**Market Research invitation to tender**

Date 23/11/2022

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| **MR0609 Customer Research**  **MR0611 Stakeholder & Partner Research** |

**Brief Description**

EA2025 is the Environment Agency’s five-year strategy. It describes our overall aim to ‘Create a better place’, and how we will do this through i) creating a nation resilient to climate change, ii) ensuring healthy air, land and water and iii) supporting green growth and a sustainable future. We work with others to achieve the outcomes in EA2025 and we need insight about the groups we work with to help us work in the most effective way. This insight will tell us how well we are working with our customers, stakeholders and partners; it will tell us how aware the public are of the Environment Agency and our aims. We will know what others need from us so they can deliver environmental outcomes. We will use the results to make sure the services we offer, the information we provide and our approach to engaging others all respond to what different groups need and will ultimately help us achieve EA2025.

We are commissioning three related research projects; one with customers (those we regulate), one with stakeholders (the groups we work with) and one with the public. This brief confirms the objectives for two projects; customer research and stakeholder and partner research.

This brief covers the customer and stakeholder/partner elements of this research programme, which will be run as 2 separate projects. For the purposes of these two research projects, we will sue the following broad definitions:

“customers” - they need something from us

“stakeholders” - we need something from them

“partners” - we need something from each other

**Business Objectives**

The EA needs coordinated, robust insight about our customers, stakeholders and partners so we can gather evidence of progress towards EA2025 outcomes, and understand how effective we are, and how we might need to do things differently.

Customers:

We need to understand what our regulated customers need from us - now and in the future, so we can identify opportunities to improve the service we provide and understand how to make further progress towards achieving EA2025 outcomes.

We need to establish baseline agreed customer metrics which are relevant to internal customer standards, and be able to track them and report on them. We also need actionable insight that explains how the EA can work and engage more effectively with our customers.

Stakeholders:

The EA recognises that working with stakeholders and partners is crucial in helping us to deliver EA2025 outcomes more effectively. This research is also driven by the ambition set out in our Organisational Outcome Plan, that our stakeholders and partners value the EA and choose to work with us to deliver outcomes. Again, we need stakeholder metrics which link to this outcome to establish a baseline measure which we can track and report on internally.

Research Objectives

The overall objective is to build upon previous research to improve the way that we work with,

communicate to, and engage with our customers, stakeholders and partners. More specifically, we want to understand in each project:

* how the EA is perceived and how they feel about having to come to us for services or work with us;
* what do they need from us, including how they know to work with us;
* how they find working with us (including some measure of to what extent we work according to our “How We Do Things” statements), whether we meet their expectations and how we can improve;
* the extent to which EA2025 outcomes, if any, matter to them;
* understand how effective we are and how we might take a different approach to achieve quicker or bigger results for EA2025;
* where there are opportunities for us to work together;
* evaluate our performance against internal communications and engagement scorecard measures;
* conduct key driver analysis to understand what drives customer satisfaction and stakeholder engagement with the EA;
* identify metrics for customer and stakeholder outcomes to create models, which we can use to track and report on how satisfied our customers are and how committed our stakeholders are to working with us. The results from this work will be used as baselines for future comparisons in any research and engagement work.

For customer:

* The EA will need to be able to use the research outputs to inform how we structure and resource our approach to customer service. This is not to be explicitly explored in the research, but suppliers need to design the research accordingly and provide evidence-based recommendations to support this need.

For stakeholder:

* Understand how we can further enhance our reputation and build relationships.

**Supporting Information**

Our corporate plan [EA2025](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-agency-ea2025-creating-a-better-place/environment-agency-ea2025-creating-a-better-place)

Customer Background:

The customer research needs to coordinate the insight requirements of different customer activities and programmes in the EA. Some of these are current regulation, compliance, enforcement, and incident operational activities and some are projects and programmes planning the future of environmental regulation. It has been more than a decade since we have run external customer research with business customers.

Stakeholder background:

The EA last ran research with our stakeholders in early 2021 to better understand what it is like to work with us, where stakeholders want to work with us, and how we can work together to deliver EA2025. A total of 185 interviews were carried out via an online survey.

The results of this research showed that strong relationships exist with our stakeholders at an individual level. However, there is scope to be more effective in working together. It highlighted areas for improvement in collaborative working and communication, more efficient processes, more timely decision-making, consistency in approach across teams and improved resourcing.

The majority of our stakeholders actively want to work with us. Most felt that our objectives are quite closely aligned with their own, with NGOs/charities being mostly aligned whilst industry and trade associations were less aligned. Flood and Coastal Risk Management is the most common area of environmental work for our stakeholders, followed by biodiversity and climate change. However, there are noticeable gaps where stakeholders are not currently working with us - in particular, climate change and energy.

This piece of research will continue to build upon the 2021 stakeholder research with the aim of establishing a long-term baseline measure. The results will help us to better understand what stakeholders/partners need from us, and how we can improve our approach to enable delivery of environmental outcomes.

Risks:

There are a number of potential risks which could affect the timely delivery of this project:

* The sample does not cover the broad range of types / sectors / geography of our stakeholders/partners, resulting in low response rate or patchy results.
* Any work with farmers needs approval from the Defra Survey Control Unit, which can take 4-6 weeks. A decision on whether to include farmers in the scope of this research will be made before the set-up meeting with suppliers.
* A large incident occurs (such as flooding), resulting in the project being ‘stopped or slowed’ for a period of time. Suppliers should be prepared to be flexible if there are any significant incidents prior or during fieldwork.
* The research exposes the EA to negative publicity. For example:
* The potential for questions about spending public money on research, value for money and the cost of living crisis. Lines to take will be agreed.

Research Approach

We believe that this will be a quantitative piece of research. The aim for both projects is to establish baseline measures and understand what drives, which can be repeated in tracker surveys to report on progress. The approach should establish a core set of questions, whilst remaining adaptable to allow us to test the effectiveness of different future approaches. The insight must apply to the whole EA.

Data Protection:

The Environment Agency is the data controller for this research and the Supplier is the data processor. We will work with the supplier to produce a Privacy Notice.

Sample

Customers sample:

There is no centralised database of our customers. We will collate internal customer data from different regulatory regimes to provide contact information for the sample. Research proposals should allow for resources to build the sample from the data we supply. The database and / or the research design should cover different demographic groups (e.g. business sectors, size, permit type) for reporting.

Stakeholder sample:

There is no centralised database, however, the sample for stakeholders and partners will be generated by the Environment Agency. The sample will aim to cover a range of the following:

* types or relationships – including partners, those funded by the Environment Agency, statutory, voluntary, consultant
* types of organisations – including government, government agency, NGO / charity / voluntary, business, industry / trade association
* areas of environmental work – including Flood and Coastal Risk Management, biodiversity, agriculture and land management, water, climate change, incident management, sustainable communities, fisheries, navigation and recreation, sustainable resource use, internal environment management
* both national and Area stakeholders/partners to give a full geographical coverage of our operations.

The exact number of stakeholders and contact details (e.[g](https://defra.sharepoint.com/sites/def-contentcloud/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7B81B6C9D4-5188-407B-BDB3-0F81F750603F%7D&file=LIT%2013696%20-%20Cost-Quality%20Evaluation%20Model.xlsx&action=default&mobileredirect=true). email addresses / telephone numbers) will be confirmed. We anticipate using key stakeholder and partner relationship holders within the Environment Agency to distribute any invitation to take part in this research.

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Outputs

* A presentation of the findings to a small number of EA staff (this can be virtual, but we would like a recording)
* An Executive Summary (approximately 2-pages) on Microsoft Word;
* A PowerPoint report of the full results. Suppliers should allow time in the schedule for us to brief on the specific content and design of the final report.
* Raw data file (Microsoft Excel compatible) to enable potential further analysis

Budget

The budget for this project is up to £49,999 (exc. VAT)

Contact

The Market Research team lead (first point of contact) for this project is:

Customer: Abigail Whittaker

Stakeholder/partner: Kelly Howitt

MRTeam@environment-agency.gov.uk

Outline Timetable

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| Issue brief and tender invitation | 25/11/2022 |
| Submit proposal | 5pm, 9/12/2022 |
| Clarification on tenders (suppliers please hold dates) | 14/12/22 & 15/12/22 |
| Award contract | 15/12/22 |
| Set-up meeting | Early Jan 2023 |
| Research design, sampling and recruitment | Jan 2023 |
| Fieldwork | late Jan / early Feb 2023 |
| Final reporting | mid-March 2023 |
| De-brief meeting | end-March 2023 |

Suppliers should be prepared to be flexible if there are any significant incidents (such as flooding) prior to or during fieldwork.

Other Information

* The Environment Agency is committed to improving equality, diversity and inclusion, and to reducing our environmental impact as we work towards our Net Zero by 2030 goal. We would like to work with suppliers who share our aspirations.
* Bids will be evaluated on 60% cost and 40% quality. Please see the quote form for more information.
* Bids will be independently evaluated by at least 2 members of the Environment Agency’s Market Research team.
* Use of third party and Environment Agency information and background Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). Please complete the attached Prior Rights Schedule and ensure you:
  + Disclose any costs associated with the use of the Prior Rights (either within the contract or enable us to use and exploit the Results) which we are expected to bear. Costs not disclosed will not be accepted by us.
  + Disclose any restrictions on the use imposed by the owner of the rights or under your licence to use the rights.
* Please also indicate if there are any Prior Rights belonging to the Environment Agency to which you require access for this study. The contractor is required to update the Prior Rights Schedule during the contract as Prior Rights are identified for introduction to this review.
* All outputs, products and results produced under this contract shall be the property of the Environment Agency.