SSRO

Single Source
Regulations Office
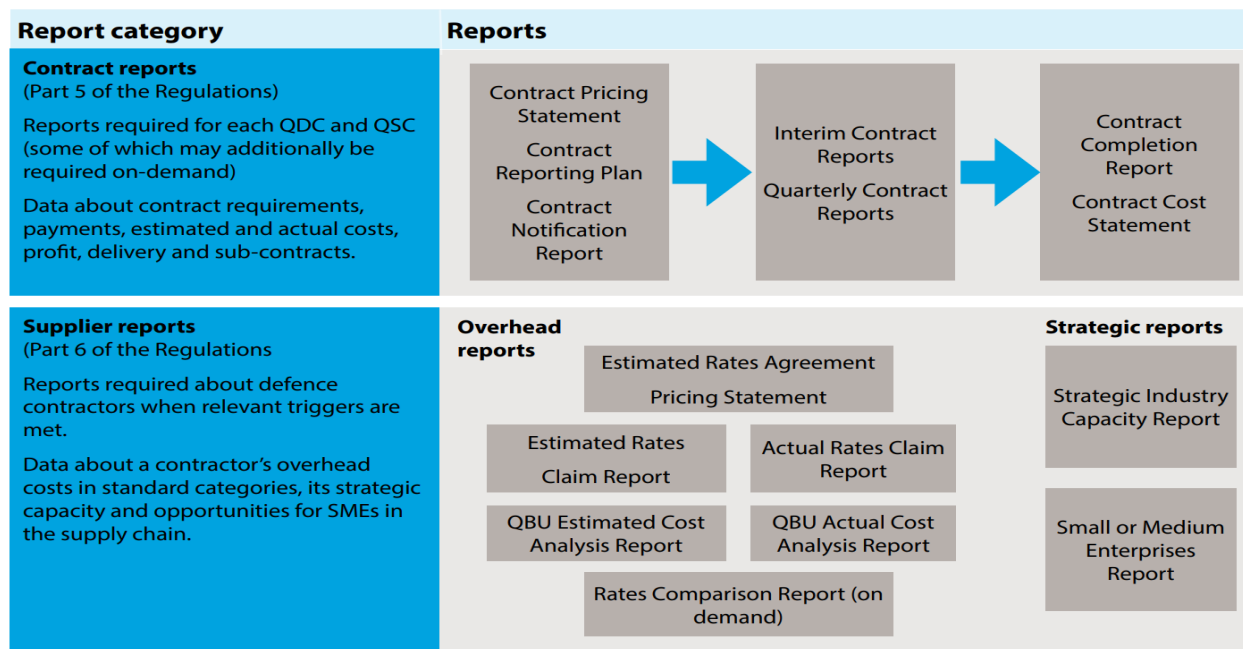
Reporting Issues Management Process Digitisation

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*

Report category	**Reports**		
Contract reports (Part 5 of the Regulations) Reports required for each QDC and QSC (some of which may additionally be required on-demand) Data about contract requirements, payments, estimated and actual costs, profit, delivery and sub-contracts.	Contract Pricing Statement Contract Reporting Plan Contract Notification Report	Interim Contract Reports Quarterly Contract Reports	Contract Completion Report Contract Cost Statement
Supplier reports (Part 6 of the Regulations Reports required about defence contractors when relevant triggers are met. Data about a contractor's overhead costs in standard categories, its strategic capacity and opportunities for SMEs in the supply chain.	**Overhead reports** Estimated Rates Agreement Pricing Statement Estimated Rates Claim Report QBU Estimated Cost Analysis Report Actual Rates Claim Report QBU Actual Cost Analysis Report Rates Comparison Report (on demand)		**Strategic reports** Strategic Industry Capacity Report Small or Medium Enterprises Report

*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.

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 issues management. The SSRO is separately procuring assistance in relation to guidance delivery.

2.   The Service Specification

Issues management

2.1   The effective management of reporting issues is central to the SSRO's achievement of its reporting-related objectives and helps optimise use of the limited resources available for this purpose. A recent internal review has recommended an improved process for managing issues.

2.2   To date, the SSRO has recorded information on potential reporting issues and its management of them in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet which is available on SharePoint for staff to view and edit ('the issues log'). This approach is replicated for the recording and management of issues relevant to other work areas, for example, compliance monitoring and the development of pricing guidance.

2.3   Over time we have adapted the issues log to capture different information as our approach to issues management has evolved. The issues log is simple to use for most staff and easily adapted to changing requirements. It allows us to identify matters that require consideration and provides an accessible record of our action. However, it does not offer any functionality for automating the issues management process and, as with other tools, relies heavily on staff to ensure it is kept up to date and contains good quality information for decision-making.

2.4   In addition to the SSRO maintaining the issues log, the SSRO has a team responsible for development of its reporting system (DefCARS, the Defence Contracts Analysis and Reporting System). The team uses Atlassian JIRA to alert the external system provider, Synectics Solutions Ltd (SSL), about issues requiring DefCARS developments and to manage development action by SSL on these. Limited access to this tool is provided to us by SSL. For each job raised on the system, information is captured that assists SSL to advise on the associated development costs and supports the SSRO's monitoring of progress using the in-built functionality of the system. At present, while workflows are supported by the tool, approvals for jobs are taking place outside of it and subsequently recorded within it. The DefCARS team is also using Planner in Microsoft Teams to plan how developments will form part of a programme of system updates. This functionality is not available to the SSRO in JIRA, although the system does have that capability.

2.5   We wish to explore the role that technology can play to make our issues management processes more efficient, transparent and less reliant on manual interventions. We see, for example, that:

- It may be helpful if there were automatic notifications to relevant personnel to alert them to changes or when decision or actions are required in the review of reporting issues.

- The current approach to issues logging does not allow us to automatically and easily share the issues log (or parts of it) with external stakeholders to inform them about matters logged for consideration and seek their input to issues management decisions.

- Technology may provide simplified management reporting on progress with issues management.

2.6   Our recent review of the approaches taken by other bodies to issues management has not identified any other tools or off the shelf products being used for this purpose. Most of those we spoke with confirmed they were using Excel in a similar way to us to log matters requiring attention and record their action in response. While we know issues management tools are available in the marketplace, we have not yet examined their suitability for our purposes. We are also mindful that the number of reporting issues logged for action each year may not merit a substantial investment in new technology to support process improvement. The current log contains c.150 entries which have been collated over the past few years, with an average of 10-20 new issues per annum.

2.7   We are aware that the MOD is pursuing application development using the Microsoft Power Platform. Initial discussions with the Microsoft Chief Technology Officers and team embedded at the MOD has indicated that there would be merit in the SSRO also exploring how we can better use the capabilities of the Microsoft tools currently available to us. This might include exploring alternatives to Excel for the issues log, considering the process automation capability provided by Power Automate or exploring how Power BI might transform our oversight (and stakeholders' visibility) of progress on issues management through new reporting capabilities.

Service requirements

2.8   The SSRO is seeking the services of a suitably qualified expert to:

- Review the SSRO's current processes for logging reporting issues.

- Advise on technology opportunities in support of the SSRO's reporting issues management process;

- Advise on how the SSRO can deploy currently available technologies to best effect, such as application of the Microsoft technology stack, including Office365 and Power Platform products.

- Map out benefits and likely costs for any identified technology options.

- Deliver a written report on each of the above matters and supports the SSRO to determine whether to invest further effort and resource in development of the issues log and automation of associated processes.

2.9   The contractor's report must include:

- commentary and feedback on the process as it is currently working;

- identified options for the future of considering reporting issues, setting out how the design and build of the issues logging process 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.

2.10 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.

2.11 The SSRO will make available any relevant documentation the Contractor reasonably requires to complete the report. We expect that the Contractor may wish to interview SSRO staff and the SSRO will facilitate access as reasonably required.

2.12 The SSRO utilises Microsoft Teams for the purposes of collaboration including audio and video communications and for content sharing. The Contractor must have the ability to participate in Teams communications, or provide their own capability that the SSRO can access to provide a collaborative platform.

2.13 The Contractor must complete the work by 12 March 2021.

3. Service approach and 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.

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.