

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

Customer: Environment Agency

Start date: To be determined

Date response required: 21/11/25

Dear Supplier,

We would like to notify you of an upcoming requirement, and by doing so we are keen to understand where the market stands in terms of our requirement below.

This Request for Information (RFI) seeks information relating to virtual reality training for community engagement.

Please note the following general conditions:

- This RFI will help us to refine the requirements.
- We reserve the right not to proceed with a further competition. Nothing shall constitute a commitment to ordering unless we undertake a further competition that results in the award of a Contract.

- Should a Call-Off Agreement be awarded following a further competition, the Potential Provider agrees to supply the services in accordance with the Call-Off Terms contained within the Contract Terms and Conditions.
- Any and all costs associated with the production of such a response either to a RFI or a further competition must be borne by the Supplier. We will not contribute in any way to meeting production costs of any response.
- Information contained within this document is confidential and must not be revealed to any third party without prior written consent from us.
- No down-selection of Potential Providers will take place as a consequence of any responses or interactions relating to this RFI.
- We expect that all responses to this RFI will be provided by Potential Providers in good faith to the best of their ability in the light of information available at the time of their response.
- No information provided by a Potential Provider in response to this RFI will be carried forward, used or acknowledged in any way for the purpose of evaluating the Potential Provider, in any subsequent formal procurement process.

Current situation

The Environment Agency works to create better places for people and wildlife, and supports sustainable development. The Environment Agency was established in 1996 to protect and improve the environment. We have over 12,000 employees. Our head office is in Bristol and we have another office in London. We have offices across England, divided into 14 areas. You can read more about The Environment Agency here: [About us - Environment Agency - GOV.UK](#)

Our staff are sent to speak to audiences after flood incidents, which is potentially a hostile situation (verbal abuse, shouting, survivors sharing their trauma). There is a risk of mental health impacts to our staff and reducing the potential for positive engagement with communities.

Currently training a mix of: trainer-led in-person sessions; trainer-led online sessions, self-led online sessions; self-led online resources.

For this use case, there are ~200 users. For other training (such as interview skills and presentation skills), the potential user number is all EA staff ~12,000.

Our aims – What we want to achieve

This information is subject to change due to potentially changing organisational priorities, project environments and business as usual environments.

The Customer is looking for one or more Suppliers to deliver the following aims:

Benefits:

- Increased digital capability of EA staff
- Increased customer flood risk awareness and preparedness
- Increased quality of customer, partner and stakeholder experience
- Increased flood risk and climate change educational opportunities
- Increased accessibility and/or inclusivity of flood digital products
- Increased efficiency of EA business processes and resource management

Outcomes:

- Increased public engagement skills
- Increased retention of what has been learned
- Increased confidence and resilience of staff in these situations
- Increased access to information for refreshing skills
- Reduced risk of mental health impacts

Functional requirements:

- VR Environment Simulation
 - The software must simulate a variety of public meeting settings (e.g., town halls, council chambers, community forums) and allow customization of:
 - Room layout and size
 - Number and demographics of attendees
 - Audio-visual equipment
 - Seating arrangements and podiums
- Audience Behaviour Modelling

- The system must simulate a range of audience reactions, including:
 - Supportive, neutral, and hostile behaviours
 - Interruptions (including heckling and emotional outburst where possible).
 - Realistic voice tones, facial expressions, and body language
 - It should allow configuration of likely questions and topics based on meeting context.
- Scenario Customization
 - Users must be able to:
 - Create and save custom scenarios
 - Select from pre-built templates based on common meeting types
 - Adjust difficulty levels and emotional intensity
- Performance Evaluation
 - The system must track and assess user performance in real-time and post-session.
 - The system must allow for specifying the criteria or content expected from the user.
 - Metrics should include:
 - Verbal clarity and tone
 - Response time and content relevance
 - Non-verbal communication (e.g., eye contact, posture)
 - The solution should be capable of providing:
 - A performance summary
 - Highlighted strengths and areas for improvement
 - Suggested coaching tips and resources

Non-Functional Requirements

- Usability
 - Intuitive user interface suitable for non-technical users
 - Minimal setup time and easy onboarding
- Compatibility
 - The solution must be compatible with VR headsets and a desktop mode for non-VR access is necessary.
- Accessibility
 - Support for users with disabilities (e.g., subtitles, voice commands)
 - Supplier must provide details of the software accessibility features
- Data Privacy and Security
 - Compliance with relevant data protection regulations (e.g., GDPR)
 - Secure storage of user performance data
- Sustainability
 - Demonstrate quantifiable sustainability performance indicators aligned with a sustainable development plan
 - Including metrics such as carbon footprint reduction, resource efficiency, and waste management practices

What we are looking for

Please can the Supplier answer the following questions:

- Can you demonstrate your proposed solution addresses the benefits, outcomes and requirements?
- Can you provide a speculative quote for annual service for 50 users, 100 users, and 200 users?

- Can you break down the speculative quote with range of service offerings and modular pricing structure?

Our timetable

Date	Activity
27/10/25	Publication of the RFI
28/10/25 09:00	Clarification period starts
7/11/25 17:00	Clarification period closes
Up to 14/11/25 17:00	Deadline for the publication of responses to the RFI Clarification questions
21/11/25 17:00	Deadline for submission of an RFI Response
28/11/25	Analysis of RFI responses
Up to 12/12/25	Confirm next steps to RFI Respondents

Questions and Clarifications

- Potential Providers may raise questions or seek clarification regarding any aspect of this RFI document at any time prior to the Response Deadline. Questions must be submitted by email to tom.dubberley@defra.gov.uk
- To ensure that all Potential Providers have equal access to information regarding this Procurement, responses to questions raised by Potential Providers will be published in a questions and answers document on the portal.

- Responses to questions will not identify the originator of the question.
- If a Potential Provider wishes to ask a question or seek clarification without the question and answer being published in this way, then the Potential Provider must notify us and provide its justification for withholding the question and any response. If we do not consider that there is sufficient justification for withholding the question and the corresponding response, the Potential Provider will be invited to decide whether:
 - The question/clarification and the response should in fact be published; or
 - It wishes to withdraw the question/clarification.

General contact point for this RFI

RFI Lead

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