

Question:

Who is the contracting authority?

Answer:

The contracting authority is ARIA, the Advanced Research and Invention Agency.

Context Used:

Section 1: Terms and Conditions

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

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

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

Section 2: Implementation and Deployment Timeline

The initial contract will run for 36 months.

The supplier must be able to start work immediately after the Target Award date. The handover period with the incumbent supplier is required to be complete by 28th April 2025.

ARIA shall have the option to extend the contract beyond the initial 36 months for up to a further 24 months if required and subject to mutual agreement.

Section 3: Confidentiality, Publicity, Conduct and Conflicts of Interest:

The contents of this RFP are confidential and must not be not 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.

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Section 4: Review Stages

This review is intended to consist of 5 stages:

17 February 2025

28 February 2025

03 March 2025

- Stage 1 - Virtual discussion with shortlisted bidders and ARIA team members - A maximum of 10 shortlisted bidders will be shortlisted to present at this stage. Please note, the proposed client manager will be required to attend this call. The format of these sessions will be advised to those invited to attend.
- Stage 2 - Reference check by ARIA
- Stage 3 - Presentation by shortlisted respondents to ARIA selection panel. A maximum of 5 responses will be shortlisted to present to ARIA at this stage.
- Stage 4 - Preferred bidder chosen and informed.

- Stage 5 - discussions and negotiations with preferred bidder, onboarding planning and contract agreement.

The ARIA selection panel will be chaired by the Chief Finance & Operations Officer with at least one other member of the ARIA executive team.

Section 5: Clarification Questions

Bidders are urged to review the RFP documentation, identify and submit any clarification requests no later than 18:00 (GMT) 08 January 2025, via email to clarifications@aria.org.uk. Clarification requests received after this date will not be reviewed.

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

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ANNEX A - Suggested Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Section 6: 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

08 January 2025

Deadline for proposal submission

13 January 2025 (12:00 GMT)

Discussion with shortlisted bidders

w/c 27 January 2025

References check by ARIA for the shortlisted Bidders

w/c 03 February 2025

Presentation by bidders to ARIA selection panel

w/c 10 February 2025

Preferred bidder chosen and informed

Target Award date

Target Contract Start date

Section 7: 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

5 pages, plus annexes.

Responses to

ARIA's application portal

In case of any technical issues with the portal please contact

clarifications@aria.org.uk

Section 8: Untitled Section

Request for Proposal:

Managed IT Service

03 January 2025

V1.2

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Section 9: Clarification Questions and Responses

Category

Question

Answer

Hardware

Of the 160-300 endpoints, please can you

There are currently approximately 160 endpoints to provide the split of this quantity between Apple, support from Day 1. This is projected to increase to Window and mobile devices? Are mobile

300 endpoints over the next 24 months, but may be devices Apple or Android devices? Also, are

subject to change depending on the needs of the 160 devices the quantity to support from day 1

organisation. The current ratio of devices is roughly of the contract and 300 endpoints the

50% laptops, 50% mobile devices. The laptops forecasted growth across the contract term? have a 80/20% split between Apple and Windows devices. All mobiles are Apple devices.

Please can you provide the make and model of

We have implemented recent HP and Apple the endpoint devices?

models for our laptop provision. As well as recent Apple models for our mobile device provision.

Further details on specific devices can be provided to shortlisted bidders if required.

Are these devices under a support warranty with

All hardware devices are under manufacturer's the manufacturer? If so, what is the SLA and warranty. Further details can be provided to when does the support expire?

shortlisted bidders if required.

The supplier would be expected to coordinate the repair of devices under warranty when required with the manufacturer.

Would the supplier be expected to maintain and

The supplier would be expected to provide suitable provide the hardware when required?

recommendations for hardware to be integrated within ARIA's IT infrastructure environment. The supplier would also facilitate direct procurement of

hardware or support ARIA's purchase decisions, ensuring value for money. Hardware maintenance would also be required whilst devices are under manufacturer's warranty.

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Category

Question

Answer

What is ARIA's expected run rate of new

The current intention is for legacy hardware devices hardware devices to be added/ installed and to be replaced after coming out of the taken under support for the duration of the manufacturer's warranty, which is typically 3 years. initial contract term?

Hardware devices would also need to be implemented for new starters when joining the organisation. This averages at 2-3 new starters per month, with some months being significantly higher.

Multi Device

Which tool does ARIA currently use for MDM?

All tools and applications are either licensed Management

Is this owned by ARIA or by the supplier?

directly by ARIA or will be transferred upon

(MDM)

handover to the successful supplier. Further details on specific tools and applications can be provided to shortlisted bidders if required.

Which tool does ARIA currently use for

All tools and applications are either licenced endpoint based anti-virus and anti-malware? Is directly by ARIA or will be transferred upon this owned by ARIA or by the supplier?

handover to a successful applicant. Further details on specific tools and applications can be provided to shortlisted bidders if required.

Is patching of end user devices required? How

Patching of end user devices is facilitated via our is this currently managed and carried out?

multi device management (MDM) system using its patching policy and also via the incumbent supplier's NOC / Management agent.

IT Architecture Could the agency please provide an

There are currently approximately 160 endpoints to architectural view of the IT landscape and the support from Day 1. This is projected to increase to expected volumes?

300 endpoints over the next 24 months, but may be subject to change depending on the needs of the organisation. ARIA uses Google workspace as its

primary operational platform. In addition it has a finance system, project management system, HR system, expense process system, CRM and grant management system, as well as numerous third party tools. All are operated using cloud based systems. Further details can be provided to

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Question

Answer

shortlisted bidders if required.

Are existing processes in place with any

ARIA has integrated various third party cloudbased third-party software applications?

software applications into its workstreams. Further information can be made available to shortlisted bidders if required.

Please clarify " business systems and tools"?

This refers to applications which have been

What specifically are these?

implemented as part of ARIA's system environment.

These applications are currently all cloud based.

Are all endpoints currently in a supported state

All endpoints are currently within a supported state.

for both hardware & software i.e. is any of the

However, a small percentage will become EOL in

solutions EOL?

2025.

Does ARIA use Microsoft 365? Would ARIA be

ARIA currently utilises MS Office 365 on a very

open to transitioning from Google Workspaces

limited basis. We have no intention of transitioning

to Microsoft 365?

away from Google Workspace.

Do ARIA currently have a DR solution in-place?

ARIA has an incident response process in place

Is this owned by ARIA or the incumbent

which is enforced by our internal incident response

supplier?

team in conjunction with the incumbent supplier.

Initial triaging would be conducted and mitigating

action determined on a case by case basis

appropriate to the severity of the incident and its

impact to the organisation. This covers scenarios,

including: loss of site, loss of data, internet

connectivity, loss of devices and systems.

Network

How many LAN, WAN, VPN and wireless

The current monitoring requirement is for 1 x LAN

networks need to be monitored?

+ 2 x wireless networks.

Please detail which services are owned by ARIA

ARIA will own the LAN and Wifi infrastructure of its
and which are owned by ARIA's serviced office
office site.

provider.

Servers

How many physical servers, virtual servers and

ARIA currently has 3 virtual servers that would

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Question

Answer

storage solutions need to be monitored and
require monitoring and support, which is likely to
supported?

increase over time. We do not have any physical
servers or storage solutions.

Security

Policies

When managing firewall configurations and

The expectation would be for the supplier to

security policies, is the expectation that the

enforce best practice when managing firewall

supplier will implement appropriate policies

configuration and security policies. The supplier

based on business or functional requests from

should be able to advise on gold standard

ARIA, or does this requirement extend further?

implementation.

Are any of the requested security services

Bidders should provide costs for resources covering

expected to cover 24/7 - specifically the

a full 24-hour period including weekends and

response to security incidents?

public holidays.

Please confirm if ARIA will fully lock out the

The supplier will be responsible for managing the

firewalls in terms of making changes or will both

firewall and keeping an activity log of changes

the supplier and ARIA have access to devices to

made.

make changes and work on projects i.e Hybrid

service?

What monitoring tools are in place, and will the

ARIA utilises various monitoring tools for

expectation be that these shall continue to be

information security and cyber security purposes.

used, or will they transfer to the new supplier?

The intention is for these to be transferred or

novated to the new supplier where possible.

Otherwise these will fall under ARIA's administrative

control. ARIA is open to transitioning to alternative

monitoring tool providers if beneficial as part of a

longer term strategy.

Cyber

Cyber Essentials Plus is listed as a mandatory

Yes, a bid would still be considered. We have

Essentials Plus

requirement. Please confirm whether a bid will

updated the RFP to state that cyber essentials plus is

still be considered without Cyber Essentials

a desirable criteria, but cyber essentials is

Plus?

mandatory.

When asked to ensure ARIA's compliance and

The Cyber Essentials Plus audit will be conducted

annual review of Cyber Essentials Plus, does this

by an external auditor. The supplier will assist in

mean review and maintenance of controls, and

facilitating the audit process and ensure that ARIA's

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Category

Question

Answer

highlighting of gaps as they relate to CE+ and

IT infrastructure meets the standard to pass this

other standards in place, but to exclude auditing

audit.

itself?

The expectation is for the supplier to resolve any issues or gaps identified as part of the audit process. This would include either implementing any changes with related third parties and ARIA users or recommending a solution where this is not possible.

Users /

Could the agency please provide the current Service desk tickets closed average between 80 -

Service Desk

service desk volumes over the last 12 months 100 per month.

Volumes

broken down by month?

Can a more detailed breakdown of the expected

Tickets are typically allocated the following

calls be provided?

categories:

- Applications
- Application Reviews
- Backup
- Starter / Leaver
- Hardware
- Change Requests
- Network

The timings and priority of logged tickets vary

depending on the requirements of the organisation.

Priority tickets will be flagged internally.

How many employees need to be supported on

The supplier will be supporting 80 users on Day 1.

the target contract start date?

Please provide a detailed breakdown of the

ARIA operates a hybrid model where users work

users e.g. office vs. remote, job functions and

both within the office and remotely. Our standard

working hours.

working hours are 09:00am - 17:30pm with users

working beyond these times depending on the

needs of the organisation. We have flexible working

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Category

Question

Answer

practices.

Resources /

To what level is the onsite support engineer

The expectation is for onsite support engineers to

Capability

expected to be? 1st, 2nd or 3rd Line?

be 3rd line.

Please confirm if dedicated means the Client

The Client manager to be at site at least one day a

manager is to be accounted for 5 days per week. They will provide oversight, development and week, business hours Mon-Fri (excluding Bank management of the services and act as the primary Holidays). Please also confirm the role of Client point of contact for overall service and relationship Manager.

management. The Client Manager can draw upon additional resources as needed and expand scope of provision as per the needs of the organisation.

In the 'Demonstration of Resource' Section there This would not preclude you from bidding.

is a requirement to demonstrate our expertise and capabilities in several areas, one of which is AWS. If we are unable to demonstrate our expertise in AWS, would this preclude us from bidding?

Terms and

Under 'Key Contract Terms' within the RFP, it ARIA's preference is to contract under our terms.

Conditions

states that the contract will be placed on terms

We would consider contracting under supplier and conditions provided by ARIA to the

Ts&Cs for this service, subject to ARIA's review of preferred bidder. Would you be able to accept

the proposed terms and the proposed terms being terms and conditions provided by the supplier? aligned with ARIA's contracting principles. We suggest you attach the proposed terms, as an Annex, to your bid.

Reporting

Under 'Reporting' within the RFP, it states that Quarterly reporting would include aspects such as, the supplier will be required to provide service availability, service usage metrics, incident quarterly reports, is this for infrastructure, tracking, performance metrics and compliance endpoints or both? status. Definitions of each of these are captured within the RFP document. The exact format of the reporting would be agreed with ARIA and the successful bidder upon signature of the contract.

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Section 10: 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 qualified IT managed services providers (MSPs) to provide strategic

and day-to-day operational support for our IT infrastructure, ensuring seamless business operations and support for end-users.