

Market Engagement success for the UK MOD's £800m Mobile Fires Platform project

About the project

With a published budget of over £800m over the next 10 years, the UK Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Mobile Fires Platform (MFP) project is expected to deliver a new fleet of 155mm self-propelled guns which will be used by the Integrated Force across the spectrum of multi-domain operations. Replacing the 39 calibre AS90 gun, which has been in service since the early 1990s, the MFP will deliver enhanced close support artillery systems and greater operational mobility. MFP is the lead project within Army Headquarters' Close Support Fires Programme.

MFP is one of the many projects we support with our AWARD® solution under corporate license within the UK MOD. We've been working with the MOD to support complex and strategic Defence procurements since 2001, and AWARD® is now integrated as part of the Defence Sourcing Portal (DSP) - the MOD's eSourcing platform, which went live in February 2021.

Key challenges – why they needed our support

1. A long time untapped, unpredictable marketplace

Not having procured a 155mm self-propelled gun for over 30 years, the MOD project team needed to understand the marketplace afresh,

along with all possible solutions and suppliers for their developing requirement.

This included a need to effectively engage with artillery design and manufacturing suppliers all over the world, from South Africa to North America and South Korea, across Europe and beyond.

By utilising our independent expert experience and knowledge, bringing us on board was a great way to instil confidence that their market engagement phase would be a success.

2. The need to engage the marketplace quickly, and efficiently manage large amounts of supplier information

As soon as the project was approved, the project team needed to rapidly engage with their global marketplace. This needed careful planning and dynamic digital support that did more than standard desktop tools are able to do. They needed their market engagement to be focused and fluid – to securely track and manage all communications with a large and dispersed marketplace of suppliers. It was clear that email communications alone would not suffice.



Ministry
of Defence

Adding to this challenge, the world was facing the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic which placed even greater emphasis on the need for digital support since face to face, large scale events could not take place.

AWARD® provided a highly versatile digital solution for all of MFP's supplier engagement.

3. The critical nature of their market engagement

The information gathered and the analysis conducted during the market engagement was urgently required to support a number of project decisions, as well as their strategy development. This collection of data would have an enduring impact on the course of the project.

Our extensive experience of successfully planning and supporting market engagement on many other large Defence projects and programmes allowed us to import best practice, create efficiencies, and avoid common pitfalls.

How we supported the project

1. Deployed rapidly and added value from day one

Our team had to act quickly – as soon as the project mandate was approved and the concept phase funded, we were brought in to start planning the market engagement with key MOD stakeholders. Given our expertise, we were immediately able to ramp up from almost no engagement to talking to all potential suppliers and sharing information back and forth with those that were interested.

The Defence Vehicle Dynamic Exhibition (September, 2018) marked a 6-week deadline to complete the planning stage and set up the digital infrastructure so that we could start publishing to suppliers during the event, and be ready to receive uploads and requests from then on.

Essential to this happening so quickly, was the implementation of a digital tool: AWARD® can be deployed rapidly to support this form of activity. Within just a week or two, the software was set up and ready for the project – tailored perfectly to the team's needs and challenges.

2. Conducted a successful market engagement over a 2-year period

Utilising our expert team, we worked with MOD to successfully plan and conduct a focused market engagement phase, with the support of the AWARD® solution.

A key Commerce Decisions deliverable for the Project Team was the MFP market engagement report

which pulled together all the key observations from the multiple supplier engagements that had taken place across various media and channels. The one-stop-shop report summarising all market engagement with a pithy executive summary was to become a key reference in the development of the Outline Business Case.

The MOD project team was very keen to take a proactive approach in sharing their developing requirements, and inviting industry to comment – these communications were all undertaken and recorded in AWARD®. This allowed them to refine the requirements set, and gain early and beneficial input from the technical experts in the marketplace.

The MOD team has benefitted from their iterative and detailed engagement with the marketplace and is now better able to make robust decisions, and can move confidently into the next phase of their procurement. The marketplace is now poised to respond to any future contracts of work relating to the MFP requirement.

3. Provided bespoke digital tools and experience

It was clear this project needed bespoke digital tools and experience to support the vast market engagement phase securely and dynamically.

We provided AWARD® and other digital tools, designed to facilitate and benefit the process.

By using AWARD®, all communications and files were able to be shared securely and transparently, with a robust audit trail created automatically. This delivered great efficiencies for the project, significantly improving the two-way communications between the marketplace and the MOD. This was particularly key for working with such a broad group of suppliers and stakeholders, all remotely. With the inability to reply on big stage, in-person events, and email not providing the secure and transparent environment needed, AWARD® was a highly valuable asset.

“Working intimately with the MFP project team & armed with huge amounts of relevant experience, the Commerce Decisions team was able to provide a wide variety of support.

Managing the delivery of this extremely complex Cat A project through its Concept Phase would have been extremely difficult without the timely, relevant and first-rate support we got from Commerce Decisions.”

Lt Col R F Hollinrake RA, UK MOD

Key deliverables via AWARD[®] included:

Early Market Engagement

Supplier portal

- ✓ Enabled communications and file sharing around the world at OFFICIAL SENSITIVE including the sharing of capability videos by suppliers

Three separate RFIs published and reviewed in AWARD[®]

- ✓ Allowed large numbers of reviewers to comment and consolidate a collective view of the marketplace provided information, all whilst working from home

Internal project support

Document exchange

- ✓ Particularly useful for sharing documents with other MOD contracted support that didn't have access to internal MODNET Sharepoint sites

Commercial war game

Running a detailed, commercial war game

- ✓ Allowed the team to experiment with different types of competition constructs, and then prioritise decisions and work accordingly
- ✓ Provided a full analytical report including lessons learnt, via a two-stage sensitivity analysis

Investment options analysis

AWARD's powerful review and remark functionality

- ✓ Used to underpin a multi-criteria decision analysis process
- ✓ Allowed voting panel members and process observers to review information, score options against criteria, and support consolidated reporting/findings and observations

What's next?

The project is on-going, and with our support, the team are now fully prepared and ready for the next phase in the project lifecycle, with the ultimate goal to:

*"...deliver a cutting-edge, battle-winning capability to the Army on time and in budget."**

(Colonel Matt Botsford, Artillery Systems Team Leader).

Find out more about AWARD[®] [here](#), or [get in touch](#) to speak to the team about your next project.

*https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/792164/April-desider-v2.pdf

About Commerce Decisions

Commerce Decisions provides the AWARD[®] strategic solution and expert services to support the effective planning, preparation and execution of procurements. For over 20 years AWARD[®] has been trusted to deliver some of the largest, most complex procurements globally across government, defence, transport and infrastructure, totalling over \$500 billion.

AWARD[®] has been proven to shorten time to contract, improve value for money, and reduce risk to support the delivery of the best possible outcomes.

Defencing Sourcing Portal (DSP) and AWARD[®]

AWARD[®] has been used by MOD projects since 2001, and remains in place as part of DSP to support the evaluation activities on complex projects. Complex projects would typically include those that are high risk, high value, particularly sensitive, multi-lot or using Willingness to Pay.