# Accelerating NATO collaboration: Introducing DIANA for aspiring innovators

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## Overview: Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA)

Member nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are incentivized to adopt new technological solutions to address an ever-changing landscape of geopolitical and environmental risks that threaten NATO's collective defence and security. A major problem for innovators is a limited access to research and development (R&D) and financial support. To address this problem, the Allied nations have initiated the Defence Innovation Accelerator for the North Atlantic (DIANA) programme to help foster innovation and integrate new technologies within the member nations' borders.

## Part 1 – What is DIANA?

DIANA is a competitive R&D initiative that was launched on June 19, 2023. It was created to help innovators connect with experts, investors, and industry partners to help them advance and commercialize technologies aiming to address defence and security challenges for NATO members. The technologies may include, but are not limited to next-generation communication networks; Artificial Intelligence (AI); autonomy; quantum-enabled technologies; biotechnology and human enhancement; energy and propulsion; novel materials and manufacturing; and aerospace. DIANA first hosted three rounds of competitive calls for proposals from prospective innovators in relation to energy resilience, secure information sharing, and sensing and surveillance. The proposals were subjected to several stages of panel reviews and consultations before selecting 44 out of 1,300 applicants to enter the programme. By 2025, DIANA expects to achieve full operating capacity with up to 10 competitions per year in many more strategic fields. The programme's adaptability is an attractive feature as the targeted strategic fields can be changed to address new global issues.

DIANA is truly an international collaborative initiative. It now has regional offices located in London, United Kingdom, Halifax, Canada, and Tallinn, Estonia. As of March 14, 2024, DIANA includes 23 affiliated accelerator sites and 182 test centres in 28 Allied countries, of which 15 are in Canada. Each of these facilities is equipped with resources

to assist innovators in one or more tasks to further their development. DIANA is also governed by a Board of Directors that includes one representative from each NATO member nation.

# Part 2 - What are DIANA's objectives?

DIANA's charter prescribes a set of guiding principles for its Board of Directors and participants. The guiding principles ensure that the programme's objectives are aligned with the shared interests of all NATO members, and that the objectives are achieved in a responsible and ethical manner.

DIANA's objectives are to:

- to maintain a network of connected innovators, investors, industry partners, and technology end-users; and
- to foster collaboration in developing emerging and disruptive technologies to address strategic issues faced by Allied nations.

# Part 3 - Why apply to DIANA?

DIANA is an attractive opportunity for small and mid-sized corporations to access a wealth of knowledge and financing across all NATO markets. It especially helps early-stage innovators to navigate a complex intersection of commerce with defence and security. A participant's technology must fit within at least one of the prescribed strategic fields, but the programme itself can be tailored to help each participant overcome their own respective hurdles. This includes receiving grant disbursements and gaining access to research testing sites, scientists, mentors, trusted investors, industry partners, customers, and government procurement experts. DIANA also features a Rapid Adoption Service (RAS), which helps accelerate the adoption of promising technologies by any interested Allied national entities.

Importantly, DIANA does not retain any intellectual property (IP) rights for any IP developed by its participants under or with support of any grant funding. This allows participants to continue to benefit from their technologies and encourage further advancement.

# Part 4 – Who can apply to DIANA?

Eligibility for DIANA has very few limitations on prospective applicants. DIANA will accept applications from any incorporated company headquartered in any NATO member nation. Subject to conditions, the programme will also accept collaborative applications by two or more companies. Universities and non-profit organizations are currently not eligible for the programme, but that is subject to change in the future. During the selection process, DIANA will prioritize selecting innovating partners whose technologies have at least a basic demonstration of functionality, but it has discretion to choose less developed solutions as well.

# Conclusion

DIANA is an exciting new global initiative for accelerating technological innovation and adoption in all NATO member nations. Participating innovators can potentially develop their IP more efficiently with easier access to financial, intellectual, and commercial support, all while retaining full proprietary rights in their IP. DIANA presents a unique opportunity for eligible innovators to capitalize on their IP while reducing costs associated with research and development, investment, and procurement.

BLG is well equipped to guide innovators on IP matters. For more information on DIANA or any other R&D or IP matters, reach out to any of the key contacts below.

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