

Subject:

**RFP-ACT-SACT-25-03 CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT**

Reference:

**Q&A #2**

Date of Issue:

**7 Jan 2025**

The following questions were raised with respect to subject **RFP-ACT-SACT-25-03 CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT**. Responses are to provide clarification.

Questions	Responses
1. Is there an incumbent performer? If so, who and what is the contract number?	1. This is a new requirement.
2. Will the participant be barred in proposing existing company capabilities for the initial concept proposed during the period of performance?	2. The company can offer an OCIA mitigation plan to firewall the on-site contractor in order to ensure that the company is competitive for any follow-on actions.
3. Will there be any conflict of interest for supporting HQ SACT, NATO or ACT in the future on-contracts or other opportunities if awarded this opportunity?	3. Future follow-on opportunities are not known at this time; however, the company can offer an OCIA mitigation plan in order to ensure that the company is competitive for any follow on actions.
4. Can the Authority confirm if there is an existing incumbent?	4. This is a new requirement.
5. Can the Authority share how there will be a level playing field maintained in this competitive procurement if there is an incumbent?	5. N/A
6. Is the Authority looking for organisations established in support to ACT or innovative new entrants?	6. Both/Either

7. Can the authority indicate how the quality of the individual candidates will inform an assessment of the confidence of the deliverables?	7. Through assessment of supporting evidence of previous performance
8. Can the authority give an indication of the team size to achieve the deliverables, and to inform the quantity of individual candidates?	8. A concept development core team will comprise of a concept lead, a concept drafter, a research, experimentation and analysis expert, and potentially additional concept developer if the scale of the concept effort justifies it. I would assess that in this case, a dedicated concept developer to assist the lead, and a research and experimentation expert. Fulfilling these functions is probably possible with partially dedicated resources. Of course, I am open to innovate solutions.
9. How does the authority intend to build confidence on the deliverability / delivery approach of tenderers given the scale of tasking in 1 year?	9. The concept will be developed collaboratively with a Hybrid ACT/Contract/external SME team. The constant collaboration will provide continuous indicators for all parties about expectations and perceived success.
10. Given the upcoming holidays, have you considered extending the proposal due date? If not, we would like to respectfully request an extension of the due date for proposal submission through January 17, 2025. We believe that this additional time will enable us to develop a more comprehensive and quality response, without conflicting with the upcoming holidays.	10. Extension granted to 17 Jan 2025.
11. Is there a better understanding of the conceptual area that will be explored in the respective CD&E effort? Understanding the concept area is critical for resource planning and SME identification.	11. The conceptual area will probably be linked to the NATO Warfare Capstone Concept. Expertise in relation to any subject area is less desirable than experience of running concept development or research projects.
12. Please share deliverables from the pre-initiation phase, especially deliverables for the concept idea.	12. This is not yet complete, and therefore cannot be shared at this time
13. Size of the project for the planning of the project management team. CD&E handbook page 9 / The Project Team: "Depending on the size of your project, your team may also include resources manager, SMEs, your sponsor...If your project is	13. It is likely that this project will have an ACT Concept Lead, and potentially a second ACT Concept support staff. Specialists from other ACT branches will be drawn on an ad-hoc basis.

small, you may be alone ad hoc supported by different specialists."	
14. Please share ROM for the concept planned for this project.	14. HQ SACT will not share this information. Industry is encouraged to provide its best offer.
15. What is the expected length of the initial concept v0.1?	15. About 40 pages, and then any relevant annex's and supporting documentation.
16. What are the expectations towards the technical proposal (content items)? "Part of any bid should provide an estimate of output and work against each deliverable to enable the effective and collaborative establishment of deliverable acceptance criteria"	16. List of activities and planned outputs for the first year. Can be quite high level, but should give us an idea of what is expected in terms of work
17. How many participants are foreseen for the kick-off workshop? What is the envisioned duration? Initiation Phase - Serial 2.	17. 1 day, working level workshop with key ACT staff, representatives from supporting branches, and the concept sponsor.
18. What will be the classification level of deliverables and working documents? Need to understand staffing and facility security requirements.	18. We envisage the work to be conducted at NATO UNCLASSIFIED in the first year. However, elements of the work may lead to classified work, increasingly so in later years. Having / being able to gain NS would be useful from that context.
19. How will NATO facilitate access to key stakeholders? (What are the expectations regarding collaboration with multinational teams and industry stakeholders?) Need clarity on NATO's role in stakeholder engagement and coordination.	19. The ACT concept lead will be the focal point for communication with the community of interest. They should provide guidance and direction on which stakeholders should be included. However, it is expected that the contractor will help with identifying and communicating, under the direction of the ACT lead, with this community. Planned activity such as SH identification activities, SH coordination and SH communication should be considered as part of the core activity. Technical means for engaging with the community will likely be through TRANSNET
20. What is the expected duration for the six meetings in Norfolk and 3-4 events in Europe? Critical for resource and cost planning.	20. Dependent partly on contractor location. We should consider these events to be 2-3 day meetings.

21. Will NATO provide access to the TRANSNET portal and related tools? Need to understand available tools and systems for project execution.	21. Yes
22. Please clarify the timeline discrepancy regarding the Stakeholder Analysis deliverable. The timeline appears inconsistent with the contract period.	22. Should be 25 APR 2025
23. What are the specific requirements for analysis/experimentation specialists? Could you clarify the required team composition and expertise?	23. The approach will be to support the concept's development through ACT technical specialist support (i.e. the Operational Analysis branch may support specific research activities). It is necessary that the contractor have experience of designing and executing research, analysis or experimentation activities, so that they can adequately draft the requirements, and support any such execution.
24. What is the expected concept maturity level for base year vs. option years? E.g. phases: Initiation -> Research -> Development -> Refinement/Validation -> Approval - year one to initial concept (Research phase), years two and three? It is important to scope effort and resources across contract periods.	24. Research phase complete by end of 1 <sup>st</sup> year, including gap analysis, problem statement definition, risk / threat articulation and potentially initial solution identification.
25. What are the expectations for implementation planning in deliverables? Implementation planning is listed throughout the CD&E handbook and has outputs in multiple phases but is not mentioned in the SOW as a deliverable. E.g., Development Phase: Initial Implementation Proposal, Refinement Phase: Updated Implementation Proposal, Approval Phase: Final Implementation Proposal. Need clarity on implementation planning scope and requirements	25. First year focus on Research, therefore Implementation consideration is not a priority during this phase
26. Will NATO provide access to modelling and simulation tools? (What tools or platforms are recommended for concept modelling and simulation?) Understanding available tools impacts resource planning and approach.	26. This is highly dependent on approach. If an appropriate M&S tool can support the CD&E effort then it can be considered, but probably out of scope for the first year of research.
27. What level of access will be provided to NATO internal documents and lessons learned repositories? Need to understand available information sources and access procedures.	27. Necessary documentation will be provided to conduct the analysis of the problem area and conduct gap analysis.

28. Will NATO provide facilities for workshops and events? Need clarity on facility requirements and availability.	28. Yes
29. Will NATO support the coordination of required workshops and events? Understanding NATO's role in event coordination impacts resource planning.	29. ACT Concept lead will direct and support the coordination/delivery of workshops and events, but it is expected that the contractor will design, coordinate and execute the workshops and events.
30. In case of a cancel/on-hold decision for the Concept Proposal, what will happen to the concept team provided by the vendor?	30. The contract team will support a concept that passes proposal (there is not a shortage of viable concepts)
31. What part of the team do you consider "key personnel"? Should we include the CVs of key personnel or the entire team in our response?	31. Only the ones that are key
32. What methodologies or frameworks does NATO expect to be applied during experimentation and analysis? To align proposed approaches with NATO's expectations and CD&E best practices.	32. There are several handbooks and guidance documents (e.g. NATO Wargaming Handbook). The ACT Experimentation and Wargaming Branch can provide support and guidance on these activities.
33. Will contractors have opportunities to engage with NATO operational units for live insights? Engaging with operational units could enhance the practical applicability of the concept development.	33. Yes, dependent on the classification held by the contractors, and the clearances required for the conversations.
34. What baseline information will NATO provide for developing initial metrics and frameworks? Access to existing metrics or datasets could streamline the process and improve alignment with NATO standards.	34. This is something that should be refined during the early research of a concept.
35. Are there any specific challenges NATO foresees in stakeholder alignment or consensus building? Understanding potential challenges can inform the approach for engagement and alignment strategies.	35. No specific challenges, but there will always be difficulty in aligning and consensus building across 32 allies.
36. How does NATO intend to evaluate the progress and quality of the proposed concept at various stages? Clear evaluation criteria are critical for aligning deliverables with expectations.	36. The Concept Development branch owns the quality assurance process for NATO concepts. Each concept is different, but at each review stage, an assessment will be conducted on the alignment with other NATO work, a review of adherence to appropriate CD&E methodology components, and an assessment of whether sufficient rigour has been applied vs the resources and attention devoted to the concept development.

37. Will the concept integrate or support ongoing NATO innovation efforts, such as the DIANA initiative? Understanding linkages ensures the concept contributes to broader strategic innovation goals.	37. Potentially, depending on the specific concept to be developed.
38. Are there specific NATO documents or manuals required for reference during the project? Access to key documents will inform the approach and ensure consistency with NATO protocols.	38. There will be, but at this stage, we cannot provide the specifics (this will be a core component of the initial work)
39. Are there specific NATO operations or case studies this concept is expected to address or incorporate? Clarification will ensure alignment with NATO's strategic focus and operational gaps.	39. There will be, but at this stage, we cannot provide the specifics (this will be a core component of the initial work)
40. Will the concept require developing or integrating a digital twin environment for experimentation? Digital twins are critical for high-fidelity simulation and experimentation aligned with modern CD&E practices.	40. . I'd be interested to know more, but I don't think a specific requirement at this stage
41. Are there specific metrics or performance indicators required for assessing multi-domain operational effectiveness? Clarity on expected metrics will streamline the design and evaluation of technical solutions.	41. Not relevant at this stage
42. What data formats and interoperability protocols are preferred for multi-domain data exchange during research? Ensures compatibility with NATO's existing systems and supports cross-domain collaboration.	42. Not relevant at this stage
43. Are there preferred technical tools or platforms for modelling operational scenarios? Identifying recommended tools will ensure efficiency and alignment with NATO's technical ecosystem.	43. The ACT Modelling and Simulation branch can be consulted and their capabilities employed where appropriate
44. How should technical dependencies between land, air, maritime, cyber, and space domains be documented and managed? Understanding cross-domain dependencies is essential for creating a cohesive and technically sound strategic concept.	44. More broadly, alignment with NATO strategic concepts and policies will be required for any concept. The level of consideration depends on the specifics of the concept, but this is unlikely to be a functional, or low-level operational concept. Detailed technical dependencies are unlikely to play a central role.
45. Will the contractor need to develop or propose specific software or hardware prototypes during the project? Determining the scope of prototyping can influence resource allocation and project planning.	45. No, not required in the research phase
46. Should we add a self-evaluation of the provided CVs according to Annex B? I have seen that some EU tenders expect vendors to provide self-evaluation based on requirements. Considering how they have	46. OK

listed evaluation criteria, it should be possible.	
47. Do you know if the concept you plan to develop within the given scope includes legal assessment or any other tasks with legal experts? The handbook highlights legal aspects. All ACT concepts must consider legal implications.	47. The Legal branch in ACT will provide that support.
48. Could you please provide more information on the broader emerging NATO concept in question?	48. Not yet, it has yet to be selected
49. If bidder includes additional Terms and Conditions not already addressed in the HQ SACT General Terms and Conditions, will HQ SACT treat that proposal as noncompliant, how will HQ SACT treat additional Terms and Conditions?	49. The proposal will not be non-compliant. Any proposed changes should be noted as an exception on the compliance document. Additional terms will be considered but there is no guarantee of acceptance. Should the company be selected, further discussion and negotiation would be required for any proposed changes that would not be acceptable to HQ ACT.
50. Can a prime contractor, established in a NATO Alliance member nation subcontract labor to a company established in a non-NATO country if the individuals are not key personnel?	50. No – All members of the proposed team (direct or indirect) must be citizens of a NATO member nation, and all work must be conducted within a NATO member nation.
51. Is supplier supposed to complete the grading matrix or will HQ SACT complete it based on bidder reply?	51. Bidders should conduct a self-assessment and include reference to the exact location within the CV/Proposal where the information can be found to substantiate the experience. HQ SACT will conduct its own evaluation, which may differ from the company assessment.
52. Has NATO ACT custom designed this 25-03 security requirement to accommodate a preferred candidate that does not have an active security clearance?	52. HQ SACT is hoping for a solution that includes a team approach to providing the delivery of this requirement – not a single individual.
53. Are bidder travel expenses supposed to be covered by the bidder price proposal? What about local travel?	53. Travel will not be considered during the award phase of this contract to ensure equal opportunity for industry from all nations. Travel, if required, will be coordinated and funded separately post award.
54. Can you clearly specify/confirm the level of classification for the various tasks of the program?	54. Not yet, as we have not yet determined which concept theme we are working on
55. Is Bidder allowed to provide several bids in response to the IFIB?	55. No, each bidder must provide only its best response.
56. Can bidders propose special Terms and Conditions with their offer?	56. Yes

<p>57. Would NATO be amicable to a start time adjustment to allow adequate time to receive the required USG export authorization IAW ITAR regulations? Who is the NATO point of contact to sign a TAA? Would NATO accept an “exemption” letter, or “written direction” letter signed by our US sponsor in lieu of a TAA for the proposal submission? What about the architectural sets required (e.g. doors)?</p>	<p>57. A start date has been set for 25 April 2025. There is nothing in NATO contracts that requires TAA authorization prior to start and many U.S. companies have completed this process after contract start. The NATO Contracting Officer will sign the TAA after coordination and agreement with the NATO legal advisor. An exemption letter or written direction letter during the proposal submission process would be accepted.</p>
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