain after the contract, who would maintain it and how continued access could be supported.

The ST&R partner will facilitate agreed sharing processes but will not determine or negotiate Creator Team intellectual-property rights.

Criteria E - Commercial Proposal and Value for Money (15% Weighting)

Provide a transparent commercial proposal that distinguishes between:

- + core team and central capability costs;
- + defined deliverables or work packages;
- + third-party laboratory, materials and other pass-through costs;
- + work assumed to be funded separately through Creator Teams; and
- + optional or scalable activities.

State all material assumptions, dependencies and exclusions. Explain how costs will be controlled as programme priorities change and how the proposal avoids duplicating capabilities already funded elsewhere in the portfolio.

ARIA will assess value for money in the context of quality, deliverability, risk and expected programme benefit. The lowest-priced proposal will not necessarily receive the highest score.

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

The successful bidder must:

- + confirm adherence to the Government Supplier Code of Conduct;
- + hold [Cyber Essentials](#) certification, or demonstrate independently verified equivalent controls, before receiving ARIA data and maintain those controls throughout the contract;
- + maintain proportionate information-security, incident-response, business-continuity, disaster-recovery and service-exit arrangements;
- + identify the locations from which ARIA information will be stored, processed or accessed, including relevant subprocessors;
- + comply with applicable UK data-protection and international-transfer requirements and obtain ARIA's approval before materially changing processing locations; and
- + ensure that laboratories and reference-material providers use quality-management and assurance arrangements appropriate to the work they perform.
- + [Cyber Essentials](#)

Desirable

Depending on your proposal:

- + [Cyber Essentials Plus](#) or independently verified equivalent controls;
- + ISO/IEC 27001 or an equivalent information-security management system;
- + ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation for relevant testing or measurement laboratories;
- + ISO 17034 accreditation or equivalent controls for reference-material production; and
- + ISO 9001 or an equivalent quality-management system.

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 **Maximum of 8 pages.** The following may be supplied as annexes and will not count towards the page limit:

- + up to two case studies;
- + short biographies of key personnel;
- + consortium or organisational structure;
- + proposed RASCI;
- + conflict-of-interest declaration; and
- + detailed commercial schedule.

Responses to [ARIA's application portal](#)

In case of any technical issues with the portal please contact
clarifications@aria.org.uk

SECTION 4: 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
Deadline for submission of clarification questions	26 October 2026
Deadline for proposal submission	9 November 2026 (13:00 GMT)
Notification of selection for discussions	27 November 2026
Further discussions with ARIA team	w/c 7 December 2026
Preferred bidder chosen and informed	21 December 2026
Target Contract signature	January 2027
Target Contract Start date	February 2027

Review Stages

This review is intended to consist of 4 stages:

- + Stage 1 - Written proposal
- + Stage 2 - Invitation to discussion with ARIA team with shortlisted respondents
- + Stage 3 - Preferred bidder chosen and informed.
- + Stage 4 - discussions and negotiations with preferred bidder, onboarding planning and contract agreement.

Clarification Questions

Bidders are urged to review the RFP documentation, identify and submit any clarification requests **no later than 26 October 2026**, 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.