

Rethinking Supplier Assessment: The Case for Common Frameworks and the Role of SSIP

3 hours ago



Procurement in construction and facilities management has long faced a fundamental challenge: inconsistency. Suppliers are often required to complete multiple, overlapping assessments, while buyers apply varying standards depending on project, sector, or perceived risk. The result is duplication, inefficiency and, in some cases, gaps in assurance.

What is increasingly clear is the need for common frameworks in supplier assessment—frameworks that provide consistency, reduce duplication and remain flexible enough to reflect the varying needs of buyers, industries and supply chains.

The need for common frameworks

A structured approach to supplier assessment is essential in today's procurement environment. Common frameworks help establish a baseline for evaluating competence, ensuring that suppliers are assessed against consistent criteria regardless of the client or contract.

However, a single, rigid approach is neither practical nor desirable. The depth and breadth of assessment required will always depend on:

- The nature of the work being procured
- The level of risk associated with delivery
- The complexity of the supply chain

- The expectations and governance requirements of the buyer

This creates a clear need for a layered approach—where core areas of competence are assessed consistently, but additional scrutiny can be applied where needed.

SSIP: a proven common framework for health and safety

Health and safety remains one of the most critical components of supplier competence. Assessing it effectively requires alignment with legislation, consistent interpretation of standards, and robust, independent verification.

[SSIP](#) provides exactly this.

Bringing together more than 50 Registered Member Schemes and Certification Bodies, SSIP operates against a single set of Core Criteria aligned to UK health and safety legislation and guidance from the Health & Safety Executive. This ensures that:

- Suppliers are assessed consistently, regardless of the assessment body
- Buyers receive a recognised and independent demonstration of compliance
- Health and safety competence is benchmarked against a nationally agreed standard

With over 90,000 suppliers holding a valid SSIP assessment, it has become a foundational element of supplier assurance across the construction and facilities management sectors.

Reducing duplication through mutual recognition

A key strength of SSIP is its 'Deem to Satisfy' model. Once a supplier has been assessed by one SSIP member scheme, that certification can be recognised by other SSIP schemes.

This removes the need for multiple, near-identical health and safety assessments—delivering measurable efficiency benefits across the supply chain. In 2025 alone, this approach contributed to over £6.3 million in savings.

This principle of mutual recognition is central to the wider ambition for common frameworks: assess once, use many times.

Where broader frameworks add value

While SSIP provides depth and rigour in health and safety assessment, buyers often require a broader view of supplier capability.

Frameworks such as the Common Assessment Standard (CAS) have been developed to address this need, covering areas such as financial standing, environmental management, social value and organisational governance.

These broader frameworks are particularly relevant where:

- Projects are high value or high risk

- Supply chains are complex or multi-tiered
- Buyers require a holistic view of supplier capability

However, it is important to recognise that not every procurement exercise requires this level of depth across all areas. A proportionate approach—aligned to contract value and risk—is essential.

A complementary, not competing, relationship

SSIP and broader assessment frameworks should not be viewed as alternatives. Instead, they are complementary components of a more effective supplier assessment ecosystem.

- SSIP provides a consistent, robust and independently verified assessment of health and safety competence
- Broader frameworks provide additional layers of assurance where required, depending on buyer needs and procurement complexity

In practice, this means:

- For lower-risk or lower-value contracts, buyers may rely primarily on SSIP for health and safety assurance, alongside targeted checks in other areas
- For higher-risk or higher-value projects, a more comprehensive framework may be applied, with SSIP forming the foundation for health and safety compliance

This aligned approach supports both proportionality and consistency—two principles increasingly emphasised in modern procurement guidance.

Supporting proportional and modern procurement

Recent procurement guidance continues to reinforce the importance of standardisation and proportionality in supplier selection.

Common frameworks support standardisation by providing consistent question sets and assessment criteria. SSIP supports proportionality by enabling buyers to rely on a recognised, independent assessment of health and safety without unnecessary duplication.

Together, they enable procurement teams to tailor the depth of assessment to the specific needs of each project, without compromising on core standards.

As SSIP Chair Eleanor Eaton explains: “A more effective approach to supplier assessment lies in combining consistency with proportionality. Common frameworks like SSIP provide a trusted, independently verified foundation for core areas such as health and safety, while broader assessments can be applied where risk and complexity demand it. By embracing mutual recognition and an ‘assess once, use many times’ principle, we can reduce duplication, improve efficiency and create a more coherent, scalable system that works for both buyers and suppliers.”

A more integrated approach to supplier assurance

The direction of travel is clear: supplier assessment should be simpler, more consistent and more efficient—while maintaining high standards.

SSIP already delivers a mature, widely adopted and trusted framework for assessing health and safety competence. When used alongside broader frameworks, it enables a more flexible and scalable approach to supplier assessment.

Rather than a single, one-size-fits-all solution, the future lies in a combination of:

- Common core frameworks (such as SSIP)
- Modular or extended assessments where required
- Mutual recognition to reduce duplication

This approach recognises the diversity of procurement scenarios while ensuring a consistent foundation across the industry.

Ultimately, improving supplier assessment is not about choosing one framework over another—it is about using the right combination of frameworks to achieve efficient, proportionate and reliable outcomes for both buyers and suppliers.

For more information about SSIP, contact: enquiries@SSIP.org.uk