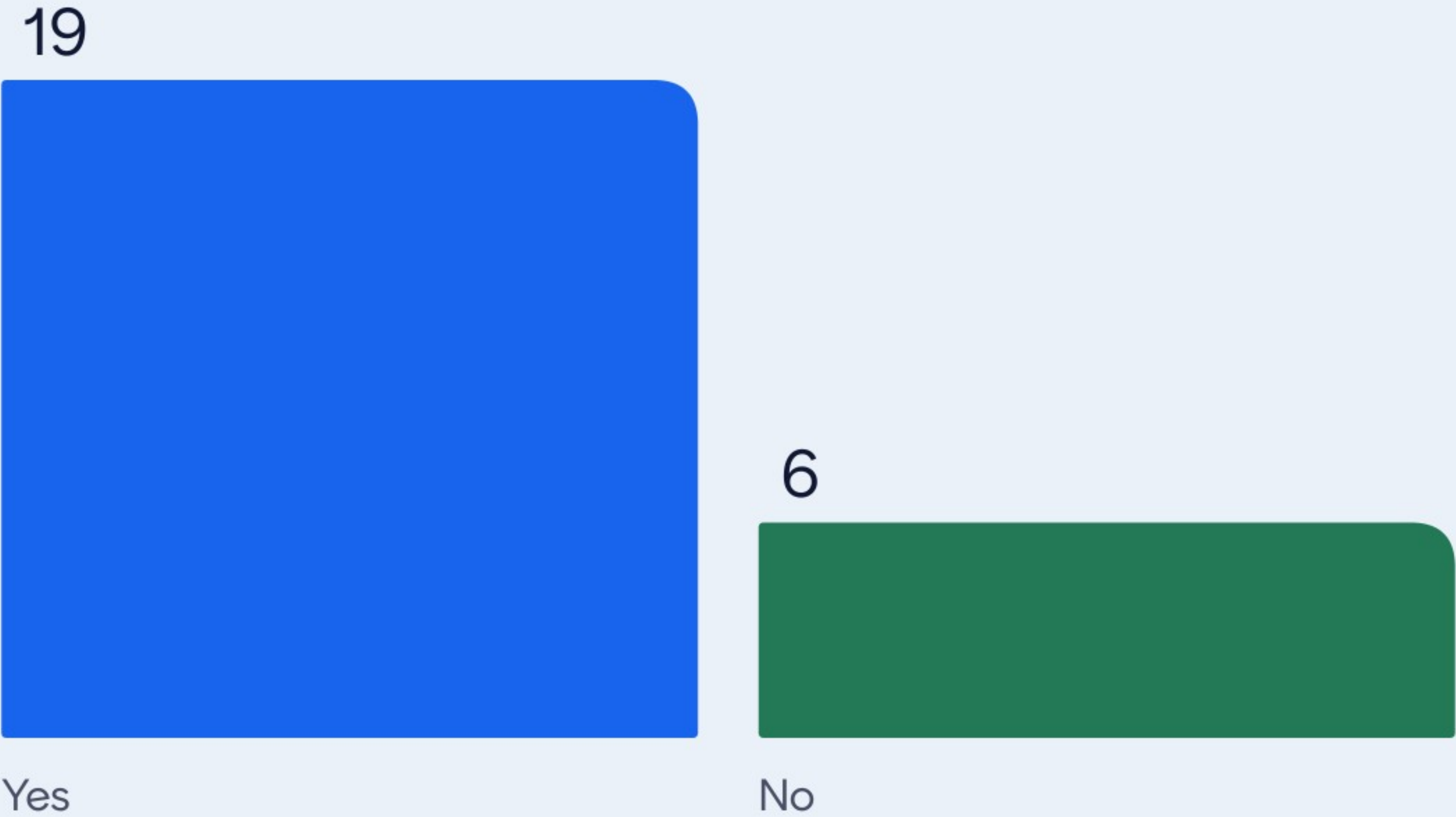


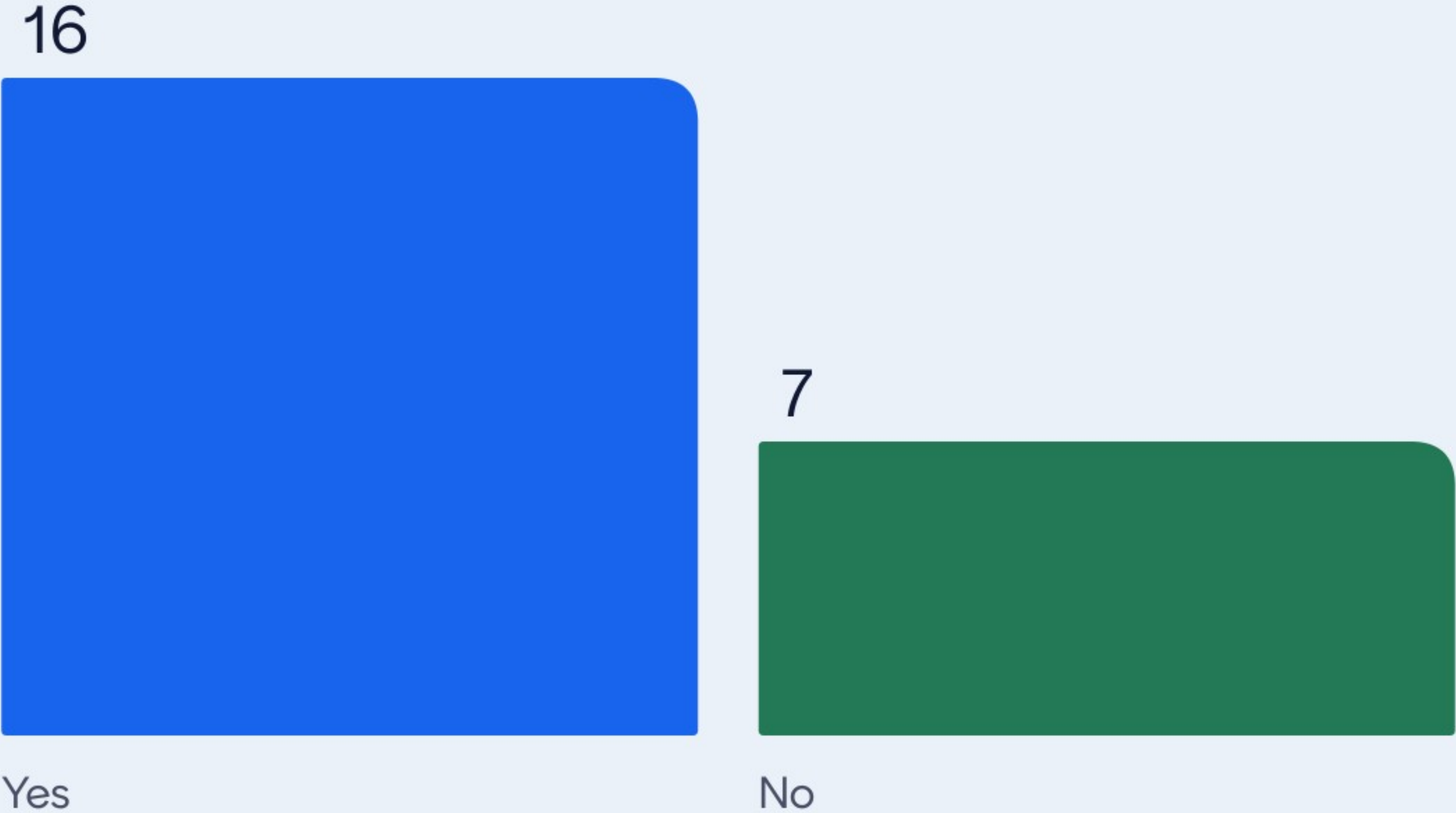


# Do you consider your business/organisation to be an SME?





Is your primary market/target market the UK Defence Sector?





What are the main challenges/obstacles that you face in doing business with the MOD? Please provide brief examples of those challenges.

Understanding the Portals, and the requirements that might suit our company.

complexity,

The fact that they dither and don't respond. Plus right now, all is frozen because of the SDR

Multiple frameworks with very similar T&Cs, but all need to be reviewed

Speed, commitment, clarity, tolerance of risk, .....also at the working level.

Working at risk and funding delays

The array of frameworks available for similar work

Recent pause in S&T funding has caused a lot of grief



What are the main challenges/obstacles that you face in doing business with the MOD? Please provide brief examples of those challenges.

The tender process is complicated

-Not meeting the requirements for Defence frameworks as an SME (requirement too wide or onerous).

Securing meeting times even when a meeting was requested!

Plus so many entry points

Commercial organisations not understanding the unique limitations of SMEs

Short bidding turn aournd times

Disjointed projects within MoD creating duplication: confusing to know how to engage.

- Numerous portals for tenders - Resubmitting info which is already captured in JOSCAR - Contract Terms are complex and onerous on SMEs - Relevance of MOD Pipeline - Payment terms



What are the main challenges/obstacles that you face in doing business with the MOD? Please provide brief examples of those challenges.

Some examples of very slow response to CQs

Too many Frameworks

Tracing requirement/programs through multiple MOD organisations and Primes to enable engagement.

Too many Portals to manage

SMEs being viewed as a risk,

Commercial view that SME's are high risk. This is a cultural and educational issue

Having to resubmit details that are already in JOSCAR

Single email address policed by Commercial who don't want to talk to SMEs, so we don't get to talk to people



What are the main challenges/obstacles that you face in doing business with the MOD? Please provide brief examples of those challenges.

Single email address policed by Commercial who don't want to talk to SMEs, so we don't get to talk to people

Process too hard to navigate. Pace too slow to revenue. Funding for innovation ineffective and not readily supported by external bodies. Culture misaligned. MOD capacity too low, primes too similar

Commercial view that SME's are high risk. This is a cultural and educational issue

MOD Pipeline - is it upto date?

All SMEs captured in the bracket of up to 250 employees. Needs to be a specific recognition of micro SME (up to 50?)

Payment terms

Lack of outcome focussed commercial arrangements limiting agile delivery

Complex Contracting



What are the main challenges/obstacles that you face in doing business with the MOD? Please provide brief examples of those challenges.

No direct dialogue with Commercial if you are an SME

MOD 'Appear' to feel more comfortable with using Primes as a default even if they don't really have the expertise

Complexity, inability to speak direct to the MOD, lack of clarity on needs

Delays in getting on Contract Changes in Requirement Reluctance to genuinely share risk

Unsteady demand signal. Added bureaucracy of frameworks. Security clearances only being held for specific projects. Perception that 'SME' suggests only manufacturing SMEs, rather than services SMEs.

Skills shortages

Primes keep things in-house even if they may not have the best capability



What are the main challenges/obstacles that you face in doing business with the Defence Industry?  
Please provide brief examples of those challenges.

Multiple vectors

JOSCAR

Test answer

Security clearance

Skills Shortages

Lack of visibility around areas of interest

cyber essentials

Understanding the requirement is difficult and where an sme, supplying a prime fits in





What are the main challenges/obstacles that you face in doing business with the Defence Industry?  
Please provide brief examples of those challenges.

Convincing the Primes that your innovation and responsiveness will help them and it is better vfm than them doing it in-house

Apparent preference to work through larger partners/consultancies

Culture of Primes being the 1st & best solution provider

IP being hoovered up at round table events or in some cases stolen (literally) by Qinetiq

Timescales from engagement to PO

Risk aversion by primes

Primes' dependency on contracts and payments - any delays to which it passed on to SMEs rather than protecting SMEs. Primes kill SMEs.

Ensuring the Primes don't burgle your ideas and capabilities.



What are the main challenges/obstacles that you face in doing business with the Defence Industry?  
Please provide brief examples of those challenges.

Similar to those of dealing directly but nuanced by competing commercial agenda of primes, similar engagement challenges (eg. flow down of terms), lack of PV investment to help drive innovation

trying to convince you that the solution you've identified is not necessarily the right one and getting you to take a step back from that and consider other options

Primes can sometimes add onerous terms in addition to the flow down of MOD T&Cs

A lack of a meaningful innovation development program. DASA is a joke.

The culture to solutionise before engaging with industry on what the art of the possible is

We haven't

Via Dstl research & innovation



Where have you been successful in doing business with the MOD? Please provide brief examples of those successes.

The Aero platforms through the Primes have been very lucrative

Systecon Opus Suite  
Software sales, support and training. Ongoing contract.

Yes - as a stand alone and through Primes

where we've had a collaborative relationship with our customer MOD side, and therefore we've been empowered and trusted to deliver

We're waiting to hear as the budget start date has been delayed by a year

Partnering in Innovate UK grants

Dstl frameworks for EMR. These are mainly transactional engagements as opposed to longer term collaborative work at programme level.

DASA has shown what can be possible in encouraging innovation into MOD which is helpful as a limited funding process, needs better commitment for exploitation pathways however



Where have you been successful in doing business with the MOD? Please provide brief examples of those successes.

When sub-contracted via another SME supporting a Contract from the RAF's Rapid Capability Office. Other strands have been disappointing and resulted in years of delays and no Contract.

When we have been the only technical solution

Won one project with DD to provide them with access to eLearning software. They had a clear requirement. We organised a successful POC and then DD bought off GCloud

As a trusted supplier & partner direct to the MOD customer

Some Training Equipment contracts but also most have these have dragged on for a lot longer than anticipated

via Dstl research & innovation

Provision of CPD for the Tri-Services but funding has been withdrawn.

Regional Defence & Security clusters offer a good mechanism to engage with MoD



Where have you been successful in doing business with the MOD? Please provide brief examples of those successes.

Consider SME engagement as part of its social values strategy.



## What experiences have you had with other Government Departments and how does that differ from engaging with the MOD?

No experience of other Government Departments

Engagement in security and policing through Home Office tends to be easier, at least for us. Defence tends to hide behind a lot of commercial barriers, whereas Home Office seem to want to talk.

We are in the process of trying to this more, to continue to diversify from Defence.

Cabinet Office has slightly different security requirements to on-board frameworks which can be limiting and reduces the diversity of suppliers able to respond to opportunities.

Quite similar I think, is this a function of pan-Government Treasury oversight and rules?

Willing to take meetings - invite us in to talk and stick to the meeting time (e.g. DSIT)

Probably a better question would be has any one dealt with another countries MOD and found their systems /approaches better or more agile?

Many FCDO opportunities will be based on delivery overseas as opposed to in-country (UK).



What experiences have you had with other Government Departments and how does that differ from engaging with the MOD?

Its far less complex but still a challenge vis a vis the private sector





What experiences have you had in other Sectors/Industries (e.g Private Sector) and how does that differ from engaging with the MOD?

Willing to co-create

Much more about relationship building. Its more about who you know

Quicker decision making

There is a framework and time constraints. This means clarity is absolutely key. Which for us makes it easy to quote against a requirement

Nowhere near as risk averse as defence primes

Easier to engage with

Never had a situation with budgets being withheld outside of MoD

More commercially savvy - Looking for the best value for money product/service not a gold plated solution







What experiences have you had in other Sectors/Industries (e.g Private Sector) and how does that differ from engaging with the MOD?

Fewer frameworks

There is recognition amongst fellow industrials about 'time & money' and clarity of requirements. They get straight to it - culturally different.

private industry reply to emails & are pro-active about engaging as expediently as possible. Can be a single phone call or email prior to receiving a contract or PO

Single engagement points

Many more single tender opportunities in the private sector

Willing to listen to potential solutions and willing to shape their final requirement

Fortunately most UK Aerospace & Defence primes are long term customers of Systecon UK, with continued up-sales of Opus Suite and ongoing Annual Upgrade & Support, with regular attendance on both sched



# What should the MOD be doing more of, or doing differently, in its approach to engaging & doing business with SMEs?

MoD (e.g. Defence Digital) has asked for collaboration. Can it therefore create a vehicle to make that collaboration happen? This needs to be more than words.

Dedicated budgets for SMEs, forcing the framework leads to spend a % with SMEs

More direct Contracting....quickly and efficiently. Acceptance of Risk and sharing that risk. Clear requirements and clear timeline to Contract

Engage or be present with SME friendly groups such as Make UK Defence other Trade Bodies rather than just focus on DPRTE / DESi trade events. For a relationship to work it needs to be 2 way

It's hard to build relationships with senior people at the mod as they are rotated every 2 to 3 years

A different and more agile approach to acquisition, greater appetite for risk, First Customer initiatives, try and fail fast, ring fence innovation environments - tell me, show me, give me

I think a clearer knowledge of the supply chain at large would be good. Direct engagement with SME's, not just through Primes

Implement a robust innovation development/accelerator program. DASA isn't fit for purpose (for many reasons). Program Mercury was on track to rectify this, but was cancelled



# What should the MOD be doing more of, or doing differently, in its approach to engaging & doing business with SMEs?

It's hard to build relationships with senior people at the mod as they are rotated every 2 to 3 years

No contract awards to primes unless there is a % of SME involvement (and prove it)

Taking advantage of SME innovation it has invested in through DASA/dstl by implementing in end user systems/applications

Reduced friction in contracting (e.g. DASA short form contract)

Walk the walk!

Streamline frameworks with similar aims

Address the mod culture of not replying to emails & returning calls

More dedicated SME events - there are some, but we need more



## What should the MOD be doing more of, or doing differently, in its approach to engaging & doing business with SMEs?

Showcase success; be open about failure - let the whole industry learn from innovation

The ability to pay retainers would enable SMEs to be proactive in establishing capability and, therefore, be quicker.

Feedback and solutions from webinars. A working solution for industry for Secure By Design. Portal still not working.

Commercial officers that understand the limitations and intricacies of SME's particularly micro

Standardise framework portals linked to secure collaborative cloud workspaces for project teams awarded funding for project delivery.

Subsidies for defence SMEs would help alleviate some financial risk. Riding out a trough in MOD demand signal is expensive. Exploiting a peak in MOD demand is expensive.



Is there anything else that you would like to mention, as SME feedback into the Industrial Strategy?

Need to see a pipeline, we don't have staff on hand and need to schedule the workload, or start to look at partnerships ahead of time

Supply chain readiness is dependent upon good, open relationships from MoD through primes and into SMEs. How can the industrial strategy support this?

Reduce to point of access - Eg Commit to one single defence portal

Developing an awareness amongst Crown Servants that they have a vital role to play in pulling through innovation and growing UK PLC through incubating SMEs. Defence is a vital sector, in this regard.

reduce the administrative burden, remove the hurdles SMEs have been talking about for years, stop treating industry as unlimited free consultancy, & make the pathway to payment as short as possible

legal requirement for SME involvement. No contract unless primes meet the requirement to use/involve SMEs

I presume that the pace at which SMEs can react and deliver will be recognised as a key enabler within the DSIS and will be seen as a non-negotiable element against which we can become UK war-ready

Take proper advantage of Innovation, especially where it can protect the Cyber defences of UK MOD and Government as a whole



Is there anything else that you would like to mention, as SME feedback into the Industrial Strategy?

Benchmark Crown Commercial terms against industry standards

investigate IASME for corruption. Cyber Essentials should be a not for profit

Learn from other government departments

Better co-funding between MoD and UKRI would help RD&I in the sector.

Better engagement opportunities, commercial people who understand the issues faced by SMEs

Government intervention into investment for SMEs will be critical and needs to be considered explicitly and exercised at pace, NSSIF exists for this purpose