

Questions and Answers from the Town Meeting for JISC Circular 4/04: Call for Projects in Supporting Institutional Digital Preservation and Asset Management held on 29th June 2004 at Universities UK, Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, London.

Q: The call states that it is important that proposals consider collaborative approaches and best practice and expertise in other organisations and sectors where appropriate. Would it be acceptable to team up with institutions or commercial companies outside the UK in this context?

A: JISC can only fund directly to UK HE and FE institutions. It would not be appropriate for large sums of funding to go to international bodies but some modest funding may be acceptable as long as the lead institution is in the UK.

Q: Could you provide further guidance on the type of digital material that the call is focussed on?

A: This material would include e-prints, data, e-journals, e-learning objects and materials, web resources, and outputs of previous feasibility studies. See paragraph 17 of the call.

Q: Could you elaborate on how a consortial bid should be structured?

A: A consortial bid should demonstrate robust project management mechanisms and the high impact to JISC communities of the project outcomes. A consortium could include commercial partners as long as the lead partner is a UK HE or FE institution.

Q: Can more than one bid be submitted per institution?

A: This is acceptable but it is hoped that if this was the case, the two bids would talk to each other and identify obvious synergies or ensure they did not overlap in any way. It should be noted that in such instances, staff resources are examined by the evaluation panel.

Q: Would JISC consider brokering marriages between bidders?

A: This sometimes happens in the evaluation phase but is not always feasible. The emphasis is on institutions developing their own partnerships in advance of submitting bids as there is a strong emphasis in the call on collaboration as having potential to add value. The JISC supports projects post award to explore synergies.

Q: What is the relationship between the call and the Digital Curation Centre (DCC) as its formal launch is not until November 2004?

A: There is significant information available now about the DCC and bidders can also refer to the aims in the original DCC call. JISC Circular 4/04 is aimed at DCC's customers and looking after digital assets directly within institutions. Projects will be expected to make links with the DCC. There is also a DCC website (www.dcc.ac.uk) and helpdesk (0131 650 3302) for further help and information.

Q: How specific should proposals be in using the DCC for the dissemination of results of projects?

A: JISC wishes to encourage this collaboration but the DCC is just starting and intense involvement should therefore be avoided. Some linkage, however, is desired.

Q: The call states that JISC will consider proposals following the 21st July deadline and endeavour to notify successful bidders by the end of August 2004. Given this short timescale, how flexible is the proposed project timetable of October 2004 – September 2005?

A: It is possible for start dates of projects to be renegotiated post funding award.

Q: What is defined as an 'institutional contribution'?

A: If you are contributing staff time, e.g. to manage the project, and not budgeting for it, that is an institutional contribution, along with space, heating, lighting, etc.

Q: Is there an expected level of institutional contribution?

A: No, but institutional contributions will enhance the attractiveness of a bid and offset the benefits to the host institution.

Q: What type of project-specific evaluation is required in proposals?

A: As stated in the call, the JISC will undertake programme level evaluation in partnership with the funded projects. However, project-specific evaluation is required, the nature of which will depend on the project, e.g. for software deliverables, some user testing would be expected. It is desired that each project should include an evaluation element. The Programme Management Guidelines give further details (http://www.jisc.ac.uk/proj_manguide.html).

Q: If there are an even spread of bids across the three themes in the first year, will JISC fund further projects in year 2?

A: If many one-year projects are funded it may be appropriate to fund further projects in year 2, given there may be funding remaining. We would like to allocate 50% of the funding to theme 1 to encourage proposals in this area as the primary focus of the call. The remaining 50% will be used to fund themes 2 and 3 but not necessarily by a 25%:25% split. This will purely depend on what proposals are initially received.

Q: Regarding projects where software tools are produced, in terms of sustainability, does JISC see what is produced as being totally freely available, and, if so, is a business model/commercial solution desired?

A: Sustaining software infrastructure is a topic of intense debate within JISC at the moment. Involvement of the commercial sector in sustaining software is a feasible model but its success would depend on what the market could stand. It would need to be a model that helps to support continued support of the project after JISC funding ends, i.e. keeping information updated.

Q: Could you expand on the link between the call and Institutional Records Management as mentioned in paragraph 17 of the Circular?

A: JISC does not want a re-submitted bid from Circular 9/02: Supporting Institutional Records Management. Previous work should be built on using the expertise gained from that work and broadening out to other types of resources.

Q: What if none of the bids address all the activities scoped in the call?

A: If obvious gaps are identified, the JISC may issue further calls in future years or explore other ways of commissioning the work.

Q: The call hints at building some sort of repository on a wider scale. Is there an indication of when this might take place?

A: It has become clear that repositories are a key enabler to what JISC is trying to do in terms of getting value for the community and it is of great current interest for e-learning materials. JISC has come to recognise that recently that there is no single view of repositories architecture and function. JISC is hoping within the next 12 months to start a repositories strand but precisely how this will be taken forward has not yet been decided. The JISC Committee for the Integrated Information Environment (JCIE) is keen to commence a repositories programme as soon as possible.

Q: The call places emphasis on the OAIS Reference Model. Can JISC give a guide to useful implementations of this model?

A: There is a URL on the DPC website highlighting various ways the model has been implemented (www.dpconline.org/graphics/reports/index.html#intoais).

Q: Should systems be built on the OAIS Reference Model?

A: This is a good starting point as a high level reference model.

Q: Can bids state different levels of work for different levels of funding, i.e. we could do this for £50,000, and we could do this for £100,000, etc?

A: This is acceptable.