NATO OTAN

Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic

# DIANA: Frequently Asked Questions

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## Why DIANA?

Emerging and disruptive technologies are vital to preserving our competitive edge in collective defence and security, but commercial innovators are not currently incentivised to work in these areas. By launching the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA), NATO is leveraging the depth of expertise and breadth of access in the Alliance to source future capabilities from dual-use innovators and create a pipeline that grows and strengthens the transatlantic innovation ecosystem.

## What will DIANA do?

DIANA will leverage its accelerator programme and test-centre network to bring end users together with the Alliance's best and brightest start-ups, scientific researchers and technology companies in order to develop the most impactful dual-use technological solutions for the Alliance's defence and security needs. The top performers will gain exposure to government and military buyers in 31 Allied nations.

## How will DIANA work?

DIANA works directly with leading innovators – from early-stage start-ups to more mature companies – to seek commercially focused technological breakthroughs that can solve defence and security challenges.

Technological areas of interest to the DIANA challenges include but are not limited to data; artificial intelligence (AI); autonomy; quantum-enabled technologies; biotechnology; energy and propulsion; novel materials and manufacturing; hypersonics; and space.

NATO will work with the public and private sectors, as well as academia and civil society, to establish an unprecedented footprint across the Alliance.

## Where will DIANA be located?

DIANA has a regional office in London (UK), and will soon open a regional office in Halifax (Canada) and a regional hub in Tallinn (Estonia). In addition, DIANA will leverage a network of more than 10 affiliated accelerator sites and nearly 90 test centres in innovation clusters across the Alliance. This network will continue to grow.

DIANA will implement its first challenges in cooperation with the following accelerator sites: Tehnopol in Tallinn, Estonia; BioInnovation Institute (BII) in Copenhagen, Denmark; the Pacific Northwest Mission Acceleration Center (PN MAC) in Seattle, United States; MassChallenge in Boston, United States; and Takeoff DIANA Accelerator in Turin, Italy.

## What are DIANA's core principles?

DIANA's charter requires that it adhere to several key principles. In line with Allied nations' shared values, DIANA must act in a responsible, sustainable and inclusive manner. It must foster and protect innovation ecosystems in Allied nations. In addition, NATO Allies are deeply committed to principles of responsible use with regard to emerging and disruptive technologies. These change per technological field, but in NATO's Artificial Intelligence Strategy, for example, the Allies have committed to the following principles: Lawfulness, Responsibility, Accountability, Explainability, Traceability, Reliability, Governability and Bias Mitigation.

## When will DIANA be operational?

DIANA is kicking off pilot activities, launching its initial challenges on 19 June 2023, and achieving initial operating capability (IOC) shortly thereafter. Once it achieves full operating capability (FOC) in 2025, DIANA will have the capacity to interact with hundreds of innovators each year across a growing network of accelerator sites and test centres.

## How many challenges will DIANA run?

In 2023, DIANA is running three pilot challenges. By 2025, DIANA intends run up to 10 challenges per year

## How will DIANA help Allied nations adopt disruptive technologies to solve defence and security problems?

DIANA will seek to solve major defence and security challenges by bringing Allied military and governmental end users together with dual-use and deep tech innovators.

DIANA will support innovators in this process by providing access to mentors, procurement specialists and a trusted investor network. DIANA's Rapid Adoption Service (RAS) will help Allied national entities develop and rapidly procure the most promising solutions from DIANA's innovators.

## How are DIANA's activities communicated?

Information about these challenges will be communicated primarily via this website and DIANA's LinkedIn page, but also by DIANA's network of national and affiliated entities, including government ministries, test centres and accelerators.

# ELIGIBILITY & SELECTION

## Who can apply?

Any incorporated company headquartered in a NATO member nation is eligible to participate, and DIANA will accept proposals from all companies meeting that basic eligibility requirement. It is anticipated, however, that early-stage start-ups or small and medium-sized enterprises with limited experience in defence and security will benefit most.

DIANA will also accept collaborative proposals as long as all member companies meet the basic eligibility requirements; a single company must be listed as lead for the purposes of communication during the submission process, as well as for contracting and reporting requirements, should a grant be awarded.

Universities and non-profit groups are not yet eligible to apply, although we foresee opportunities in future programmes.

DIANA seeks technology solutions at maturity levels typically greater than TRL 4 – but lower TRL solutions with potential disruptive impact will be considered.

## How will companies be selected into DIANA programmes?

Companies will be primarily selected on how well they respond to a specific DIANA challenge topic, as well as the operational applicability, technological feasibility, commercial viability, and transformational nature of the solution they propose.

For each of three DIANA challenge topics, around ten companies will be selected to receive grant funding and participate in the accelerator programme.

The selection will be led by the DIANA staff, together with experts sourced from within the NATO scientific and technical community, from operational end users, investors, and with guidance from affiliated elements.

DIANA is committed to diversity and inclusion and encourages applications from across all member states. DIANA will ensure that when all qualifications and competencies are met, as many nations as possible participate in the accelerator programme in an equitable distribution to represent the geographical and cultural diversity existing across the Alliance.

# BENEFITS FOR INNOVATORS

## What kind of support will DIANA offer to companies participating in its programmes?

DIANA offers a comprehensive support package to companies selected to participate in its accelerator programmes, including:

- **grants** to support technology development and demonstration, and participation in the DIANA accelerator programme.
- 10+ **accelerators** across the Alliance, with more planned over the coming years
- 90+ **test centres** (with more planned) across the Alliance where entrepreneurs can de-risk, and demonstrate and validate their proposed dual-use technological solutions
- **mentoring** from scientists, engineers, industry partners, end users, and government procurement experts
- an **investor network** for trusted third-party funding
- opportunities to **demonstrate** technology in operational environments
- **pathways to market** within the NATO enterprise and 31 Allied markets

## How will DIANA provide funding to its innovators?

Funding will be provided to awardees as grant, with each selected company receiving EUR 100,000, for the first six months of the programme. Following a competitive down-selection, participants may receive up to EUR 300,000 for an additional six months. The base currency for grants is Euros. DIANA can accommodate payments in any NATO national currency but any foreign exchange risk remains with the participants.

Awards are made to the company, not an individual, and are paid in full prior to the start of the DIANA accelerator programme.

The grant should be used in furtherance of the DIANA Challenge Programme objectives; this may include but is not limited to salaries, rent or equipment. While companies participating in the Challenge Programmes are not exempt from regular taxation, the DIANA grants are tax exempt.

DIANA has a separate budget to support travel by innovators to some DIANA events in line with the NATO Travel Regulations. Innovators are responsible for their own travel arrangements.

## Does DIANA take equity in or IP from participating companies?

No, DIANA does not take equity in any participating company, nor does it take intellectual property. Participants are free to negotiate separate provisions (equity, licence, etc.) with third parties at any point during the programme.

## How will DIANA help innovators attract additional sources of funding?

DIANA will provide its innovators with regular exposure to a community of trusted Allied investors.

DIANA's investor network will provide invitations to exclusive events, demo days and regular reporting from our test centres to provide investors with the information they need to invest in DIANA start-ups. If you are interested in joining DIANA's investor network, please register your interest via the DIANA website.

## How can DIANA help my company to succeed?

We are committed to supporting our participants in selling to the defence and security community as well as commercialising their solutions for civilian markets. During the accelerator programme, DIANA innovators will receive business development advice. Participants will also receive feedback from end users to identify product market-fit and gain exposure among defence planners and procurement professionals, increasing opportunities for follow-on contracts and pathways to production.

Larger companies that may be too big to benefit from participation in the DIANA accelerator programme play a vital role in growing the Allied innovation ecosystem. Industry may provide mentors during the accelerator programme and act as systems integrators once innovators are mature enough to seek partners and growth opportunities.

## How will DIANA connect innovators with the end users within Allied governments and defence forces?

DIANA will seek to solve major defence and security challenges by bringing Allied military and governmental end users (who 'own' the problems) together with dual-use, deep tech innovators.

Allied military and governmental end users will define defence and security challenges that need solutions; DIANA will design its own challenges in response to these problems.

In DIANA's accelerator programme, end users will work with the selected companies to help them adapt their solutions to Allied military needs through mentorship, workshops, and the

option to bring on board 'embeds'. Innovators will also be granted access to end users in DIANA's affiliated test centres, and in military exercises, training and at test ranges.

## CHALLENGES

### Which are DIANA's priority areas of focus in 2023?

In December 2022, NATO Allies agreed that energy resilience, secure information sharing, and sensing and surveillance will be the priority areas of focus for DIANA's work in 2023. The three areas make up the backbone of DIANA's 2023 Strategic Direction and have defined DIANA's first challenges to innovators.

In an uncertain and changing world, there is an urgent need for more reliable, resilient and efficient energy solutions – particularly in the aftermath of natural disasters or in conflict zones. Hence, for the Energy Resilience challenge, DIANA is seeking technology solutions that enable the modular design of microgrids that can meet supply demands reliably.

For the Secure Information Sharing challenge, we are seeking ways of creating a secure and trusted information environment – with the emphasis on live data streams such as those used to provide near real-time video, augmented reality feeds, digital radio, and beyond.

For the Sensing and Surveillance challenge, we are looking for components and systems for sensing and information gathering in subsurface coastal zones. Applications of interest might include, but are not limited to, novel techniques and/or advanced capabilities for seafloor mapping, undersea infrastructure monitoring, manmade object and marine-life tracking, climate-change-effects sensing, and patterns-of-life visualisations.

### What are the timelines for DIANA's first challenges?

DIANA will launch its pilot call for proposals on 19 June.  The call for proposals will remain open for two months. We expect to notify the selected innovators around one month after the application window closes. The accelerator programme will kick off after the selection of the first cohorts of innovators.  .

From 2024 onwards DIANA will seek to launch challenges on a regular basis focused on different technological focus areas. All calls for applications will be posted on the DIANA website.

### How do I apply to DIANA's 2023 challenges?

Applicants must provide company information, select the challenge problem they are interested in addressing, and submit a 1-page Quad chart and maximum-4-page proposal. Applicants are not required to provide financial information at the application stage.

DIANA does not provide proposal development support to applicants. However, online instructions will be available to guide applicants through the submission process.

All proposal evaluations will be conducted by panels comprising DIANA team members, technical experts sourced from within the NATO science and technology community, NATO defence and security end users, as well as trusted investors.

DIANA will ensure the utmost privacy and security of the information that applicants share with us. Proposals are submitted via a secure portal, where each company will receive a unique identifier and directions to create a unique login account.  All information is encrypted in submission and in storage.

## ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME

### How will the DIANA accelerator programme work?

The DIANA accelerator programme is designed to equip businesses with the skills and knowledge to navigate the world of deep tech, dual-use innovation. It provides an immersive curriculum and 'boot-camp' that combines the NATO innovation network with strategic business partners from the commercial and defence markets.

DIANA's accelerator programme will be implemented in collaboration with the following sites (pending conclusion of necessary contractual arrangements):

- Tehnopol Startup Incubator – Tallinn, Estonia
- Deep Tech Lab – Quantum – Copenhagen, Denmark
- Pacific Northwest Mission Acceleration Centre Pacific Northwest (PNW MAC) – Seattle, USA
- MassChallenge – Boston, USA
- Takeoff DIANA Accelerator, Turin, Italy

The DIANA accelerator programme will be offered in person and online. There is an expectation, however, of in-person attendance during key programme events.

DIANA-affiliated accelerator sites will host participants responding to more than one DIANA challenge to encourage engagement and cross-pollination between the DIANA cohorts.

Participation in the DIANA accelerator programme will not require participants to relocate their company. Participants should consider that in-person participation may require travel.

Importantly, DIANA does not take equity in any participating company. Participants are free to negotiate separate provisions (equity, licence etc.) with third parties at any point during the programme.

## TEST CENTRES

### What are the DIANA test centres?

A list of test centres participating in the DIANA test centre network can be found here. The participation of the test centres is pending the conclusion of legal agreements between DIANA and the test centres. DIANA will support and advise matching participants with test centres.

In order to match applicants with the right test centre, applicants will be asked to indicate what testing resources they may require.

DIANA will make a contribution to the funding of test centre fees for selected DIANA Innovators in addition to the DIANA grants. DIANA's ambition is to negotiate favourable access conditions for DIANA innovators to DIANA affiliated test centres. The arrangement is subject to the conclusion of respective legal agreements.

DIANA Innovators will sign a separate contract between themselves and the respective test centre. DIANA Innovators may use a pre-negotiated contract provided by DIANA and the test centre.

### How can new test centres apply to join the DIANA network?

Test centres can apply to join DIANA through their national governments. They should contact a representative from their national Ministry of Defence to ensure their application can be put forward as part of a national offer to DIANA.

## INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION

### How can industry partner with DIANA?

Industry plays a key role in fostering and developing the technologies that will change the future. DIANA is looking for companies to support innovators participating in its programmes across the following areas:

- **Commercial industry** – Non-defence companies can help DIANA's start-ups to develop dual-use technology. DIANA is keen to engage with companies in any relevant sector that wish to support the programme.
- **Defence and security** – DIANA wants to partner with companies who have experience in selling to government, developing military capabilities and integrating new technologies into existing capabilities.
- **Smaller emerging technology companies** – DIANA is looking for companies who can provide our start-ups with lessons learned, cutting-edge technical advice and options to collaborate.

If you would like to join our industrial partnership network, please register your interest on the DIANA website.

### How can industry leaders support DIANA's innovators?

Established companies are invited to support DIANA's innovators in multiple ways. We're looking for:

- mentors who can offer expertise in military procurement (including the military certification processes, interoperability criteria and 'bureaucracy hacking'), commercial procurement, business development, and funding
- joint hackathon or workshop opportunities which offer DIANA's start-ups the chance to learn from both commercial and defence companies
- invitations to relevant events for DIANA's start-ups
- datasets, software, innovation platform credits, etc.

- access to commercial venture capital or customer databases

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## THE NATO INNOVATION FUND

### Are DIANA and the NATO Innovation Fund related?

The establishment of DIANA and the NATO Innovation Fund (NIF) are part of NATO's approach to foster and protect Allied nations' innovation eco-systems. These complementary initiatives are designed to engage 'early and often' with the Alliance's deep tech start-up communities. Together, DIANA and the NIF will promote a pipeline of talent and technology and will fuel their adoption by end users in NATO governments and militaries.

DIANA and the NIF are two legally separate entities. DIANA is governed and funded by all 31 Allied countries, while the NIF will be governed and funded by its participating nations.

DIANA will collaborate closely with the NATO Innovation Fund. The EUR 1 Billion NATO Innovation Fund will invest in early-stage start-ups and other venture capital funds developing dual-use emerging and disruptive technologies. Participants in the DIANA accelerator programme will gain regular exposure to investment specialists from the NATO Innovation Fund.

### Will the NATO Innovation Fund invest in DIANA's innovators?

The EUR 1 billion NATO Innovation Fund's investment strategy mandates the NIF to prioritise investments in companies accelerated through DIANA that are headquartered in any of the nations participating in the Fund. There may be opportunities for DIANA start-ups to receive NIF funding.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION AND UPDATES

Visit the DIANA website.
Follow DIANA on LinkedIn.

Emerging & Disruptive Technologies (EDTs)

NATO Advisory Group on EDTs Annual Report 2021

NATO Innovation Fund (NIF)