ARIA Activation Partners

Request for Proposals

Date: 1 April 2026

v1.0

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Summary

What is ARIA? ARIA is an R&D funding agency created to unlock technological breakthroughs that benefit the UK and beyond. Created by an Act of Parliament, and sponsored by the Department for Science, Innovation, and Technology (DSIT), we fund teams of scientists and engineers to pursue research at the edge of what is scientifically and technologically possible.

What is this Request for Proposals (RFP) about? This RFP is seeking up to 8-10 new Activation Partners to accelerate breakthroughs within ARIA's opportunity spaces, with a significant emphasis on organisations from the field of AI in Science to equip ARIA-funded researchers with cutting-edge tools. We're also seeking organisations to augment the science translation ecosystem around ARIA.

Why does this matter? Delivery of science and technology breakthroughs can be substantially accelerated through the use of new tools and an ecosystem of mission-driven and ambitious partners. Success would accelerate the time to real-world impact for ARIA's opportunity spaces.

What will be funded? A budget of £100 million is available to support up to 8-10 organisations to deliver new and bespoke activities to support ARIA's opportunity spaces over 3 years.

Who should apply? Applications are welcome from various organisations (non-profits, startups, companies, etc.) with a focus on accelerating science using advanced AI capabilities or a strong track record in translating research into meaningful impact. A UK presence/focus is essential, and non-UK applicants must plan to establish one or partner with a UK entity.

How to apply? Submit a four-page proposal plus a cost sheet [here](). The proposal must cover your organisation overview, proposed activities, ARIA relevance, track record, execution plan/team, timeline, UK presence plan (if applicable), potential restrictions, and expected costs.

Applications and teaming tool opens	1st April 2026
Webinar	15th April 2026 (12:30 BST)
Clarification Questions Deadline	14th May 2026
Proposal Submission Deadline	21st May 2026 (14:00 BST)
Shortlisted applicants notified	8th July 2026

Final decisions communicated	12th August 2026
Contracts commence	1st September 2026

Resources

Teaming tool: We have created a teaming request form to facilitate finding potential collaborators. By following the link to the sign up form here you will be able to register, submit your details, and gain access to a list of other individuals seeking to find/share their expertise. All requests are screened via ARIA's internal team prior to access, after which connections will be made based on aligned expertise.

Webinar: We are hosting a webinar on 15 April 2026 at 12:30PM BST to provide an overview of the Activation Partner call objectives, scope, and application process, and to give potential applicants an opportunity to ask questions to the ARIA team. Please register your interest and submit questions in advance for this event here.

Submit your proposals here.

1. Introduction and Overview

ARIA is launching this RFP to find up to 8-10 new [Activation Partners](#) to work closely with us to accelerate the discovery and translation of breakthroughs in our [opportunity spaces](#).

Launched in January 2023, ARIA is a UK R&D funding agency built to back scientists and engineers to take bold scientific bets to drive widespread societal impact through R&D. Succeeding in this mission requires creating the conditions to take multiple, highly informed shots on goal, rapid learning, and the translation of breakthroughs from the lab to the real world.

One way we achieve this is by partnering with world-leading organisations, our Activation Partners. In just over a year, our first partners have built a translation ecosystem around ARIA and accelerated the R&D timelines of our researchers. **We're now looking to build on this momentum with a new set of partners to further augment science translation at ARIA. As well as this, we're expanding our scope to focus on accelerating our R&D with cutting edge AI in Science tools** which may include: AI for Science models, scientific reasoning systems, automated/autonomous labs, AI Scientists, or a combination of these. This is because we believe that access to the emerging potential of advanced AI capabilities for scientific discovery could meaningfully increase the velocity of our R&D, positioning our spaces towards greater success.

2. Activation Partners

To catalyse further momentum from the [early learnings and successes of our first cohort of Activation Partners](#), we're launching this call to find new partners to increase the velocity of the cutting-edge research we fund and its translation into the real-world. We're envisioning a significant portion of our new cohort to be focused on the application of AI to Science. These AI in Science partners will be chosen alongside others uplifting our programmes in ways such as unlocking latent ideas, empowering technical talent and supporting promising new ventures across our [opportunity spaces](#).

Success for these partnerships is not just about hitting metrics; it's about working alongside us to foster the environment that propels our opportunity spaces — and the UK — towards massive social and economic outcomes by accelerating research and delivering translational outcomes.

As part of this, we'll provide funding for organisations to carry out new, bespoke activities in one or more of our opportunity spaces. Across our portfolio of new partners we expect organisations to work on science translation and/or the application of AI to Science - you can do either one alone, or both, and any activity should align with your expertise and incentives. We encourage proposals

where our funding can be catalytic, helping you expand or do bigger things than you're able to do right now.

Our first cohort of Activation Partners has provided learnings on what works and doesn't, shared here. However, we want to be led by your instincts and experience — and ask you to be creative with how you imagine interacting with our spaces. To spark ideas, here are examples:

+ Support our Creators with access to AI capabilities, and deploy engineers in the project teams to increase adoption.
    + These capabilities may include AI Scientists, autonomous reasoning systems, frontier AI for Science models or tools for uses such as hypotheses generation, data analysis, and autonomous design of experiments.
+ Provide infrastructure for scientists to leverage AI capabilities for their R&D, such as autonomous labs able to interface with a range of AI for Science models across institutions.
+ Facilitate new incentive mechanisms, such as prizes, to drive non-conventional innovation.
+ Develop tools, such as foundation models, or infrastructure, including autonomous labs, that R&D innovators within and beyond the ARIA ecosystem can benefit from.
+ Create an AI for Science talent fellowship or training programmes to equip early career scientists with skills to harness these tools effectively.
+ Identify/build talent pipelines into our spaces and design ways to empower them.
+ Run a venture creation programme focused on our spaces.
+ Unblock research projects with expert engineering and hardware support across scientific disciplines.

We're open to submissions that propose a spectrum of flexible options. We're also open to multiple proposals from the same applicant.

3. Deliverables for ARIA

Our requirements are for partnerships to **undertake new activity within our opportunity spaces and contribute across our programme lifecycles**. This should provide us and our R&D Creators, (the individuals, teams or organisations who are recipients of ARIA's R&D funding) critical resources and capabilities. We'll be looking for commitment to these in proposals and we'll agree specific success metrics and milestones during contract negotiations.

Our opportunity spaces are areas led by ARIA Programme Directors that we believe are likely to yield breakthroughs. Within these, ARIA will have undertaken initial work on scoping the space,

building talent pipelines and dedicating circa £10-100 million to focused R&D. An ARIA opportunity space is:

+ Important if true (i.e. could lead to a significant new capability for society).
+ Under-explored relative to its potential impact.
+ Ripe for new talent, perspectives, or resources to change what's possible.

Our current opportunity spaces can be found [here](#) and we are now at a point where we are predominantly looking to build critical mass and momentum in existing spaces.

From all partners we'd be looking for commitment to the following deliverables. We ask you to include how these will be delivered in your proposal, including measures and metrics:

+ Support the success of our Programme Directors and R&D Creators through, for example, tools that accelerate their work, entrepreneurial training/resource sharing, and spending dedicated time with them to understand opportunities and challenges.
+ Facilitate the real-world dissemination of ARIA-backed technology, be it through supporting product and tool development, facilitating technology commercialisation and/or access to high quality market knowledge.
+ Collaborate with other Activation Partners to compound the impact of individual activities and share learnings.
+ Intentionally work with the wider UK ecosystem.
+ Participate in ARIA convenings and community activity.

3.1.   Interfacing with ARIA

Partners are expected to contribute to our opportunity spaces through one or both of the following operational modes:

1. **Working directly with ARIA:** This involves close collaboration with ARIA's R&D Creators and programme teams, providing bespoke activities to accelerate programmes and projects. For example, this may be through giving Creators access to facilities, models, or expertise.
2. **Running alongside ARIA:** This mode focuses on broadening the scope of activity within our opportunity spaces by identifying and engaging with new ideas and talent that ARIA might not otherwise reach, thereby increasing variance and overall activity. For example, this may be through fellowship programmes, running incubators, or creating new technical capabilities within ARIA's opportunity spaces.

Your proposal must clearly state which of these modes you intend to operate within (or both) and detail your proposed operational strategy for implementation.

4. What does success look like?

Success is about working alongside us to foster the right environment for our opportunity spaces and the research we fund within them, to deliver breakthroughs that benefit everyone.

Whether you're a team providing our funded researchers with tools to reach their deliverables faster or translating these discoveries beyond the lab, we want to be able to look back and say that without this specific partnership, this work may either never have happened or reached the real world. Specific success metrics for these partnerships will depend on each partner's activity but at a high level, success over time will mean our partnerships:

+ **Unlock latent ideas:** higher volume, higher quality and higher variance ideas within our opportunity spaces, increasing the likelihood of new discoveries. This could include accelerating ARIA's Creators by supporting them with expertise and/or tools that accelerate the delivery of their milestones, such as engineering expertise or AI tools. It could also include developing new technical capabilities within our opportunity spaces.

+ **Empower talent:** new and/or upskilled talent to drive impact in our spaces with a greater depth/breadth/diversity of talent in our ecosystems and stronger communities.

+ **Accelerate societal impact:** an increase in teams that are willing and able to translate their technology. This could involve tailored regulatory pathways support, strategic go-to-market planning, matching technical teams with experienced operators or increasing the diversity of founder-friendly capital available such as philanthropic, non-profit or venture.

+ **Provide insights and connectivity:** more value-informed and connected opportunity spaces with a greater chance of real world applications from breakthroughs.

+ **Build self-sustaining momentum:** the partnership should aim to create activities in our opportunity spaces that will endure beyond ARIA's funding term for example by securing follow-on funding, demonstrating recurring internal demand, or enabling other funders to invest. Success means establishing a sustainable capability in the UK that is not solely reliant on ARIA's support for its continuation and growth..

This is not an exhaustive list. We're also interested in outcomes we might have not thought about but could be instrumental in increasing our odds of success. We encourage you to apply if you think you can surprise us.

5. Budget

For this RFP, we expect to allocate £100m (inc VAT where applicable) across a maximum of 8-10 partners over a period of three years (with the option to extend if both parties agree). Funding awards for individual organisations will vary in size between partners and we encourage you to request the resources you need to carry out the project - don't hesitate to be ambitious. Exact allocations will be determined through a negotiation process. The ultimate funding allocation will depend on the proposals received.

If you don't need funding but want to contribute to our opportunity spaces, we're also interested in working with you and encourage you to submit a proposal.

There are a few constraints on this funding:

+ We'll fund your costs monthly in arrears (see our eligible cost guidance for more details) on a time and materials basis. We will not fund investment capital or incorporation costs of establishing a UK presence.
+ The funding can be provided in phases that allow you to ramp up over time. All agreements will be phased with regular milestone reviews and go/no-go milestones to determine progress.

Our funding should be used to catalyse self-sustaining activities that will aim to outlive our funding term for example by securing match funding and/or enabling other funders to come in alongside or after us. We ask you to share with us how you will build this self-sustaining momentum into the partnership, and what signals will help us to know if the activity is building self-sustaining momentum.

6. Eligibility

6.1. Eligibility & Who You Are

We don't have hard constraints on the type of organisation we'll work with. You might be a: nonprofit organisation, startup, established company, fellowship programme, deeptech investor, incubator/accelerator, venture creator, a combination of these, or something else.

What we do know is that we are looking for partners who have:

+ Deep technical expertise and a demonstrable track record of creating new technical capabilities and/or translating research into meaningful impact.
+ Existing/or ability to attract and retain an all-star team as well as a clear thesis on technical talent identification and activation.

+ Proven capacity to deliver.

+ A commitment to operate as founder/scientist friendly.

+ Willingness to engage within an ecosystem of partners and can bring routes to high-quality market knowledge (on both talent + ideas), and/or capital.

+ For AI in Science applicants, a clear proposal to accelerate science with advanced AI capabilities such as AI Scientists, AI for Science models, automated/autonomous labs.

+ Dedicated skin in the game for the activities and a willingness to commit their own resources including people, time and/or capital into the partnership

+ Extreme ambition.

6.2. Joint-proposals/multi-party proposals

We welcome joint proposals that involve more than one organisation or form a consortium, however we ask that a lead organisation is identified with all other collaborators identified as proposed subcontractors/sub grantees to the project. You could alternatively choose to create a special purpose vehicle.

6.3. Finding potential collaborators and teaming

For those seeking specific expertise to support their proposal, we have created a teaming request form to facilitate finding potential collaborators. By following the link to the sign up form here you will be able to register, submit your details, and gain access to a list of other individuals seeking to find/share their expertise. All requests are screened via ARIA's internal team prior to access, after which connections will be made by individual users based on aligned expertise.

6.4. Webinar

We're hosting a webinar on 15 April 2026 at 12:30PM BST to provide an overview of the Activation Partner call objectives, scope, and application process, and to give potential applicants an opportunity to ask questions to the ARIA team. Please register your interest and submit questions in advance for this event here.

6.5. UK focus/presence

Our priority and focus is on funding activity that takes place in the UK. We can select applicants that are not based in the UK however we'd expect you to build/establish a UK presence or work with a UK-based partner. In any case most of the funded activity should be conducted in the UK.

7. Partnership management

7.1. Partnership milestones

We will collaboratively track each partnership's progress using milestones agreed during the negotiations phase.

Milestones should:

+ Be specific, measurable, and signify a meaningful step towards reaching the goals of the partnership.
+ Include details on activities used to achieve each milestone.
+ Be defined for the full duration of the project.
+ Be staged such that early activities maximise the value of information gained to inform future iterations - we encourage activities to ramp up in scope and ambition throughout the partnerships.
+ Include major "Go / No-Go" decision points for both sides to evaluate if individual activities, or the partnership as a whole, are progressing as envisioned or require termination or pivots.

Progress reviews will occur quarterly and will consist of a written update from partners. During each quarterly progress meeting, partners and the ARIA Team will review the partnership's progress using the agreed upon milestones as a foundation. As part of that discussion, partners will be encouraged to think through the following questions:

+ Have the milestones for the previous quarter been met? If not, why not — and what might be mechanisms (possibly unconventional) to get back on track including where ARIA can support?
+ What has been learned this quarter that may inform future stages of the partnership? E.g., is there a case to be made to pivot or scale up the partnership?
+ Are there any additional resources, tools, or services that you've learned would significantly accelerate your progress? How could ARIA help?

Written and/or verbal feedback will be delivered to partners following each quarterly review meeting. In addition to the above, each partnership will undergo a deeper mid-point review. Based on insights gained in the first half of the project, later milestones may be revised where appropriate.

7.2. Activation Partner events

In an effort to foster a collaborative research environment, we will host regular collaboration sessions and events to allow Activation Partners to exchange updates, ideas, and feedback on best paths forward. All these events will be held in the UK and partners are strongly encouraged to attend.

7.3. IP + Legals

Any pre-existing IP or foreground IP generated throughout the partnership will remain the property of the originator. However, where funded activity results in a standalone brand identity, ARIA shall own any resulting IP such that it could operate the project independently of the partner if required.

ARIA's priority has been to create an approach to intellectual property that is science-founder friendly. We expect our partners to follow the spirit of this founder friendly approach.

While we do not intend to establish legal partnerships, joint ventures, or relationships of agency in respect of the in-scope activities, we remain open to considering alternative delivery or collaboration models where these clearly support the objectives of the programme. Any resultant contracts that are not intended to form a special purpose vehicle will use the draft terms and conditions here which will be refined during negotiations. Activation partners shall have no exclusive right to invest in the companies that emerge as a result of Activation Partner activity.

8. Application process

8.1. How to apply + Evaluation Process

The application process will consist of two stages:

Stage 1: Proposal submission.
Submission of a four page proposal following the detailed guidance outlined later in this RFP and a cost sheet. Proposals will pass through an initial screening and compliance review to ensure they conform to the format guidance and are within the scope of the solicitation. At this stage we will also carry out checks to verify your identity, review national security risks and check for conflicts of interest. Prior to application review reviewers are required to recuse themselves from decision making related to any party that represents a real or perceived conflict.

Where it is clear that a proposal is not compliant, outside the scope and/or does not pass a quality assurance review, these proposals will be rejected prior to a full review on the basis they are not compliant or non-eligible.

Proposals that pass through the initial screening and compliance review will then proceed to full review led by our Deputy CEO, with input from ARIA's internal team and a range of expert external reviewers who will also support discussions with potential partners. Proposals will be reviewed against the criteria set out in this document, and a shortlist of applicants will be identified and invited to the next stage.

Applicants not shortlisted will be notified that they have been unsuccessful. For those applicants not shortlisted for the next stage we will not provide feedback.

You can find detailed guidance on what to include in a proposal here.

Stage 2: Competitive negotiations
Applicants shortlisted for this stage will be invited to further develop their proposals and engage in a series of collaborative discussions with the ARIA team. Through these conversations, we aim to explore proposals in greater depth, clarify key assumptions, and work together to strengthen both delivery approaches and commercial arrangements. We will also use this stage to better understand and refine the ethical and social and responsibility considerations associated with each proposal (where relevant).

Shortlisted applicants should expect to take part in a number of virtual discussions focused on specific topics or questions, which will be shared in advance. As discussions progress, we aim to reduce the number of applicants further, working more closely with those applicants that show the strongest potential and alignment with the objectives of this request for proposals. We will also apply a strong portfolio view at this stage to ensure a well balanced and diverse cohort of partners. Final selection will be made following this period of dialogue and refinement.

8.2. Evaluation Criteria

We'll select partners against the following criteria:

+ **ARIA relevance + value:** direct relevance and clear value-add to one or more ARIA opportunity spaces or programmes.
+ **Track record:** a deeply technical focus and a strong track record of translating R&D from the lab into societal-scale impact. If your focus is on AI for Science and AI Scientists, we want to understand why you have a clear right-to-win in your given application/domain.

- + **Differentiation + novelty:** evidence that the proposed activity is new or bespoke for this partnership or is unlikely to happen without ARIA's support. (i.e. the proposal is not for existing business as usual that is not redirected in some way).

- + **Big-win:** Even if nascent, the proposal's ability to give an idea of what the 'big win' scenario for this partnership would be (how will we know it has worked? What would the big wins in terms of driving impact for ARIA look like?).

- + **UK focus:** if you are not based in the UK, clear plans to build/establish a UK presence or partner with a UK organisation. Also, a demonstrable benefit to the UK.

- + **Talent-first**: exceptional team and a commitment to operate as founder/researcher friendly.

- + **Commitment to partnership/skin in the game:** evidence of your willingness to make a significant commitment to the partnership, and to invest energy/time/resources into our efforts and community (including at your leadership level). We want to see your 'skin in the game' and how our funding is leverage for us to work with your best resources.

- + **Well-defined:** the reasonableness of the proposed cost and timeline.

- + **Responsible and safe:** For organisations providing AI Science capabilities, robustness of safeguards against misuse of tools.

ARIA takes equity, diversion and inclusion (ED&I) seriously, and we want to partner with organisations who share our commitment. We may ask you questions related to ED&I as part of the process. In addition to these criteria — to ensure a diversity of organisation type and opportunity space coverage — at each stage of the selection process we will apply a portfolio lens to our decision-making, with particular emphasis on this placed at the final stage.

The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT) is currently undertaking an ongoing programme of work, part of which includes market engagement related to autonomous laboratories and associated capabilities. To support strategic coordination and maximise overall impact across these initiatives, proposals submitted to ARIA may be shared with DSIT for the purposes of portfolio alignment. This coordination process aims to identify and reduce unnecessary duplication across funded activities.

This coordination may inform funding considerations; however, ARIA and DSIT will make final funding decisions independently, in line with their respective objectives, processes, and priorities.

9. Timelines

This request for proposals will be open for submission as follows (we may update timelines based on the volume of responses we receive):

Applications open	1st April 2026
Webinar	15th April 2026 (12:30 BST)
Clarification Questions deadline	14th May 2026
Proposal Submission deadline	**21st May 2026 (14:00 BST)**
Shortlisted applicants notified	8th July 2026
Competitive negotiations	9th July 2026 - 6th August 2026
Successful/Unsuccessful applicants notified	12th August 2026
Contracts commence	1st September 2026

10. Submission details

Interested organisations should submit applications [here](.).

Before submitting an application we strongly encourage you to read this call in full, as well as the [general ARIA funding FAQs](.).

Clarification questions should be submitted no later than 14th May 2026. Clarification questions received after this date will not be reviewed. Any questions or responses containing information relevant to all applicants will be provided to everyone that has started a submission within the application portal. We'll also periodically publish questions and answers on our website, to keep up to date click [here](.).

Please read the [portal instructions](.) and create your account before the application deadline.

If you are disabled or have a long-term health condition, we can offer support to help you engage with ARIA, navigate our funding application process, or carry out your project, you can find more information [here](.).

[APPLY HERE](.)

Proposal submission detailed guidance

1. Format

Page count	● Up to 4 sides of A4 pages, not including the cost spreadsheet.
Font	● Arial ● Single line spacing, standard character spacing (neither expanded nor condensed) ● Colour: black ● Size: 11-point font or larger
Margins	● At least 0.5″ margins all around
File Type	● PDF

2. What to include in your proposal

Section 1: Overview

+   A short description of your organisation and what you do.

Section 2: Activity

Describe the activities you propose to undertake (this could be a spectrum of options). Depending on the nature of the activity, this may include, but will not be limited to:

+   How are the proposed activities novel or additive to the UK?
+   What are the key go/no-go milestones we could use to test the partnership and how would they inform decisions on how to proceed?
+   If your proposal is for a "phase one" nature of activities, what would step-up phase two activities look like?
+   Building the required systems and infrastructure to execute the proposed activities.
+   How do you plan to engage with the R&D ecosystem within ARIA and across the UK?

Section 3: Opportunity space alignment

Funding provided to partners should be used for new activity within or across our opportunity spaces. These are areas we believe are likely to yield breakthroughs and will have undertaken initial scoping work, building talent pipelines and dedicating circa £10-100 million to focused R&D. In your proposal we would like specific detail on:

+ Which opportunity space(s) your proposed activity aligns with.

+ Outline in detail how you'll work within the proposed opportunity spaces (e.g. working directly with our Creators, and how, and/or running alongside us, and how) to help us grow/shape these spaces

+ How you envisage interacting with the Programme Directors and funded researchers in our spaces. This should include what is the ideal level of engagement you foresee needing for the success of your activities (you could provide a minimum and maximum range).

  ○ This is particularly important for activities which propose to accelerate the research of our projects.

Section 4: Track record

Please outline real examples demonstrating the key attributes discussed above. Teams proposing tools to increase the velocity and/or impact of R&D e.g. through AI and associated capabilities (ML models, autonomous labs, agentic reasoning systems etc) should include examples of research acceleration. Also share some detail on the 'big win' scenario for this partnership, specifically:

+ How will we know it has worked? To you, what are the relevant measures of success?

+ What would the big wins in terms of driving impact for ARIA and the opportunity space(s) look like?

+ How would broader impact in the UK be created as a result of this?

+ Sustainability of the proposed activity: please detail how you aim to make your proposed plans sustainable beyond our funding term.

Section 5: Execution & Team

In this section of your proposal please provide details on your commitment to the partnership and investment of energy/time/resources (including at leadership level). This includes detail on:

+ **Who** are the key individuals to deliver the proposed activities (if the plan is to hire a new team, please share thinking on how you'd approach this and your priorities. Include detailed biographies of who you'd envision fulfilling the roles).

+ The anticipated **time commitment** of key individuals and the team (even if a rough estimate). If you're not UK-based, indicate how much of this would be in the UK.

Section 6: Timeline

We're eager to start making an impact in our opportunity spaces as soon as possible.

+ Please provide proposed timelines on achieving the key milestones and outputs of the activities (which should include the go/no-go milestones).

Section 7: UK Presence + Focus

For this initiative, most of the funded activity should be conducted in the UK. For applicants not based in the UK we expect you to build/establish a UK presence or work with a UK based partner. Please outline:

- How the proposed activities are novel or additive to the UK.
- If you are not based in the UK, your plans to build/establish a UK presence or partner with a UK organisation.

Section 8: Costs

Please provide a high-level cost breakdown. To aid with this we have provided a copy of our cost template — use this to provide a clear, transparent breakdown of your budget to help us understand how you plan to use our funding. All costs should be in GBP and inclusive of any applicable taxes.

To ensure your application is reviewed effectively, please follow these requirements:

- **Phased detail:** At this initial application stage, you only need to provide costs phased on an annual basis. You may provide a monthly breakdown now if you prefer; however, this will only become a mandatory requirement if your proposal is successful.
- **Categorisation:** Organise your budget according to the specific cost categories defined in the template. Use these categories consistently.
- **Granularity:** Provide enough detail for us to evaluate the necessity of each cost, avoiding overly vague line items such as "operations". Your breakdown should clearly reflect your proposal's needs.
- **Capital equipment:** If you are requesting funds for capital equipment, you must explicitly specify exactly what you intend to purchase and its purpose.
- **Work packages:** Please clearly break down your activities into distinct work packages and use these consistently throughout your proposal and budget.
- **Multiple activities:** If you are submitting a proposal covering multiple activities please submit a single cost sheet with a work package for each activity.

Also include how you will build self-sustaining momentum into the partnership, and what signals will help us to know if the activity is building self-sustaining momentum.

The funding can be provided in phases that allow you to ramp up over time. We'll fund your costs (see our eligible cost guidance for more details) on a time and materials basis.

We welcome proposals that include additional funding where it strengthens the likelihood of success, supports work beyond our opportunity spaces, or involves for-profit activity. In these cases, contributed funding will be considered as part of the overall strength of the proposal. If you plan to contribute funding, please specify the amount, the source, whether it is already secured, and any other relevant details.

Section 9: Restrictions

Please tell us if there are any other factors or restrictions that might impact your freedom to operate and deliver the proposed activity. These might include, for example, perceived conflicts of interest, import/export restrictions, security, ethical, legal, and regulatory restrictions.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **Should proposed activity be different from that delivered by the first cohort of Activation Partners?**

   While we would prefer proposals to this RFP to be to new activity, we will also consider proposals augmenting or replacing existing activities. You can find more about our first cohort of Activation Partners [here](#).

2. **How should proposals balance support for existing ARIA-backed projects versus creation of new companies, teams, or translational pathways around the same space?**

   We expect to fund both types of activities: supporting existing ARIA-backed projects or establishing new pipelines of company and team creation or translational pathways. Proposers should identify activities where they are likely to have an unfair advantage in delivering a particular programme of work.

3. **Would ARIA prefer a platform that many types of Creators can utilise, or one that deeply supports a smaller number of flagship projects?**

   In the long term (3+ years), we expect capabilities that many types of Creators can utilise but understand that organisations might start out by building capabilities for a smaller number of projects in defined spaces.

4. **What level of capital expenditure versus operational expenditure is ARIA prepared to support?**

   ARIA can support both capital and operational expenditure. We don't set a fixed split, applicants should propose the balance that best supports their work, and we'll assess this as part of the overall proposal. In all cases, applicants should clearly justify any capital expenditure and how it supports project delivery and value for money. It should also be clearly identified in budget submissions

   ARIA does not typically intend to take ownership of capital assets at the end of an award (except in rare or specific cases). There are two scenarios:
   - Where the asset's lifespan broadly aligns with the funding period, ARIA may fund the full capital cost, subject to financial assessment.
   - Where the asset's lifespan extends beyond the funding period, ARIA may only fund a proportion of the cost that reflects usage during the project.

Scientific equipment funded by ARIA is typically expected to be depreciated over 3-5 years, depending on the nature of the asset, and in line with the funding recipient's standard depreciation policies.

5. **For AI in Science applications, is ARIA more interested in advancing the AI capability itself, or in accelerating scientific outputs?**

   For this call, we're seeking organisations to apply their existing AI capabilities to accelerate the research in our opportunity spaces and, in particular, of our funded projects rather than to specifically advance the AI capability itself. However, we believe the application of the AI capabilities to our research areas will offer a testing ground to improve them.

6. **Does ARIA expect new physical infrastructure to be built in the UK, or would partnerships with existing UK facilities be viewed favorably?**

   We can select applicants not based in the UK. However, our priority and focus is on funding activity that takes place in the UK. For applicants not based in the UK we expect you to build/establish a UK presence or work with a UK based partner, in any case most of the funded activity should be conducted in the UK. This UK presence/partnership does not need to be in place from the outset, we are open to approaches that allow us to move quickly in supporting Creators, provided there is a clear plan to establish a UK presence or partner with UK-based organisations.

7. **What evidence does ARIA seek for demonstration of AI in Science capability?**

   We have no hard types of evidence but request you to please provide evidence that is best aligned with your proposed system's capabilities while keeping the following principles in mind: (1) any benchmarks used are meaningful and comparable. Robust controls, where available, will be a significant advantage. (2) Proposed capabilities have shown or are on track to show significant improvement in the research process.

8. **How should technical IP generated by an Activation Partner for a Creator be structured — Creator-owned, shared, or ARIA-owned?**

   ARIA does not seek any IP in funded projects and is looking for partners that are willing to work with founder/researcher friendly terms. At the start of any activity that will generate such IP, ARIA will work with the Activation Partner to agree IP principles that will apply to Creator collaboration to ensure they are founder friendly whilst geared towards maximising real world impact of the research.

9. **How important is anchoring this infrastructure as a long-term UK national capability beyond ARIA's initial funding period?**

Very important. We expect to fund teams that have a strong plan for sustainability of efforts beyond our funding period and ask for plans and expected signals of self-sustaining momentum in the UK to be included in applications.

10. **What signals would demonstrate that a scientific translation activity is likely to be self-sustaining?**

Signals for self-sustainability could include but are not limited to: follow-on funding secured, recurring internal demand or extensive use of service by external parties.

Conditions of RFP

Confidentiality, Publicity, Conduct and Conflicts of Interest:

ARIA will treat the information you provide in your Proposal as confidential and will not disclose it other than as necessary for the purposes of this RFP, the associated procurement process and ARIA's functions. ARIA may use the information you provide to assess and compare submissions, administer this RFP, agree and manage any resulting Contract, and support ARIA's operational activities, including the development, testing and improvement of internal tools, systems and processes.

ARIA may share Proposals with relevant employees, contractors, advisers and third-party expert reviewers for evaluation purposes. Any such recipients will be subject to appropriate confidentiality, non-use and conflict of interest obligations. ARIA will process any personal data contained in your Proposal in accordance with applicable data protection legislation and its privacy notice and may contact individuals named in the Proposal using the details provided.

In support of its internal processes and operations, ARIA may use secure* generative AI tools. This may include using information from Proposals to assist with assessment, comparison, analysis, summarisation and identification of themes, risks or opportunities, and to support the development and improvement of internal tools and processes. Any AI-assisted outputs will be reviewed by ARIA staff and will not be used as the sole basis for contract award decisions.

Although ARIA will treat Proposals as confidential, applicants are advised not to submit potentially patentable or applicants highly commercially sensitive information before appropriate protections are in place. ARIA may disclose confidential information where required in order to meet its obligations as a public body, including for parliamentary, ministerial, judicial or audit purposes (including disclosure to the Comptroller and Auditor General). ARIA may publish statistics or high-level information relating to this RFP or any resulting Contract, but will not publish confidential or personal data.

The contents of this RFP are confidential and must not be copied, reproduced, distributed or disclosed except for the purpose of preparing and submitting a Proposal. No publicity regarding this RFP or the award of any Contract will be permitted without ARIA's prior written consent. ARIA may use ideas or concepts contained in a Proposal for any reasonable purpose connected with this RFP or subsequent discussions, provided that it does not disclose the identity of the originating applicants.

ARIA reserves the right to amend, clarify or withdraw this RFP at any time and may extend submission deadlines where appropriate. ARIA may reject any non-compliant Proposal, disqualify any applicant guilty of serious misrepresentation, fraud, regulatory breach or conduct giving rise to material risk to ARIA, re-run the procurement on the same or an alternative basis, choose not to award any Contract, or amend the timetable, structure or content of the procurement process as it considers appropriate. ARIA will not be liable for any costs, expenditure or effort incurred by applicants in connection with this RFP or the procurement process, including where the process is amended or terminated. It is at ARIA's sole discretion as to which, if any, Proposal is accepted.

Any attempt by an applicant or its advisers to influence the contract award process in any way may result in disqualification. Applicants must not enter into any agreement or arrangement with any other person as to the form or content of any other Proposal, offer any inducement to alter another Proposal, enter into arrangements that prevent or restrict another party from submitting a Proposal, canvass ARIA or its employees or advisers in relation to this procurement, or attempt to obtain confidential information concerning another applicant or Proposal. Applicants are responsible for ensuring that no actual or potential conflicts of interest exist between the applicant (or its advisers) and ARIA, its employees or advisers, and must declare any such conflicts in their Proposal. ARIA reserves the right to disqualify an applicant where a conflict cannot be appropriately managed.

ARIA staff (employees, secondees, individual contractors engaged by ARIA in a staff-like capacity, and Board members), and their immediate family members (including spouse, civil partner or unmarried partner; sibling; child whether biological, adopted or step-child; and parent) are not eligible to submit a Proposal. Any entity in which such an individual is a board director or person of significant control (as defined on gov.uk) is also ineligible. Any Proposal falling within these categories will be rejected on eligibility grounds.

*For ARIA, "secure" means enterprise-approved generative AI tools that have undergone ARIA's Technology Security Assessment Process to ensure appropriate security controls, transparency over data storage and processing, and that ARIA data is not used to train external AI models or shared beyond authorised environments.