

Strategic Stability Programme Guidance: FY2026/2027

1. Programme Context

The [UK's 2025 National Security Strategy](#) highlights that the foundations of strategic stability are being seriously challenged. The threat posed by nuclear weapons to the UK and our allies is once again growing, driven by a wider and more complex mix of actors than during the Cold War. More states possess larger and more diverse nuclear arsenals, disruptive technologies are proliferating rapidly, and international arms control arrangements have failed to keep pace with these developments.

The Strategic Stability Programme (SSP) underpinned by the five-year Strategic Stability Strategy, is a core instrument of the UK's response. Led by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, the Programme is aligned to the development and implementation of UK policy in response to the most acute threats facing the UK and our Allies, reflecting the realities of intensified great-power competition and an increasingly contested security environment.

Over the past two years, the SSP has accelerated work across critical strategic domains: reinforcing multilateral engagement through international organisations, including the OSCE; advancing civil nuclear and responsible technology initiatives; strengthening UK and allied expertise; and shaping international governance and norms on emerging and disruptive technologies and space security. This activity spans key geographies—from the Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic—where strategic competition is most pronounced.

Looking ahead, the Programme will deepen its role as a cross-government platform for strategic impact, working closely with the Ministry of Defence and the UK's global overseas network, and within international fora, like the United Nations, NATO, and OSCE. It will also continue to advance the UK's Women, Peace and Security agenda and uphold Public Sector Equality Duty commitments as integral components of a stable and secure international system.

2. Application process

Projects proposals must be submitted by 23:59 GMT on 17th April 2026. We intend to issue the results from 22nd May 2026.

- Applications must include:
 - a fully completed project proposal form, including a theory of change and draft results framework; and
 - a full activity-based budget.
- Eligible projects may be single-country, multi-country, regional, or thematic in scope.
- The Strategic Stability Programme Board is seeking ambitious, high-impact proposals with clearly defined outcomes that align with the strategic priorities set out in the Annex.
- The Board will prioritise bids of £350,000 and above, and proposals must demonstrate credible and measurable contributions to UK strategic objectives.
- The Board will look favourably on bids from consortia which bring together expertise and networks in a way which increases strategic impact.
- Organisations may not derive financial profit from the receipt of grant funding. Proposals from for-profit entities will only be considered where delivery is undertaken through an officially registered non-profit arm or division.
- The Programme Board reserves the right to consider proposals outside the timings set out in Section 3.1.
- The Strategic Stability Programme cannot fund projects that qualify for Official Development Assistance (ODA). More detail on the criteria for ODA is provided by the OECD at [Official development assistance \(ODA\) - OECD](#).
- Prospective bidders are strongly encouraged to discuss project concepts with the relevant policy leads in the FCDO Security Policy Department ahead of submission. For policy-lead contact details or general enquiries, please email sspteam@fcdo.gov.uk.

2.1 Timeline

Programme activity	Timing
Application process launched/c	w/c 9 th March 2026
Deadline for receipt of project proposals	17 th April 2026
Communication of results	From 22 nd May 2026

2.2 Assessment criteria

Over the past two years, the Programme has worked with a wide range of UK and international partners—including NATO, the OSCE, the UN, the European Space Agency, academic institutions, and government counterparts—to strengthen understanding, enhance communication, and support stability across priority regions and themes. Through collaborative analysis, strategic exercises, expert exchanges, and capability-building initiatives, we have contributed to more informed policy approaches and stronger foundations for managing shared security challenges. We are now looking to build on this work and welcome proposals that bring forward innovative, evidence-based ideas aligned with the Programme’s strategic outcomes for financial year 2026 - 2027 (see Annex), helping to increase public understanding of these areas.

Each project proposal will be assessed in accordance with the following criteria.

- **Strategic Fit:** Proposals must align with the Programme’s strategic outcomes set out in the Annex and clearly demonstrate benefits to the UK (and, where relevant, host countries or regions). Implementers are encouraged to build on and strengthen previous year’s outcomes. Research or workshops may support delivery but cannot be the sole output.
- **Capability & Partnerships:** Proposals should demonstrate strong delivery capability, clearly outlining risks, proposed mitigations, and the relevant expertise, networks, and a track record of the implementing team. Applications from consortia or single organisations able to achieve multiple outcomes are encouraged. Projects may be single-state, multi-country, regional, or global in scope. Where relevant, proposals

should also demonstrate meaningful engagement with host governments, multilaterals, or other partners, and show alignment with wider programme activity to reduce duplication.

- Innovation: While we are no longer part of the ISF, we remain committed to the spirit of its principles, including integrated ways of working, agility, thoughtful risk-taking, and catalytic approaches that enable long-term change.
- Impact: Projects must deliver real work improvements in strategic stability. Proposals should show how they will deliver measurable impact aligned with FY26/27 outcomes, including short-term results and longer-term sustainability. For continuing implementers, we will consider change stories and evidence of results from previous years.
- MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning): Proposals must include a clear and credible MEL approach, with defined metrics and methods for assessing contribution to Programme outcomes. All activity must be completed by **31 March 2027**.
- Budget: Proposals over **£350,000** will be prioritised, as larger projects tend to be more cost-effective and efficient. Budgets must align clearly with activities, demonstrate value for money, and profile expenditure across the financial year. Multiyear proposals (up to three years) are welcome, though funding can only be guaranteed annually.
- Paris Agreement Compliance: We encourage bids that seek to align activities with the Paris Agreement – and assess climate and environmental impact and risks, taking steps to ensure that no environmental harm is done.
- Gender Equality & Social Inclusion: All proposals must promote gender equality and social inclusion or, at minimum, ensure they do not contribute to further inequality.

2.3 Project budget

Budgets must profile detailed expenditure as accurately as possible, and align it to intended activity and impact, to enable robust financial monitoring throughout the year. All project proposals should be submitted in GB pounds sterling.

FCDO can only pay for costs that are incurred after signature and between the start and end date stated in the grant arrangement.

Please refer to the FCDO Eligible Cost Guidance for Accountable Grants: [eligible programme expenditure](#) for questions on costs and further questions.

2.4 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) marker

Although we are no longer an ISF-funded programme, we intend to continue using the GESI Marker framework to ensure that all projects, at a minimum, **do no harm**. Projects will continue to be assessed against the GESI Marker categories, which align with the OECD Gender Equality Markers (GEMs).

Successful projects will also be required to conduct a gender sensitive analysis and risk assessment during programme inception, to identify how project activities might reinforce or mitigate existing inequalities, including gendered risks related to strategic stability. The self-analysis should demonstrate how activities contribute to the relevant GESI Marker category. This aligns with the Public Sector Equality Duty and the UK WPS National Action Plan, ensuring gender is embedded across strategic planning and delivery.

Definition	Gender Equality Social Inclusion (GESI) Markers [UKISF]	Gender Equality Marker [OECD]	Definition
No feasible contribution to gender equality	Category A	0	No contribution to gender equality
Potential, but no contribution to gender equality	Category B		
Some contribution to gender equality	Category C		
Significant contribution to gender equality	Category D		
Principal contribution to gender equality	Category E	2	Principal contribution to gender equality

2.7 Project monitoring and evaluation

Implementing Partners are expected to deliver core monitoring and reporting activities that help track progress and demonstrate impact. This includes providing monthly updates on budgets, risks and forecasts, and completing a quarterly project review focused on delivery against agreed outcomes. At the end of each financial year, partners will submit a project completion report summarising activities, outputs, and early impacts.

Partners are expected to define clear project outcomes and indicators, report quarterly using our templates, and collect basic engagement data. They will work with us to produce Change Stories that show the results of their work and

provide evidence to support them. Overall, partners are expected to engage openly, report on time, and collaborate with the MEL team to ensure consistent and reliable evidence of their impact.

2.9 Stakeholder management and communication

We expect project proposals to:

- show how the project will communicate with its stakeholders; more widely to other target audiences; and how these communications will contribute to project outputs and help to deliver project objectives.
- identify the principal stakeholders for each project, how they have been engaged to date and proposed plans for future engagement to ensure that successes from the programme are celebrated and publicised through a range of media where appropriate.

3. Other issues and information

It is highly recommended that potential applicants discuss project ideas with the relevant policy leads before submitting project proposals.

E-mail sspteam@fcdo.gov.uk for contact details of relevant policy leads; or to submit general questions about the programme or the bidding process.

Annex: Programme strategic outcomes for FY26/27

1. HMG and UK expert community equipped to manage 21st-century strategic stability challenges

SSP FY26/27 – what success looks like?

- a) A UK cross-government cadre of strategic security specialists is established with recognised professional standards, accreditation, quality assurance, and sustainable pathways for continuous professional development, enabling more effective design and delivery of strategic stability policy.
- b) A growing, diverse network of UK based experts is actively shaping future HMG thinking on strategic risk-reduction, deterrence, nuclear-conventional interaction, escalation management, and regional stability.
- c) UK and Allied (NATO/JEF) expertise, influence, and capability on Euro-Atlantic, including Arctic/High North, and Indo-Pacific security, deterrence, and risk reduction.

2. Allies and partners build the defence, deterrence and security architecture needed to increase strategic stability

SSP FY26/27 – what success looks like?

- a) HMG and Allies understand the drivers of strategic instability and the most dangerous escalation pathways towards it, with clear policy options identified to reduce incentives for nuclear coercion and use, including through new approaches to strategic deterrence, security architecture, and arms control.

- d) Deterrence communication by HMG and NATO is more targeted, credible and evidence driven enabled by improved analytical tools, audience insights, evaluation mechanisms, and trained practitioners.
- e) Space is fully integrated into UK and NATO deterrence posture, supported by tested escalation models, validated operational concepts, and strengthened international norms on responsible space behaviour.
- f) The UK's strategic stability partnerships in Northeast Asia are deepened, with Japan and South Korea applying UK supported tools, dialogue mechanisms, and assessments to manage regional and global risks.

3. Broad international adoption of stabilising behaviours including the use of emerging technology

SSP FY26/27 – what success looks like?

- a) Global understanding of the strategic stability implications of AI-enabled military systems is significantly improved, with shared risk models, legal interpretation tools, and guidance accessible to partners.
- b) Concrete international measures to mitigate the most pressing AI-related military risks are developed, with broad support from key states, middle powers, and multilateral groupings.
- c) Analysis of other emerging and advanced technologies provides HMG actionable options to manage strategic stability risks, with at least several measures adopted or piloted across government or with partners.
- d) Global Middle Ground states increase and sustain engagement with UK-led proposals on responsible space behaviours and wider risk reduction initiatives

4. More effective, transparent and crisis resilient approach to Russia and China

SSP FY26/27 – what success looks like?

- a) UK and NATO decision-making is strengthened through deeper insight into Russian and Chinese policy, posture, and capability, generated by targeted research, exercises, and structured regional engagement.
- b) Durable Track 1.5/2 dialogue with Chinese institutions delivers practical proposals for risk reduction across nuclear, AI, space, and EDT-related risk reduction, informing HMG policy and enabling cooperative steps where feasible.
- c) ASEAN functions as a more effective platform for collective responses to destabilising behaviour, supported by UK technical assistance, expert input, and capacity-building.