

West Midlands Regional Defence and Security Cluster (WM RDSC) Advisory Board Governance Pack

Purpose of this document

This document sets out the role, structure and governance of the WM RDSC Advisory Board, including the responsibilities of the Chair, Deputy Chairs and Board members.

It is intended to support individuals considering submitting an Expression of Interest (EOI) for these roles, and should be read alongside the [EOI form](#).

Individuals interested in these roles should review this document and submit an Expression of Interest via the [online form](#).

1. Overview

Regional Defence and Security Clusters (RDSCs) are collaborative networks bringing together industry, academia and government to strengthen regional defence and security ecosystems.

The RDSC programme is a Ministry of Defence (MOD) initiative within UK Defence Innovation, with delivery led by local partners. Its aim is to enhance collaboration, accelerate innovation, and support the growth and resilience of the UK defence and security supply chain.

The West Midlands Regional Defence and Security Cluster (WM RDSC) brings together partners from across industry, academia and the public sector to strengthen the region's contribution to UK defence and security.

The cluster, [launched in May 2026](#), provides a platform for collaboration - connecting organisations, identifying opportunities, and supporting growth across the regional ecosystem. It aims to enhance coordination, increase visibility of regional capability, and support engagement with national priorities.

To support the next phase of development, **an Advisory Board and Chair are being established to provide strategic leadership, guidance and external perspective as the cluster develops.**

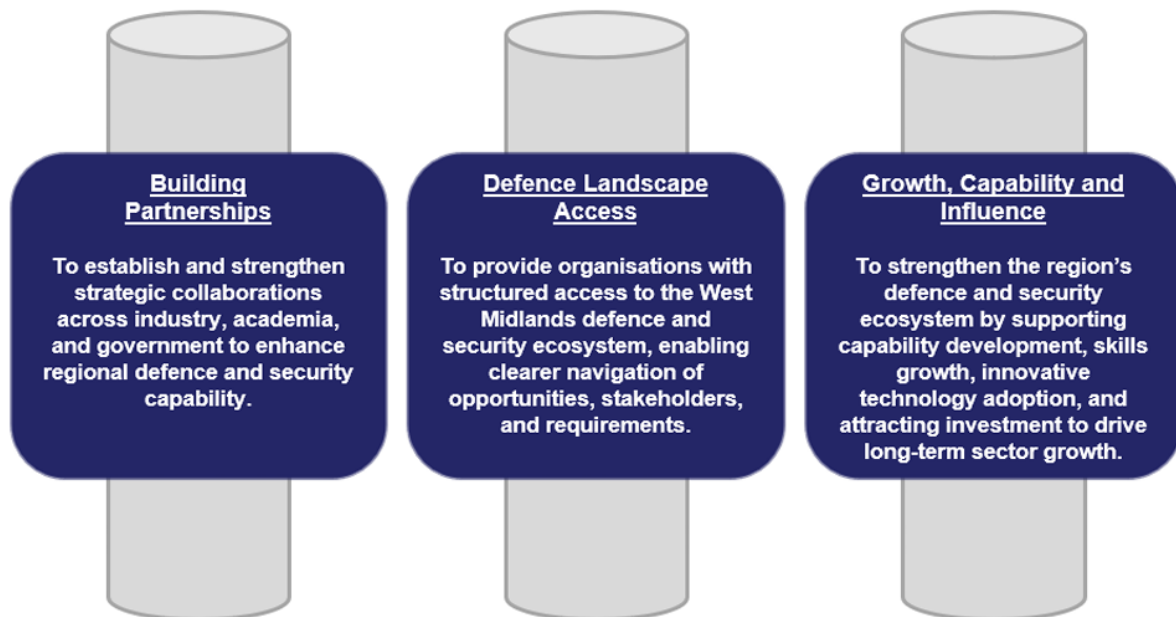
At its core, the WM RDSC acts as a collaborative ecosystem that connects the region's defence and security industrial base, academia, local authorities and wider partners. It seeks to aggregate and raise the profile of defence and security to stimulate sector knowledge, business, investment, economic growth, and productivity across the region.

The agreed objectives of the WM RDSC are:

- 1) Establish a trusted regional hub that supports the simplification of access to defence markets, signals demand and provides clear pathways for industry engagement.
- 2) Accelerate dual-use innovation and adoption by improving access to regional assets, testbeds, and high-value collaboration opportunities.
- 3) Increase SME participation across the West Midlands defence and security ecosystem, enabling growth, diversification, and supply-chain entry.

- 4) Strengthen supply-chain resilience by enhancing capabilities, reducing vulnerabilities, and supporting firms to meet defence and security requirements, including through skills development.
- 5) Attract inward investment and elevate the region's national and international profile, showcasing West Midlands capabilities to global markets and government

The activities of the WM RDSC have been grouped into three functions to clearly define the broader aims of the RDSC:



Core delivery support is provided by the [West Midlands Growth Company](#) (WMGC) as the economic delivery vehicle for the region, with the [West Midlands Combined Authority](#) (WMCA) acting as the accountable body. The WM RDSC is representative and open to the whole West Midlands (ITL) region.

More information is available on the WM RDSC website: <https://westmidsrdsc.co.uk/>

2. Role of the Advisory Board

The WM RDSC Advisory Board will:

- Provide strategic advice and constructive challenge
- Help shape priorities and areas of focus for the cluster
- Support the development and delivery of cluster activities and initiatives
- Help steer engagement with key partners, sectors and stakeholders
- Act as ambassadors for the WM RDSC and the wider regional sector
- Support collaboration across academia, industry and government
- Bring insight, networks and connections to strengthen activity and impact
- Champion opportunities and support the initiation of collaborative activity across the cluster.

This will build on and replace the WM RDSC Steering Group that was in place between October 2025 and May 2026, supporting the set up and launch of WM RDSC.

The Board will interface with existing and emerging WM RDSC delivery activities, such as membership engagement, thematic Special Interest Groups and working groups, event delivery and attendance, and representative advocacy for the West Midlands defence and security industry.

The Advisory Board will, in partnership with the Secretariat, support the development of a small number of key indicators to track the cluster's progress against its objectives. These will be reviewed periodically and reported to the Board at appropriate intervals.

3. Scope and Operating Principles

The Board will:

- Focus on strategic direction and enabling delivery, rather than direct operational management
- Operate on a collaborative and consensus-based basis
- Support alignment with relevant regional and national initiatives
- Promote a partnership-led and inclusive approach to engagement
- Act as a convening and influencing forum to help drive activity across the cluster
- Operate as part of the wider WM RDSC governance structure, including the secretariat, Special Interest Groups and delivery activity
- Act in the best interests of the cluster and support delivery of its overarching mission:

“to unite and empower organisations across the West Midlands to strengthen our regional capability while contributing to national resilience and security. Together, we are making the West Midlands a leading UK hub for defence and security innovation.”

The WM RDSC is intended to complement, not duplicate, existing activity.

4. Membership

The Advisory Board will comprise senior representatives drawn from:

- Industry and Industry Groups
- Academia / Universities and Research Technology Organisations
- Public sector
- Other defence and security-related organisations

Membership will reflect a balanced **“triple helix” model**, ensuring a breadth of experience, expertise and regional representation.

Given the importance of SME growth and participation as a core cluster objective, the Board will seek to include members who can bring direct experience of operating as, or working closely with, SMEs in the defence and security sector.

Board Size

The Board is expected to comprise approximately **10–15 members**.

Leadership Structure

- A **Chair** will lead the Board
- Up to **two Deputy Chairs** will support the Chair and provide additional leadership capacity

Deputy Chairs will be appointed from among Board members.

Terms of Appointment

Appointments will usually be for an **initial term of up to 2–3 years**, with scope for review.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

Chair

The Chair will:

- Provide overall leadership and strategic direction
- Convene and chair quarterly Advisory Board meetings and work with the secretariat in-between meetings to shape agendas
- Set the tone for constructive, collaborative engagement
- Support engagement with key regional and national stakeholders, including representing the WM RDSC at quarterly meetings of the Midlands Defence and Security Industry Council (MDSIC), and meetings of the national forum of RDSCs.

Deputy Chair(s)

Deputy Chairs will:

- Support the Chair in leading the Board
- Deputise where required
- Attend MDSIC and national RDSC forums where the Chair is unable to.
- Contribute to specific areas of focus where appropriate

Board Members

Board members will:

- Attend and contribute actively to meetings
- Provide strategic insight and constructive challenge
- Act as ambassadors for the WM RDSC
- Support collaboration and connectivity across the sector

- Bring relevant expertise, networks, and perspectives

6. Ways of Working

- The Board will meet **quarterly**
- Meetings will typically be held in-person where possible, with online or hybrid options where required.
- Agendas will be developed by the Secretariat in partnership with the Chair / Deputy Chairs.
- Secretariat support will be provided by West Midlands Growth Company, including a dedicated RDSC Cluster Manager.
- Observer organisations, including the WMCA and MOD, will be invited to attend Board meetings.
- A quorum will consist of the Chair (or a Deputy Chair) and at least one third of the current Board membership. The Board will seek to operate on a consensus basis. Where consensus cannot be reached, the Chair will use their judgement to determine the appropriate course of action, considering the views expressed.

The Board may, where appropriate, establish informal task-and-finish groups or special interest groups to support specific areas of activity.

7. External Engagement

The Chair and, where appropriate, Deputy Chairs and Board members may represent the WM RDSC at relevant regional and national forums.

It is expected that the WM RDSC is represented at quarterly meetings of the Midlands Defence and Security Industry Council (MDSIC), via the Chair or Deputy Chairs. See here for more information: <https://www.wmca.org.uk/news/business-leaders-appointed-to-new-midlands-defence-and-security-industry-council/>

8. Expenses

All roles are **voluntary and non-remunerated**.

Reasonable expenses for the Chair, and for Deputy Chairs when undertaking responsibilities on behalf of the Chair, will be reimbursed for national-level engagements, including:

- Travel (standard class or mileage)
- Accommodation where necessary
- Other agreed costs incurred in undertaking the role

9. Selection Process

Appointments will be made through an **open Expression of Interest (EOI)** process, supported by targeted engagement to ensure a strong and balanced field of candidates, including across industry, academia and the public sector.

A small selection panel comprising senior representatives from WMCA, WMGC and MOD will:

- Assess candidates based on experience, perspective and potential contribution.
- Consider both individual merit and overall board balance, including geographical, sector and other characteristics.
- Take a holistic approach to ensure representation across academia, industry and the public sector.

Short informal discussions may be held with selected candidates where required.

The Chair and Deputy Chair roles will be confirmed as part of the overall appointments process.

The selection process will actively seek to ensure that the Board reflects a diversity of backgrounds, perspectives and experience, including in relation to gender, ethnicity, career stage and organisational type. This is considered integral to the quality of the Board's advice and the credibility of its representation.

10. Timeline

Indicative timeline:

- EOI launch: Early June 2026, via this link: [West Midlands Regional Defence and Security Cluster \(WM RDSC\): Advisory Board and Chair Expression of Interest Form.](#)
- EOI deadline: **5pm 30 June 2026**
- Appointments confirmed: Early July 2026
- First Board meeting: July/August 2026

11. Conflicts of Interest

Board members are expected to declare any actual or potential conflicts of interest prior to appointment and as they arise during their term. A register of interests will be maintained by the Secretariat and made available on request. Where a conflict arises in relation to a specific agenda item, the member concerned will be asked to withdraw from that discussion. Members are expected to act with integrity at all times in managing any potential conflicts.

12. Review

These Terms of Reference and governance arrangements will be reviewed periodically to ensure they remain appropriate as the WM RDSC evolves.