REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
Management of Multi-Partner Military Longitudinal Cohort Research

To whom it may concern,

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) works within UK defence and security. Dstl is an executive agency of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) providing expertise and delivering cutting-edge science and technology for the benefit of the nation and allies.

This Request for Information (RFI) is not a bidding opportunity but a means by which industry can provide information. No further discussions with industry are planned at this stage. However, any future procurement activity will be advertised in line with public procurement regulations on the Defence Sourcing Portal and Contracts Finder.

Please note the following general conditions:

- We reserve the right not to proceed with this procurement. Nothing shall constitute a commitment to instigating a formal procurement process.
- Any and all costs associated with the production of such a response either to an RFI or any resultant competition must be borne by the Provider. The Authority 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 that may take place.
- Should a Potential Provider fail to respond to this Questionnaire, it will not affect any further participation in any possible future procurement for this capability.

RFI Title: Management of Multi-Partner Military Longitudinal Cohort Research

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Contents

Glossary

DNBI	Disease Non-battle Injury
Dstl	Defence Science Technology Laboratory
GCP	Good Clinical Practice
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
MOD	Ministry of Defence
ROM	Rough Order of Magnitude

1. Background

Disease Non-Battle Injuries (DNBIs) remain a significant cause of morbidity and loss of operational readiness within the armed forces. Therefore, research that focuses on reducing the incidence of DNBIs by enabling the detection, prevention and treatment of injuries caused by Defence occupational, environmental and workplace stressors is a high priority. Monitoring of individuals and collecting data about them and the context in which they find themselves has the potential to provide insight into the risk factors associated with development of DNBIs and thus the ability to intervene early to the benefit of individuals. However, DNBIs are often complex, interconnected conditions. In addition, for several priority DNBIs, patterns and inferences in data will only be discernible with sufficiently long duration of collection to discern trends and supporting contextual evidence.

As a result Dstl are looking to implement a multi-year, multi-cohort longitudinal study in human health monitoring. Dstl anticipates, this study will be undertaken in partnership with several organisations (academic institutions, industry) who will each have expertise in specific scientific areas critical to understanding high priority DNBI issues, noting that these my change as the study progresses.

The study will use mixed-methods approaches, collecting data (e.g. qualitative surveys, self-report, commercial off-the-shelf wearable sensors, epidemiological and, importantly, contextual data) across multiple cohorts from all Defence services (Royal Navy, Army, and Royal Air Force). Clinical biological samples will also be collected. These data will be collected at an expansive baseline, and at scheduled iterative follow-ups appropriate to gather information through the life of the study (5+ years). The frequency of data collection is likely to be different for different measures and DNBIs. The study will have an adaptive design, with modifications being made based on information garnered during project lifespan. Nested sub-samples of the cohorts will also be identified for more granular, specific investigation, which will likely include the gathering of test data linked to specific DNBIs. At least some of the data will be medical data and all of the data will need to be controlled according to the legal requirements of GDPR and under the ethical conditions of the MOD Research Ethics Committee. All collected samples will be subject to the requirements of the Human Tissue Authority. It is anticipated that the study will expand to accommodate several thousand overall participants to be recruited on a rolling basis.

The project team are investigating the extent to which research organisations in the UK can provide management, infrastructure and resource support to this multi-year longitudinal research, the range of support available, and the ROM costings for provision of this support. The principles of good clinical practice (GCP) should be applied in a proportionate way to each element of the study.

Set out below are a list of essential criteria the service must include for supporting the longitudinal trial:

- Access and maintain long term contact with serving military populations
- Liaise with an overarching Defence steering board, and with front-line commands (Royal Navy, Army, , Royal Air Force), medical centres/facilities to coordinate approaches for data collection

- Track and manage onboarding, consent and recruitment of participants throughout a longitudinal time frame (i.e. iteratively)
- Maintain accurate records of participants to include, specifically, their continued engagement with the study over multiyear time frames
- Ensure repeated data collection is undertaken at set time periods
- Employ methods of enhancing compliance with long term data collection studies such as feedback reports to participants, check-ins, summary of data and progress of study or other mechanism
- Work with, and supervise, multiple supplier teams (i.e. university and industry research teams)
- Internally manage the resource and turn-over of staff to continue the support to a project through its lifespan, to include generation of Standard Operating Procedures to ensure compliance to process in the event of staff turnover
- Work with data contractors, where the contractor would hold and maintain a data architecture for data storage, and/or provide these services with due compliance to data security, GDPR and confidentiality
- Provide data quality control checking for research studies to include compliance with data collection, contextual information on missing data.
- Have the capacity to build, validate and circulate questionnaires/surveys
- Provide biobanking services, or storage and carriage of clinical samples
- Provide staff for taking clinical samples from research participants, and have the ability to apply GCP proportionately to different elements of study.

The project team are interested in whether, and which of, these criteria can be fulfilled by research organisations.

2. RFI intended outcomes.

This RFI aims to achieve 5 outcomes:

1) Align the MOD requirement with industry capability and processes for procurement of the required solution.
2) Develop a procurement strategy that will deliver best value for money for Defence.
3) Implement an enduring solution that allows the Authority to plan its activity against an assured continuity of service, whilst also supporting foreseeable increases in demand.
4) To inform a Procurement Strategy that enables the implementation of an enduring solution.
5) To provide evidence that there is solution available that meets the Authority's User Requirement to enable procurement activity to proceed.

3. RFI Procedure

Responses to this RFI will be reviewed by subject matter experts from different functional areas within Dstl and wider Defence science.

If, upon review of your submission, any clarifications or additional information is required, you will be contacted using the details provided in your RFI response.

Any details provided in response to this RFI will be used for information purposes only and will not be used to determine the potential Suppliers who will be invited to bid, should the Authority proceed to tender.

The results and analysis of this RFI shall not constitute any form of pre-qualification exercise.

Any formal procurement process will be undertaken in accordance with the relevant Procurement Law.

Nothing in this RFI, or any other engagements with Industry prior to a formal procurement process, shall be construed as a representation as to the Authority's ultimate decision in relation to the future requirement.

4. How to submit responses to this RFI

Respondents should provide responses in accordance with the format provided in **Annex A, quoting** the RFI reference on all documentation and emails**.**

Please do not submit additional documents such as company overviews, the purpose of the RFI is to collect information related to the technical solution, any additional documents will not be included in the review process.

Any responses received after the deadline will be passed to the subject matter experts for information, however they may not be included in the RFI review meetings which are to be held immediately following the deadline.

Once completed, please return electronically to the e-mail address shown below in **section 7,** no later than **17:00 on 15th November 2024.**

Responses will be acknowledged electronically by return e-mail.

5. Confidentiality & Proprietary Information

No information included in your response, or in discussions connected to it, will be disclosed to any other third party.

Proprietary information, where included, should be kept to a minimum and must be clearly marked.

For the purposes of this RFI, any documentation submitted should be classification OFFICIAL.

6. Costs of preparing your RFI response

Any costs relating to the preparation and submission of a response to this RFI are the sole responsibility of the respondent.

7. Contact

Quoting the RFI Title, please submit

i) any requests for clarification
ii) all responses to this RFI and
iii) any questions regarding Classification of document(s) intended for submission, to:

CBRcommercial@dstl.gov.uk

8. Annex A

Management of Multi-Partner Military Longitudinal Cohort Research

Question	Answer
Company Name	
Company Address	
Is the company a Small - Medium Enterprise (less than 250 employees)?	
Name of Company representative completing the RFI	
Contact details (e-mail and telephone number)	
Company website address	
Main products/services/line of business	
Main market sector	
Number of years in this market sector	
QUESTIONS Respondents are reminded that as this is not a bidding opportunity (see guidance at top of document), the answers to these questions are for industry to provide information, and therefore do not need to exceed a few paragraphs per question(or several bullet points where applicable)	
1. Please provide an indication of how you would produce an enduring solution that meets the above requirements. Please specify if there are any areas that you would intend to subcontract.	
2. Are their specific challenges you foresee within the requirements detailed in the RFI that would constrain your ability to provide the requirements detailed?	

3. How would you expect to price or cost for this type of requirement, and how would you calculate the costs charged for this service? And therefore, what do you believe the rough order of magnitude (ROM) cost would be to deliver this service?
4. Does your organisation have experience conducting or managing longitudinal data collection trials? (5 years and greater). Is this capability scalable to cover a total cohort of several thousand individuals, who may be recruited across multiple years of the project in a rolling fashion. If so, please provide indication of how your capabilities would meet this requirements.
5. What experience does your organisation have of working with, and/or supervising, multiple supplier teams (i.e. university and industry research teams)?
6. Does your organisation have experience working within MOD projects, including accessing and maintaining long term contact with serving military populations? Please describe this (including which services) or other relevant experience.

7. How does your organisation provide quality control for research studies to employ the proportionate application of the principles embedded in Good Clinical Practice (GCP)?
8. Can your organisation provide the staff/resource to collect clinical samples from research participants, and have facilities for biobanking services, and/or storage and carriage of those samples from point of collection to the bio-bank? How would you achieve this across multiple sites possibly including remote locations in the UK and overseas?
9. What experience does your organisation have of work with data contractors, where the contractor would hold and maintain a data architecture for data storage, and/or does your organisation provide these services?
10. What experience does your organisation have with using methods for enhancing compliance for long-term data collection studies, such as feedback to participants, summary reports (or other mechanisms); additionally, what methods can you employ for checking participant adherence and data quality?

11. Has your organisation had experience in adapting to collection of new data metrics in an adaptive studies design? Has your organisation had demonstrable experience in study designs with embedded nested cohorts with additional metrics specific to those cohorts within the context of a wider study?
12. Do you have any suggestions that may help in refining the scope and approach of any future procurement?
13. Do you have any other comments/feedback or any suggestions on how to improve the way the requirements could be met?