



Single Source
Regulations Office

SSRO-C-146 Stakeholder Survey 2025

Invitation to Tender

October 2024

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Invitation to Tender (ITT) is issued by the Single Source Regulations Office (SSRO) for the appointment of a contractor to undertake our third biennial stakeholder survey. The purpose of the survey is to measure performance, understand stakeholder perceptions, inform our strategic direction, and improve stakeholder engagement.
- 1.2 The contract is intended to start on 6 December 2024 and complete by 31 March 2025.
- 1.3 The SSRO intend the successful contractor to carry out the stakeholder survey in two parts from January to February 2025. Consistent with previous surveys the SSRO require the delivery of an initial online survey of stakeholders, followed by a set of qualitative telephone or online (e.g., Zoom, Teams etc) interviews with a representative sample of stakeholders. The SSRO require a draft written report from the contractor by 17 March 2025 and a final written report from the contractor by 31 March 2025.
- 1.4 The content of this ITT is for use by prospective bidders who wish to submit a Tender Response in relation to these services, which are more particularly set out in the specification (**Appendix 1**).
- 1.5 This ITT is provided on the basis that it is and shall remain the property of the SSRO and must only be used for the purposes of responding to this tender opportunity.
- 1.6 This document contains the information and instructions that bidders will need in order to submit a compliant Tender Response. The SSRO will evaluate compliant Tender Responses against the evaluation criteria, in accordance with the methodology set out in this ITT.

2. The Single Source Regulations Office

- 2.1 The Defence Reform Act 2014 ('the Act') created a regulatory framework for single source defence contracts. The framework places controls on the prices of qualifying contracts and requires greater transparency on the part of defence contractors.
- 2.2 The Single Source Regulations Office (SSRO) is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Ministry of Defence. The SSRO provide independent, expert leadership on the regulation of single source contracts and carry out a range of statutory functions in support of the regulatory framework. When exercising our functions, the SSRO aim to ensure that:
 - good value for money is obtained in government expenditure on qualifying defence contracts; and
 - that persons who are parties to qualifying defence contracts are paid a fair and reasonable price under those contracts.
- 2.3 Additional general information about the SSRO can be found on the website: <http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/single-source-regulations-office>

3. Service requirements

- 3.1 The SSRO is seeking to appoint an expert external organisation to undertake their stakeholder survey and present them with a draft and final report setting out the analysed and benchmarked results with commentary. The specification is provided as a separate attachment to this ITT at **Appendix 1** and sets out the SSRO's specific requirements. The specification will form part of the contract with the successful bidder.

- 3.2 The successful bidder will demonstrate a full understanding of the requirements and will have the ability and commitment to provide a comprehensive service to the SSRO.
- 3.3 The SSRO has set an **estimated maximum value** of **£30,000** (including VAT) for delivery of the full service as set out in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.4 Bidders are required to hold and maintain throughout the Contract Period Cyber Essentials accreditation and evidence of this must be submitted as part of the Tender. Tenders received from bidders who are not Cyber Essentials accredited **will be rejected automatically**.

4. Guidance for bidders

Instructions to suppliers submitting a Tender

- 4.1 Please read this guidance on the tendering procedures carefully. Bidders must ensure that they are familiar with the nature and extent of their obligations when participating in this procurement process. The SSRO reserves the right to revise the procurement documentation and, in so doing, will re-issue such documentation via Contracts Finder where appropriate.
- 4.2 Tenders must be submitted strictly in accordance with the instructions contained within this ITT. Failure to comply with the instructions may invalidate a Tender Response. It is important, therefore, that Bidders provide all the information required in the format specified in this ITT.
- 4.3 The information contained in this ITT, the supporting documents and in any related written or oral communication is believed to be correct at the time of issue. However, the SSRO will not accept any liability for its accuracy, adequacy or completeness and no warranty is given in that regard. This exclusion does not extend to any fraudulent misrepresentation made by the SSRO.

Timetable

- 4.4 The SSRO anticipates that the tender process will be run in accordance with the timetable set out below. However, the SSRO reserves the right to vary, amend or cancel the timetable or process at any stage prior to contract award. Where amendments are significant, the SSRO may at its discretion extend the deadline for receipt of Tenders.

Stage	Dates/Times
Tender documents issued	30 October 2024
Deadline for receipt of clarification questions	11 November 2024 (5pm)
SSRO response to supplier questions	13 November 2024 (5pm)
Tender return deadline	18 November 2024 (12pm)
Notification of decision	5 December 2024
Contract commencement date	6 December 2024

Questions about this ITT

- 4.5 It is the responsibility of bidders to obtain at their own expense all additional information necessary for the preparation of their response to this ITT. The SSRO shall not be responsible for the inadequacy of bids owing to the failure of a bidder to undertake adequate research or acquire sufficient knowledge.

- 4.6 Bidders may submit any clarification questions they have relating to this ITT by no later than the date and time specified in the timetable above. The SSRO will respond to reasonable requests received before the deadline. Questions received after the deadline may not be answered.
- 4.7 Please only submit such queries by email to the SSRO at: tenders@ssro.gov.uk
- 4.8 The title of the email should be “**Stakeholder Survey 2025: Clarification Question**”. Any clarification questions should clearly reference the document and the relevant paragraph. To the extent possible, multiple questions should be aggregated rather than sent individually.
- 4.9 Clarifications provided by the SSRO will be circulated to all bidders on or before the date specified in the table in paragraph 4.4. All questions and their answers will be published and circulated to all bidders without revealing the identity of the individual bidder that put forward the question.
- 4.10 Clarifications issued, which are considered relevant by the SSRO, will form part of the contract entered into between the SSRO and the successful bidder.

Return of Tenders

- 4.11 Tenders must be returned by the date and time specified in the timetable above. Any Tender received after this date and time will not be considered. Tenders received will be retained unopened until after the deadline for submission has lapsed. It is the bidders' responsibility to ensure that their Tender is received no later than the stated date and time. The SSRO accepts no liability whatsoever for Tenders that are not received before the deadline, including for reasons of internet connectivity, transmission delays or errors.
- 4.12 Please only return Tenders by email to the SSRO at: tenders@ssro.gov.uk.
- 4.13 The title of the email should be “**Stakeholder Survey 2025: Tender Submission**”. The documents required to be submitted with the proposal should be provided as attachments to the email.

Tender requirements

- 4.14 All submitted Tenders must include the following:
- a completed Form of Tender;
 - response to Tender Questions;
 - a completed Pricing Schedule;
 - evidence of required insurance cover and levels referred to at paragraph 4.26;
 - evidence of Cyber Essentials accreditation;
 - consortia/sub-contracting proposals (where relevant); and
 - a completed Statement of Conduct.
- 4.15 Tenders which omit any of the documents listed in 4.14, or which include documents that are not properly completed, may be rejected.

- 4.16 No qualifications, caveats or unauthorised alterations are to be included or made to the documentation supplied (including the specification and SSRO's Terms and Conditions). Tenders containing such qualifications, caveats or unauthorised alterations shall be rejected.
- 4.17 Any additional pre-existing material which may expand upon the Tender may be included as appendices with cross-references to this material in the main body of the Tender submission. Additional material should only be added where expressly permitted within the Response to Tender Questions.
- 4.18 Bidders are advised to retain for themselves a copy of their submission. The SSRO reserves the right to make a charge to subsequently provide a copy of a submitted Tender.

Form of Tender

- 4.19 Bidders must provide a completed Form of Tender, in the form provided at **Appendix 5**.
- 4.20 The Form of Tender requires that bids remain valid for acceptance for **90 days** from the deadline for receipt of Tenders. If this statement is excluded, amended, or qualified, the bid will be rejected.

Response to Tender Questions

- 4.21 Bidders must complete and submit the Response to Tender Questions, in the form provided at **Appendix 2**. Bidders must respond in full to each of the questions.
- 4.22 If a question is similar to a question included elsewhere in the Response to Tender Questions document, bidders should repeat the response where relevant and expand upon it, as necessary.

Pricing Schedule

- 4.23 Bidders must complete and submit the Pricing Schedule, in the form provided at **Appendix 3**.
- 4.24 Bidders must quote on the basis that the price set out in the Pricing Schedule remains fixed for the period of the Contract. Bidders are strongly advised to check all figures and calculations before submitting their Tenders. The SSRO will not allow bidders to amend their pricing schedules after submission. If the Tender is accepted, the bidder will not be entitled to claim, and the SSRO will not allow any increase in the price.
- 4.25 Bidders must submit their tender based on prices which exclude Value Added Tax (VAT). This tax, if applicable, will be paid by the SSRO as an addition at the appropriate rate on the invoices when submitted.

Insurance

- 4.26 Bidders must include as part of their Tender, evidence to show the following types and levels of insurance are held:
- Public liability Insurance to a minimum value of five million pounds; and
 - Employer's Liability Insurance to a minimum value of five million pounds.
- 4.27 Failure to demonstrate the required insurance cover and levels shall result in the bid being rejected.

Sub-contractors and consortia

- 4.28 If you are bidding for this contract in association with another supplier, you must explain the structure of the bid. If you do not do so, then it may be disqualified.

- 4.29 Bidders must indicate whether they are reliant on any third parties for any aspects of fulfilling the service as specified, or if this is a consortium bid. In such cases you should provide full details of sub-contractors, the nature of the relationship and the intended balance of work to be completed, and copies of quality assurance arrangements operating between the sub-contractors. Failure to provide this information will result in the bid being disqualified.
- 4.30 Bidders and Contractors must not, without the prior consent of the SSRO, appoint sub-contractors or add consortia partners who have not been declared as part of the initial submission. The SSRO may refuse consent for any reason, acting reasonably. This is to ensure that services are delivered in a timely, good quality and cost-effective fashion.
- 4.31 The SSRO may request a copy of the consortia legal arrangements or the form of contract to be entered between the Contractor and any proposed sub-contractor. Failure to provide this information may lead to the bid being disqualified or the SSRO withholding its consent to the appointment of sub-contractors.

Statement of Conduct

- 4.32 Bidders must provide a completed Statement of Conduct, in the form provided at **Appendix 6**.

5. Evaluation

- 5.1 Prior to evaluating Tenders, the SSRO will carry out an initial review of each Tender to confirm completeness and compliance with the requirements of this ITT. Tenders which are complete and compliant will proceed to the evaluation stage.
- 5.2 The contract will be awarded to the highest-ranking bidder based on the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT), subject to the minimum scores being achieved as set out at 5.13 and acceptability as explained at 5.18.
- 5.3 Tenders will be scored based on a combination of quality and price, with the weighting applied to each detailed in the table below. Individual sub-weightings for Quality/Technical, where used, are referred to in 5.7 and the Response to Tender Questions at **Appendix 2**. There are no sub-weightings for price.

Criteria Number	Award Criteria	Percentage Weightings
1	Quality/Technical	70%
2	Price	30%

- 5.4 Appropriate individuals have been selected to undertake the evaluation and moderation of Tenders and will collectively be referred to as the "Evaluation Team."
- 5.5 The Evaluation Team will only consider the information provided by bidders in their Tender submission and, if appropriate, responses provided to the SSRO during any subsequent clarification process carried out as part of a completeness and compliance check following receipt of Tenders.

Quality/Technical

- 5.6 Bidders are required to complete the Response to Tender Questions document (**Appendix 2**) as the answers provided will be used to evaluate Quality/Technical. The Quality/Technical criteria have an overall weighting of **70%**.

- 5.7 The relevant weightings assigned to each Quality/Technical criterion is set out in the table below:

Quality/Technical	Weighting %
1. Suitability of methodology within timescales	20%
2. Analysis and presentation of results	25%
3. Expertise of team	5%
4. Security and data handling	10%
5. Ensuring delivery and accessibility of communications	5%
6. Conflicts of interest	5%
Total	70%

- 5.8 The Quality/Technical sections will be assessed based on the written responses provided to each of the Tender Questions in **Appendix 2**. The response to each will be awarded a score of between 0 and 5 in accordance with the assessment table below.

Assessment table

Assessment	Score
Unacceptable: the response does not meet any of the requirements or no response has been provided. An unacceptable and/or non-compliant response with serious reservations, demonstrating no understanding of the requirement.	0
Unsatisfactory: the proposal significantly fails to meet the requirements as it does not demonstrate a full understanding of them, posing major concerns.	1
Weak – the proposal falls below the requirements. The response has met some, but not all elements of the requirement, which poses risk that the proposal will not meet the deliverables required.	2
Satisfactory – the proposal meets the required elements with low levels of assurance. The response is acceptable and meets all the basic requirements. However, the response is not sufficiently detailed to minimise risk and/or the proposed approach may require additional support (in addition to that outlined in the Services Specification) from the SSRO to meet its deliverables.	3
Good – the proposal meets the requirements with moderate levels of assurance. The response fully meets all requirements with detail provided, minimising risks to delivery. The response is comprehensive and unambiguous, demonstrating a thorough understanding of the requirements and provides details of how the requirement will be met in full without additional support from the SSRO, other than that outlined within the Services Specification.	4
Outstanding - the proposal exceeds the requirement with high levels of assurance. The response is comprehensive and unambiguous, demonstrating a thorough understanding of the requirements, providing detail of how the requirement will be met in full without	5

Assessment	Score
additional support from the SSRO. The Potential Provider has also provided additional beneficial services, solutions, and skills other than those outlined within the Services Specification.	

- 5.9 Bidders can gain scores of 5 by providing innovative proposals that exceed the SSRO's core expectations as expressed in the specification. The SSRO also encourages bidders to present innovative methods of service delivery that will add value to the services.
- 5.10 The score assigned to each criterion will be multiplied by its respective weighting in **Appendix 2**. The weighted score will be expressed relative to the maximum score for each criterion (5) and then multiplied by 100.

$$\text{Total quality score} = \sum \frac{\text{quality score} \times \text{weighting}}{5 \text{ (the maximum score)}} \times 100$$

Quality scoring example

Criteria	Sub - weighting (a)	Example Score (b)	Weighted Score (a x b) = c	Final score = (c/5) x 100
Suitability of methodology within timescales	20%	4	0.8	16.00
Analysis and presentation of results	25%	4	1.00	20.00
Expertise of team	5%	3	0.15	3.00
Security and data handling	10%	4	0.4	8.00
Ensuring delivery and accessibility of communications	5%	3	0.15	3.00
Conflicts of interest	5%	3	0.15	3.00
Total	70%			53.00

In this example, the supplier would receive a total weighted score of 53 out of a total of 70 for Quality.

- 5.11 The total quality score will be the sum of the individual weighted scores for each criterion.
- 5.12 The weighted quality and price scores will be rounded to the nearest two (2) decimal places. For example: a score of 25.3268 will become 25.33 whereas a score of 25.3238 will become 25.32.

- 5.13 A bidder must score at least 3 (“Satisfactory”) for each quality criteria (or sub-criteria). Failure to achieve this minimum score will result in the Tender being automatically rejected, regardless of its other merits.

Price

- 5.14 Bidders are required to complete the table in the Pricing Schedule **Appendix 3**. Bidders must quote their pricing excluding VAT, as bids received will be evaluated on price excluding VAT.
- 5.15 The Price criteria has a weighting of **30%**.
- 5.16 The lowest-priced Tender submitted will receive the full marks available. The price of each of the other Tenders will be scored proportionately to the lowest-priced Tender, according to the following calculation:

$$(\text{Lowest-priced Tender} / \text{price of Tender being scored}) \times 30\% \times 100$$

Example:

Bidder A submits a Tender with a cost of £25,000.

The lowest-priced Tender received was £20,000.00. Bidder A’s score for the will be calculated as follows:

$$20,000/25,000 = 0.80$$

$$0.80 \times 30\% = 0.24$$

$$0.24 \times 100 = 24.00$$

Bidder A will therefore receive an overall weighted score of 24 for price.

Ranking and provisional award of contract

- 5.17 Price and weighted Quality/Technical scores will be added together to give a total score for each bidder, and each bidder will be ranked accordingly. The highest-ranking bidder will be recommended for contract award. Should there be a tie in scores between the bidders ranked first, the bidder with the lowest-priced Tender will be recommended for contract award.
- 5.18 Any Tender which in the reasonable opinion of the Evaluation Team is fundamentally unacceptable on any key point regardless of its other merits, may be rejected.

6. Transparency

- 6.1 The Freedom of Information Act 2000 (“FOIA”) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (“EIR”) apply to the SSRO. You should be aware of the SSRO’s obligations and responsibilities under FOIA and EIR to disclose, on written request, recorded information held by the SSRO. Information provided by you in connection with this procurement exercise, or with any contract that may be awarded as a result of this exercise, may be required by law to be disclosed, unless the SSRO considers that an exemption can be applied.
- 6.2 If you wish to designate information supplied as part of this response as confidential, or if you believe that its disclosure would be prejudicial to any person’s commercial interests, you must provide clear and specific detail as to the information concerned and the justification for it to not be disclosed. Such designation alone may not prevent disclosure if, in the SSRO’s reasonable opinion, it is required by applicable legislation or policy, or where disclosure is required by the Information Commissioner, the First-tier Tribunal (Information Rights) or a court.

- 6.3 Additionally, for reasons of transparency, the SSRO may publish its Tender documents on a publicly searchable website. The same applies to any contract entered into by the SSRO as a result of this procurement exercise. By submitting a Tender, the supplier agrees that their participation in this procurement and any resultant contract may be made public. Where Tender documents or contracts are disclosed, the SSRO will redact them as it considers necessary and, in doing so, will have regard to the exemptions in the FOIA or EIR.

7. Canvassing and bidders' conduct

- 7.1 Offering an inducement of any kind in relation to obtaining this or any other contract with the SSRO will disqualify a bidder's Tender from being considered and may constitute a criminal offence.
- 7.2 Bidders will be disqualified if they:
- tell anyone else what their Tender price is or will be, before the submission deadline;
 - try to obtain any information about anyone else's Tender or proposed Tender before the submission deadline; or
 - make any arrangements with another organisation about whether or not they should Tender, or about either Tender price.
- 7.3 Should it be determined that any bidder has been communicating with any other bidder in respect to this Tender, the SSRO may, acting reasonably, disqualify both bidders.
- 7.4 The SSRO will investigate Tenders where the price appears to be abnormally low. If the bidder cannot provide substantial reasons for the low prices (which may include justifying the sustainability of the bid over the life of the contract), then the SSRO may reject the Tender.
- 7.5 You should not withdraw a Tender after the submission deadline. If you do so, and the SSRO is not satisfied with the reasons for withdrawal, then the SSRO may refuse to accept future Tenders from you.
- 7.6 If the SSRO disqualifies a bidder from this procurement, it will also consider whether to exclude the bidder from subsequent procurement exercises.

8. Conflicts of interest

- 8.1 The SSRO is keen to avoid any actual and/or potential conflicts of interest. Therefore, the SSRO requires that bidders notify it immediately should there be any risk of a conflict of interest. Any bidder failing to notify a conflict that is later identified will be disqualified.

9. Acceptance of Tenders

- 9.1 The SSRO reserves the right to discontinue this procurement at any time or not to award any contract, without liability, and does not bind itself to accept any Tender.
- 9.2 Bidders are advised that in the event of their Tender being successful, the contract between the SSRO and the preferred bidder will only come into existence once it has been duly executed in writing by both parties.
- 9.3 No other purported method of acceptance (e.g., telephone call) or any action by the bidder (e.g. commencement of any work) shall be binding upon the SSRO or have any contractual effect.

- 9.4 Nothing contained in this ITT shall constitute an agreement. Receipt by the bidder of this ITT does not imply the existence of a contract or commitment by or with the SSRO for any purpose and bidders should note that the ITT may not result in the award of any business.

10. Bid costs

- 10.1 Tenders are to be prepared and submitted at the cost of the bidder. The SSRO will not be liable for any costs incurred by the bidder in the preparation and submission of a Tender. For the avoidance of doubt, bid costs include fees incurred by the bidder directly or indirectly as a result of preparation and submission of this Tender.

11. Terms and Conditions

- 11.1 In the event of a conflict between the ITT (including any of the appended documents) and the Terms and Conditions, the Terms and Conditions shall take precedence.
- 11.2 The Contract will be awarded on the Terms and Conditions at **Appendix 4**. Suppliers are asked not to submit their own terms and conditions, as these will be disregarded.
- 11.3 The Contract will comprise:
- the SSRO's Terms and Conditions (including schedules contained therein);
 - the Tender (including pricing schedule and, where relevant, any clarifications);
 - the Specification (including, where relevant, any clarifications);
 - the Tender Response (including Pricing Schedule); and
 - any other agreed Schedules.

12. Documents provided with this ITT

- 12.1 The ITT documentation pack is comprised of the following appendices:
- Appendix 1: Specification
 - Appendix 2: Response to Tender Questions
 - Appendix 3: Pricing Schedule
 - Appendix 4: SSRO Terms and Conditions
 - Appendix 5: Form of Tender
 - Appendix 6: Statement of Conduct