

SSRO-C-154 Security and Information Risk Advisor (SIRA) services

CLARIFICATION QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

No.	Clarification Question	SSRO Response
1	<p>Morning,</p> <p>We're looking to apply for the SSRO SIRA services contract but currently are not a sponsor for national security vetting applications and do not have access to the National Security Vetting Solution.</p> <p>Do you have the contact details for the DSA for SSRO to allow us to apply to be a sponsor for NSV applications please?</p>	<p>The SSRO's Government sponsor department is the MOD. For MOD vetting queries, UKSV is the gateway and enquiries are routed internally to the Departmental Security Authority. The UKSV contact details are on their home page https://www.gov.uk/guidance/united-kingdom-security-vetting-contact-us.</p> <p>Bidders must note that all individuals delivering services under the contract must hold UK HMG security clearance at SC level or above. As explained in the Invitation to Tender, bidders whose proposed personnel do not currently hold UK HMG security clearance at SC level or above may submit a Tender, but the security clearances must be held prior to contract award. Bidders are cautioned that if the bidder ranking first in the evaluation process cannot evidence this mandatory requirement by the contract award date of 20 March 2026, the SSRO may proceed to award the contract to the next highest-scoring bidder who is able to evidence compliance with the mandatory requirements.</p>
2	<p>Staff Training: If successful, are there any specific training or onboarding requirements for the staff we provide? (Are year 1 days front loaded for kick-off and familiarisation?)</p>	<p>There are no specific training requirements. As set out in the specification, there may be some transition activity with the incumbent, however the SSRO does not expect this to be significant. The year 1 days are not front loaded.</p>
3	<p>Day Rates and Budget: Is there a maximum allowable day rate? Are you expecting fixed/firm/ T&M pricing?</p>	<p>Bidders should refer to the Invitation to Tender and Pricing Schedule for detailed information on pricing. Bidders must quote on the basis that the rates or prices included in the Pricing Schedule remain fixed for the period of the contract, including any extension periods. The SSRO has not stipulated a maximum allowable day rate, however bidders should take note of the advertised contract value and that the price criteria has an overall weighting of 40%.</p>
4	<p>What is the cadence of planned days, what are the fixed days annually/planned activities?</p>	<p>The SSRO is contracting for a fixed requirement of 15 planned days of service per annum for the purposes of the programme of planned activities. Please refer to paragraphs 3.5-3.7 of the Specification for the programme of planned activities.</p>

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5	What is the anticipated lead-in time for ad-hoc days? Will the incumbent just work with the end team and plan days	The SSRO is unable to provide an anticipated lead in time for additional or ad-hoc services as these relate to additional optional service requirements which may emerge that cannot be covered by the rolling work programme or ad hoc queries for security advice of a low level of effort which only become known at the time the work is requested. To date, however, the SSRO has worked with the incumbent to plan in the required work.
6	What are examples of equivalent qualifications and would you accept Associate CII Sec and UKCSC Principal?	<p>As explained in the Invitation to Tender, all individuals delivering services under the contract must hold at least one of the following credentials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) SIRA Certified Cyber Professional (CCP), as accredited by the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC); ii) Membership of the Chartered Institute of Information Security (CII Sec); iii) Chartered Cyber Security Professional (ChCSP) status; or iv) An equivalent certification to any of the above. <p>The SSRO does not maintain a definitive list of "equivalent" certifications or qualifications. Bidders may propose alternatives which they consider to be equivalent to those listed above, but it is for bidders to demonstrate equivalence in their Tender submission. In assessing equivalence, the SSRO will consider whether the proposed certifications or qualifications are broadly comparable in terms of level, scope, rigour and professional standing, including requirements relating to competence, experience, assessment and ongoing professional obligations.</p> <p>However, the SSRO confirms that Associate CII Sec and UKCSC Principal are not objectively equivalent qualifications to those listed and are therefore not acceptable.</p>
7	What is the anticipated volume of work- average number of pen tests/how many reviews undertaken. Is there any expectation to do any remediation/retest reviews?	<p>The SSRO undertakes an annual ITHC/pen test, the results of which feed into the Secure by Design reporting. The Secure by Design support days are included within the 15 planned days per annum. The SSRO contracts separately for the ITHC/Pen tests.</p> <p>As set out in 3.6 of the Specification, Secure by Design reviews are undertaken quarterly with the 4th quarterly review being the annual review.</p>
8	Please can we clarify the on-site requirement? What facilities will be available to our team when working on-site (e.g., office space, internet access)?	As set out in the Specification, much of the work can be delivered at the Supplier's site(s) and this is how the incumbent currently works. Full or part day attendance at the SSRO's office (100 Parliament Street, London) may be required on occasion, and where this is the case a desk, meeting room(s) and GovWiFi will be available for use.
9	Please can we clarify the locations in scope and frequency of travel required for the contract?	Based on experience to date, the frequency of travel to our 100 Parliament Street office is unlikely to exceed 1 day per quarter.

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10	How are expenses being treated? Is there a maximum limit per day? Does the rate have to be inclusive of all T&S/within a certain areas?	As stated in the Pricing Schedule, costs associated with attendance on site, including travel, shall be included in the price/rate(s) proposed by the bidder in the Pricing Schedule.
11	If using supplier provided systems are there any specific tools or platforms we are required to use for remote work and collaboration	There are no specific tools or platforms required for use on Supplier provided systems
12	Can you confirm the Authority's rights to terminate or suspend the contract? Notice period etc.	The contractual terms, including those concerning termination, suspension and notice period, are set out in the Terms and Conditions provided as Appendix 4 of the associated tender documents.
13	Is this a new requirement or is there an incumbent supplier? If so, who is the incumbent? And what is the transfer of service / handover plan required?	The incumbent is Hex Security Limited. The SSRO does not expect a significant amount of transition activity will be required between the incoming and outgoing supplier (where applicable). However, the Supplier must carry out all required transition activity and take the necessary steps to ensure continuity of business services.
14	What is the expected process for knowledge transfer at the end of the contract?	The SSRO does not expect a significant amount of transition activity will be necessary at the end of the contract. The process for knowledge transfer can be discussed and formalised during the course of the contract.
15	Are there opportunities for additional work or follow-on contracts related to this project?	No. This procurement relates solely to the service set out in the Specification. The SSRO is not committing to, nor does it anticipate, any additional work arising from these services. Any future requirements (including follow-on contracts), should they arise, would be subject to the SSRO's normal procurement processes and procurement law requirements.
16	For remote working is the presumption to operate on Supplier systems and if so what is the anticipated classification of work to be processed or will we be furnished with MoDnet or similar	For remote working the Supplier is expected to work on their own systems. The classification of the work will be Official, including Official Sensitive. The SSRO currently does not have access to MoDnet or other similar MOD systems.