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## AUKUS MARITIME INNOVATION CHALLENGE 2025

### CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS

#### Industry Briefing Information

**Q: Will a recording of all briefings be made available and will the questions from all AUKUS partners' sessions be communicated?**

A: Yes, recordings of all briefings have been published on the respective AUKUS partners' websites. Please refer to the Challenge document for links.

The questions from each session have been summarised and included in this FAQ/Addendum outlining further Clarification Questions.

#### Eligibility

**Q: Can prime defence companies bid into this challenge?**

A: Yes. This challenge is open to bids from all suppliers, including primes, Small-Medium Enterprises (SMEs), academia and companies that are new to defence altogether. All bids will be treated equally and based purely on the assessment criteria as set out in the competition document.

**Q: Are joint ventures or teaming arrangements between companies submitting a response together in a consortium approach desired or encouraged? Can these be multinational proposals? Can these include universities? Will partnering for collaboration be facilitated by the AUKUS partners?**

A: Collaborations and teaming arrangements are possible and encouraged between organisations. This includes working with large organisations, small organisations and academic organisations, or across multiple nations.

We do ask that there is one lead partner with whom any resultant contract will be made, and they subcontract any work undertaken by the other parties. Details of the collaborative arrangement should be included in the Submission Form when describing your solution.

The AUKUS partners will not be facilitating this collaboration process. If innovators wish to partner, they should reach out to find collaborative partners through other avenues. While multiple contracts may be entered into as a result of the Challenge, responses will not be 'combined' by the AUKUS partners following submission.



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Although there is no absolute restriction on the nationality of organisations it is a requirement of the competition that respondents are in a position to supply their technology to any of the three AUKUS nations.

You can have multiple submissions but not for the same bid from each partner. Each proposal must be unique. If you are submitting more than one proposal with interconnectivity this needs to be made clear in your submission.

For Stage 2 participation is by invitation only. You will receive notification by 26 May 2025 if you have been selected to participate in Stage 2. Uninvited proposals will not be accepted.

**Q: What costs can I cover in my submission?**

A: You can cover costs directly related to delivery of the work described in your project. This includes

ELIGIBLE COSTS	INELIGIBLE COSTS
Wages and labour costs	Gifts
Sub contracting costs	Finance agreement interest or charges
Business premises rentals	Costs associated with securing intellectual property (IP) arising from or associated with this project.
Overheads (including insurance of goods in transit for demonstration and depreciation of equipment owned by the respondent)	Payments for work undertaken which is a statutory requirement
Consumable items	Payments for legal challenges
Capital items (please note that the contracting bodies may maintain ownership of large capital items)	Liabilities incurred before the commencement of any awarded contract

**Q: Will the multinational demonstration be funded through a separate contract, when the Stage 2 projects are completed in November 2026?**

A: This is currently being explored and further detail will be provided in Stage 2.

**Q: Do I need to have had prior experience working with any of the AUKUS navies?**

A: Previous engagement with the navies is not required to take part in this competition. We are keen to receive submissions from as wide an audience as possible, including from non-



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traditional defence suppliers. It may be useful for you to reach out to your local organisation (ASCA, DASA, DIU) to discuss if you are less familiar with working within defence.

**Q. Are submissions required to be marked with security classifications?**

A: No security marking is required and submissions will be classified on receipt of submissions as detailed in the challenge submission form. Classified information is not permissible in responses.

**Q: For bids contracted by DIU, is the contract instrument for any potential award limited to Other Transactions under the authority of 10 U.S. Code § 4022? If so, are OT's limited to Firm Fixed Price or will Cost Plus Fixed Fee OT's be considered?**

A: For US awards, the contract instrument is limited to Other Transaction Agreements under 10 USC 4022. The US Government intends to award a Fixed Price agreement.

**Submission**

**Q: Can we submit more than 1 idea into the Challenge?**

A: Yes, you can make as many submissions as you like. However, all submissions must be completely self-contained. It is not permissible to enter a submission that can only be completed upon acceptance of another bid. You should also bear in mind your resourcing should more than one of your submissions be successful; do you have the facilities/staff to successfully deliver all submissions in the required timeframe.

As outlined above, we would also be open to seeing a consortium where different technologies are integrated by one leading player within that consortium.

**Q: Can previous unsuccessful ASCA/DASA/DIU applications be resubmitted into this challenge?**

A: If you have an idea that meets the scope of this challenge then you can submit into one of the portals. If the idea is based on a proposal that has been declined in the past you should consider any feedback you received and ensure that you have addressed any points raised. However, addressing those points would not in itself guarantee success in this challenge.

**Q: Can I submit into all of the submission portals?**



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A: All submissions received into any of the portals will be reviewed by all nations. There is no need to submit into more than one portal. The assessment process at Stage 1 is the same irrespective of the submission portal used.

**Q: What is meant by ‘Mission Requirements’?**

A: When the technologies have been developed fully and fielded operationally, these are the requirements of a mission that they might have to support; therefore, innovators need to consider this when submitting their proposals.

**Q: Is a proposal which addresses more than one of the Desired Capability Effects more likely to be funded than one which only addresses a single effect?**

A: All submissions will be assessed on their desirability and feasibility. If your organisation can offer an innovative solution – and leap forward in performance – for part of the mission requirements, then this will still be considered by assessors.

What the AUKUS allies are ultimately seeking is a more capable teamed network of UVs, improved freedom of action for operational commanders, and value for money for taxpayers. If your proposal can contribute to those goals in a novel and credible way, it will be more competitive in this Challenge.

**Information Sharing**

**Q: Can you please clarify the status of the Intellectual Property (IP) ownership, assuming a successful submission?**

A: Any IP generated by an organisation under a contract will remain the property of the organisation. The funding nation will secure certain rights to use the information for Government/Defence purposes which will allow information to be shared across the AUKUS nations.

**Q: How would AUKUS partners (in particular UK and AUS) protect restricted, limited and SBIR (Small Business Innovation Research) data right assertions?**

A: We understand the importance of data rights assertions. These will be a key component of Stage 2, allowing for a thorough review and discussion to ensure appropriate protections are in place.

**Q: After the challenge, will the successful innovative proposals be publicly announced with details of the capability?**



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A: We may announce that a contract has been awarded, however, details will be managed on a per contract basis, and in consultation with the successful company.

### **Export Controls and Security**

**Q: If our US industry partner has ITAR restricted equipment, can access to the equipment be approved to us as an Australian/UK/international(?) partner under this program?**

A: AUKUS partners may provide support; however, support and ITAR considerations will be handled on a per contract basis with further information provided at Stage 2.

Australia, the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) are streamlining the flow of defence trade between AUKUS partners to pursue greater advanced scientific, technological and industrial cooperation. This includes the creation of an export licence-free environment, which removes barriers to defence trade, collaboration, co-development, research and innovation between the AUKUS partners.

The licence-free environment is being operationalised by the three AUKUS nations providing national exemptions for each other from their export control licencing requirements. These exemptions will remove the licencing requirements for most military goods and technology items exported, re-exported or transferred (in-country) to or within the three AUKUS partners.

**Q: What is the maximum classification requirement of the final delivery.**

A: This will be managed on a per-contract basis and further information on classification will be provided in Stage 2.

**Q: Is there are requirement to have Australian Defence Industry Security Program (DISP) membership, to take part in the challenge?**

A: There is no requirement to have Australian DISP membership to make a submission to Stage 1. DISP requirements will be managed on a per contract basis and further information will be provided in Stage 2.

**Q: Will AUKUS partners provide support in areas such as letters of support of export control, or shipping for demonstrations? How flexible are partners regarding payment structures over the 12-month contract period?**



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A: AUKUS partners may provide support; however, this is managed on a per contract basis and further information on this will be provided during Stage 2. For payments, contracts will follow a typical milestone and deliverable structure with payments being made on the achievement of each milestone throughout the duration of the contract.

### **Contracting**

**Q: Will I have to agree to separate contracts from each nation if I am successful?**

A: Respondents invited to take part in Stage 2 will submit their proposal into one of the nations' portals. This will be advised to the respondent when invited. There will only be one contract which will be between the respondent and the nation selected to receive the proposal.

**Q: If my proposal is not successful at Stage 2 will it be made available to other nations/defence agencies for funding consideration?**

A: No. Information sharing agreements in place do not allow wider circulation of proposals to explore other funding mechanisms.

**Q: Will most funding offers come from one partner or is the intention to keep the number of funded projects per country equal?**

A: It is possible one AUKUS partner enters into a greater number of contracts than another. This will be determined based on the outcomes of Stage 2 of the challenge. AUKUS partners are looking for solutions that provide the greatest value for money in each nation within their available funding pool.

**Q: How flexible are partners regarding payment structures over the 12-month contract period?**

A: For payments, contracts will follow a typical milestone and deliverable structure with payments being made on the achievement of each milestone throughout the duration of the contract.

### **Technical**

**Q: How is "capability" being defined by AUKUS for this challenge—does it mean mission-ready, field-able, or just technically credible and directionally promising?**



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A: The challenge is seeking a mission-ready prototype, which is the lowest level prototype that an Operations Commander could use for its intended purpose effectively and operationally, if it was available today. It is about the technology, not about the other elements of the 'fundamental inputs to capability'. By the end of the 12-month contract there will be a minimum viable product at least at TRL 6 to demonstrate at a multinational maritime exercise.

**Q: What are the underwater domain(s) of interest? For example, shallow and/or deep water? Near coastline or ports?**

A: The challenge statement has been designed to solicit proposals from all underwater domains.

**Q: Do you require proposals to cover Command and Control and decision support tools as part of this call, or are you just interested in underwater communications?**

A: Overall, the AUKUS allies are seeking to fund innovations to de-risk each of the Desired Capability Effects, and each requirement of the mission. For any one of the AUKUS nations this may be in the form of one proposal answering the entire problem statement, or multiple proposals answering complementary aspects of the problem statement.

**Q: The competition document states: "This mission will need to be communicated to individual Uncrewed Underwater Vehicles with varied capabilities and payloads, over an appropriate range." What are the capabilities and payloads?**

A: In operations, UVs may be equipped with a variety of sensors or effectors to complete tasks safely and effectively. The technologies we are seeking to fund through this competition are independent enablers of the task(s) that those sensors or effectors are designed to do. Any innovation we receive in this competition should be general enough that criteria describing the strengths and weaknesses of any node in the networked team can be inputted by an end-user. A competitive mission planning algorithm or C2/C3 system is one in which the end-user can adapt it to any task, regardless of environment, threat level, rules of engagement, or other considerations.

**Q. For Desired Capability Effects 1-3, what is the operational range.**

A: The AUKUS Maritime Challenge statement doesn't specify an exact range because we are keen to see how ambitious the community of innovators can be.

**Q: How deep will the UUVs be expected to operate?**

A: The AUKUS Maritime Challenge statement doesn't specify an exact depth because we are keen to see what innovators can provide. AUKUS partners are seeking to identify



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technology concepts that would allow communication between systems ranging from the seabed to the surface in a variety of operational scenarios. . In your Stage 1 submission please state an approximation of the depth of at which your solution could operate.

**Q: What constitutes “significant” data for long-range emergency transmission? Are there ballpark figures for volume, urgency, and criticality?**

A: The AUKUS Maritime Challenge statement doesn't specify the amount of data requiring transmission because we are keen to see how ambitious the community of innovators can be. The amount of data requiring transmission is dependent on the platform and mission being performed. The data being transmitted could be raw sensor data, processed data or control data. The type of data will determine the volume of data to be transmitted. For sensor or processed data, it might be required to be stored on board or transmitted in near real-time. Control data will need to be transmitted in near real-time.

**Q: Is there more information that can be shared on the kinds of undersea vehicle (UV) tasks that the system needs to manage and allocate?**

A: We have deliberately not written a vignette or scenario to communicate what the UVs will be tasked with. This is partly for security reasons, and partly to encourage submissions to be applicable to multiple types of tasks/missions.

**Q: Would software solutions which handle asset-task allocation, without necessarily introducing specific, new hardware, be in scope?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Can you elaborate on the statement "we are not looking for development of new sensors." Do you expect an off the shelf sensor or a higher TRL but still 'in-research' sensor to be used?**

A: We are only interested in responses that address at least one of the five desired capability effects, which focus on communication of data, not gathering/sensing data. Development of sensors is out of scope.

**Q: Are EW capabilities being considered for undersea systems? What specific tasks will the UUVs be doing, mine clearance?**





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A: Other than what is stated in the Mission Requirements, AUKUS allies do not have a specific mission in mind; the command control and communication software or solution should be applicable to a variety of tasks.

**Q: Are there significant Size, Weight and Power (SWaP) restrictions on a UUV?**

A: We are looking for solutions that operate across a range of different UUVs to allow teaming. Submissions should indicate the size weight and power they propose to achieve.

**Q: Can surrogate platforms (i.e ROVs, buoys, etc.) be used to demonstrate the capability, deferring integration cost with specific AUV?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Is the Battle Management System (BMS) outside the scope of this Challenge? For example, if a company has a BMS with communication / interoperability protocols that enable assured communications between a CMS / proprietary C2 system back to the BMS, is this considered?**

A: Yes, BMS is out of scope.

**Q: Does the communication link have to remain undersea at all times?**

A: Not necessarily however, those elements of being able to operate in a contested and congested electromagnetic environment and the Low Probability of Intercept /Low Probability of Detection characteristics remain a requirement.

Platforms for over-the-horizon communication are in scope, as long as they adhere to the Desired Capability Effects.

**Q: Is the central C2 another autonomous node or could this also be manned?**

A: Yes, it could be a crewed platform as well as an uncrewed platform. The way we use the phrasing of Central C2 node is just to indicate that you may have to pass data at a significant distance.

**Q: Can you explain in more detail what is meant by "near real time", given the inherent limits of acoustic communications?**

A: Underwater communication with existing systems can take hours but for effective teaming, underwater systems will need to communicate almost simultaneously, which may



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be achieved through communication via the Battle Management System. We are looking for solutions that enable teaming despite the inherent limitations of acoustic communications, which may involve trade-offs.

**Q: Critical Underwater Infrastructure (CUI) is mentioned. Is CUI security the ultimate operational focus?**

A: The collective operational focus for this competition is autonomous vehicles that are able to operate individually or as a system of systems for a wide range of missions.

**Q: To clarify, are you looking for bearers and bearer-technologies? Or are broader bearer-agnostic networking and security technologies in scope/desired?**

A: We are looking for novel approaches to solving a defence problem in a credible way that offers value for money. Bearers and bearer technologies would be in scope. Other elements such as networking and security technologies would be in scope and would need to be bearer agnostic.

**Q: Will the UK's Phorcys secure Acoustic Comms protocol feature in this challenge, or is there intention to develop a new one?**

A: No, we are aware of Phorcys, but we are not looking to repeat the Phorcys activity.

### **Exploitation**

**Q: Is there an identified acquisition pathway for technologies emerging from this challenge?**

A: As per the Challenge document, the development and demonstration will provide the AUKUS navies with evidence on how an innovation satisfies the mission requirements and an indication of the feasibility and cost of adopting that innovation. However, there is no guarantee that any of the AUKUS partners will seek to bring any of the technologies developed under this Challenge into service. Any such activity would be subject to separate processes, approvals and contracts.

**Q: If my proposal is successful how will it be demonstrated to end-users?**



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A: When successful proposals are on contract there will be opportunities to engage with and seek feedback from serving members of the AUKUS armed forces with expertise in underwater warfare and military command, control, and communications (C3).

When projects have completed in November 2026 they will be demonstrated at a multinational maritime exercise.

**Q: Where is the multinational demonstration planned to be executed? What is its planned area extension and depth?**

A: Details on the venue for the multinational demonstration will be provided at a later date.

**Q: What do I need to know about participating in a military exercise? What will a demo at TRL 6 comprise? Do I have to demonstrate on platforms, or just in simulation?**

A: If you are successful at Stage 2 of this competition, your project manager and technical partner will assist you with applying to participate in a suitable multinational maritime exercise through the relevant process. Their support and guidance will help you complete relevant paperwork on time, and help ascertain what government provided equipment and information you may need to contribute to the exercise.

The demonstration will involve real platforms and serving personnel. ASCA, DASA, and DIU can't guarantee that any particular platform or system – in service or in development – will be participating in the exercise. We will help you plan for if the optimal platform or system required to demonstrate your innovation cannot be used.

**Q: Is TRL 6 expected for the system as a whole, or for individual subsystems?**

A: TRL 6 is expected for the system as a whole.

**Q: Are innovators expected to pay to attend this multinational maritime exercise?**

A: If you are invited to bid in for Stage 2 of the competition you will be required to include costs for participating in the multinational maritime exercise in November 2026. These costs will have to include shipping of any necessary hardware to the location of the exercise. Additional information will be provided if you are invited to bid into Stage 2.



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ASCA, DASA, and DIU recommend innovators check how long it will take to obtain export licenses for their innovation if those are required.

**Q: Will GFE be made available to meet encryption requirements?**

A: GFE/GFX is not guaranteed. Innovators should include details of what GFE they may need, and a plan to achieve their final innovation without it. Innovators will be notified whether the GFE/GFX they request is possible.