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Cyber Security 4 Supplier Engagement Event #2

PA23 Mechanisms
19 October 2026



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Government Commercial Agency

value for the nation

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Housekeeping

Please remain on mute during the presentation.

We will be using Menti to capture your feedback.

Please post any questions in the chat function, there will be time for Q&A at the end of the session.

The slides will be shared.

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Today’s session

01	Why Cyber 4? Context and objectives
02	Proposed procurement timeline
03	PA23 framework models – Open versus closed frameworks
04	Framework duration, reopening and supplier admission
05	Call-off competitions, filtering and process improvements
06	Innovation at call-off
07	Award Without Competition (AWOC)
08	Next steps and questions

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Why Cyber 4?

2029

Cyber Security 3 expires in February 2029
Cyber 4 will replace the current agreement.

CS4

A dedicated route for supplying cyber services, with relevant products included where public-sector and market evidence supports them.

DESIGN PRIORITIES

01	One-stop shop	02	Call-off flexibility	03	SME & specialist access	04	Future readiness

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A one-stop shop for public-sector cyber security

ENABLED BY

01	Broader cyber scope	02	Flexible call-off routes	03	SME and specialist access	04	Future-ready scope e.g. AI and post-quantum cryptography

SUPPLIER AND MARKET BENEFITS

01	**Market visibility** A clear route to broader public-sector cyber demand.	02	**Fair opportunity** Proportionate requirements and workable call-off routes.	03	**Market access** More opportunities for SMEs, specialists and new entrants.

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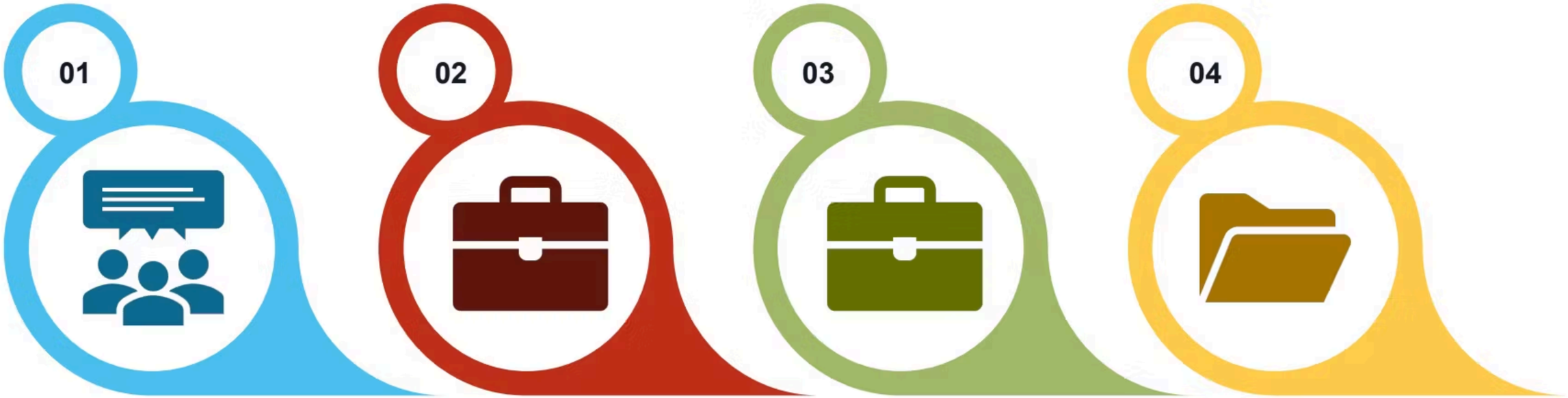
Cyber Security 4 — proposed timeline



Pre-market engagement starts
July 2026

Outline Business Case
January 2027

Full Business Case
June 2027

Tender preparation
July 2027

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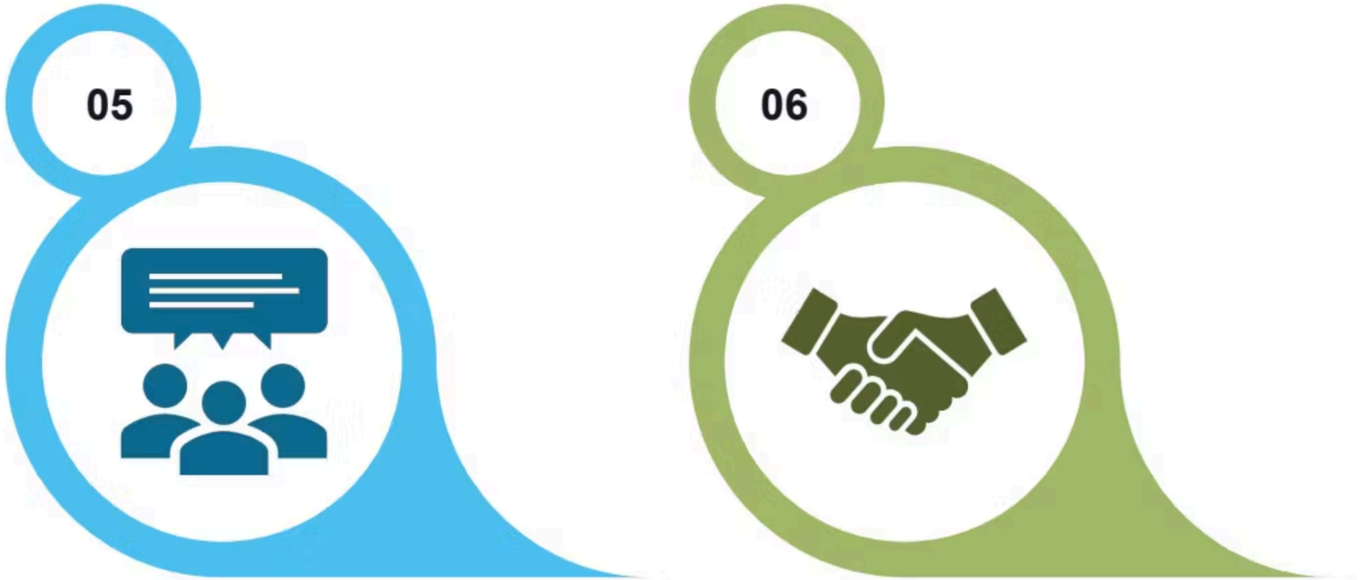
Cyber Security 4 — proposed timeline



Invitation to Tender
October 2027

Award
April 2028

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Introducing the four pre-market engagement themes

SUPPLIER AND BUYER PME THEMES

01	Scope & specification	02	PA23 mechanisms	03	Framework requirements	04	Terms & conditions

HOW EACH THEMED EVENT WILL WORK

01	**Explain the choices** Focused context and options	02	**Test with evidence** Examples, constraints and trade-offs	03	**Play back the response** Findings and proposed design

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Supplier PME event dates



01	13 October 2026 (in person) Theme 1: Scope and specification Theme 3: Framework requirements
02	19 October 2026 (webinar) Theme 2: PA23 mechanisms
03	5 November 2026 (webinar) Theme 4: Terms and conditions
04	Choose the events relevant to your organisation Bring colleagues with the appropriate commercial, technical or legal experience.

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Theme 2 — PA23 mechanisms

WHAT THE THEMED EVENT WILL EXPLORE

01

Purpose

- Test the framework model and the call-off routes through which suppliers may compete or receive awards.

02

Key questions

- How would an open or closed framework, its duration and any reopening affect supplier access and the framework's ability to reflect the market?
- What information and pricing would suppliers need for AWOC, single-stage competition and multi-stage competition to operate fairly?
- What controls are needed, and what would each option mean for access, capacity, operating burden and digital capability?

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PA23 replacement options for DPS arrangements

Closed Framework

Similar to frameworks under PCR 2015

Open Framework

New framework type under PA23

Dynamic Market

Intended replacement for PCR 2015 DPS arrangements

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Dynamic Markets and below-threshold buying

DYNAMIC MARKET CONSTRAINTS

1

Restriction
- Below-threshold requirements cannot use a Dynamic Market.

2

Current buying pattern
- Around 80% of contracts through the current agreement have been below threshold.

3

Central government threshold
- £135,018 for supply and services contracts.

4

Sub-central government threshold
- £207,720 for supply and services contracts.

DYNAMIC MARKETS WOULD NOT COVER MOST CURRENT CYBER 3 ACTIVITY

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The framework choices form one connected design

MODEL, CAPS, EVALUATION, DURATION AND OPERATING BURDEN

01

Framework model
Open or closed determines when new suppliers can enter and how the market can refresh.

02

Supplier numbers
A closed framework may be capped. The open proposition is uncapped to avoid repeated ranking solely for admission.

03

Evaluation design
A closed framework can support deeper one-off evaluation. An open framework needs a simple, repeatable assessment.

04

Lifecycle model
Duration, reopening, pricing refresh, digital capability and management capacity must work together.

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Open and closed frameworks create linked trade-offs

Trade-off	Open framework	Closed framework
Access and stability	Reopens to new suppliers and capabilities. Broadens choice, but creates recurring admission activity.	Supplier base fixed at award. Provides stability, but increases lock-out and obsolescence risk.
Supplier numbers	No supplier cap proposed: maximises access and continuity, but creates a larger pool to navigate and manage.	Places can be capped at award: a more manageable cohort, but reduced access, capacity and competition.
Evaluation	Simpler, objective criteria must be repeatable at each reopening, limiting detailed qualitative assessment.	A deeper one-off evaluation can differentiate quality and capability, but increases initial procurement effort.
Market refresh	Regular refresh can capture new capability and pricing, while the framework remains on substantially the same terms.	The commercial model is stable, but capability and pricing may become less current during the term.
Operating burden	Recurring evaluation, assurance, onboarding, and digital-platform activity.	Burden is concentrated at initial award. There is no ongoing admission activity but earlier full reprocurement is required.

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How an open framework would work

SUCCESSIVE FRAMEWORKS • PLANNED REOPENING • MARKET REFRESH

1

Series of frameworks

An open framework is made up of successive frameworks under one overarching arrangement, on substantially the same terms.

2

Planned reopening

At published reopening points, suppliers can apply to join. This creates opportunities for new entrants and previously unsuccessful suppliers.

3

Market refresh

Reopening allows the supplier base and available capability to refresh during the life of the arrangement rather than remaining fixed from day one.

4

Lifecycle

The overall open framework can run for up to 8 years. The reopening cadence and supplier admission arrangements must be set out clearly in the framework design.

SUPPLIER IMPLICATION Planned reopening creates opportunities for new suppliers to join and existing suppliers to expand their offering, without waiting for the framework to be fully re-procured.

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What would suppliers need to do at reopening?

ILLUSTRATIVE SUPPLIER JOURNEYS — PROCESS TO BE TESTED

1

Brand-new supplier

First-time applicant: submit an application / tender when the framework reopens.

2

Returning supplier

Where nothing material has changed, confirm or update relevant information. Could a streamlined process work?

3

Re-applying supplier

Previously unsuccessful: submit a new application / tender addressing the reopening requirements.

4

Material changes

Existing supplier: submit updated information or a new tender for affected lots where changes are material.

SUPPLIER JOURNEYS Illustrative application requirements at reopening. We want to test whether these are proportionate and workable for suppliers.

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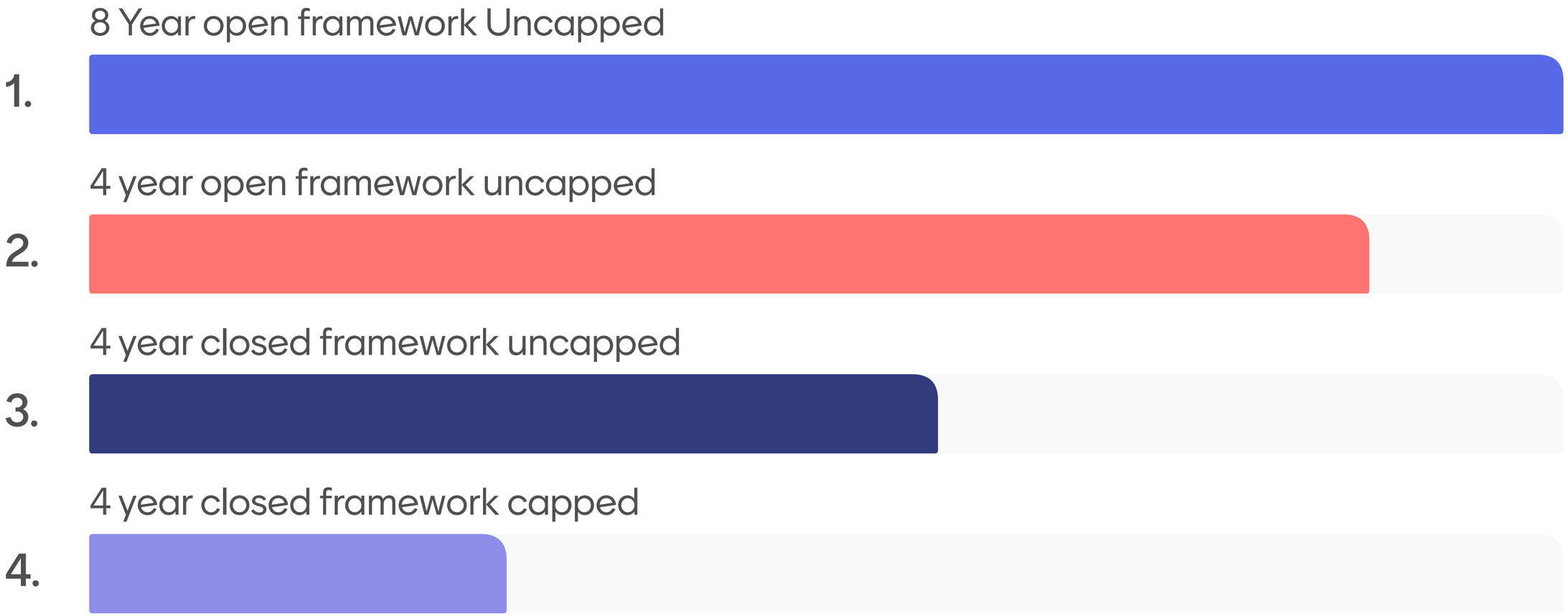
Which of the following framework models would you prefer for Cyber Security 4?



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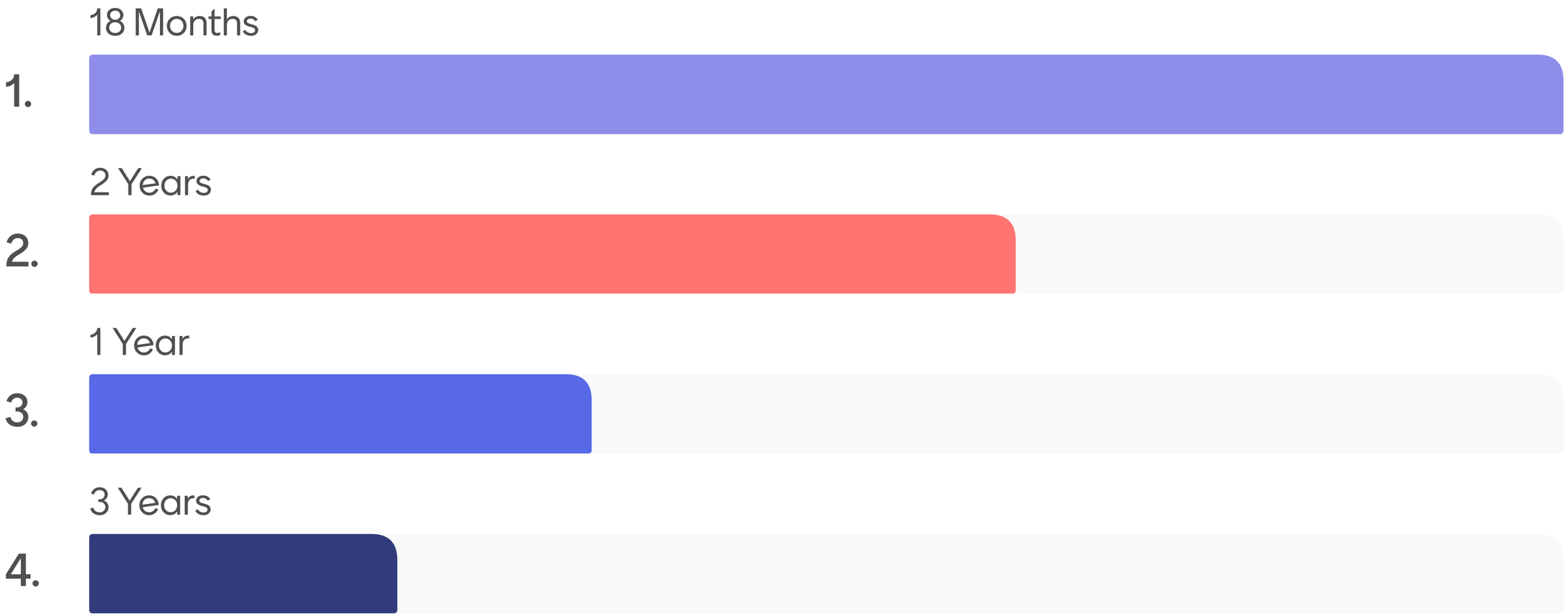
If an Open Framework, how often do you think the framework should reopen?



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Competition structures and AWOC

LOTS AND /OR FILTERS DEFINE ELIGIBILITY | TEST SHORTENED COMPETITION BEFORE AWOC

1 **Objective filtering**

Lot/category, capability, security assurance, location or mobilisation. All suppliers meeting the published filters form the eligible pool.

2 **Standard competition**

All eligible suppliers invited; single-stage quality and price response. For straightforward requirements at any value.

3 **Shortened competition**

All eligible suppliers invited; focused standard documents and short realistic timetable. For urgent, clear or repeatable needs.

4 **Multi-stage competition**

All eligible suppliers enter stage one, followed by objective shortlisting. Dialogue, negotiation or demos where enabled.

5 **AWOC — exceptional**

Only where competition cannot meet the evidenced need. Objective selection, evidence, approvals and controls are required.

DECISION TEST: 1 STANDARD VIABLE? → 2 WOULD SHORTENED COMPETITION WORK? → 3 IS AWOC STILL NECESSARY?

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What requirements are suitable for short-form, single stage, or multi- stage processes?

Short form or Single stage

For engineering services you need to keep it short firm to reduce costs. Micro and SME responses are very expensive if you many stages

Standard licence requirements would be best served by short form or single stage

Most services should be either short or single

Multi stage are a waste of time for all parties

SMEs cost is prohibitive... single stage needs to remove any duplication of effort

c. Multi-stage. Many requirements are highly specialised and often demand a bespoke solution, rather than an off the shelf product. In these scenarios, multi-stage allows more depth for consideration.

It depends on how big the opportunity is and whether there is a need for a consortium. You tend to have multiple stages when there are more services that are put into one opportunity

What requirements are suitable for short-form, single stage, or multi- stage processes?

All requirements can be bought through short or single - no need to over complicate

Complexity and size needs time to give collaboration a chance so single stage but a few weeks

Single stage - opportunities lower than 50K

Keep multistage to millions of pounds ie big ones

the preference would fall out of the requirement i.e. bespoke/specialist/complex versus a (relatively) standard requirement such as licencing or spt.

Two stages - application and interview/presentation - where there is a focus on capability/capacity development

b. Shorted competition: most useful for immediate / emergency requirements where time to resolve a cyber issue is imperative. Pricing would similarly need to be fairly flat/off the shelf.

Multi stage better for more complex requirements

What requirements are suitable for short-form, single stage, or multi- stage processes?

Multi-stage is better suited to larger/ complex / framework (multi-supplier award) contracts (>£1m). Most others suit single-stage or short-form quotes.

Single stage - where an organisation is already listed with NCSC CHECK/CIR Enhanced/ACSC - the rigour is already done previously

have them based on value

Multi-stage processes for complex requirements can be too vague because what suppliers consider complex may differ from what buyers consider complex. Buyers need guidance toward the simplest route.

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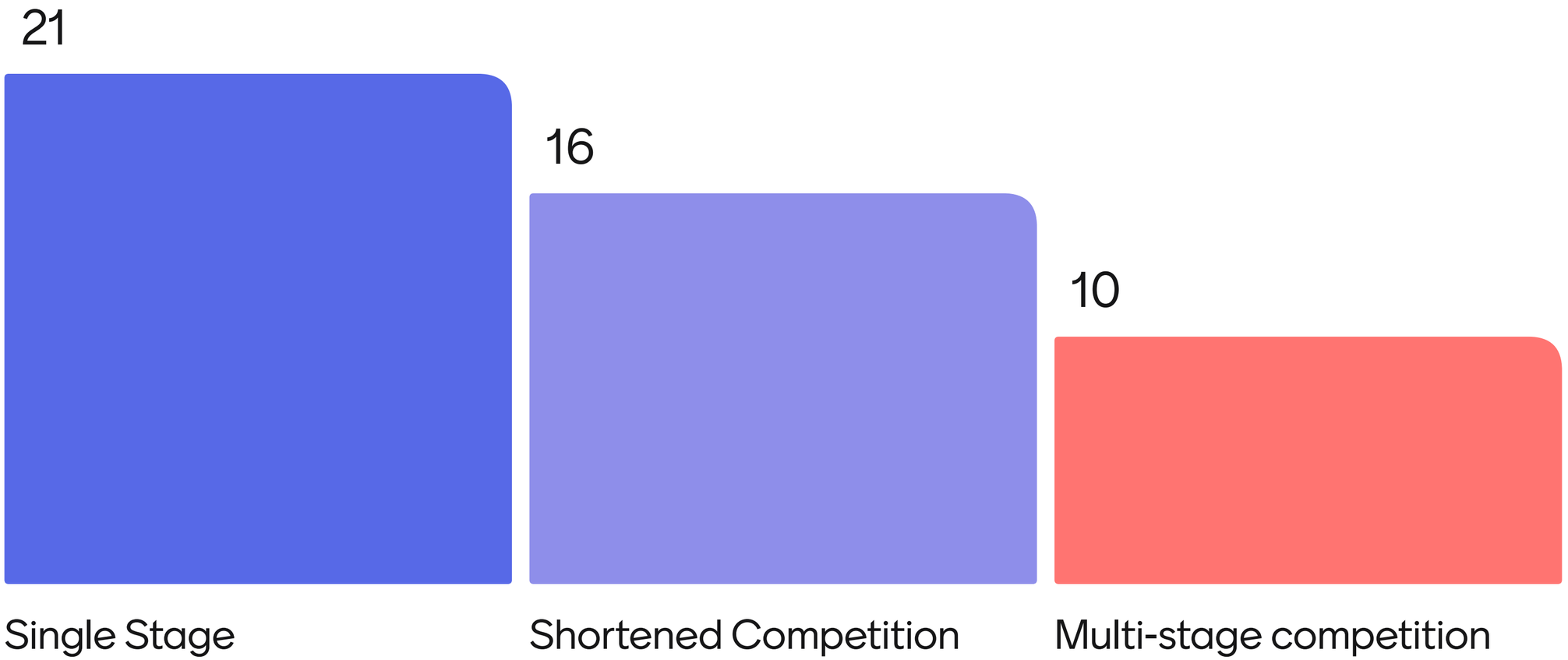
Which call-off competition routes should Cyber 4 support?



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How could Cyber Security 4 improve the call-off competition experience for suppliers?

Have buyers that umderstand what they want

Useful feedback.....access to the assessors to understand why you miss the mark

Ensure that the timelines are fixed - too many tenders are started and then stall for weeks or even months

Feedback is a really good point - templates for feedback to standardise what you get back win or lose

PMEs can be useful - but not if they are purely via documents and with no F2F

In my experience, buyers already have an organisation in mind that they would prefer to contract with. A process that allows direct contracting saves everyone time: buyers, suppliers and bidders.

Buyers need to understand that a lot of Cyber solutions aren't always off the shelf. Bespoke is critically important, and warrants pricing by outcome, not T&M. Buyers must know tech requirement.

Having a mechanism to AWOC

How could Cyber Security 4 improve the call-off competition experience for suppliers?

Need an urgent and immediate AWOC for incidents

Don’t use Basware for AWOC!!!!

Guidance for evaluators and examples of clearly designed, focused scoring criteria to reduce bias and subjectivity. Not all evaluators fully understand the difference between some of criteria used.

Let us play with the filters

Cyber Security Services 3 Filters

Certification

- (●) NCSC Assured Services
- ( ) Non-assured NCSC Services

NCSC Assured Services - Subject Area

Consultancy and Advice

- [ ] Post Quantum Cryptography (Advice)
- [ ] Post Quantum Cryptography (Discover & Migration Planning)
- [ ] Cyber Resilience Audit
- [ ] Risk Management
- [ ] Risk Assessment

NCSC Assured Services - Standards

- [ ] **Cyber Essentials Plus**
- [ ] **PCI Assessor**
- [ ] **Project Management - APM Qualified**
- [ ] **Project Management - PRINCE Qualified**
- [ ] **Clearance: Counter Terrorist Check**
- [ ] **Clearance: Security Check**
- [ ] **Clearance: Developed Vetting**
- [ ] **NPPV (Non-Police Personnel Vetting)**

Sectors & Domains

Experience

- [ ] Networks
- [ ] Database
- [ ] Internet
- [ ] Cloud
- [ ] Premises
- [ ] Endpoint/applications
- [ ] GDPR
- [ ] Electronic Warfare (EW)
- [ ] India
- [ ] Indo Pacific

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Transparency

Wilton Park

RM1043.9-3-WP Service Manager

58	**Single stage**	**£200,000**	**Outside scope**	**24 August 2026**
Applications submitted	Call-off procedure	Value	Off-payroll (IR35) status	Application closing date

Search criteria used:
638 results found in Lot 3: Digital specialists where the supplier provides 1 Delivery manager and where can be provided in London, in Offsite and in South East England

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How could Cyber Security 4 improve filtering to help buyers identify suitable suppliers while ensuring fair access to call-off opportunities?

Need full transparency around filters - it must be possible to advise / report on all opportunities and show which filters were selected

Transparency on which filters we are actually linked to, it's not always easy to tell which ones we are actually selected for?

Combine the filters so there is only one instead of two which precludes some suppliers to bid for

The thing with filters is that there is a reliance on the buyer to know and understand what they need. Do they always filter correctly?

Report needs to be proactive - e.g. issued monthly by GCA

No point having a list in some portal

No point in having a list of opportunities and the filters selected in a portal - hence a monthly report of what has been issued and on what filter basis

where filters allow e.g. level 1,2,3, if a buyer filters based on requiring minimum L2, care needs to be taken to ensure this doesn't rule out L1 (where L1 is 'better' than L2)

How could Cyber Security 4 improve filtering to help buyers identify suitable suppliers while ensuring fair access to call-off opportunities?

We have to report to GCA - so why shouldn't GCA report to us as suppliers on all opportunities being issued

Innovation route at call-off

Could an innovation route support progression from pilot to development under Cyber Security 4?

MODEL **Possible route**

From problem statement to scale-up

- Publish the problem and required outcomes.
- Invite eligible suppliers to propose solutions.
- One or more pilots or proofs of concept.
- Use published criteria to down-select.
- Final tender and scale-up award.

CYBER 4 **Build it in**

Cyber 4 option

- One route from pilot to deployment.
- Cyber-specific terms and assurance.
- Framework permits pilots and down-selection.
- Scope, filters, and IPR set upfront.
- Additional framework administration and tailored contract terms.

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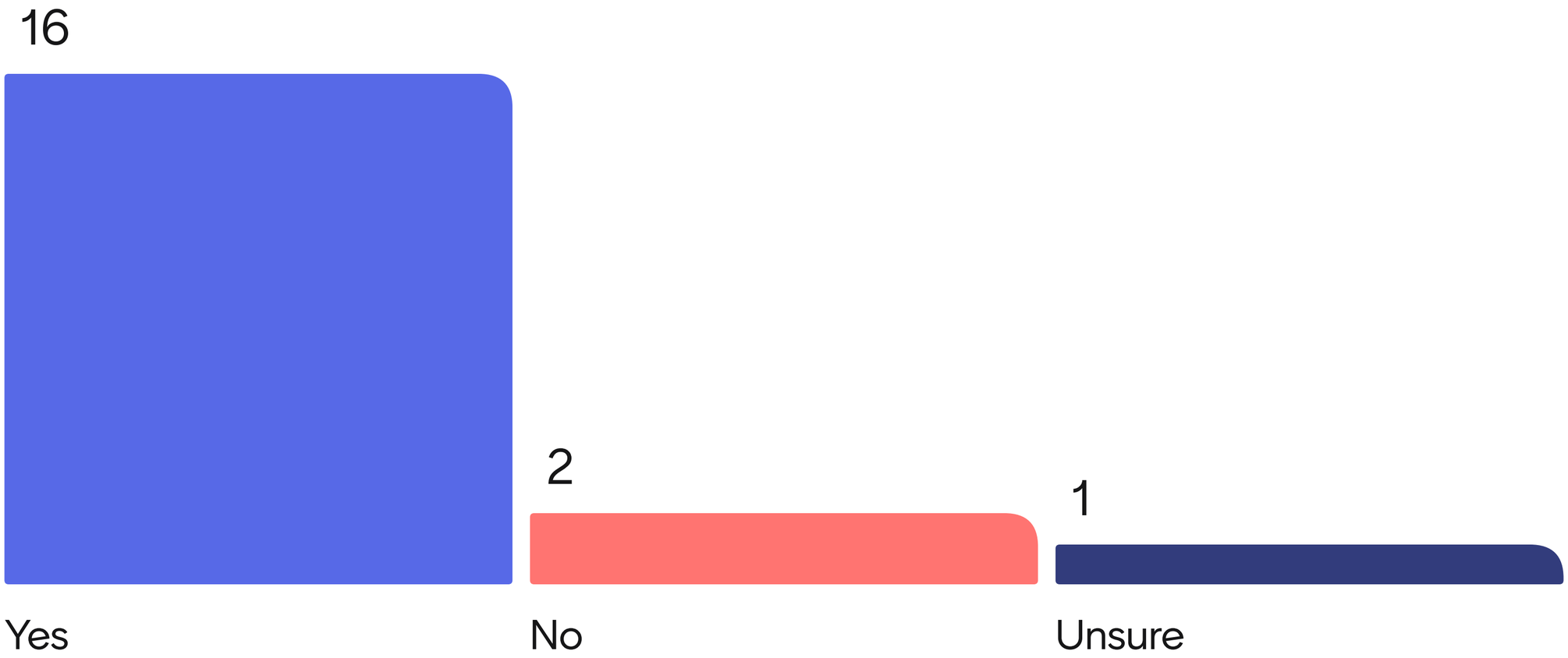
Should we include an innovation route at call-off?



AWOC mechanisms

EACH OPTION NEEDS A USE CASE, OBJECTIVE RULE, PRICE, AUDIT TRAIL AND OPERATING ROUTE

A	**Pre-priced catalogue**	Fixed package, defined scope and published price.
B	**Parametric calculator**	Locked factual inputs determine price and supplier.
C	**Re-weighting calculator**	Framework criteria / weightings move only within capped ranges.
D	**Unique capability / match**	One supplier meets a pre-defined, evidenced technical need.
E	**Security-sensitive match**	Pre-set security constraints objectively identify one supplier.

ILLUSTRATIVE AWOC MECHANISMS | NO PREFERRED OPTIONS | SUBJECT TO GCA LEGAL & POLICY APPROVALS

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Option A — Pre-priced catalogue — standard package

A FIXED PACKAGE AND COMPARABLE PRICE CAN SUPPORT A PRICE-LED AWARD

1 Illustrative use cases

- Cyber Essentials readiness package for a defined organisation size
- Security awareness training for a defined user band
- Phishing simulation for a defined user band
- Standard web-application penetration test with fixed scope and assumptions
- Vulnerability assessment for a defined number of assets

2 AWOC award basis

Price-led. At call-off, the mechanism compares catalogue prices for catalogue items, capable of meeting the buyer's Statement of Requirement (SoR) and the published rule (lowest price) identifies one supplier.

3 Framework design / trade-off

Pricing controls. At framework level define the pricing rules applicable to pricing catalogue items e.g. maximum day rates, minimum discount levels.

Trade-off: fast route for predefined scope, but catalogue and price maintenance are ongoing.

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What services are suitable for Award without Competition? How do you price them (e.g. Day rate)?

Day rate

Services you can compare such as licences

Day rate (fixed service labour etc) particularly on roles, fixed priced with a mark up

Immediate / Urgent Incident Response - priced on an Hourly Rate Need to be able to contract in hours based on Starement of Works crafted from scoping call

Will be made up of product, services and day rates for individuals - prices should be tested by buyer not at framework level?

You have yo be very careful with single source as you kill the competition for when you go back they don't exist

Unique or near-unique technical capability

You could use a points based system where 1 point relates to 1 day. Example 20 point document = 4 weeks work at 20 points at SFIA level x

What services are suitable for Award without Competition? How do you price them (e.g. Day rate)?

Unique or near-unique security clearance and ability deploy rapidly

Discount for AWOC

Urgency driven from catalogue pricing

Projects that are short and require innovative thinking to test out an idea

Managed Services can also be suitable for Award without Competition, as buyers typically reach out before going to market to learn more and already have someone in mind. CSS4 should allow for this.

Very very uniques skills

Where badging or certification for individual is needed. Where it makes sense that there is only a binary outcome

fixed fee & outcomes based constructs You need to be moving away from t&m to drive value

What services do you think are not suitable for AWOC, and why?

Default is always competition.....AWOC is by exception

Programmes where there are multiple potential outcomes. The last for several months. And are above a threshold eg. above 75K

If it is a bespoke or specialist service where only 1 or 2 suppliers can deliver in the required time line

Data sovereignty - some customers ask for UK based data centres for hosting data. this comes with liability issues as well as levels of assurances required, as well as multi product requirements

Operational need!

Urgent is not a week - urgent is quite literally hours

Complexity and value should be a factor

What issues do you face with other direct award/AWOC routes currently?

You don't see em

Under new regulations it’s all a bit up in the air and buyers don’t want to do the transparency notices!

It's a difficult one. A few years ago, I received a direct award only because no one else bid on the first tender.

Direct award usually is not seen or is found out late

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If we do include a catalogue, what do you need to make sure it works?

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Next Steps

Supplier feedback will be reviewed alongside buyer and stakeholder engagement to inform the proposed Cyber Security 4 design.

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Next Event



Thursday 5 November 2026

Virtual webinar

Theme 4: Terms and Conditions

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Any questions?



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