



Strategic Alignment Review Tool – StART

Assessment Guide

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Introduction

The Strategic Alignment Review Tool (StART) has been developed by Highways England in collaboration with representatives of the construction and maintenance industry. The purpose of the toolkit is, as part of the supplier selection and development process, to test the alignment of our key suppliers to Highways England strategy, as defined in our Strategic Plan, Supply Chain Strategy and Procurement Strategy, and in a range of other Highways England and Government documents and policy papers.

StART provides Highways England with an in-depth assessment of the supplier's alignment to Highways England's strategic direction and imperatives. It tests how alignment is supported by the way the supplier works, and how this is being driven through their business and through their wider supply chain. It seeks evidence to show how the supplier aligns and positions their business, and most importantly provides a platform from which a supplier can seek to develop their capability and alignment moving forward to deliver successfully in line with Highways England's direction and strategy.

“The changes to the way England’s major roads are managed reflect the need for certainty for everyone in our sector. Now that we at Highways England have committed funding, we need to make sure we have people, equipment and materials in place to deliver all the work. It is ever more important that we work with the best in the business. The StART programme seeks to identify how our suppliers’ objectives align with our own strategic direction, and enables them to think about and plan their alignment to Highways England’s direction and future needs. Making sure we are aligned and that our suppliers share our values and imperatives is an important aspect of our procurement and supplier relationship process. It ensures we are all working together towards achieving the same outcomes”

David Poole – Director, Commercial and Procurement

Highways England Strategic Alignment Review Tool – Summary of the Framework

Areas for alignment:	Highways England Strategic Principles:	What Highways England will look for:
Leadership and Collaboration	Highways England has been set an unprecedented investment and performance improvement challenge. To drive best value for road users and the communities we serve, we need to establish strong and enduring relationships with suppliers who support us not only by delivering exemplary contracts, but also by working with us to fulfil our strategic agenda. We will choose to work with strongly led, responsive organisations who are able to commit the skills and resources we need, who work collaboratively across boundaries, who actively promote sharing and openness to build trust, manage risk and drive value, and who contribute to and influence our strategic direction.	Show us what you do to support this principle, how you know that it works, and what you do to maximise its value.
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Health, safety and wellbeing are imperative. Our aim is that no-one should be harmed when travelling or working on the strategic road network. We therefore require our suppliers to collaborate with us and with their peers to achieve a major shift in health and safety performance by showing leadership, building competence, managing risks and enhancing wellbeing.	Show us what you do to support this principle, how you know that it works, and what you do to maximise its value.
Supply Chain	We need a supply chain which is completely coherent with our strategic agenda, and with the capability to be deployed effectively so that our programmes can deliver different and better outcomes for customers. We therefore rely on our suppliers to develop the understanding, capabilities and working practices of their own internal and external supply chains in order to deliver effective results consistent with our strategic agenda.	Show us what you do to support this principle, how you know that it works, and what you do to maximise its value.
Efficiency and Effectiveness	A modern network that keeps pace with the country's growing demands requires efficient and effective delivery that improves service to our customers. We therefore need our suppliers to mobilise all their talents and resources to manage risk and deliver smarter and more efficient ways of working that deliver improvements in all aspects of performance.	Show us what you do to support this principle, how you know that it works, and what you do to maximise its value.
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Our objective is to embed the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion into all areas of our business, driving real change in how we work with our customers and communities, our supply chain and our employees. Our ambition is to lead the improvement in how all parts of society view and experience the highways sector. We therefore require our suppliers to consider the diverse needs of customers and communities when making decisions, to become more effective at attracting and recruiting a more diverse workforce, and at creating inclusive working cultures that allow everyone to perform to their potential.	Show us what you do to support this principle, how you know that it works, and what you do to maximise its value.
Sustainability	We are working to contribute to a sustainable future and to deliver a positive impact on the natural and built environment, and on neighbouring communities through our work. We therefore need our suppliers to deliver better products and services that help to meet the sustainability challenges that we face as an industry.	Show us what you do to support this principle, how you know that it works, and what you do to maximise its value.

The StART Framework in Detail

Leadership and Collaboration

Highways England has been set an unprecedented investment and performance improvement challenge. To drive best value for road users and the communities we serve, we need to establish strong and enduring relationships with suppliers who support us not only by delivering exemplary contracts, but also by working with us to fulfil our strategic agenda. We will choose to work with strongly led, responsive organisations who are able to commit the skills and resources we need, who work collaboratively across boundaries, who actively promote sharing and openness to build trust, manage risk and drive value, and who contribute to and influence our strategic direction.

Show us what you do to support this principle, how you know that it works, and what you do to maximise its value.

In addressing the principle, you may also include:

- How you prioritise, and how you continually refine and refocus around Highways England's strategic agenda over time
- How you achieve strategic alignment through your organisation and reinforce positive behaviours and actions
- How your leaders exercise governance to ensure successful delivery
- How you build your leadership, capability, capacity and intelligence to support growth
- How you create the right relationships to stimulate and sustain lasting value
- How you work with Highways England and with your peers to maximise the supply chain's contribution to the Highways England strategic agenda
- How you contribute to shaping and delivering Highways England's strategic agenda

Health, Safety and Wellbeing

Health, safety and wellbeing are imperative. Our aim is that no-one should be harmed when travelling or working on the strategic road network. We therefore require our suppliers to collaborate with us and with their peers to achieve a major shift in health and safety performance by showing leadership, building competence, managing risks and enhancing wellbeing.

Show us what you do to support this principle, how you know that it works, and what you do to maximise its value.

In addressing the principle, you may also include:

- How you achieve safer working practices
- How you manage and control health and safety risks
- How you integrate imposed processes, legal and regulatory changes into your own processes, systems and culture, stretching beyond conformance to achieve excellent outcomes
- How you overcome defensiveness and blame issues to maximise learning and minimise repeating issues
- How you ensure that safe practice is everybody's responsibility – no barriers
- How you address health and wellbeing across your organisation and in your supply chain

Supply Chain

We need a supply chain which is completely coherent with our strategic agenda, and with the capability to be deployed effectively so that our programmes can deliver different and better outcomes for customers. We therefore rely on our suppliers to develop the understanding, capabilities and working practices of their own internal and external supply chains in order to deliver effective results consistent with our strategic agenda.

Show us what you do to support this principle, how you know that it works, and what you do to maximise its value.

In addressing the principle, you may also include:

- How you incorporate organisations into your supply chain seamlessly to form an effective integrated team
- How you support your supply chain to develop its people, skills, capability and capacity to meet Highways England's evolving needs
- How you work with and incentivise your supply chain appropriately to develop and deliver innovations and efficiencies year on year
- How you work with your extended supply chain to drive through the Highways England strategic agenda and principles

Efficiency and Effectiveness

A modern network that keeps pace with the country's growing demands requires efficient and effective delivery that improves service to our customers. We therefore need our suppliers to mobilise all their talents and resources to manage risk and deliver smarter and more efficient ways of working that deliver improvements in all aspects of performance.

Show us what you do to support this principle, how you know that it works, and what you do to maximise its value.

In addressing the principle, you may also include:

- How you address all aspects of value to deliver the best value outcomes at pace for Highways England.
- How you manage risk
- How you routinely collaborate with Highways England, your peers and your supply chain to improve the customer experience for all road users
- How you develop and deploy improvement approaches, including for example, lean principles, to increase productivity, reduce cost and waste, and decrease disruption on Highways England projects
- How you apply novel ways of thinking to unlock value
- How you enable and support positive changes in Highways England and its supply chain, and how you reduce barriers to change

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Our objective is to embed the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion into all areas of our business, driving real change in how we work with our customers and communities, our supply chain and our employees. Our ambition is to lead the improvement in how all parts of society view and experience the highways sector. We therefore require our suppliers to consider the diverse needs of customers and communities when making decisions, to become more effective at attracting and recruiting a more diverse workforce, and at creating inclusive working cultures that allow everyone to perform to their potential.

Show us what you do to support this principle, how you know that it works, and what you do to maximise its value.

In addressing the principle, you may also include:

- How you attract and recruit new people into the sector including those from under-represented groups
- How you ensure you and your supply chains share Highways England's ambition for equality, diversity and inclusion
- How you work with others across the sector to support Highways England's EDI ambition
- How you hold yourselves, and those in your supply chain, to account on progress with EDI initiatives and on meeting the above

Sustainability

We are working to contribute to a sustainable future and to deliver a positive impact on the natural and built environment, and on neighbouring communities through our work. We therefore need our suppliers to deliver better products and services that help to meet the sustainability challenges that we face as an industry.

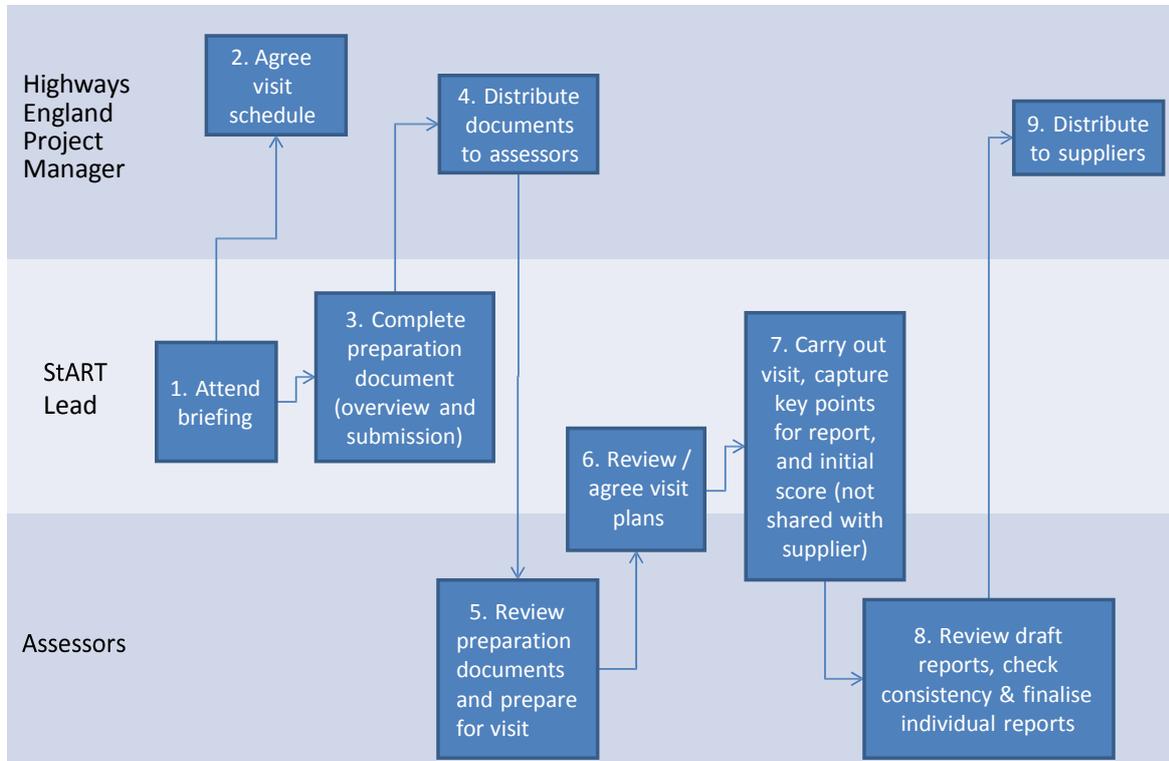
Show us what you do to support this principle, how you know that it works, and what you do to maximise its value.

In addressing the principle, you may also include:

- How you ensure that environmental, social and economic impacts are addressed in your business activities, your products and your services
- How you minimise your footprint on the environment
- How your approach to sustainability reflects your understanding of people's experience on the network, and of their differing needs
- How you develop and apply imaginative, sustainable solutions to the environmental challenges we face
- How you mitigate negative social impacts and how you ensure opportunities to deliver positive social impacts are maximised and communicated

The StART Process

The following chart shows the stages of the Strategic Alignment Review Tool assessment process. Each stage is described in more detail below.



1. Attend briefing

Every company to be assessed through StART will be invited to a briefing by Highways England before the process begins. The detailed timing of the assessment process and the information required from suppliers to enable the visits to be scheduled will be communicated at the briefing or very shortly afterwards.

2. Agree visit schedule

The Highways England Project Manager agrees visit dates and locations with StART Leads and with assessors in accordance with the overall assessment timeline.

3. Complete preparation document

Guidance on the content of the preparation document (Part 1 overview and Part 2 submission) is shown below under StART Preparation Guide. The maximum number of pages is also shown there. Completed preparation documents to be in PDF form, and submitted as directed to Highways England by the due date. The framework in full is shown on pages 5 to 10 of this document. In addition to the principles themselves, it includes bullet points to highlight particular aspects of the principle that the supplier may wish to address.

The visit will be focused on the part of the company that is most likely to enter into contracts and interact with Highways England as specified by the supplier. Depending on how the supplier is structured it may be relevant to spend some time on group-wide functions and activities. The clearer these relationships are made in the submitted preparation document, the easier it will be to plan the visit appropriately.

4. Distribute documents to assessors

The Highways England Project Manager distributes the preparation documents for each company to the assessors who will be carrying out the assessment visit.

5. Review preparation document and prepare for visit

For the main phases of StART assessments, the assessors prepare for all the visits in parallel so that differences can be highlighted and a consistency of approach to each visit is established. Before each assessment visit, the assessors take a small amount of time to reorient and focus specifically on that individual company. For one-off assessments, preparation is carried out individually for each company, and issues of consistency are addressed during the consistency review (step 8).

6. Review/agree visit timetable

Telephone conversations as necessary between the assessors and the StART Lead to clarify any points of understanding of supplier structure and visit logistics, and to question, clarify and confirm any points of issue with the timetable or other plans for the visit.

7. Carry out visit, capture key points for report and initial score

An intensive one-day visit, spending time on each of the six StART principles in turn. An outline timetable is shown below. A brief presentation of the evidence from the supplier on each principle followed by interview/discussion. The attendees for each session will be as documented in the preparation document. The assessors and/or the supplier can ask for additional people to come into the session to respond to specific issues as they arise.

The assessors will be looking for suppliers to demonstrate and provide evidence of:

1. Comprehensive coverage of principles, no gaps.
2. Aligned with Highways England's approach and requirements.
3. Not just responding to Highways England's strategies, but helping to set the lead.
4. Company practices based on policies, strategies and plans.
5. Supported at corporate level by Directors and embedded at all levels.
6. Performance and effectiveness regularly measured, reviewed and improved.
7. Sustainable approach over long-term.
8. Approach demonstrably generates value for the company, Highways England and other stakeholders.

Where suppliers do not have Highways England based evidence, they can use non-Highways England examples, but should make clear how these examples are relevant to Highways England.

The supplier provides the assessors with a hardcopy of the slides that are being presented (in handout format with 3 slides per page) and also a softcopy PDF. The copies must not include any additional slides beyond those presented at the visit, and must not include notes or any other additional content. The assessors will take no other supplier documentation away with them. The slide set will be bound into the supplier's feedback report as an appendix.

The assessors capture the key points for the report and carry out an initial scoring exercise. The outputs of this are for the assessors' use, to capture their conclusions from this visit. Draft scores are not shared with the supplier.

8. Review draft reports, undertake consistency check and finalise individual reports

Draw together and compare the individual scores from all of the visits and check for consistency of the scores in relation to each other. Any necessary adjustments will be made to the individual reports and scores before the reports are finalised and sent to the Highways England Project Manager.

9. Distribute to suppliers

The Highways England Project Manager distributes the individual reports and scores to each company. The timing for this is as specified in the timetable at the start of the process.

Preparation Guide

The preparation provides the input for the assessors to get to know the supplier, to plan their visit and to understand the headline aspects of the supplier's approach to delivery that will be covered during the assessment day. The more accessible and comprehensive the information in it, the better the assessment will work. The Part 2 Submission (see below) forms part of the evaluation process, but is not separately scored and does not limit what can be presented or discussed on the assessment day. The Part 2 Submission document will be bound into the supplier's feedback as an appendix.

Part 1: Provide overview of supplier organisation:

A brief factual document describing the supplier's purpose, size, structure, location, operations, in order to orient the StART assessors to the supplier's organisation.

- Name and address
- Name of StART Lead and contact details
- Proposed location for visit, and rationale for proposing it
- A pen picture of the supplier:
 - Context and ownership
 - Relationship of highways organisation to wider group
 - A clear organisation chart
 - Locations, including current active project sites, for both Highways England and other major clients, showing numbers and main activities
 - Turnover and headcount, total and percentage on Highways England projects
 - Main customers

Maximum length 4 pages including organisation charts.

Part 2: Prepare a submission, describing for each of the 6 principles in the framework:

- the headline aspects of the supplier's approach covering the key points that the supplier wishes to make to the assessors, and
- who (from the supplier organisation) will present and/or be available for discussion for each session of the assessment and how they relate to the subject to be discussed.

The maximum length for the submission is 2 full pages per principle, i.e. 12 pages in total. Any additional material provided with the Part 2 submission will be discarded. There is no need to include the wording of the StART principles in your response. Fonts must be no smaller than 10 point.

Completed preparation documents are to be in PDF form, and submitted as directed to Highways England by the due date. The assessors may wish to ask for additional or alternative people or information to be included at the visit. The final plan for the visit will be agreed between the assessors and the supplier.

Starter timetable for visit

This is a projected outline timetable for the visit day. It is not fixed. Actual timings are likely to vary on the day. The supplier may also choose to adjust the order or the timings to allow more time on some sections than others, although it is a very full day so there is very little flexibility in the timing. However they should ensure there is time at the end of the visit for the assessors to explore and resolve any outstanding issues. It is the supplier's responsibility to ensure that all the principles are covered within the time allocated for the visit. There will be no follow up visit.

9:00	Leadership and Collaboration	Allowing 20 minutes for presentation of evidence, 30 minutes for interview/question and answer. A further 20 minutes for assessors in private to discuss, agree and document key points.
10:10	Health, Safety and Wellbeing	
11:20	Supply Chain	
12:30	Lunch	
13:00	Efficiency and Effectiveness	
14:10	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	
15:20	Sustainability	
16:30	Review	Explore any outstanding areas/final questions
17:00	Close	

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Only Assessment

Highways England has committed to a Public Sector Equality Duty Objective:

*“By 2020, all our key suppliers will have improved their strategic alignment review tool (StART) scores for **inclusion** by 15%”*

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principle in StART is being used to benchmark progress. The baseline will be measured in this round of StART. Some key suppliers may be offered an EDI only assessment should they not need a full StART score for future procurements.

These EDI only assessments will follow the same process as for a full assessment, but assessing only the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion principle. It is important for the assessors to understand the organisational context within which the supplier’s EDI approaches operate. The Leadership aspects of the StART framework (the leadership elements of the Leadership and Collaboration principle) should provide appropriate context. The assessment visit will therefore include a session on Leadership, appropriately introduced in the Part 2 Submission. This session will not be assessed.

Preparation

As for a full assessment, the supplier will need to submit a Part 1 and Part 2 preparation document:

Part 1: Provide overview of supplier organisation

Exactly as for a full assessment, as defined above

Part 2: Prepare a submission, describing for Leadership and for EDI:

- the headline aspects of the supplier’s approach covering the key points that the supplier wishes to make to the assessors, and
- who (from the supplier organisation) will present and/or be available for discussion for each session of the assessment and how they relate to the subject to be discussed.

For the Leadership section, focus on the leadership elements of the Leadership and Collaboration principle.

Assessment visit

During the assessment itself, the outline timetable will be as follows.

30 mins	Leadership	Allowing 20 minutes for presentation, 10 minutes for clarification questions
70 mins	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	Allowing 20 minutes for presentation of evidence, 30 minutes for interview/Q&A, 20 minutes for assessors in private to document key points.
30 mins	Review	Explore any outstanding areas/final questions

StART Scoring Chart

Fit: the assessors' confidence that what the supplier does ...	None/very low	Limited	Moderate	Good	Very good	Exceptional		Fit Score: A(i)+A(ii) (A)
... clearly addresses Highways England principles	0	1	2	3	4	5	A(i)	
... keeps the supplier in tune with Highways England principles over time	0	1	2	3	4	5	A(ii)	

Function: the assessors' confidence that what the supplier does ...	None/very low	Limited	Moderate	Good	Very good	Exceptional		Function Score: B(i)+B(ii) (B)
... is embedded into the supplier's culture*	0	1	2	3	4	5	B(i)	
... is assessed and routinely reviewed and improved*	0	1	2	3	4	5	B(ii)	

Value*: the assessors' confidence that what the supplier does ...	None/very low	Limited	Moderate	Good	Very good	Exceptional		Value Score: C(i)+C(ii) (C)
... is exploited to its full potential for the supplier and Highways England*	0	1	2	3	4	5	C(i)	
... sets the supplier apart from everyone else*	0	1	2	3	4	5	C(ii)	

	TOTAL SCORE for Indicator= (subject to top-down sense-check)						(A + B + C) (Max Score 30)
Top-Down Sense Check							
Limited Alignment*		Committed to Alignment*			Comprehensively Aligned*		Leading the Agency*
Bottom quartile		Second quartile			Third quartile		Top quartile

* Terms with asterisks are defined in glossary

Scoring factor

Scoring element

StART Scoring Definitions and Glossary

For each principle, the assessors will score each scoring element according to their confidence level – the extent to which they have been persuaded by the evidence presented that the supplier’s approach is comprehensive and effective.

Score	Confidence level:	Evidence presented shows:
0	None/very low	Substantial weaknesses
1	Limited	Some significant weaknesses
2	Moderate	Addressed but with some weaknesses
3	Good	Well addressed with limited minor weaknesses
4	Very good	Very well addressed with no significant weaknesses
5	Exceptional	All aspects comprehensively addressed

Term / concept	Means ...
Embedded into the supplier’s culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consistent with other approaches ➤ Well established in the collective mindset and behaviour patterns ➤ Established over time, deep rooted
Assessed and routinely reviewed and improved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Assessed for efficiency and effectiveness. ➤ Part of the performance management and improvement routine. The level and extent of review and improvement will determine score: ➤ If review & improvement is carried out in the operational environment, score is likely to be below midpoint ➤ If also at strategic level, score is likely to be above midpoint.
Value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Higher scores in the Value elements result from value added for Highways England as well as for the supplier and their other stakeholders.

Term / concept	Means ...
Exploited to its full potential	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consider all relevant dimensions ➤ Range of employees, supply chain partners, other stakeholders ➤ Time – could this be done more frequently to provide more value? ➤ For higher scores, includes reach into Highways England and its stakeholders and evidence that results are achieved for them as well as for the supplier
Sets the supplier apart from everyone else	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Up to the suppliers to demonstrate and show how they know. ➤ Consider both sector comparisons and broader ones. ➤ For a maximum score, comparisons should definitely be “world class”.
Limited Alignment (score in bottom quartile)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Alignment is by chance rather than design. Limited effort made to understand Highways England’s strategy. ➤ Limited testing and development of approaches for alignment.
Committed to Alignment (score in second quartile)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The right things are being said. ➤ Evidence of conscious efforts to align strategies and practices upwards with Highways England and outwards into supply chain.
Comprehensively Aligned (score in third quartile)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The right things are being done. ➤ Good evidence of widespread alignment to Highways England’s strategy and practices, behaviours and culture with attributable benefits to the supplier, Highways England and throughout the supply chain.
Leading Highways England (score in top quartile)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Clearly and actively contributing to shape Highways England’s strategy in this area, both by example and by direct involvement. ➤ Seen by peers as exemplifying best practice.