Advanced Research + Invention Agency ARIA

Precision Mitochondria

FAQs from RFP

The Precision Mitochondria team released an RFP for their Standardisation, Translation, and Replication (ST&R) Partner on 12 October 2026.

The following clarification questions have been submitted:

Q: Software IP: Does the default position on new IP apply to software developed by the ST&R partner? Could the partner retain that IP while granting the programme continuing rights to use it?
A: The general expectation is that no new IP accrues to the ST&R partner, and that where new IP is developed it accrues to the relevant Creator teams on a case-by-case basis. However, background IP is retained: any software, platform or tooling the ST&R partner brings to the Services remains the ST&R partner's. Please note that this is a default and not an absolute. The RFP provides for bespoke arrangements agreed case by case where all relevant parties agree and separate terms are settled. Where a bidder's operating model depends on retaining foreground software, this should be explained in the proposal. Further discussions surrounding IP will take place during the negotiation process and will be re-assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Q: Replication facilities: Do you expect replication primarily to take place in creator-team labs, independent third-party labs, or facilities arranged by the ST&R partner? What level of wet-lab access should applicants plan and budget for?
A: Primarily in participating laboratories, Creator teams' own laboratories and other laboratories with the relevant capability, with the ST&R partner coordinating rather than performing. Operating a standing wet laboratory is not necessarily expected, but the ST&R partner may carry out discrete wet-lab work to produce a reference material, characterise a reference protocol or resolve a discrepancy between laboratories, in consultation with ARIA — bidders should say how they would do so and at what scale.

Q: Onsite work: Would onsite interviews and observation in creator labs be an appropriate way to establish and maintain the roadblock and capability maps? If so, what access could ARIA help facilitate, given that creator participation is voluntary?
A: Yes. Knowledge transfer often requires demonstrations, troubleshooting and hands-on training alongside written protocols, and the capability and roadblock maps have to capture what Creator teams are actually blocked on rather than what a survey returns. Although participation is voluntary, ARIA will help to facilitate these activities.

Q: How much and what mitochondrial biology expertise is expected?

A: Deep mitochondrial expertise is welcome but not essential where the bidder can demonstrate credible access to it and relevant experience in establishing shared capability in an unsettled field.

Q: Conflict: may a consortium member continue to sell routine commercial services to Creator teams during the contract, with declared management arrangements? We have a service provider as a part of our consortium that already serves some of the funded teams.

A: The eligibility bar applies to existing Creators, who cannot apply this call. Service providers that are selling to Creator teams may be eligible to apply, and will be assessed on a case-by-case basis depending on the type of engagement they have with the Creator teams in question.

Q: Payment profile: will payments be scheduled in advance of spend, or in arrears against delivered work packages? Many of these work packages require substantial upfront commitments which could not be accommodated on cash flow alone for smaller organisations.

A: Payments are made in arrears based on costs incurred. This can be done on a monthly or quarterly cycle. Depending on the upfront commitments we can support on cash flow (for example, expedited reimbursement). Otherwise you may need to consider if other credit arrangements need to be put in place.

Q: Can discrete wet lab work for producing reference materials or for inter-lab studies be funded as a part of the additional £1M that is available as a part of the £5M total or does it need to be accommodated in the £4M? Some of this is difficult to scope upfront as it will only become more obvious as teams progress and identify bottlenecks and the need for certain standards (and costs to produce them).

A: The indicative envelope of at least £5m covers ST&R-shaped activities across the full contract period and is split between the successful partner and funded teams already in the portfolio; it includes funds for existing teams to carry out work identified by the partner. ARIA expects to award up to £4m in this contract.

The balance is therefore not a discretionary reserve held by the partner, it is how work that is best carried out by a funded Creator team gets resourced, including work the partner identifies later. Discrete wet-lab work the partner carries out itself, or commissions from a third-party laboratory, sits within the contract and should be priced there.

Work that a Creator team is best placed to do is resourced through the separate route, subject to being scientifically justified and agreed with the team and ARIA. We recognise that much of this cannot be scoped upfront, which is why the commercial response asks you to distinguish defined deliverables, pass-through costs, work assumed to be funded separately through Creator teams, and optional or scalable activities.

You are encouraged to cost in what you can foresee, identify what you cannot, and propose the trigger and approval route you would want for work identified during delivery.

Q: How important is having preliminary data for the concept paper?

A: It's helpful but not required. We fully anticipate that many groups, especially those bringing new enabling technologies from other fields, will not have extensive mitochondria-specific preliminary data.

Q: Standards & Interoperability: Does ARIA expect ST&R to define the programme-wide data and evidence interoperability framework, adopting appropriate open standards, ontologies and minimum-information specifications and extending them where necessary?

A: The ST&R partner will help develop the proposed frameworks, benchmarks and reporting approaches, in collaboration with the Creator teams, whilst ARIA will advise and approve programme-wide requirements. Scope areas include the establishment of shared evidence and reporting standards, in addition to metadata, versioning and the record itself.

Q: Minimum Information & Evidence: Is ST&R expected to define what information must accompany research outputs, including metadata, provenance, experimental context, methods and supporting evidence, to enable comparison and reproducibility across the 19 research efforts?

A: Yes, the scope includes agreeing a minimum information package for shared results, including experimental conditions, failed attempts and negative findings, with suitable metadata and versioning, held in an accessible and appropriately controlled record of capabilities, protocols and results. This package is to be agreed with participating teams, and decisions about disclosing or transferring any specific unpublished result or materials remains with the Creator teams.

Q: Governance, adoption and buy in from Creator teams: What responsibility will ST&R have for establishing and driving adoption of common data governance, quality and standards across participating research teams, and what authority will it have where teams cannot conform?

Q: Considering the volunteered participation from Creators. What level of authority does the Partner have in this bid to help ensure best practices are onboarded with reasonable effort for the overall success of ST&R.

Q: Will there be a formal obligation on Creator teams to participate in workshops, capability mapping, interviews, and working groups, or is access entirely voluntary?

A: Responsibility is substantial, although authority to mandate is not. This ST&R function is to serve as an enabling force for the programme and field at large, but not a prescriptive authority. We expect substantial initial buy-in, however full adoption will have to be won through demonstrated value to the Creator teams.

The Programme team will provide their full support to the ST&R partner when engaging with Creator teams.

Q: Analytics & Programme Intelligence: Does ARIA expect ST&R to develop common measures and analytics for evidence maturity, reproducibility, capabilities, roadblocks and gaps, with the Capability and Roadblock Maps becoming continuously maintained, data-driven programme assets?

A: Yes, the capability map and the roadblock and challenge map are live records updated continuously as

teams progress. Common measures are welcome and are for you to propose.

Q: AI & Knowledge Exploitation: Should ST&R define how AI, semantic technologies and advanced analytics can be used to discover, connect, compare and synthesise knowledge and evidence across the programme, while maintaining scientific traceability and human validation?

A: You may propose it, but it is not a required workstream. If AI, semantic technologies, or advanced analytics are your route to success, set them out together with the traceability and human validation you would put around them.

Q: If participation levels are low, how will success be monitored by ARIA on a continued basis.

A: In this eventuality, success will still be monitored using the described metrics, albeit with this context in mind. Every effort will be made to identify why participation is low and how ARIA can work with the ST&R partner and the Creator teams to increase engagement and adoption.

Q: The document describes coordination, facilitation, transfer, and replication activities, while also allowing production of reference materials and limited wet-lab work. What balance does ARIA expect between programme orchestration and hands-on laboratory delivery?

A: Programme orchestration will be the priority. Where hands-on laboratory delivery can facilitate this, the ST&R partner will be expected to assist.

Q: Where replication, assay transfer or reference material creation requires material effort from a Creator team outside their funded scope, what mechanism and timeline exists for approving and releasing those additional funds?

A: ARIA does not mandate a platform and has not selected one. What this looks like is part of what we would welcome you to propose, and on what teams use today, establishing that picture is part of what the capability map is for.

Q: Asset ownership: Who ultimately owns and maintains the shared knowledge assets after contract completion?

A: Creator teams' own data, materials, protocols, publications and background IP stay with them. New IP developed under the contract accrues by default to the relevant Creator(s) case by case, however bespoke arrangements are possible where all parties agree.lin