

MOD Acquisition Operating Framework: how the MOD does business

The UK MOD Acquisition Operating Framework is the authoritative source of policy, guidance and good practice for all members of the MOD and its Industry partners concerned with acquisition. Here MOD DCB looks at what the AOF provides and how, with your input, it is continuing to be improved.

The Acquisition Operating Framework (AOF) defines how MOD conducts, governs and controls its acquisition processes. It provides the one-stop shop for policy and guidance for everyone who works in defence acquisition, whether MOD or industry. In short, the AOF explains how the MOD does acquisition business.

The AOF is a key enabler for improving the delivery of capability to the UK Armed Forces and achieving value for money for the taxpayer. The MOD currently spends approximately £20 billion annually on goods and services, around two-thirds of the total Defence Budget, and has contracts with around 29,000 suppliers (The Defence Strategy for Acquisition Reform dated February 2010).

Major General Alan Macklin, accountable to the MOD's 2nd Permanent Under Secretary as the Chair of the AOF Governance Board, tells MOD DCB why he thinks the AOF is important to MOD acquisition business: *"In an enterprise as complex as the MOD, continuous improvement in business performance requires all of us to work on a consistent, systematic, basis with both MOD customers and industry suppliers understanding the way we do business, what standards are expected and what 'good' looks like. To do this well, especially in a world that does not stand still, we need easy access to authoritative guidance with confidence that what we are looking at is the 'current version of the truth'. This is what the AOF provides."*

Since its initial launch in April 2007, the AOF has undergone significant development including a number of recent improvements.

Improved organisation of content

In response to feedback obtained during the AOF Customer Survey in 2009, the top-level presentation of content on the AOF website was reorganised earlier in 2010.

The Strategic Guide to Acquisition now provides the 'big picture' of how acquisition works. It also provides information on how the MOD is improving acquisition under the Defence Acquisition Reform Programme (DARP).

Sections on Acquisition Organisations, People and Business provide more detailed information about how the MOD undertakes acquisition. The key principles and processes are laid out in the Acquisition Business section covering:

- Through-Life Capability Management
- Project and Programme Management
- Commercial
- Planning Process
- Logistics
- Research
- Safety and Environmental Protection
- Sustainable Procurement
- Engineering
- Approvals and Scrutiny

A recent addition to the AOF is the Good Practice Area which provides working examples of how acquisition policy, guidance and information are being or have been used to good effect in the delivery of a product, service or capability.

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Providing the latest information

A monthly publication cycle allows the AOF to reflect a range of updates and improvements to acquisition business in a timely manner. The AOF provides information on the ongoing DARP and is regularly updated to reflect the improvements that it has implemented, for example, guidance to provide better control over projects entering the equipment programme.

An improved search capability

To help users find information on the AOF quickly, and in response to feedback in the 2009 Customer Survey, the search capability on the AOF website was recently expanded. Approximately 350 recommended links have been added based

on analysis of the search terms that users have been entering over recent months.

Users can now also limit the extent of their search to a particular Acquisition Business area and, furthermore, searches now also include all downloadable documents in the Commercial Toolkit.

Accessible to all

The MOD aims to make the AOF website accessible to all users and to maintain that standard over time. Leading the way within MOD, in December 2009 the AOF was awarded the status of being an RNIB Surf Right Accessible Website. Maintaining an accessible website is an ongoing process and work continues to provide a user-friendly experience.

Commercial Toolkit

The Commercial Toolkit is a significant part of the AOF, not because of the amount of information it provides but because of what that information says about the way we do commercial business within the MOD.

The Toolkit is a one-stop shop for commercial policy and guidance and associated DEFCONs and DEFFORMs. It is written primarily to help MOD commercial officers do their job and therefore ensure that our requirements are delivered on time, to cost and to the specified performance levels. But it is important that everyone involved in acquisition, in the MOD and in industry, has a good understanding of our commercial policies and processes and that they understand the legal and policy constraints we live within.

You have read about the developments made to the AOF. The Toolkit is also going through changes, with a renewed emphasis on providing policy and guidance in a more easy to understand style, cutting through the jargon and making it easier for everyone to understand what our commercial policy is, and what is required of our commercial officers, when and why.

You can keep up to date with the changes to the Toolkit by looking at the What's New page each month.

You can also help us to improve the Toolkit by giving us your feedback. You can do this at any time direct to the Commercial Policy Help Desk and you can take the opportunity in October to comment through the AOF customer survey. Please do.

Website: www.aof.mod.uk/aofcontent/tactical/toolkit/content/help/feedback.htm

What's next?

A rolling review process and regular updates will continue to improve the AOF in the context of the DARP and wider reform.

One key area of the AOF that is planned to grow over the coming months is that

on the MOD Systems of Systems Approach (SOSA) which is being developed incrementally and aims to provide a common set of principles, rules and standards to ensure better interoperability between systems is planned and delivered.

To inform continued improvements to AOF content and delivery, a Customer Survey aimed at everyone working in defence acquisition, whether MOD or industry, will go live on the AOF site throughout October 2010. This provides another opportunity to give your feedback on the AOF to inform future improvements.

PROVIDE YOUR FEEDBACK ON THE ACQUISITION OPERATING FRAMEWORK

Throughout October 2010, a Customer Survey will be available on the AOF website to seek feedback from MOD and industry personnel on the AOF. Responses will be used to inform future improvements to both AOF content and delivery.

WHY PARTICIPATE?

Because the AOF aims to help you; whether MOD or industry. This is a key opportunity to feedback how the AOF can be improved to help you.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE?

It couldn't be simpler. The survey will be available via a clear link on the AOF Home Page throughout October and can be accessed at any time during that period. Just go to www.aof.dii.r.mil.uk (Defence Intranet) or www.aof.mod.uk (Internet). Please take a few minutes to fill it in and provide your response.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AS A RESULT?

The results will be published on the AOF in December 2010 and a plan of action developed to implement further improvements to the AOF. Your answers really count. As a result of last years survey there have been big improvements made to the AOF content, layout and search.


Alternatively, you can email the MOD's AOF Team at any time on DESPTG-AOFTeam@mod.uk with your feedback.

Further information

For further information, please visit the AOF website at:

Defence Intranet: www.aof.dii.r.mil.uk – Website: www.aof.mod.uk

The AOF is also available on DVD for those people who don't have online access. Contact the AOF Team at DESPTG-AOFTeam@mod.uk for further details.



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
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 DEFENCE CONTRACTS BULLETIN

SMEs: How to grow your business with the MOD

The MOD is an important customer for UK industry. SMEs of all types and sizes can make a valuable contribution to the MOD's ongoing work at home and overseas, and in doing so can also expand their businesses. However, for a typical SME, selling to the UK MOD for the first time can appear a daunting prospect.

To help you gain a share of this valuable business, you can now download a free interactive eBook to help you take your first steps into the defence industry.

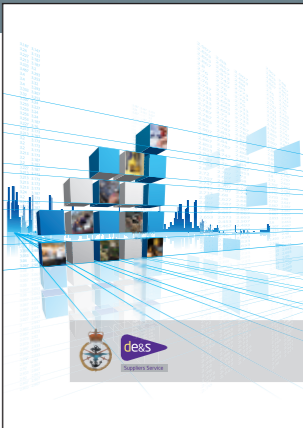
As well as providing a valuable resource, the eBook will help answer questions such as:

Why should I supply to the MOD?

How is the MOD helping SMEs?

What should I do now?

How do I find out more?



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www.contracts.mod.uk