Q&A pairs derived from the Diana information meeting.

Q1: For the selected accelerator, is there any budget available from NATO that will be available when developing the accelerator program, or is it just funding for the companies once the accelerator is up and running that they can use for the participation fee?

A1: Accelerators are compensated by the contributing ally for their services within DIANA. They must already exist, accommodate up to 20 companies, and be co-located with an innovation ecosystem, preferably near top academic institutions. The accelerator should be capable of running a dual-use program, collaboratively developed with NATO. The first pilot program will be delivered from December this year. No costs are incurred for participants, and they gain access to various training sessions. Selected startups receive non-dilutive grants for technological development.

Q2: I represent Chalmers University of Technology. We are excited about this new funding opportunity and wish to contribute to Europe's stability and defense capabilities. We're considering applying as a test center. While DIANA is clear about SMEs and startups, what are the benefits for us as a test center? Will we just be subcontractors for technical tests or is there a strategic long-term value for us?

A2: As a test center, you'll be included in a growing network of around 100 test centers across the alliance by year-end. This offers potential revenue streams as startups funded by us may require testing services. You'll get exposure to these companies and can charge them for testing. We aim to provide this network and framework contracts. There's no pressure on filling the test centers – it adds an additional customer base.

Q3: What is the added value of Swedish test centers for DIANA?

A3: It's early to pinpoint specific market demands before the program's pilot activities begin. While we appreciate specialized sites, there's a risk in being too niche. We have ample big data, AI, and maritime test centers. The unique value Swedish centers might offer could be in areas like battery production or hydrogen power production. However, the primary goal is to expand the network, offering more options to innovators without the need to fill every test center.

Q4: Regarding the location, if one applies as a test center or accelerator, how is the proximity of test centers considered, especially when they aren't located nearby?

A4: The goal is to have a wide geographic distribution of accelerators and test centers, allowing innovators to potentially not have to move if they want to participate in the program. Test centers aim to provide a broad offer that allows startups to test when they need to, even if it means traveling a short distance. While proximity to innovation ecosystems is less crucial for test centers, specialized accelerators, like the one in Copenhagen focusing on life sciences, benefit from nearby specialized labs. The emphasis is on deep tech accelerators experienced in commercializing challenging deep tech applications.
Q5: Would it be beneficial for various organizations, companies, and research institutes to cluster together to form a test center? Does a test center need to be from a single organization, or would clustering multiple similar test facilities offer more advantages?

A5: Clustering only makes sense if beneficial for the innovator. For example, if all test centers in a cluster operate under the same legal regime and have a single-entry point for innovators. The process should be streamlined and not require splitting into multiple agreements or contracts.

Q6: Do accelerators need to be domain specific, or can they be broader, especially in the context of deep tech?

A6: Accelerators don't need to be domain specific as DIANA is technologically agnostic. However, there's a strong emphasis on the deep tech focus. DIANA values accelerators with experience in accelerating deep tech innovations, especially those that are challenging to commercialize. Such expertise complements what NATO lacks, and it's valuable in the network for delivering the acceleration program.

Q7: As we represent the Swedish ecosystem for graphene and 2D materials, should we send a narrowly focused application or try to partner with others, given the interest from NATO and other organizations in these new materials?

A7: For the accelerator, partnerships that complement areas you might be weaker in could be beneficial. For instance, partnering with a university or another operator could be advantageous. However, creating a large consortium delivering everything is not necessary. The essence of DIANA is building a network and fostering collaboration among different actors. Sharing expertise and resources throughout the network can be beneficial for all participants.

Q8: When it comes to the NATO member states participating in DIANA, is there any limitation on the nationality of the companies or entities involved?

A8: At the expression of interest stage, there's no requirement for nationality. Companies should be properly incorporated and registered. If Sweden presents them, they should probably be incorporated and registered in Sweden. However, a third party could still deliver the program. For instance, a US-based company could deliver a program in Italy. DIANA is a public program focusing on dual-use capabilities for both civilian and defense sectors. If technologies are deemed sensitive, allies can handle them accordingly, but DIANA itself won't restrict them. Security requirements for accelerator sites and test centers are basic, ensuring awareness of being part of a NATO network and the associated exposure.

Q9: If we represent a university, should we clarify how we are organized when joining DIANA?

A9: The accelerator program is open to a variety of entities, including universities. The key is to clearly define how the organization will contribute to DIANA and align with its goals. Universities can offer a unique perspective, potentially providing research capabilities, access to student talent, or specialized resources.
Q10: Is Swedish citizenship required for all participants in the application to ensure clearance in the future?

A10: At the expression of interest stage, there's no focus on nationality. The primary requirement is for companies to be properly incorporated and registered. If represented by Sweden, they should likely be incorporated and registered in Sweden. However, a third party could deliver the program. For instance, a US-based company might deliver a program in another country. DIANA is a public program emphasizing dual-use capabilities beneficial for both civilian and defense sectors. If technologies are sensitive, allies can handle them appropriately. Basic security requirements are in place for accelerator sites and test centers, emphasizing awareness of being part of a NATO network.

Q11: Given that many test centers focus on 5G, AI, communication, robotics, and autonomous systems, is there interest in testing more conventional materials like steel used in industry?

A11: Absolutely, advanced materials, including conventional ones like steel, are of interest to potential clients in the DIANA setting.

Q12: Is space one of the focus areas for DIANA, considering its connection to Swedish strength areas?

A12: Yes, space is one of the focus areas. However, DIANA aims to be technologically agnostic. Challenges might be presented, such as surveillance or coastal zone mapping, but the technology used to address them is up to the innovator. It could be space-based, maritime-based, or any other technology. The emphasis is on the solution.

Q13: Considering the vast variety of test centers in the DIANA network, is there room for more niche areas, or is the focus more on broader technological domains?

A13: While DIANA has a broad range of test centers, it's essential to be careful about being too niche. While some niches are unique and valuable, there's a risk in being too specialized. The goal is to diversify the network, providing various options without the need to fill every test center.

Q14: Regarding the accelerator program's curriculum, is there a joint network of experts accessible to accelerators? Can an accelerator in Stockholm, for instance, draw from this expert pool to support their program?

A14: Yes, the idea behind the transatlantic network is to leverage the NATO brand and provide access to a vast expert network. This network will be available across all accelerator sites and will include mentors from the defense and security environment, procurement agencies, and operational end-users. The aim is to offer feedback and expertise that might not be commonly accessible to startups.
Q15: Will there be a public announcement about these challenges or opportunities to join the DIANA program?

A15: Yes, there will be a public announcement about the challenges. Interested parties can sign up and apply through a dedicated portal on the DIANA Website.

Q16: When it comes to DIANA’s objectives and goals, how do they align with Sweden’s innovation goals?

A16: DIANA aims to support startups with dual-use capabilities that have both civilian and defense applications. It seeks to advance technological solutions and innovations that can benefit NATO member states and their populations. While DIANA doesn’t specifically target a nation’s innovation goals, the program’s objectives should align with Sweden’s broader aims to foster innovation, enhance security, and promote economic growth.

Q17: What is the selection process for startups applying to be part of the accelerator program?

A17: Startups submit a Gantt chart and a four-page proposal, which are evaluated by expert panels from various domains, including operations, technical, and commercial aspects. The initial phase involves evaluating the written proposal. Successful candidates then undergo a half-hour interview presenting their ideas to a diverse panel. Selection criteria include technical feasibility, operational applicability, commercial viability, and visionary potential. The current focus is on innovations with a Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of around four or higher.

Specific questions received by e-mail after the information meeting:

Q18: How can an accelerator secure continuous operations if selected as a DIANA accelerator site? Training business advisors in the model, implementing the program, screening of companies, running challenges/sprints, producing marketing material and overall coordination likely requires significant resources from the accelerator part. Is it assumed that those additional costs are carried by the accelerator or are there plans for some kind of reimbursement model?

A18: By selecting an accelerator and offering it to the DIANA network, the contributing Ally (in this case Sweden) commits itself to financing the operations of the accelerator site itself. In addition NATO will be financing the delivery of parts of the curriculum that are focused on security and Defence. Business continuity will be ensured by recurring Challenge Programmes launched by DIANA. The Accelerator is free to deliver separate Programmes in parallel.