

II.2.4) Description of the procurement

Earth observation (EO) science is fundamental to humanity's understanding of our planet, its climate and natural processes. EO capabilities enable a wide range of public services, including meteorology, Earth imagery, climate monitoring, environmental management & agriculture, urban planning, and intelligence, surveillance & reconnaissance. These services are all underpinned by the instruments and technologies which enable satellites to gather data, which can take decades to design, build and mature.

To build UK capability and develop the UK industrial/academic skill base, the UK Space Agency established the Earth Observation Instrumentation Programme (EOIP) in 2007. The programme has sought to develop UK capability in EO instrumentation by: providing and overseeing the delivery of match-funded grants; providing strategic, business and technical advice to project teams, the wider EO sector and UK government; and promoting close working relationships and knowledge transfer between the academic community and industry.

Since its inception, the programme has been delivered by the Centre for Earth Observation Instrumentation (CEOI), a consortium of EO experts consisting of Airbus DS, QinetiQ, University of Leicester and STFC/Rutherford Appleton Laboratory. The CEOI has run 14 funding calls to date, and has organised numerous events and workshops through a community building programme.

We are looking to undertake a retendering process to support the future sustainability and potential expansion of this vital Programme and support the UK National Space Strategy implementation plans. To this end, UK Space Agency will be undertaking a full retender exercise. This Prior Information Notice (PIN) is to advise prospective providers of UK Space Agency's intention.

It is the intention of the Authority that the procurement will be conducted as an Open Procedure under the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. The ITT is expected to be published by end September 2022. A separate advert will be released advising of this.

The UK Space Agency (UKSA) therefore has a requirement to define, let and manage the next contract for the Earth Observation Instrumentation Programme (EOIP).

The programme will focus on two key areas:

1. Earth observation (EO) instrumentation development through the management and promotion of the grant funding programme and its associated aims. The programme has typically overseen around £2m in grant funding each year, typically with three levels of projects: "Flagship" grants of £500k and 24 months duration; "Fast Track" grants of £200k and 15 months duration; and "Pathfinder" grants of £75k and 9 months duration. The smaller Pathfinder projects have usually been focused on particularly low-TRL (Technology Readiness Level) activities, whilst

Flagship activities are focused on mid-TRL activities such as demonstrating a remote sensing instrument aboard an aircraft.

2. Community building activities, including a yearly EO conference, technology showcase events and industrial consultation workshops. Activities will be scalable depending on the success and benefits of continuation of activities undertaken under the EO Programme; knowledge and skills transfer opportunities; and wider developments on plans to implement the National Space Strategy.

The Requirement will also entail assuming responsibility for a small number of ongoing projects which are due to continue beyond the end of the current contract (currently expected to be around 4), in addition to managing contract award ASAP for projects successful in the 2022 funding call, managing at least one new funding call each year, organising events, and providing expert EO-related technical, strategic and business advice to the UK Space Agency.

Market engagement

We intend to release a Request for Information before the end of August, together with a draft statement of requirements.

It is our intention to hold a market engagement event on the afternoon of the 7th September 2022 from 13:00 to 14:00 at the UK National Earth Observation conference, National Space Centre, Leicester (room TBC). At the event there will be an opportunity to discuss our plans and consult with parties interested in potentially bidding to deliver the Programme. The event will take the form of a presentation and discussion and will outline our current thinking, the anticipated procurement process, general discussion, and request for information. The process will also provide an opportunity to network with others in this field.

We welcome engagement from those who are not planning to attend the conference; we intend to provide the opportunity to join the session remotely and provide a recording for interested parties.

UK Space Agency will use the opportunity to gather intelligence from providers who may influence and inform the development of the final tender.

Next Steps / joining instructions

If you are planning to attend the National EO Conference and would like to attend the event on 7th September in person, please let us know by emailing commercial@ukspaceagency.gov.uk so that we can ensure sufficient room capacity.

If you would like to join virtually, or would like to receive a recording of the event, please also contact us at the above email address.

The Authority reserves the right not to proceed with the Procurement, or any part thereof, or change the requirements as necessary at any time.