An exploration of changes to the costs of research in UK research performing organisations

Aims:

The aim of this study is to develop and demonstrate a methodology that will allow UKRI to better understand the underlying costs of research, how these costs are changing over time, and the drivers behind the observed trends.

The proposal should set out a plan to explore quantitative and qualitative methods (including a plan for data acquisition) that will enable a detailed exploration of changes in the underlying cost of research in UK research-performing organisations over the last 10 years.

Objectives:

The purpose of this study is to develop and demonstrate a robust methodology that could enable UKRI to estimate the true cost of research activity, looking at different disciplines and subject areas, and investigating how research costs have changed over time.

The proposal should demonstrate how to explore the drivers behind the trends in the changing costs of research activity and how these might impact the full economic costs of research. The methodology should encompass different types of research-performing organisation (including universities and UKRI-funded research institutes).

Outputs:

Bidders should set out their proposal to develop a detailed methodology, how they will approach the identification of a sample set of organisations, the qualitative and quantitative data they would use and their plan for data acquisition and analysis. The outputs of this work involve:

- Developing the methodological approach that could be used to answer the research
- questions
- Outlining an approach to data acquisition and analysis to provide robust evidence of
- the changing costs of research
- Identifying any anticipated challenges to the methodological approach and/or data
- analysis and proposing how these would be managed or mitigated
- Developing a project plan for the project with key deliverables and milestones
- Preparing and submitting a written report that sets out the recommended methodology and data approach
- Providing 'proof of concept' of the methodology to demonstrate its feasibility and efficacy for answering the research questions

As part of the evaluation process to select and appoint consultants for this work, suppliers may be invited to an online clarification interview to validate points on their methodology and approach.

Following completion of this work, UKRI may wish to commission suppliers (via a further invitation to tender) to undertake a full investigation into the costs of research using the recommended methodological approach. Bidders may therefore wish to take this into account when considering the design of their methodology and proof of concept.

Budget: The project has a total budget of up to £50,000 (excluding VAT)

Project timeline:

Mid-late October/ early November 2022: appoint supplier
Late October/ early November 2022: kick-off meeting between supplier and UKRI Research Sustainability Team
Late October/ early November 2022: supplier starts work
March 2023: presentation of report on methodology and data acquisition plan
March 2023: a proof of concept demonstrating the methodology, initial use of curated data and preliminary findings and submission