



Single Source
Regulations Office

SSRO-C-127 Digital Board Software

Invitation to Tender

14 December 2023

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Invitation to Tender (ITT) is issued by the Single Source Regulations Office (SSRO). It is conducting a procurement to appoint a contractor to provide Digital Board Software and associated software support services.
- 1.2 The content of this ITT is for use by prospective bidders who wish to submit a Tender Response in relation to the delivery of the Service, which is set out in the Specification (**Appendix 1**).
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 This document contains the information and instructions that bidders will need in order to submit a compliant Tender. The SSRO will evaluate compliant Tenders in accordance with the methodology set out in this ITT.

2. The SSRO

- 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. We 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, we 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 a Digital Board Software and associated software support services provider. The scope of this procurement includes provision of a Digital Board Software package, the development and administration of the system and end user training and ongoing support. It also covers the management and security of the SSRO's data ensuring that it is kept safe, secure and available.
- 3.2 The Specification is provided as a separate attachment to this ITT at **Appendix 1**, and it sets out the requirements of the SSRO. The Specification will form part of the final contract with the successful bidder.
- 3.3 The successful bidder will be able to demonstrate a full understanding of these requirements and will have the ability and commitment to provide a comprehensive and quality service to the SSRO. Bidders must address all the requirements of the Specification in their Tenders.

- 3.4 We draw to bidders' attention that, in order to be eligible to bid for this contract, at the date of tender submission, bidders (and any proposed sub-contractors who will handle SSRO Sensitive Information) **must**:

- hold ISO27001:2013 (or equivalent) accreditation; and
- hold, or have committed in writing to obtaining within six months of the Commencement Date, Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation.

Bidders who fail to satisfy both requirements will be automatically rejected from the process.

- 3.5 The contract is expected to commence on 24 January 2024 to accommodate the potential transition from the incumbent supplier, with the live service commencing on 5 March 2024. The fixed contract period is 3 years, plus the fixed set up/transition period, with the option for the SSRO to extend the contract for a further 12 months.

4. Guidance for bidders

Instructions to bidders

- 4.1 Please read this guidance carefully. Bidders must ensure that they are familiar with the nature and extent of the obligations associated with participating in this procurement process.
- 4.2 Tenders must be submitted strictly in accordance with the instructions contained within this ITT. Failure to comply with the instructions, or failure to return a compliant Tender may, and in some cases will, invalidate a Tender. It is important, therefore, that bidders provide all the information specified in this ITT and in the required format.
- 4.3 The SSRO reserves the right to revise the procurement documentation during the process and, in so doing, will re-issue such documentation via the Contracts Finder website where appropriate. The information contained in this ITT, the supporting documents and in any related 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.

Milestone	Key date/time
Tender documents issued	14 December 2023
Deadline for receipt of clarification questions	18 December 2023 (5pm)
SSRO response to supplier questions	22 December 2023 (5pm)
Tender return deadline	9 January 2024 (5pm)
Notification of decision	22 January 2024
Contract commencement date - set up	24 January 2024
Service commencement date	5 March 2024

Questions

- 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. No claims of insufficient knowledge will be entertained.
- 4.6 You may submit any clarification questions you 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 Any clarification questions should clearly reference, where relevant, the document and paragraph. To the extent possible, multiple questions should be aggregated and not sent individually.
- 4.8 The title of the email should be “**Digital Board Software: 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 The SSRO will publish responses to clarification questions on the Contracts Finder platform by the date specified in the timetable above. All questions and their answers will be published without revealing the identity of the individual bidder that put forward the question.
- 4.10 Any clarifications issued, where deemed relevant by the SSRO, will form part of the ultimate contract between the SSRO and the successful bidder.

Return of Tenders

- 4.11 Bidders should address the requirements of the Specification in their Tenders, by providing responses to the Tender Questions in **Appendix 2**.
- 4.12 Tenders must be returned by the date and time specified in the timetable at paragraph 4.4. Any Tender received after this date and time will not be considered. 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. 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.
- 4.13 Please only submit Tenders by email to the SSRO at: tenders@ssro.gov.uk.
- 4.14 The title of the email should be “**Digital Board Software: Tender Submission.**” The documents required to be submitted with the proposal should be provided as attachments to the email.

Tender requirements

- 4.15 All submitted Tenders **must** include the following:
- a completed Response to Tender Questions;
 - a completed Pricing Schedule;
 - a completed Form of Tender;
 - a completed Statement of Conduct;

- evidence of the bidder's (and any proposed sub-contractors who will be processing SSRO Sensitive Information):
 - (a) ISO27001:2013 (or equivalent) accreditation; **and**
 - (b) Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation **OR** a written statement from the bidder confirming a commitment to obtaining (and/or, as the case may be, their proposed sub-contractors obtaining) such accreditation within six months of contract commencement (as set out in paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5 of the Specification); and
 - Your Information Handling/Security policies as noted in **Question 5** of the Response to Tender Questions;
 - evidence of the insurance cover and levels noted below at paragraph 4.30, or a statement from the bidder confirming a commitment to obtaining such insurance prior to contract commencement; and
 - consortia/sub-contracting proposals (where relevant).
- 4.16 Tenders which omit any of the documents listed in 4.15, or which include documents that are not properly completed, **may be rejected**.
- 4.17 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.
- 4.18 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.

Response to Tender Questions

- 4.19 Bidders must complete and submit the Response to Tender Questions, which is provided at **Appendix 2**. Bidders must respond in full to each of the questions.
- 4.20 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. Bidders should not, however, exceed the indicated word limits (if any). The SSRO will disregard any text which exceeds the word limit.
- 4.21 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.
- 4.22 The SSRO has set Key Performance Indicators, which include minimum performance requirements, which are attached as **Annex 1**. Bidders should take account of these, and the provisions set out therein when submitting their bid. **Annex 1** shall form part of any contract awarded to the successful bidder.

Pricing Schedule

- 4.23 Bidders must complete and submit the Pricing Schedule, which is provided at **Appendix 3**.
- 4.24 Bidders must quote on the basis that the prices set out in the Pricing Schedule remain 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. The successful bidder will not be entitled to claim, and the SSRO will not allow any increase in the price.

- 4.25 The Tender must be based on prices which include 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.
- 4.26 Where a price quoted appears to be abnormally low, the SSRO shall investigate as appropriate. If the bidder cannot provide substantive reasons for the low quote, the SSRO may reject the Tender. The SSRO will also investigate where a price quoted appears disproportionately spread over the full contract period, including where it is front-loaded. If the bidder is unable to justify the reasons for the spread of the price, or it presents an unacceptable risk to the SSRO, the SSRO may in its sole discretion reject the Tender.

Form of Tender

- 4.27 Bidders must provide a completed Form of Tender, which is provided at **Appendix 5**.
- 4.28 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.

Statement of Conduct

- 4.29 Bidders must provide a completed Statement of Conduct which is provided at **Appendix 6**.

Insurance

- 4.30 Bidders must include as part of their Tender, evidence to show the following types and levels of insurance are held (or a statement confirming a commitment to obtaining such insurance prior to contract commencement):
- Public Liability Insurance to a minimum value of five million pounds for each and every claim or series of claims arising out of one event; and
 - Employer's Liability Insurance to a minimum value of five million pounds for each and every claim or series of claims arising out of one event.
- 4.31 Failure to demonstrate the required insurance cover and levels shall result in the bid being rejected.

Sub-contractors and consortia

- 4.32 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.
- 4.33 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.
- 4.34 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.
- 4.35 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.

5. Evaluation

- 5.1 Prior to evaluating Tenders, the SSRO will carry out a review of each Tender to confirm completeness and compliance with the requirements of this ITT.
- 5.2 The contract will be awarded to the most economically advantageous tender (MEAT), subject to the minimum scores being achieved as set out at 5.13 and acceptability as explained at 5.20.
- 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, where used, are referred to in the Response to Tender Questions at **Appendix 2** (for quality) and paragraph 5.14 below (for price).

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

- 5.4 Appropriate individuals have been selected to undertake the evaluation of Tenders (the "Evaluation Team").
- 5.5 The Evaluation Team will only consider the information provided by bidders in their Tender submission and the responses provided to the SSRO during any subsequent clarification.

Quality

- 5.6 The quality criterion carries a weight of 70% and is assessed by the Evaluation Team based on the bidder's completed Response to Tender Questions. The criteria and weightings are set out in the Table below. Sub-criteria and sub-weightings, where applicable, are given in **Appendix 2**.
- 5.7 The relevant weightings assigned to each Quality Section are set out in the table below:

Quality/Section	Weighting%
1. Software requirements	50
2. Information and security	20
Total	70%

- 5.8 The Quality section will be assessed based on the written responses provided to each of the Tender Questions (**Appendix 2**). Each criterion has been assigned a weighting and for some, sub-weightings, from the overall section weighting. Each criterion (or where identified, sub-criterion) 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 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

- 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

Sub-criteria	Sub - weighting (a)	Example Score (b)	Weighted Score (a x b) = c	Final score = (c/5) x 100
Please describe the technical architecture of your proposed system	2%	4	0.08	1.60
Please describe the nature of your application and technology environment	5%	5	0.25	5.00
Please provide detail of your IT system management processes	3%	4	0.12	2.40
Total	10%			9.00

In this example, the supplier would receive a total weighted score of 9.

- 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 The Price criteria has an overall weighting of 30% and is assessed based on the completed Pricing Schedule. The relevant sub-weightings assigned to each price element are set out in the table below:

Pricing element	Weighting%*
Total Fixed Price (including transition)	25%
Additional user Price: cost for additional users	5%
Total	30%

- 5.15 Bidders are required to complete the tables within sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 of the Pricing Schedule (**Appendix 3**). These capture the bidder's price/rates for performing the Set up and Transition Services, the Core Services, and Additional Users. Table 1 within section 1 is auto populated based on the total prices/rates quoted in the section 2 tables. The total prices for delivering each service, as auto populated in Table 1, are individually evaluated in accordance with the calculation at paragraph **5.18** below and a sub-weighted score assigned to each.
- 5.16 The figure used for the purposes of evaluating the Fixed Price is the *Total Fixed Price (including transition)* amount auto populated in Table 1. This has an overall weighting of 25%.

- 5.17 The figure used for the purposes of evaluating the Additional User Price is the *Additional User Price* autopopulated in Table 1. This has an overall weighting of 5%.
- 5.18 The lowest-priced Tender for each price element will receive the full marks available for that pricing element. The price elements of each of the other bids will be scored proportionately to the lowest-priced price element, according to the following calculation:

$$(\text{Lowest-priced Fixed Price} / \text{price of Fixed Price being scored}) \times 25\% \times 100 +$$

$$(\text{Lowest-priced Additional user Price} / \text{price of the Additional user Price being scored}) \times 5\% \times 100$$

Example:

Bidder A submits a bid with a Total Fixed Price of £175,000 and Additional user Price of £25,000.

The lowest-priced Total Fixed Price Tender received was £120,000.00. Bidder A's score for the Total Fixed Price will be calculated as follows:

$$120,000/175,000 = 0.69$$

$$0.69 \times 25\% = 0.17$$

$$0.17 \times 100 = 17.00$$

Bidder A will therefore receive a score of 17 for the Total Fixed Price element.

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

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

$$0.80 \times 5\% = 0.4$$

$$0.4 \times 100 = 4.00$$

Bidder A will therefore receive a score of 4 for the Additional User Price element.

Bidder A would receive an overall weighted score of 21 for Price.

Overall ranking for the award of the contract

- 5.19 The weighted Quality and Price scores will be added together to give the 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 and second, the bidder with the lowest-priced Tender will be recommended for contract award.
- 5.20 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 supplier'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 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.
- 7.5 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 requires that bidders notify it immediately should there be any conflicts of interest, or risks thereof, as part of the procurement process. 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 Contractor 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 The contract will be awarded on the Terms and Conditions provided at **Appendix 4**. Any contract terms which are supplied by a bidder as part of their Tender will be discounted and the Tender may be rejected in those circumstances.
- 11.2 The Contract will comprise:
- a) the SSRO's Terms and Conditions;
 - b) the Specification (including, where relevant, any clarifications);
 - c) the KPI Service Standards;
 - d) the Contractor's Tender (including the completed Pricing Schedule);
 - e) the ITT; and
 - f) any other agreed documents.

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: Terms and Conditions
 - Appendix 5: Form of Tender
 - Appendix 6: Statement of Conduct