

Request for Proposal: Coaching Service

20 March 2025

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SECTION 1: THE REQUIREMENT AND CONDITIONS.....	3
Introduction.....	3
The Requirement (the “Services”).....	3
Implementation and Deployment Timeline.....	4
Key Contract Terms.....	4
SECTION 2: PROPOSAL RESPONSE STRUCTURE.....	5
Executive Summary.....	5
Criteria A - Background, Profile and Experience.....	5
Criteria B - Your Approach to Service Delivery.....	5
Criteria C - Demonstration of Resource.....	6
Criteria D - Commercial Proposal.....	6
Additional requirements.....	6
Format of Proposal Submission.....	7
SECTION 3: TIMELINES, REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS.....	7
Procurement Timeline.....	7
Review Stages.....	8
Selection criteria.....	8
Clarification Questions.....	9
CONDITIONS OF RFP.....	10
Clarification Questions and Responses.....	12

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 executive/leadership coaches to provide regular individual coaching for ARIA's leadership (including its Programme Directors), and group workshops as required.

The Requirement (the "Services")

ARIA empowers ambitious scientists and engineers to reach for the edge of the possible. This people-centric approach to pursuing ambitious outcomes is fundamental to ARIA's model. That is why we're seeking a coaching partner to work directly with ARIA's leadership on their professional development, and to cultivate an organisational culture of high performance.

1-1 Coaching

The supplier will provide fortnightly 1-1 coaching sessions (1 hour in duration, to be held virtually), initially for up to 28 members of ARIA's leadership, which includes Programme Directors (PDs), the executive team, and operational leaders. There are two cohorts of 8 PDs, each at different stages of their programme journey, requiring tailored support to match their evolving needs.

To support this number of ARIA team members, our expectation is that the supplier would work with up to 14 ARIA team members at a time in alternating blocks of 6-week periods. We expect every team member to have one coaching session on a fortnightly basis within the 6-week block. An additional set of 4 optional coaching sessions should be made available within the 6-week block for any team members who require extra support.

Although not yet confirmed, we are considering expanding the coaching service to the wider ARIA team in future, beyond the initial 28 team members.

Our preference is for a single coach to deliver the services, however, we are open to alternative delivery models. For example, this may involve utilising multiple coaches from the same company or engaging multiple providers.

Group Workshops

The supplier will also provide group workshops for 4 - 20 people (1 to 4 workshops per year) on culture and team effectiveness — we envisage these workshops to be half-day sessions touching on common themes that have emerged from individual coaching to enhance collaboration and our high-performance culture.

We're also open to additional ideas by bidders to provide other tailored services that can support leadership effectiveness, such as decision-making under uncertainty, resilience training, or strategic communication.

Who you are

- + You have a proven record of coaching leadership teams in industry-leading organisations.
- + You excel at providing one-to-one coaching tailored to a variety of senior stakeholders, adapting to the evolving needs of leaders in a fast-paced, changing environment.
- + You can design and deliver group workshops that enhance trust, collaboration, and team performance.

Implementation and Deployment Timeline

The initial contract will run for 12 months.

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

ARIA shall have the option to extend the contract beyond the initial 12 months for up to a further 24 months, in 12 month increments, if required and subject to mutual agreement.

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 thirty days' prior notice.
- + ARIA shall have the right to terminate the contract or part of the contract where the supplier fails to provide the service contracted, upon thirty days' prior notice.
- + Any Intellectual Property generated in the performance of the contract shall vest in ARIA.
- + The supplier shall indemnify ARIA, its employees, officers and agents against the supplier's infringement of third party Intellectual Property Rights.

All information shared with the supplier shall be subject to confidentiality terms.

SECTION 2: PROPOSAL RESPONSE STRUCTURE

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

The format below is set out as a guide and represents a maximum length response. If bidders 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 your professional history and approach to leadership coaching and building high-performance cultures.
- 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 to be used.

Case studies

- Provide a minimum of two examples/reference customers, ideally one in the private sector and one in the public sector, where your organization has provided a similar service. With their consent, provide a summary of key successes, and overall learnings for the ARIA contract.

ARIA may choose to verify case studies with the reference customers as part of the proposal review process. We will ask for your consent and suitable contact details beforehand.

Criteria C - Demonstration of Resource

- Outline your capacity to deliver the services alongside your other clients.
- Short bio of suggested coach(es), including their areas of expertise.
- Where you are proposing to use multiple coaches to deliver the services, a clear demonstration supported by evidence of access to a wider pool of coaches.

Criteria D - Commercial Proposal

- Propose a clear pricing structure, including:
 - Rates per hour (ex VAT)
 - Any additional costs which are likely to be incurred through the life of the contract
- Identify any critical assumptions, dependencies and exclusions required by the bidder in order to successfully execute any resultant Contract

Additional requirements

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

Mandatory

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

Desirable

- [Cyber Essentials](#) - should this accreditation not be currently held, please provide a proposed plan outlining how it will be obtained within the first six months of service delivery.

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.**

Responses to [ARIA's application portal](#)
In case of any technical issues with the portal please contact clarifications@aria.org.uk

SECTION 3: TIMELINES, REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

Procurement Timeline

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

Event	Date
RFP live	28 February 2025
Deadline for submission of clarification questions	19 March 2025
Deadline for proposal submission	21 March 2025 (14:00 GMT)
Notify shortlisted bidders	2 April 2025
Presentation by bidders to ARIA selection panel (to be held virtually)	11 or 14 April 2025
Meetings with individual ARIA team members (to be held virtually)	15 or 16 April 2025

Preferred bidder informed	17 April 2025
Target Award date	25 April 2025
Target Contract Start date	28 April 2025

Review Stages

This review is intended to consist of 5 stages:

- Stage 1 - Written proposal.
- Stage 2 - Presentation by shortlisted respondents to ARIA selection panel. A maximum of 5 bidders will be shortlisted to present to ARIA at this stage.
- Stage 3 - Shortlisted bidders to meet with an ARIA team member (either a PD, member of the executive team or an operational lead) on a 1-1 basis (with a member of ARIA's procurement team present).
- Stage 4 - Preferred bidder(s) chosen and informed.
- Stage 5 - discussions and negotiations with preferred bidder(s), onboarding planning and contract agreement.

The ARIA selection panel will be chaired by the Chief of Staff and Product Operations Lead.

Selection criteria

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

- A. Background, Profile and Experience [20%]** - A clear demonstration of delivering similar requirements for fast-paced and rapidly scaling organisations, including existing client information.
- B. Your Approach to Service Delivery [30%]** - A clear articulation of what you see as our requirements and how you would meet them, including any tools or approaches to be used.

- C. Demonstration of Resource [30%]** - Demonstrate that you have (or have access to) the expertise and resources required to deliver the services required, including details on the proposed coach(es) who would be delivering the service.
- D. Commercial Proposal [20%]** - Commercial terms that demonstrate value for the tax-payer, including market comparables.

Clarification Questions

Bidders are urged to review the RFP documentation, identify and submit any clarification questions no later than 18:00 (GMT) 19 March 2025, via email to clarifications@aria.org.uk. Clarification questions received after this date will not be reviewed.

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

CONDITIONS OF RFP

Confidentiality, Publicity, Conduct and Conflicts of Interest:

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

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

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

Clarification Questions and Responses

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

Category	Question	Answer
Budget and Pricing	Please can you provide some clarity on budget expectations beyond what is outlined in the tender document?	The estimated budget for this requirement is in the region of £100k - £160k. Note, this is subject to internal demand for coaching services which could vary over the life of the contract.
	Can we propose a tiered pricing structure due to the different levels of leadership you have?	The hourly rate should be the same irrespective of who is receiving the coaching. If you have multiple coaches, their hourly rate can be different depending upon their experience
Page limit	Is it possible to provide reference appendices or links to the RFP or is it strictly limited to 5 pages?	Four pages is the limit.
Background	Could you share any background on ARIA's previous experience with leadership coaching?	ARIA has engaged in leadership coaching through group sessions and 1-1 coaching with Programme Directors, the Executive Team, and the wider senior leadership, focusing on high-performance cultures in high-risk, high-uncertainty environments. This has been crucial in aligning our first programmes with ARIA's high-risk, high-reward R&D mission. Depending on scope, this could build on existing coaching relationships or shape a broader organisational coaching framework.
	What initially triggered the desire to support	ARIA is a fast-evolving organisation

the leaders with coaching? Beyond the high-performance culture mentioned in the RFP, are there specific organisational priorities or challenges that ARIA leadership is particularly focused on addressing through coaching?

It would be helpful to gain insight into the broader context within which you are operating. For example, are there specific external or internal factors influencing this RFP, such as a period of growth, organizational restructuring, or shifts in funding? What specific challenges or opportunities have led to the decision to seek coaching services at this time?

The RFP places the emphasis on one-on-one coaching compared to team/group development. Does this reflect a strategic decision to prioritize individual leadership development, or is there flexibility to adjust the balance? Would you be open to a proposal that places a stronger emphasis on team and group coaching interventions?

navigating complex strategic, operational, and funding decisions. We prioritise high-quality decision-making, balancing speed with maintaining standards, as we scale our team and outputs, ensuring mindful support in this process.

There is no specific driver of the timing of this RFP. The enduring factor is that ARIA is a people-centric organisation. The core of our model is empowering ambitious scientists and engineers to reach for the edge of the possible. That is why we're seeking a coaching partner to work directly with ARIA's leadership on their professional development, and to cultivate an organisational culture of high performance.

It is also worth noting that we are growing as an organisation, evolving from a single cohort of Programme Directors to two. This presents a fresh set of opportunities for a coach to support the leadership team in this next stage of ARIA's journey.

We are open to different approaches. However, individual coaching is where we currently see the greatest opportunity to support our team's development.

Tools and techniques

Are you open to the use of psychometric tools to support the coaching?

We're open to the supplier's recommended methods, including psychometric tools, if they align with the best outcomes.

Have you invested in behavioral profiles for your team? If not, would this be something you would consider as it could elevate the coaching sessions as you begin with a strong foundation of self-awareness

We're open to new approaches that a successful applicant might recommend.

Team structure

While we assume that the executive team operates as a cohesive unit, could you clarify the working dynamics of the Programme Directors and operational leaders?

Programme Directors work with Procurement, Communications and Programme Finance as interdependent teams at key stages of launching a programme. The other operational teams will work closely with Programme Directors depending on their programme's specific needs (e.g. People Ops when recruiting a Technical Specialist).

What is the profile of those to be coached - is it primarily scientists, engineers, technical individuals, or broader?

Our Programme Directors are primarily scientists from academic, entrepreneurial, and/or industry backgrounds, each with expertise in different areas. Our wider team, function leads, and executive team bring strong leadership across fields like product, operations, chief of staff, finance, procurement, and marketing.

To what extent have the 28 potential coachee leaders been engaged in the request for coaching?

They have been engaged in the RFP by requesting their feedback on it.

Can we make the assumption that the make up of the 28 leaders is Executive Team (4),

There are 16 Programme Directors. The rest are Exec Team and Operational Directors.

Program Directors (8) and Operational Leaders (16)? If this is incorrect, can you share an organogram of the leaders or clarify the numbers?

Key metrics

How does ARIA plan to evaluate the effectiveness of the coaching program? Are there specific outcomes or metrics you'll be using to measure success beyond the individual coaching relationships? What key performance indicators (KPIs) or success metrics will be used internally to evaluate the coaching program's impact?

Key metrics include NPS scores and qualitative feedback gathered and analysed throughout the contract.

Challenges

Could you provide more details on the specific leadership challenges and development goals you would like the coaching to address?

ARIA is a fast-evolving organisation, navigating complex decisions at all levels—strategic, operational, and funding. We prioritise high-quality decision-making in our early years, balancing speed with maintaining standards.

Number of coaches

Is there a preference for a single coach vs. multiple coaches, or would a hybrid approach (e.g., one lead coach with supporting coaches) be acceptable to you?

We are open to different approaches. However, individual coaching is where we currently see the greatest opportunity to support our team's development.

We note the desire is to have one coach, however chemistry is an important element of building an effective coaching partnership. What would happen if there weren't a good coach / coachee match?

We value having one coach for alignment but are open to additional resources if they help mitigate risk and provide strong support. We'd be interested in hearing your ideas and the people you'd bring in.

Workshops

We want to clarify re the half day group workshops - are these in person or online? And if in person, will you be supplying venues, catering etc.

In person, and yes we will provide venue + catering (if needed). We can work with you to make sure it aligns with the dynamic of the half day workshop.

What's the lead time in planning the Group Workshops? Do you have an idea which months in the year you'd like these done? If travel is involved, can we price travel at a flat rate?

We would arrange this with the successful applicant for a date that works for all parties, with plenty of lead time. Travel costs can be expensed as per our internal policy.

Delivery model

Could you please clarify the delivery model of the 1:1 coaching?

Group A would consist of 14 individuals who would have coaching in a 6 week block. Group B would consist of 14 individuals who would have coaching in a 6 week block. This would then continue to swap between group A & B every 6 weeks. The groups would stay the same.

We have suggested this model to support our preference for a single coach to deliver the services. However, we are open to alternative delivery models.

Do the alternating 6-week blocks repeat over the course of the initial 12-month contract (i.e., roughly 8 blocks of 6 weeks over the year) or is the initial contract for 12 weeks of coaching only?

It would be over the course of the initial 12 months.

There are another 4 coaching sessions per person, for those who need it. Is this per person, or an extra 4 sessions overall?

The additional 4 sessions are overall, not per person. It means you should have 4 hours of additional capacity (over the course of the 6-week block) in case anyone needs an additional session.

Coaching qualification

Could you tell me if you have a minimum standard for coaching qualifications e.g. ILM level, professional coaching body?

No, we don't. The most important factor is alignment in skillset and organisational fit.

Our experience is primarily in 1:1 coaching and group workshops, which feels like a great

Experience of running something at this scale is not a hard requirement.

match for the RFP. However, I haven't run something of this scale before. Is that a hard requirement?