

Questions from Potential Bidders for RFP Feasibility Study Longitudinal Research

Overarching clarification on the Purpose and Scope of the Feasibility Study

The overall purpose of the proposed research is to conduct a feasibility study into longitudinal research that rigorously explores the methodologies, data requirements, risks, and strategies for participant attraction and retention.

While GEEP participants have been mentioned as a potential focus group in the RFP, this is intended as a starting point for discussion rather than a definitive directive. We recognise that GEEP participants, as beneficiaries of career interventions, may not represent the best audience for longitudinal research into broader career barriers. Therefore, we are open to alternative proposals and methodologies that identify other participant groups more suited to addressing the study's aims.

The RFP is designed to provide general guidance, but we strongly encourage applicants to leverage their expertise in longitudinal research to propose innovative and robust ideas. Your proposal does not need to focus on GEEP or any specific suggestions we have made. What matters most is that your submission delivers:

- Thoughtful and relevant research questions
- A robust feasibility study with clear methodology recommendations and a review of data requirements and limitations for the project
- Detailed awareness of potential risks and mitigation strategies
- Practical solutions for participant engagement and retention

We are eager to see proposals that meet these objectives and bring fresh, expert perspectives to this important project.

- **Submitted Question:** The Request for Proposals mentions several different timeframes - 5 years, 5+ years, 5-10 years, up to 20 years - for the longitudinal study. Please can you clarify which timescale is preferred.
- **Academy Response:** *The Academy would like to explore a minimum timeframe of 5 years while also evaluating what is required to conduct a much longer study, including up to 20 years. We don't expect separate methodologies for each timeframe however we understand that increasing length of study brings greater complexity. We are particularly interested in understanding the risks, opportunities, and mitigations associated with longer periods on engagement.*

This feasibility study should provide us with a comprehensive guide to inform our planning for future longitudinal research. It should outline options, methodology and data requirements, risks, and mitigation strategies to help the Academy make an informed decision about the optimal duration and structure of such a study. We encourage bidders to propose robust methodologies and practical solutions for managing the challenges associated with a long-term study, including participant engagement and attrition over extended periods.



- Submitted Question: What monitoring data, if any, does the Academy collect on GEEP participants? (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity, nationality) Would this data be shared with the successful bidder (with due regard to data protection and confidentiality)?
- *Academy Response: Our delivery partner collects participant data, which is shared with us in report form. We can provide an anonymised summary that includes a breakdown of students by:*
 - *University and location (England, Scotland, Wales, NI)*
 - *Year of graduation (past or future)*
 - *Under-represented group membership, such as:*
 - *Ethnic minorities*
 - *Women*
 - *First in the family to attend university*
 - *Non-Russell Group university*
 - *Received free school meals, grants, or bursaries*
 - *Family job background*
 - *Disability status*
 - *Caregiver or care leaver status*
 - *Engineering sector, degree, and interest in engineering (e.g., first, second, or only choice).*
 - *This data would be made available to the successful bidder, subject to confidentiality and data protection requirements.*
- Submitted Question: At what age or career stage does the Academy consider the start point to be? Does early-entry include T Levels or L3 apprentices for example?
- *Academy Response: The Academy is open to examining early-entry stages into engineering careers. This includes individuals undertaking T Levels, Level 3 apprenticeships, and similar qualifications, as well as those entering engineering through degrees or entry-level positions. We welcome innovative approaches to defining this starting point and encourage bidders to consider diverse pathways and their implications for career progression. Please consider the differences across national education systems (Scotland, England and Wales, Northern Ireland) when referring to specific pathways as the Academy is interested in a UK wide impact.*
- Submitted Question: What balance of resource is considered appropriate between the study design and the career insight aspects of the work?
- *Academy Response: The study design is paramount as it lays the foundation for the longitudinal research. However, the feasibility study must also provide initial career insights to ensure immediate value and contribute to a deeper understanding of underrepresented groups in engineering. The allocation of resources should ensure robust methodological design alongside insights to guide future work.*
- Submitted Question: Why are you outsourcing the project?



- *Academy Response: The Academy values the expertise and fresh perspectives external researchers bring to this complex and novel area of work. Outsourcing allows us to leverage specialised knowledge in longitudinal research methodologies and EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) to ensure the study is rigorous, innovative, and impactful.*
- Submitted Question: Is this the start of a long-term partnership or are you looking for a one-off engagement?
- *Academy Response: This feasibility study is a one-off piece of work designed to provide the Academy with a clear understanding of the options, risks, and methodologies for conducting a longitudinal study. The Academy may also publish the report to share the insights with the engineering landscape. Should we decide to pursue a longitudinal research project in the future, we will commission a separate RFP for that work. The insights and recommendations from this feasibility study will help shape the subsequent RFP, but there is no guarantee of continuity or long-term partnership with the successful bidder of this feasibility study.*
- Submitted Question: Have you carried out any similar longitudinal studies in the past? Any lessons learned from that process?
- *Academy Response: The Academy has not previously conducted longitudinal research of this scope. However, past EDI initiatives have highlighted the importance of co-creation with participants, rigorous risk management, and sustained participant engagement. Our most recent publications can be found on our website – include link please*****
- Submitted Question: What would success look like for this project? Key takeaways?
- *Academy Response: Success for this project includes:*
 - *A comprehensive and actionable feasibility study that provides clarity on methodological options, the data requirements for each methodological option, risks, and opportunities which the Academy can utilise action and publish.*
 - *Clear recommendations for participant recruitment, retention, and engagement.*
 - *Initial insights into the career barriers and experiences of underrepresented engineers.*
The ultimate goal is a framework that enables the Academy to commission a high-impact and robust longitudinal study.
- Submitted Question: What will the format be for the interviews in January?
- *Academy Response: Interviews for shortlisted bidders will be conducted virtually in January. They will include a presentation by the bidder and an opportunity for*

discussion with the selection panel, based on a set of questions. Further details on the format will be shared with shortlisted candidates in advance.

- Submitted Question: What effective data collection procedures have you used in the past that could be considered in the methodological design?
- *Academy Response: While we have utilised diverse data collection methods in past EDI research (e.g., surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews), we are particularly interested in bidders' proposals for innovative and robust methodologies that align with the unique challenges of longitudinal studies. Proven strategies for managing participant engagement over time are of high value.*
- Submitted Question: The RFP it suggests that the deadline was 2nd December. Are there any other shifts in timelines which we should bear in mind?
- *Academy Response: The 2nd December date referenced in the RFP was the original deadline for submission of questions from interested applicants, which was extended to 16 December.*

The deadline for proposal submissions remains Monday 13 January 2025.

We encourage all applicants to proceed with the current schedule and reach out if further clarification is needed.