

SSRO

Single Source
Regulations Office

November 2025

Stakeholder engagement strategy



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1. Introduction

The Single Source Regulations Office (SSRO) is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Ministry of Defence (MOD). We were established by the Defence Reform Act 2014, which also created a regulatory framework for single source defence contracts ('the regulatory framework'), placing controls on the pricing of qualifying contracts and requiring greater transparency on the part of defence contractors.

Engagement is fundamental to the SSRO's evidence-based approach to our work and leads to improved understanding of issues within the regulatory framework and user needs. The SSRO has made stakeholder engagement a strategic priority, and over the past two years we have expanded our engagement, undertaking site visits; onboarding and training sessions; and have presented at various exhibitions and to trade membership organisations and relevant parts of the MOD. We will maintain a proactive programme of stakeholder engagement to help us deliver our statutory functions.

Our Corporate Plan 2025-26 sets out how we will engage with the Government and the defence industry during the development and implementation of the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) and Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS). The SSRO will be mindful of its two statutory aims – value for money and fair and reasonable prices – as well as focusing on the role we can play in increasing the pace and simplicity of single source procurement.

We will work closely and proactively with the MOD and defence contractors on the development and implementation of the review of the regulatory framework.

Our engagement contributes to our ongoing duty to keep the operation of the regulatory framework under review. Stakeholder feedback informs our recommendations to the Secretary of State for Defence on improvements to the framework.

We recognise that encouraging SMEs and new entrants into defence is vital for innovation, agility, and economic growth. The regulatory framework is designed to be proportionate and accessible, ensuring that smaller suppliers are not disadvantaged by complexity or cost. Our engagement with SMEs will help them to navigate the framework.

This refreshed Stakeholder Engagement Strategy complements the Corporate Plan and develops our stakeholder engagement to ensure that we will:

- Be visible and accessible, with a clear and coordinated offer of engagement and support to the primary users of the regulatory framework.
- Have an enhanced communications approach, increasing the impact and reach of our work.
- Work with our stakeholders to keep improving our overall offer of communication, support and engagement to users of the regulatory framework, guided by their key issues and concerns.
- Undertake a programme of enhancements to the guidance and support we provide, including through an improved website platform.
- Engage with other regulators and relevant organisations, in the UK and internationally.

2. Stakeholder survey

To help us improve our engagement, we completed a fourth stakeholder survey in 2025.

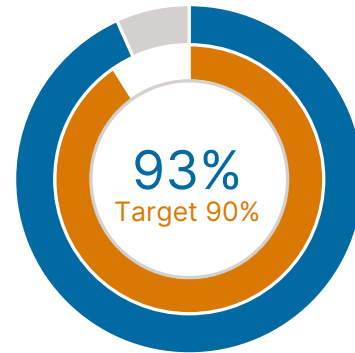
The survey results inform this Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, with priority actions to respond to issues raised by stakeholders in the survey.

It is encouraging to see that the responses to the survey are generally positive with high levels of satisfaction with the SSRO's performance and our work. The survey provides insights that we will use to improve our products and services.

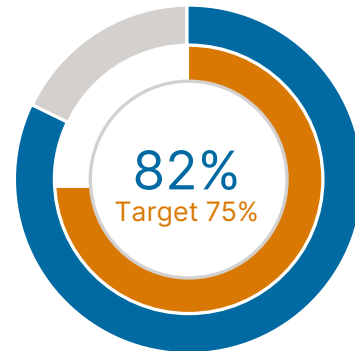
Respondents constructively highlighted ways to improve our engagement, including:

- offering more training and support, particularly via the 'teach in' format as used in relation to the changes to the Single Source Contract Regulations contained in the Procurement Act 2023;
- providing guidance in specific areas with greater use of real-world examples;
- developing and broadening relationships, particularly within the MOD, focusing on active engagement with potential and actual users of reported data; and
- further improving the usability of the Defence Contract Analysis and Reporting System (DefCARS) and how the reported data can be used.

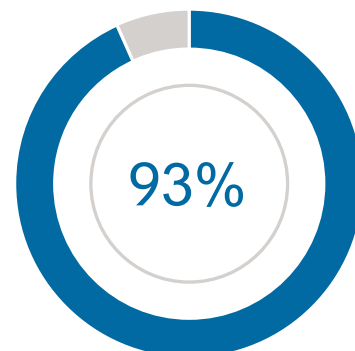
We have prioritised actions in the Corporate Plan 2025-26 to address this feedback.



KPI 4A: Users satisfied with SSRO responses to questions raised with SSRO



KPI 4C: Percentage of stakeholders who agree that the SSRO's pricing guidance is clear and applicable, and useful in agreeing contract prices that support VFM and fair & reasonable prices



Stakeholders who consider the SSRO engages well

3. Our stakeholders

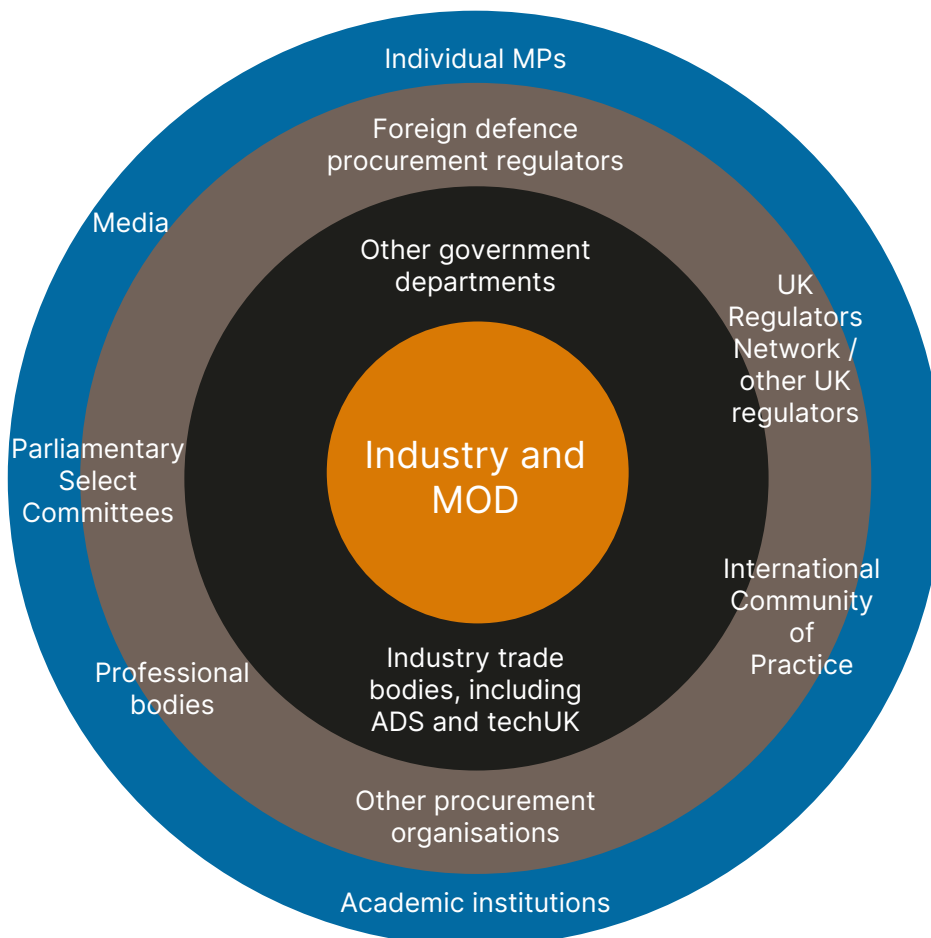
We aim to engage in a proportionate way with stakeholders, having regard to the extent of their involvement and interest in the regulatory framework.

The diagram below shows the range of stakeholder groups the SSRO engages with. The frequency and depth of engagement will be greatest for stakeholders towards the center of the diagram below, and progressively more light touch moving outwards.

We engage frequently and in detail on many topics with the primary points of contact and specifically users of the regulatory framework from within the MOD including those within the National Armament Director's Group, the Submarine Delivery Agency, and the Defence Nuclear Enterprise. Engagement also occurs with other parts of the MOD who have less frequent involvement with the regulatory framework or who have a part in the MOD's role as our sponsoring department, supporting our corporate activities such as IT, security, finance, and governance.

Given the framework can now apply to contracts beyond those that are exclusively for defence purposes, we will work across other parts of Government as appropriate.

Some industry stakeholders have many qualifying defence contracts and are active participants in forums such as the Operational Working Group (OWG)¹, and other companies only have a single QDC that forms a small part of their overall business.



¹ The OWG enables stakeholders to provide feedback to the SSRO on issues relating to statutory guidance, compliance with reporting requirements. The OWG also enables the SSRO to seek feedback from stakeholders on priorities and planned work. All companies with a QDC/QSC (or major single source prime contractors without a QDC) are invited to attend, as well as the MOD and ADS.

4. Engagement principles and approaches



Feedback: We aim to broaden engagement opportunities and adapt to the needs of our stakeholders.

We regularly gather feedback through surveying stakeholder experience of our training and onboarding sessions. Engagement helps us to continue developing our understanding of the defence and related sectors and gain maximum benefit from our stakeholders' knowledge and experience of defence contracting.



Reach: We convene regular meetings and groups to facilitate stakeholder engagement, including our OWG and Reporting & IT Sub-Group.

At the SSRO we create opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to meeting agendas and lead discussions. All SSRO staff aim to build strong relationships with stakeholders across all our activities and the defence sector. Effectiveness of the SSRO's stakeholder engagement is measured and considered at Board and Senior Leadership meetings.



Visibility: We maintain a presence and strive to improve the effectiveness of our engagement mechanisms.

We are increasing our presence at MOD and industry events and undertaking site visits across the United Kingdom to gain and share knowledge, offer support, and hear directly from stakeholders.



Communications: Our independent website is clear, so stakeholders can find what they need.

Our programme of guidance optimisation will result in enhancements which will be available on our website in a variety of easily useable formats. We will make use of evolving technology that enables traditionally text-based guidance to be delivered through audio and video.



Support: We provide a helpdesk, training and onboarding support.

We provide high quality and highly regarded support to the MOD and industry through our helpdesk, on-boarding meetings, and training to make the regulatory framework accessible and effective.



Knowledge: We continue to develop and share our sector knowledge and are a trusted source of information.

We will provide insights, guidance and information useful to industry and the MOD and which contributes to meaningful improvements in defence procurement. We will deliver impactful insights, such as our input to the SDR and DIS, be fully engaged in the review of the Single Source Contract Regulations (as detailed in both the SDR and DIS), and the publication of an overview of single-source contracting across 11 partner nations as part of our involvement in the International Industrial Cost Analysis and Verification Community of Practice (ICOP).

5. Engagement priorities

Our engagement priorities enable us to deliver on our Corporate Plan activities and our statutory functions:

1. Provide a compelling SSRO Support offering

SSRO Support offers a range of assistance to stakeholders to help them understand the requirements of the regulatory framework and to enable them to provide and utilise good quality data contained within the contract and supplier reports. The assistance includes: a helpdesk for contractor and MOD queries; high-quality training sessions on the DefCARS system and reporting requirements for contractors and the MOD; in-person or virtual onboarding sessions; teach-ins on the requirements of the regulatory framework, and extra support for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

We will undertake a programme of guidance optimisation, resulting in enhancements. Where there are new areas of guidance introduced we will utilise a 'teach in' style of training, which stakeholders have told us is their preferred method. Our website will be user-friendly, allowing stakeholders to easily find what they need in various formats, keeping in mind the needs of stakeholders who are new to the regulatory framework. We will use new technology to provide guidance through audio and video channels.

We will arrange short placements at the MOD and industry for our staff, to enhance and maintain understanding of commercial practices and their practical application. We will continue to draw on the Defence Learning Environment material for our bespoke SSRO Commercial Training Pathway to improve our technical knowledge of the regime's application.

2. Continue developing our relationships within the MOD and facilitate better use of DefCARS data

We will engage effectively and regularly with stakeholders from the MOD to help us understand ways to make the regulatory framework as accessible and effective as possible. We will:

- Continue to be open and accessible for MOD staff who wish to talk to us about the regulatory framework, and proactively look to provide the MOD with insight and analysis on SSRO held data based on their areas of interest.
- Report on single source contract statistics and maintain our trusted reputation as an expert on the regulatory framework.
- Provide an Analysis and MI Service to the MOD, building on their user feedback results and our stakeholder survey, to expand and improve the MOD's utilisation of DefCARS data in negotiating and managing contracts.
- Play an active and independent role in supporting the development and successful implementation of the MOD's DIS and SDR, including the Department's review of the Single Source Contract Regulations. We will provide analysis and insight to help evolve the regulatory framework, aligning with the Government's objectives to enhance Defence capabilities and stimulate UK economic growth.

3. Maintain mechanisms for purposeful engagement with industry

We will engage effectively and regularly with stakeholders from industry to help us understand ways to make the regulatory framework as accessible and effective as possible.

We will purposefully engage with contractors and industry trade associations such as ADS, techUK, Make UK Defence and Team Defence Information. We will do this through SSRO's established forums, for example the OWG and the Reporting and IT Sub-Group, and through other existing industry or MOD forums, workshops and bilateral meetings. We will continue to refine how our forums operate, to maximise benefit and ensure relevance to both our stakeholders and ourselves.

We will continue to ensure we are accessible: visiting defence industry sites across the UK to facilitate discussion and promote understanding between the defence industry and the SSRO's Senior Leadership Team, Non-Executive Board Members, and our staff.

We will enable defence contractors to submit high-quality information through our Reporting Service. This includes training, compliance work, and maintaining DefCARS for secure data collection.

We will consult industry for their insight and experience of using the regulatory framework, to inform how we are involved in and respond to outputs arising from the Defence Industrial Strategy and Strategic Defence Review, including the Department's review of the Single Source Contract Regulations.

4. Continue to enhance our communications approach, and increase the visibility and relevance of our work

The SSRO benefits from exchanging information, developing ideas, and sharing good practice with organisations with similar functions. We will engage with other regulators and relevant organisations, in the UK and internationally, and given the single source regulatory framework can now apply to contracts beyond those that are exclusively for defence purposes, we will work across other parts of Government as appropriate.

We will increase our presence, visibility and participation at MOD and industry conferences and events building on our successful speaking engagements at the DPRTE and DSEI conferences. This helps us to undertake our statutory functions and Corporate Plan activities; increases our understanding of the defence and related sectors; and allows us to use our expertise to help stakeholders.

Through the UK Regulators' Network we continue to engage with and share best practice tools and techniques with UK organisations with similar regulatory functions. We will continue to maintain and add to these relationships where they help us to carry out our statutory functions.