

# SSRO

Single Source  
Regulations Office

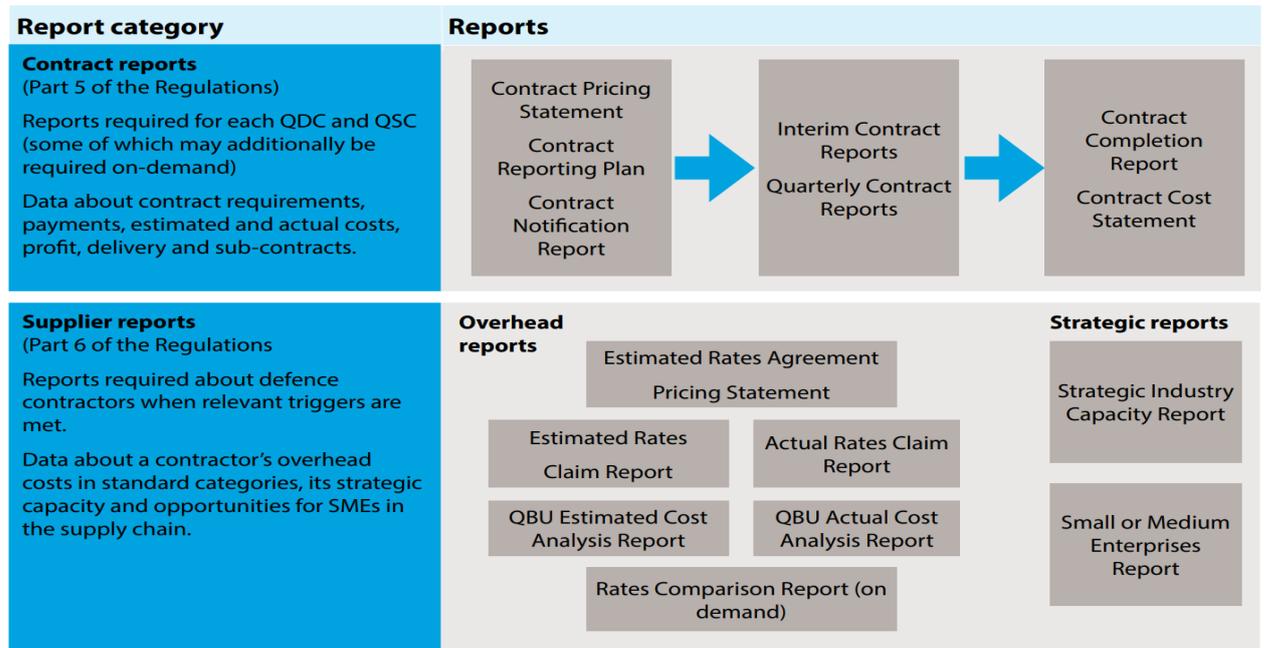
## Guidance Development and Delivery Digitisation

### Appendix 1: Specification

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Invitation to Tender introduces the regulatory framework for single source defence contracts. It also explains that the SSRO has a key role in supporting the regulatory framework.
- 1.2 The advice we are seeking is primarily concerned with the statutory reporting framework established under the Defence Reform Act 2020. Pursuant to that framework, defence contractors are required to submit statutory reports, as summarised in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Reports required under the regulatory framework\***



\*In this table, and in the Regulations, "QBU" refers to a qualifying business unit.

- 1.3 The SSRO carries out the following activities which impact on the submission of statutory reports by contractors:
  - Guidance on the completion of statutory reports;
  - Provision of the Defence Contracts Analysis and Reporting System (DefCARS) through which contractors submit the reports;
  - Provision of support contractors to provide high-quality data by helping them to understand their reporting obligations;
  - Application of our compliance methodology to keep under review the extent to which persons subject to reporting requirements are complying with them
- 1.4 Our vision is that the data submitted by contractors in statutory reports is fully utilised in procurement decisions, contract management and the development of the regulatory framework to deliver value for money and fair and reasonable prices. We seek to coordinate our activities in support of this goal.
- 1.5 Additional general information about the SSRO, can be found on our website: <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/single-source-regulations-office>.

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- 1.6 The SSRO's [Corporate Plan 2020-2023](#) (Objective 7) highlights and explains our ambition to enable the digital transformation of how we operate and the way we deliver our services and functions. In pursuit of this objective the SSRO has been considering the potential for technology to assist in several aspects of its work:
- Issues management. The identification, logging, investigation and resolution of issues related to the statutory reporting system within which suppliers with contracts regulated by the Act and Regulations report about those contracts and their operations; and
  - Guidance delivery. The development and delivery of the guidance it provides to stakeholders, for example, on statutory reporting and on the pricing of regulated contracts.
- 1.7 This specification relates to guidance delivery. The SSRO is separately procuring assistance in relation to issues management.

## 2. The Service Specification

### Guidance development and delivery

- 2.1 The SSRO's *Corporate Plan 2020-2023* notes our ambition to be flexible in guidance development so that we can move more quickly to address identified issues in appropriate cases and take longer on more difficult problems. The plan indicates we will explore the benefits of using an online content management system to deliver our guidance in a more accessible and interactive format, drawing on best practice from other regulatory bodies.
- 2.2 The SSRO publishes [guidance](#) on the completion of contract and supplier reports. The report submissions made by contractors embody the regulatory reporting requirements set out in the legislation and the reporting takes place through DefCARS. The guidance is contained in three documents published on the SSRO website in PDF format. Links are made to sections of the reporting guidance from within DefCARS to assist those completing reports to reference relevant guidance at the point of need.
- 2.3 The guidance changes over time in response to changes in legislation, to provide additional clarification on reporting requirements where needed, or to reflect changes in the data collection system. The development of draft guidance is undertaken through the preparation of Microsoft Word documents that are shared internally for comment. Significant changes to guidance are typically the subject of public consultation during which the SSRO will publish draft guidance (in PDF format) for comment. Consultations may include a line-by-line presentation of additions, deletions and revisions. Consultation responses are made through the submission of word documents by stakeholders, or occasionally simply through email.
- 2.4 Following consultation, new guidance will be published, indicating in an appendix or as a separate consultation response document the changes that have been made from the previous version. Stakeholders have indicated a desire for greater clarity on the changes that are made to guidance from one version to the next.
- 2.5 A broadly similar approach is taken to the development and publication of the SSRO's other guidance, for example, on [Allowable Costs](#), [adjustments to the baseline profit rate](#) and on [procedures for referrals](#).
- 2.6 The audience for SSRO guidance can be counted in hundreds rather than thousands, the main audience of DefCARS guidance are around a thousand industry users and four to five hundred MOD users. For reporting guidance, the audience is principally those staff in contracting organisations with responsibility for reporting on the c.300 contracts currently within the regime. For pricing guidance, the audience is comprised of those with responsibility for contract pricing and policy setting both in industry and the MOD.

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- 2.7 Under the current approach, guidance is accessible to anyone with access to the SSRO's website and published in a format that can be read with a wide range of software, maintains a consistent appearance for all users and can be searched easily. However, the existence of multiple versions of the same document along with repeated sections within the guidance documents, may cause confusion for some and risks reference being made to the wrong guidance on occasion or there being some internal inconsistencies within the guidance documents.
- 2.8 Through our recent review we have observed many examples of other bodies adopting similar approaches to the publication of guidance as that used by the SSRO. We have also seen a small number of examples where regulations, codes and guidance have been made available through web-based platforms that support additional functionality for users and those developing the material. The FCA Handbook and the Smart Energy Code from Ofgem have been digitised using a content management platform (Clausematch) which enables users to tailor the content they see to reflect their specific interests or needs, have greater visibility of changes over time, link easily from the guidance to other relevant material (such as legislation), and raise questions or provide feedback on the content with those who have published it. The platform also supports those developing the content to manage the process of drafting, consultation and approvals within the system, supported by workflow management tools, rather than through the preparation of separate documents.
- 2.9 While the user base for SSRO guidance is currently relatively small, we wish to explore the benefits for those using guidance and for the SSRO from the adoption of a more digitised approach to guidance development and delivery. However, we need to develop our knowledge of the content management tools available in the marketplace, their benefits and costs to establish whether such a change would deliver value for money and should be pursued. Some initial work was undertaken by the DefCARS team in 2019 to examine the potential to develop a DefCARS help tool using one relatively low-cost software platform (MadCap Flare), but this was not taken forward at the time.

### Service requirements

- 2.10 The SSRO requires the Contractor to review the SSRO's current process for the delivery of its guidance and to map out benefits and likely costs for technology change options the Contractor has identified. The overall aim is that the additional clarity provided by the Contractor's output will allow the options to be assessed, allowing more informed commercial decisions to be made.
- 2.11 The contractor is required to deliver a written report, mapping out benefits and likely costs for the technology change options the Contractor has identified. The report must consider / include:
- commentary and feedback on the process for the development and delivery of guidance as it is currently working;
  - identified options for the future of developing and delivering guidance, setting out how the drafting and issue of guidance could benefit from implementing technology change; and
  - for the options, identification of potential providers and/or off-the-shelf products, cost and timescale estimates, and the key parameters that the SSRO could use to evaluate and choose between the options
- 2.12 The SSRO expects to work closely with the Contractor for the duration of the contract and be involved in developing thinking. Any presentation or draft material produced during the contract should be delivered to the SSRO with the report.

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- 2.13 The SSRO will make available any relevant documentation the Contractor reasonably requires to complete the report. The SSRO expects that the Contractor may wish to interview SSRO staff and the SSRO will facilitate access as reasonably required.
- 2.14 The SSRO utilises Microsoft Teams for the purposes of collaboration including audio and video communications and for content sharing, and the Contractor must have the ability to participate in these or provide their own capability that the SSRO can access to provide a collaborative platform.
- 2.15 The Contractor must complete the work by 12 March 2021.

### **3. Service approach / management**

- 3.1 The Contractor must nominate a manager whose role is to:
- manage the service and relationship with the SSRO including the assignment of resources;
  - ensure the quality and timelines of any deliverables;
  - act as primary point of contact for the SSRO throughout the contract duration;
  - ensure compliance with security requirements;
  - remain consistently informed about the Contractor's performance on all matters;
  - be available to address issues in a timely manner and meet any urgent requirements within an acceptable timeframe;
  - ensure that the agreed price structure is followed and that costs are communicated to the SSRO on a routine basis throughout the service delivery; and
  - be a point of contact for the SSRO's auditors if necessary.

### **4. Information and Security Arrangements**

- 4.1 In carrying out its corporate functions, the SSRO processes information of the following kinds:
- official information, which may be marked OFFICIAL SENSITIVE with the Government Security Classifications.
  - confidential or commercially sensitive information, which the SSRO would not disclose under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 by reason of the application of one of the exemptions in that Act.
  - personal data or special category data within the meaning of the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018 which must be processed in accordance with applicable data protection law.
- 4.2 The Contractor must handle all materials and communication in connection with the services in a confidential manner. Confidentiality will attach to all information given to the Contractor by the SSRO or a third party, or materials or communication generated by the Contractor, in connection with delivery of the Services. The Contractor's attention is drawn to Schedules 1 and 2 of the Contract, which sets out the Contractor's obligations in this respect.

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- 4.3 The Contractor must ensure that all personnel assigned to the contract have undergone personnel security checks equivalent to the HMG baseline personnel security standard.
- 4.4 The SSRO IT environment, policies and procedures are based on the following policies and procedures, and the Contractor must ensure that any proposed solution option will be consistent with the wider HMG digital service and security policy framework, including:
- HMG Security Policy Framework (SPF).
  - NCSC Published Guidance, Cloud Security Principles and Security Design Principles.
  - ISO/IEC 27001:2013 – Information technology – Security techniques – Information security management systems – Requirements.
  - Cyber Essentials Scheme: Requirement for Technical Protection from Cyber Attacks.
- 4.5 The Contractor must be, and continue to be for the contract duration, Cyber Essentials Plus as well as ISO27001 certified.
- 4.6 Where the Contractor has confirmed that it holds any industry recognised security and data handling schemes / accreditations / certificates (such as ISO security standards), the Contractor must comply and act in accordance with such standards in the delivery of the services throughout the duration of the contract.
- 4.7 The SSRO IT environment uses the Microsoft platform including Windows 10 (E3), Office 365 (E5), Intune and Enterprise Mobility and Security (EMS E3). This is complemented by infrastructure services including Azure virtualisation, Cisco Switches and ASA firewalls, a VPN solution which uses Cisco AnyConnect VPN client software, and wireless network using Meraki Wireless Access Points.

## **5. Conflicts of interest**

- 5.1 The avoidance of Conflicts of Interest is critical to the SSRO. Its minimum requirements are set out in clause 30 of the contract.