

# SME Engagement Charter

The next line of defence



## Discover & Engage

### 01 Clear Path to Engagement

We will make engagement simple and consistent, giving clear advice, with a single digital interface and named points of contact, guiding suppliers to opportunities and decision-makers.

### 02 Scout & Signal

We will proactively scout novel sovereign capabilities and publish clear demand signals and requirements, collaborating with industry partners to match high potential SMEs to real problems earlier.

### 03 Best Solution Wins

We will choose the best solution based on the mission, not incumbent status or company size. Transparent criteria, challenge-led processes, fair evaluations and feedback will create a level playing field, prioritising agility, merit and outcomes.

## Contract

### 04 Proportionate Partnerships

We will adopt a risk-proportionate approach to commercial terms where appropriate with simplified contracts and proportionate liability aligned to the size, scope and risk of work. Intellectual property will be respected and default license in models will be prioritised to preserve SME value where required.

### 05 Cashflow Confidence

We will ensure cashflow confidence by paying SMEs promptly and transparently, targeting to pay 95% of invoices in 30 days or less, aiming for the Gold Standard for the Fair Payment Code and supporting their business and enabling their investment in growth and R&D.

## Validate & Pull Through

### 06 Sandbox to Battlefield

We will aim to provide accessible physical and digital 'sandboxes' for low-burden experimentation and integration, enabling secure collaboration environments for SME partners.

## Build & Scale

### 07 Embedded Expertise

We will share practical expertise through mentoring, mutual secondments and targeted training, building real-world capacity and providing hands-on support to help SMEs meet standards and win work.

### 08 Investment & Scaling Pathways

We will actively support the growth of high-potential SMEs by helping to pilot financial instruments, including co-investment, to crowd-in private capital and bridge from prototype to deployment.

## Industry Ecosystem

### 09 Inspiring Future Generations

We will continue to champion defence as a high-tech, purpose-driven career for young people and diverse talents across all communities and regions, supporting sector-wide reforms to attract the next generation of innovators.

## Govern & Improve

### 10 Accountability

We will embed the principles from this Charter throughout our organisation and will aim to publicly track our performance. This Charter is a lived commitment, providing tangible proof of our dedication to fostering a collaborative and supportive defence ecosystem.