

PTAC

ALABAMA

PROCUREMENT TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

Guide to Government Contracting for Alabama Small Businesses



Alabama Procurement Technical Assistance Center

In collaboration with:

Alabama SBDC Network

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *Guide to Government Contracting for Alabama Small Businesses* has been prepared by the Alabama Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), in collaboration with the Alabama SBDC Network, to help small businesses in Alabama win government contracts. The Alabama PTAC Program and the Alabama SBDC Network provide confidential, one-on-one technical assistance to help small businesses in Alabama expand sales of goods and services and strengthen the state's economy.

This publication was made possible due to the cooperation between several agencies of the State of Alabama, including the Alabama Department of Commerce, Office of Small Business Advocacy; the State Finance Department, Division of Purchasing; and the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs, Office of Minority Business Enterprises. We express our sincere appreciation for their assistance with the publication, but moreover, their leadership and commitment to assist small businesses to expand.

This guide will help you understand the world of government contracting, what is required to pursue this fascinating business opportunity, and if selling goods and services to the government is a viable option to grow your small business. Please contact the following organizations listed below for assistance.

Alabama Procurement Technical Assistance Center Program
www.al-ptac.org

Alabama SBDC Network
www.asbdc.org

Office of Small Business Advocacy
Alabama Development Office
www.madeinalabama.com/divisions/small-business-advocacy/

Office of Minority Business Enterprise
Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs
<http://adeca.alabama.gov/Divisions/ced/cdp/Pages/ombe.aspx>
www.adeca.alabama.gov

Alabama Department of Finance
Division of Purchasing
www.purchasing.alabama.gov

The information is presented as a guide to contracting opportunities and procedures. Please bring any omissions or errors to the attention of the Alabama PTAC Program Office. While the publication reflects current information available as of July 2016, government contracting information is subject to change.

The Alabama SBDC Network at the University of Alabama is funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. This procurement technical assistance center is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the Defense Logistics Agency. All opinions, conclusions, or recommendations expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the SBA. SBDC and PTAC programs are open to the public and all services are provided on a non-discriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, disability, or national origin. Accommodations are made for individuals with disabilities.

INTRODUCTION

Doing business with the government offers significant opportunities for Alabama small businesses of all kinds. The U.S. Federal Government alone is the world's largest buyer of goods and services with purchases totaling more than \$300 billion per year. The good news for the Alabama small business community is that each federal agency must do its best to reach the goal of setting aside 23 percent of its purchases for small businesses.

Even though contracting requires a substantial amount of time and resources, the potential for growing your business through government contracting opportunities is significant. The following chart illustrates the federal spending in Alabama during fiscal year 2016. The data is derived from USAspending.gov, an official website of the U.S. Government.

<u>TYPE AWARD</u>	<u>FY 2016</u>
Total federal contract awards nationwide	\$292.3 billion
Total federal contract awards in Alabama	\$ 6.3 billion
Total federal sub-contract awards in Alabama	\$ 1.8 billion

Doing business with the government can be a complex and daunting task, especially if you are a small business. The Alabama Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) is available to help businesses take advantage of exciting opportunities in federal, state, and local government markets.

This resource guide has been developed to simplify government contracting for your business. We also hope it will provide assistance and information on how your business can take advantage of these unique opportunities. This guide provides information that can help you position your company for contracting opportunities. It will help you understand the basics of selling to the government, show you how to get started and pursue opportunities, and provide resources that will give you the knowledge and skills you need to help you succeed.

Throughout this guide, you will find links to government sites to pursue further information on a specific subject. In addition, the guide describes other valuable assistance including:

- [How to register and do business with the State of Alabama](#)
- [Small Business Administration - SDB, 8\(a\), HUB Zone and other certifications](#)
- [Researching procurement histories](#)
- [Identifying bid opportunities](#)
- [Proposal preparation](#)

Small businesses interested in government contracting are urged to seek free, one-on-one counseling from professional business counselors and procurement specialists with the Alabama Procurement Technical Assistance Center and Alabama SBDC Network offices located throughout Alabama. Small businesses may register for assistance by completing an online registration form at:
<http://al-ptac.org/register>.

We welcome your inquiry. Please contact the PTAC Program Office listed below:

**ALABAMA PROCUREMENT TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE CENTER**

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Alabama SBDC Network
The University of Alabama
Box 870396
Tuscaloosa, AL 35487
Phone: 205-348-1687
www.al-ptac.org



Alabama SBDC Network University Partners

Alabama State University *

Auburn University

Jacksonville State University*

The University of Alabama*

The University of Alabama in Huntsville*

The University of North Alabama *

The University of South Alabama *

The University of West Alabama

Troy University*



* Procurement Specialist Locations

The University of Alabama is the host institution for the Alabama SBDC Network and the Procurement Technical Assistance Center Program.

GUIDE TO GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING

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CHAPTER ONE

DOING BUSINESS WITH THE STATE OF ALABAMA

While the substantial volume in federal contracting may seem appealing for your firm, do not overlook the opportunities available in selling to the State of Alabama. Contracting with the State of Alabama is an excellent way for your business to get started in the government contracting arena.

State of Alabama Purchasing: www.purchasing.alabama.gov

Register to do Business with the State of Alabama Purchasing

Vendors must register with the State of Alabama in order to receive solicitations to bid. Registration requires a \$200 fee which provides access to the bid solicitations for two years.

1. Review the Alabama Department of Finance Administrative Code at www.purchasing.alabama.gov/pages/admin_code.aspx#3 and the rules and regulations that explain the general requirements of vendors.
2. Locate your product and service codes: This is a listing of Commodity Class/Sub-Class codes used when completing the online Vendor Registration form. These codes describe the products and/or services your firm provides. (The State is not responsible for codes omitted or incorrectly submitted on your registration).
www.purchasing.alabama.gov/pages/comm_index.aspx.
Professional Services Products and Service Codes are located at www.purchasing.alabama.gov/pages/prof_codes.aspx.
3. Complete entire registration form on the Alabama Purchasing website www.alabamainteractive.org/vendor_registration/initial.action.
You will be required to submit payment in the amount of \$200.00. This payment will allow you two (2) years of access to view, print, bid, and/or be awarded a solicitation to bid. Methods of payment accepted are credit card, debit card, or E check.
4. Enter your Federal Employer Identification Number. If you do not have a Federal Employer ID Number, enter your Social Security Number. One of these numbers is mandatory as it will control your purchasing records. Be advised you assume ALL responsibility when registering with your social security number.
5. Business Information: Provide complete company name and addresses, contact persons, phone number, and E-mail address in the appropriate spaces for each address type. If one address entry is sufficient for all your requirements complete the General Address section only.

Business Ownership: The State of Alabama defines a small business as less than 50 employees or gross receipts less than \$1,000,000.00 per year, independently owned and operated. Minority and Women Owned must be at least 51% owned by one or more socially and economically disadvantaged individuals and whose management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more of those individuals.

Specific Minority Groups: African Americans; Latino Americans (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central/South America, other Spanish origin); Asian Americans (including Pacific Islander); and American Indians (including Alaskan Native).

6. Vendor Registration Fee: Every vendor desiring to receive an Invitation to Bid (“ITB”) on goods and services purchased through the Division of Purchasing must, when submitting the vendor registration application, pay a bi-annual vendor registration fee in the amount of \$200.00. The registration fee must be paid at the time of registration by either an accepted credit or debit card or by electronic check. Vendor registration cannot be completed without payment of the required fee.

** The applications are generally processed within 2-3 business days.

Registration Contact: Division of Purchasing
RSA Union Building
Attn: Ms. Tamara Norman
P. O. Box 302620
Montgomery AL 36130-2620
Phone: (334) 242-4284
Fax: (334) 353-1878

Note: When an emergency has been declared within the State of Alabama, typical contract process is not required, but you MUST be a registered vendor with the state to do business. In emergency situations the typical set-asides for special status businesses (woman-owned, minority-owned, veteran-owned, etc.) do not apply to state purchasing.

Sealed Bids

The State of Alabama uses a Sealed Bid process on all purchases in excess of \$15,000. The purchasing agent is required to post solicitations over \$15,000 and must send notice by mail to all Alabama firms who have filed a request that they be listed for solicitation on bids for the particular items set forth in the request.

To submit a sealed bid, you will need to review the specifications for the product or service requested by clicking on the Open ITB's link on the Division of Purchasing website. The specifications describe the physical, technical or functional characteristics, or the nature of a product, service or construction item. They usually include a description of requirements such as inspecting, testing, or preparing a product, service or construction item for delivery. They may include provisions that govern various aspects of the relationship of parties under the contract.

The specifications will state the location where bids must be received, the time by which bids must be submitted, and whether a plan deposit is required. Any bid received after the time specified cannot be considered.

A bond may be required with a sealed bid. Any such requirement will be stated in the specifications. Your bid cannot be considered without the required bond.

Searching for Invitations to Bids

Click on OPEN ITB's to see all of the ITB's currently available for suppliers to submit a bid. The OPEN ITB's are listed by bid opening date. You should check back often as ITB's are added daily. You should become a registered vendor to receive a notification through the mail for OPEN ITB's. This will allow you to receive a single page notification for the specific class/sub-classes you have registered for.

TIPS ON HOW TO DO BUSINESS WITH THE STATE OF ALABAMA

- Be sure your firm's name is on the bid list with the correct class/sub-classes. Keep your application current with any changes.
- Read the bid documents thoroughly and follow all instructions, terms, and conditions. Failure to do so will be at the bidder's risk.
- Be sure your bid is submitted on or before the receive date and time. Be sure the envelope shows the bid number and opening date.
- Attend bid openings to see what the competition is doing, since bid results are not given over the telephone or in writing. You may go to the Alabama Purchasing website to view the bid responses which are posted for sixty (60) days from the bid opening date.
- Visit, write, or call the various state agencies to learn of their needs and to introduce your company and products.
- Ask questions.

Award of ITBs

According to the Administrative Code, awards shall be made or contracts entered into with the lowest responsible bidder meeting all specifications, terms, and conditions established by the Division of Purchasing. The Division of Purchasing reserves the right to determine the lowest responsible bidder on the basis of an individual item or group of items. Delivery dates may be a factor in awards. Multiple awards may be issued if notice is contained within the competitive bid and when technical compatibility and/or operations specifications are defined.

The Director of Purchasing may award the contract to a preferred bidder as provided under Alabama law. Tie bids will be awarded to the bidder that, in the opinion of the Director of Purchasing, will best serve the interests of the state.

Upon award of a bid, the Division of Purchasing will issue a purchase order or Notice of Award which will be given for immediate acceptance by the awarded bidder. Unless the Director of Purchasing is promptly notified to the contrary, the bidder accepts the order or award and will make delivery as specified in the award. No award is valid unless the signature of the Director of Purchasing is affixed to it.

Additional Resources

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PURCHASING

www.purchasing.alabama.gov

Locate contracts, responses to ITB's and contact Purchasing staff

LIST OF ACTIVE STATE CONTRACTS

www.purchasing.alabama.gov/pages/active_contracts.aspx

View current statewide contracts

PURCHASING FAQs

www.purchasing.alabama.gov/pages/faq.aspx

Review frequently asked questions of the Alabama Department of Purchasing

RULES & REGULATIONS

www.purchasing.alabama.gov/pages/rules_regs.aspx

Rules and Regulations for registered vendors in Alabama

STATE AGENCY DIRECTORY

www.info.alabama.gov/directory.aspx?range=2

State of Alabama Buyer Contacts

BRYAN MATTHEWS

bryan.matthews@purchasing.alabama.gov

(334)353-5433

Electronic Monitoring, Audio Visual Video, Broadcast, Photograph, Publications, Film Processing, Research & Subscriptions, Athletic Equipment and Clothing, Sporting Equipment, Hardware & Related Items, Lawn Care, Grounds Service, Subscriptions, Art Supplies & Art Objects, Tree Removal, Litter Pick-up, Guard Service, Services Alarm/Armored Car/Card Access, Rent/Lease Facilities, Portable Toilets, Library Services, Animals (Live), Livestock Equipment & Supplies, Veterinary Equipment & Supplies, Feeding/Bedding/Vitamins, First Aid & Safety Supplies, Germicides/Cleaners, Surgical Scrub, Luggage & Briefcases

RAY BRESSLER

ray.bressler@purchasing.alabama.gov

(334)242-4670

Heating and Air Conditioning, Garbage Service, Electrical, Elevator, Elevator Maintenance, Hazardous Waste, Plumbing, Pressure Washing, Translation/Transcription, Public Works, Construction, Sludge Removal and Maintenance, Septic Tank Maintenance and Service, Shredders, Shredding Services, All Electrical & Plumbing Work, Financing Services

PAT ANTLE

pat.antle@purchasing.alabama.gov

(334)242-7253

Telephone Equipment, Cellular Equipment and Service, Pagers, Micrographic Equipment and Supplies, Cable and Wiring (including both fiber optic and twisted pair), Radio Communication (two-way and three-in-one), Electronics and Accessories, Etc., Voice Mail Box Service, Answering Service, Excavating/Reclamation, Pest Control, Television Equipment, Communications and Media Related Services (advertising, mailing), Television Commercials.

JAERI ELLIS

jaeri.ellis@purchasing.alabama.gov

(334)242-7259

Computer Hardware, Software and Accessories, Local Area Network, Wide Area Network Equipment, Hardware and Software Maintenance, Electronic Information Service, Internet Service, Driver's License, Projectors

JENNIFER LORETZ

jennifer.loretz@purchasing.alabama.gov

(334)242-7370

Copiers, Copier Supplies and Maintenance, Police Equipment, Printers/Plotters, Printer Cartridges, Fax Machines, Security Systems, Temporary Personnel, Telephone Equipment, Audio and Video, Cable Television, Optical Equipment, Clipping Service

SUSAN JANA

susan.jana@purchasing.alabama.gov

(334)242-7173

Promotional Items, Service Pins, Boats (Motors and Trailers), Fuels, Material Handling (Hand Trucks, Fork Lifts, Coveying), Automotive Accessories, Auto Replacement Parts, Auto Bodies, Vehicles and Transit Bus and Accessories, Auto Equipment, Bearings, Auto Belts, Tires, Auto Accessories, Auto Conversions, Auto Washing, Tire Mounting, Fleet Management, Vehicle Storage, Auto Transportation Equipment Lease, Auto Shop Equipment Lease.

PAM JOHNSON

pam.johnson@purchasing.alabama.gov

(334)242-4667

Furniture, Office Supplies, Office Machines, File Cabinets, Training, Educational Equipment/Services/Supplies, Travel, Pool Equipment

WENDY PENTON

wendy.penton@purchasing.alabama.gov

(334)353-7176

Printing Equipment & Supplies, Barcode Labels, Decals, Stamps, Office/ Graphic Arts Papers, Envelopes, Printing Services



CHAPTER TWO

FEDERAL CONTRACTING: HOW TO DEFINE AND PRESENT YOUR CAPABILITIES

NOTE: IN THIS CHAPTER, WE WILL DISCUSS A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF NUMERICAL CODES AND NUMBERS THAT WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY AND REGISTER YOUR COMPANY FOR GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING. IN ORDER TO KEEP ALL OF THIS INFORMATION ORGANIZED, YOU CAN FIND A PRINTABLE FORM LOCATED IN THE APPENDIX THAT CAN BE USED TO RECORD EACH CODE OR NUMBER THAT APPLIES TO YOUR FIRM. THESE CODES AND NUMBERS WILL BE REFERENCED THROUGHOUT THE GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING PROCESS SO BE SURE TO KEEP THEM HANDY.

SECTION ONE: IDENTIFY YOUR PRODUCT OR SERVICE

In order for the government to properly identify what your firm is capable of, you will need to identify your product or service according to the government's coding system. These codes are to your business as social security numbers are to individuals. It is critical to know the Federal Supply Classification (FSC) or the Product and Service Code (PSC) and NAICS codes for your products or services.

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) identifies business establishments by category. It is the first economic classification system to be built based on a solitary economic concept. Economic units that use similar or identical processes to produce goods or services are grouped together.

You should find the code that is most appropriate for your business. Be sure to be very thorough in matching the appropriate NAICS codes to your firm and locate all NAICS codes that apply to your business. To research your firm's applicable NAICS visit the U.S. Census at: www.census.gov/naics/2007/index.html. You may search the site by using a keyword, or you may browse through the complete list to find your firm's codes. Your firm will not be prevented from bidding on contracts with an NAICS code that you have not listed in your record.

The Federal Supply Classification (FSC) Codes

FSC Codes are used to identify products. The FSC Code is a four-digit code used by government buying offices to classify and identify the **products and supplies** that the government uses and buys. It is important to understand which FSCs apply to your products so that you can locate opportunities.

Each FSC code is derived from the category of Federal Supply Groups (FSG) or Service Codes that the product or service falls under. To identify your firm's respective FSC Codes visit the Defense Logistics Agency at: www.dlis.dla.mil/H2/search.aspx.

National Stock Number (NSN)

Also used to identify products and supplies, the NSN is a 13-digit number that the federal government assigns, for purposes of identification and inventory control, to every piece of supply, equipment, and material that it uses and buys. It works like a federal cataloging system. Each item's NSN is divided into four sections, each with specific meaning: 4444-22-333-4444. The first four digits are the Federal Supply Code (FSC), which categorizes the item. The next two digits specify the country that buys the item. The last seven numbers, called the National Item Identification Number (NIIN), are used to index NSNs. National stock numbers are further explained at <http://www.dla.mil/SmallBusiness/Documents/NSN%20Info.pdf>

Product Service Codes (PSC)

PSC Codes are used to identify services. Service codes are alpha-numeric, from A to Z. I and O are not used in PSCs. Three numbers are added to the alphabetic character to further define what type of service is needed. The Product Service Code Manual lists the codes used to index all services, for example: construction, architecture and engineering, information technology, management, security, and so on. If you are in the services industries this is the resource for you.

In order to identify your firm's PSC codes you will need to research the Product/Service Code Manual. The manual is in the process of being revised to reflect changes in industry information over the course of 2011. Currently, an updated manual can be found at: https://www.google.com/?gws_rd=ssl#q=Product+Service+codes

What is the difference between NAICS and SIC codes?

NAICS codes provide a greater level of detail about a company's business trade than the SIC system did. NAICS includes 1,170 industries, whereas the SIC system included 1,004 industries. Additionally, NAICS codes are based on a consistent, economic concept, while SIC codes are not. For NAICS codes, establishments that use the same or similar processes to produce goods or services are grouped together. Industries under the SIC codes were grouped together based on either demand or production.

Unlike SIC codes, the NAICS codes were developed by the U.S. federal government in cooperation with Canadian and Mexican statistical agencies. Because both Canada and Mexico use NAICS for their industry classifications, government and business analysts are now able to compare directly industrial production statistics collected and published in the three North American Free Trade Agreement countries.

SECTION TWO: IDENTIFY YOUR BUSINESS SIZE

The Federal Government specifically encourages small businesses to bid on contracts for many of its purchasing needs. In fact, Federal agencies are required to establish contracting goals, with at least 23 percent of all government buying targeted to small firms. It is important for you to accurately define and present your firm in order to take advantage of these opportunities.

Is your Firm a Small Business?

SBA defines a small business as a concern that is organized for profit; has a place of business in the U.S.; operates primarily within the U.S. or makes a significant contribution to the U.S. economy through payment of taxes or use of American products, materials, or labor; is independently owned and operated; and is not dominant in its field on a national basis. The business may be a sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, or any other legal form. In determining what constitutes a small business, the definition will vary to reflect industry differences.

Size Standards

SBA has established numerical definitions, called "size standards," to represent the largest a concern can be and still be considered a small business. Size standards are usually stated in number of employees or average annual receipts (see table on next page), and represent the largest size that a business (including its subsidiaries and affiliates) may be to remain classified as a small business for federal contracting programs.

A small business must meet the size standard stated in the solicitation. The contracting officer designates the size standard of the procurement by selecting the industry that best describes the principal purpose of the procurement.

Since all Federal agencies must use SBA size standards for contracts identified as small business, you need to determine what size standard best fits your business.

- Determine your size standard using SBA's Table of Small Business Size Standards at: https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/Size_Standards_Table.pdf
- Match your NAICS code(s) with the appropriate size standard(s).

Summary of Size Standards by Industry Sector

Small business size standards define the largest that a business concern, including all of its affiliates, may be and yet qualify as a small business concern for SBA and most other federal programs. The SBA has established two widely used size standards – 500 employees for most manufacturing and mining industries and \$7.5 million in average annual receipts for many nonmanufacturing industries. However, there are a number of exceptions. For the size standard applicable to any North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code, see the SBA's Small Business Size Regulations, 13 CFR §121.201, or the Table of Small Business Size Standards.

SBA periodically changes a size standard for an industry. The process for changing a size standard is discussed in the Agency's Guide to Size Standards and in its Size Standards Methodology.

To review a summary of size standards for major industries and industry groups in various NAICS industry sectors go to: <https://www.sba.gov/content/summary-size-standards-industry-sector>

It is important to note that in determining if you are a small business, you must include the receipts and/or employees (depending on what the standard is based) of all NAICS activities, regardless of how they were earned, as well as the receipts and/or employees of all affiliates, regardless of where they are located or what their industry is. For information about how SBA determines receipts and number of employees, and what constitutes affiliations, go to Small Business Regulations at: <https://www.sba.gov/content/small-business-size-regulations>

SBA's size standards are updated regularly and include additions and modifications made since January 1st of the most recent year.

Use of Size Standards for Government Contracts

When bidding for Federal Government contracts, on the date of your bid you cannot exceed the small business size standard that the procuring agency's contracting officer specifies for the contract (it may or may not be your principal activity). However, as long as you meet the size standard for that contract, you can qualify as a small business.

For all other small business programs, you cannot exceed the size standard for your primary industry, which is generally the industry that accounts for the largest source of receipts.

What if I mistakenly misrepresent my firm as a small business when I pursue contracts?

In addition to other laws that may be applicable, the Small Business Act provides severe criminal penalties for knowingly misrepresenting the small business size status of a concern in connection with procurement programs, and criminal penalties for knowingly making false statements or misrepresentations to SBA for the purpose of influencing in any way the actions of the agency. For additional information on SBA Size Standards visit www.sba.gov/size or contact the Office of Size Standards at sizestandards@sba.gov or (202) 205-6618.

SECTION THREE: SMALL BUSINESS CERTIFICATIONS

Each year, the federal government purchases billions of dollars in goods and services from private firms that range from paperclips to complex space vehicles. It is the policy of the United States, as stated in the Small Business Act, that all small businesses have the maximum practicable opportunity to participate in providing goods and services to the government.

The SBA is responsible for the management and oversight of the small business procurement process across the federal government. The SBA negotiates with federal departments concerning their prime contracting goals and achievements with small businesses to ensure that small businesses have the maximum practicable opportunity to provide goods and services to the federal government.

Further, the negotiation ensures that the federal government will achieve the following statutory goals:

- 23 percent of prime contracts for small businesses
- 5 percent of prime and subcontracts for small disadvantaged businesses
- 5 percent of prime and subcontracts for women-owned small businesses
- 3 percent of prime and subcontracts for HUBZone businesses
- 3 percent of prime and subcontracts for service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses

The groups that are covered by these goals are small businesses, some with specific characteristics:

- Small business concerns
- Small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans
- Qualified HUBZone small business concerns
- Small business concerns owned and operated by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals
- Small business concerns owned and controlled by women

SBA has developed a number of programs to help these specific groups secure federal contracts. If your firm qualifies for one of these programs it could represent a significant advantage in marketing your firm for federal contracting.

Small Business Certifications

As part of the federal contracting registration process, you will be required to enter information about your company in the System for Award Management (SAM) database. In SAM, you may self-certify yourself as a small business, but you must meet the federal government's definition of a small business as defined above in the Table of Small Business Size Standards. We will discuss your firm's SAM registration in greater detail in the following chapter.

Women Owned Businesses

The Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) Program is a program that authorizes contracting officers to specifically set aside certain requirements for competition solely amongst women-owned small businesses (WOSBs) or economically disadvantaged women-owned small businesses (EDWOSBs).

The federal government has both prime contracting and subcontracting goals for small businesses. More specifically, 23% of federal prime contract dollars shall be awarded to small businesses, with individual prime and subcontracting goals for certain identified small business groups. The federal government must award 5% of its prime and subcontract dollars to women-owned small businesses. The goal attained by the individual agency is then used to calculate the government-wide small business goal, including the individual prime and subcontracting goals for the identified small business groups, such as women-owned small businesses.

One purpose of this program is to enable contracting officers to meet these goals by specifically limiting, or setting aside, certain requirements for competition solely amongst WOSBs or EDWOSBs and ensure a level playing field on which these small businesses can compete for federal contracting opportunities.



Eligibility for WOSB

To be an eligible WOSB, a company must be: a small business that is at least 51% unconditionally and directly owned and controlled by one or more women who are U.S. citizens.

Eligibility for EDWOSB

To be an eligible EDWOSB, a company must be a WOSB that is at least 51% owned by one or more women who are “economically disadvantaged.” However, SBA may waive this requirement of economic disadvantage for industries in which WOSBs are “substantially underrepresented.” A woman is presumed economically disadvantaged if she has a personal net worth of less than \$750,000 (with some exclusions), her adjusted gross yearly income averaged over the three years preceding the certification is less than \$350,000, and the fair market value of all her assets is less than \$6 million (with some exclusions).

There are two ways to certify for the WOSB program:

- **Self certification** with supporting documents.
- **Third Party Certification** with supporting documents: If a WOSB chooses to obtain third-party certification, they may only obtain certification from SBA-approved third-party certifiers. At this time, SBA has not approved any third party certifiers. A list of approved third-party certifiers will be posted on the sba.gov website after they have been approved.

4 STEPS TO PARTICIPATE IN THE WOSB PROGRAM:

1. Read the WOSB Federal Contract program regulations in the Federal Register <https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/2010-25179.pdf> and the WOSB Compliance Guide https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/WOSB%20Compliance%20Guide_April2011.pdf
2. Register and represent your status in the System for Award Management (SAM) as WOSB or EDWOSB.
3. Log onto SBA's General Login System (GLS).
https://eweb.sba.gov/gls/dsp_sbabanner.cfm?CFID=14703007&CFTOKEN=3e8178641fa1786c-EAEB8B28-0F87-4C1A-7534C78B46AE8C82&jsessionid=0230bf7f778fd822ba220786b1755d7e3246
*Obtain an account now if you don't already have one.
4. Go to the WOSB program repository (through GLS) and upload/categorize all required documents.

WOSB Program Repository

To access the WOSB Program Repository, users must first login to SBA's General Login System (GLS). If you do not have an account:

- Log onto SBA's General Login System (GLS).
- Click on "Instructions for GLS" for information on how to request an account.
- Go to "Request SBA User ID" to create an account.

Once you are in GLS, click the "Access" button at the top of the screen. Then select "Women-Owned Small Business Program Repository" and press submit. You should then be able to access the repository. Once you are in the repository, you can click the "Help" button at the top of the screen for instructions on how to use the repository. A complete list of documents you must submit to the WOSB Program Repository prior to an offer on a WOSB or EDWOSB requirement can be found in the Complete Guide for WOSB program at:

https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/WOSB%20Compliance%20Guide_April2011.pdf

All eligible WOSBs and EDWOSBs who would like to participate in this program must complete and sign the WOSB or EDWOSB certification form below and upload it into the repository.

WOSB: <https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/SBA%202413.pdf>

EDWOSB: <https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/SBA%202414.pdf>

Historically Underutilized Business Zone

The Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) program helps small businesses in urban and rural communities gain preferential access to federal procurement opportunities. SBA's HUBZone Program is designed to promote economic development and employment growth in distressed areas by providing access to more federal contracting opportunities. To be eligible for the program, a concern must meet the following requirements to obtain certification:

- Be a small business by SBA standards.
- Have their business located in a HUBZone.
- Be owned and controlled 51 percent by person(s) who are U.S. citizens.
- Have at least 35 percent of its employees residing in a HUBZone.

Is your business located in a HUBZone?

In order to find out if your business is located in a HUBZone, view the HUBZone map at <https://www.sba.gov/content/hubzone-maps>. You can input your firm's address to see if your firm is located in a designated HUBZone.

How to apply for HUBZone certification

You can apply for the HUBZone Certification Online at <https://www.sba.gov/content/applying-hubzone-program>. You must have the following to login and apply for the application:

- An active up-to-date Dun and Bradstreet profile and DUNS number that represents the business for which you are seeking HUBZone Program certification, recertification, program examination, decertification, etc.
- An active SAM registration for each of the businesses location(s). A business is identified using your Employer Identification (EIN).
- Each business location (DUNS Number) must have a primary NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) Code.

For more information on SBA's HUBZone program visit the SBA at <http://www.sba.gov/hubzone>.

8(a) Business Development Program

The 8(a) Program offers a broad scope of assistance to socially and economically disadvantaged firms, helping these entrepreneurs to compete in the Federal contracting arena and to take advantage of greater subcontracting opportunities available from large firms as the result of public/private partnerships.

- The 8(a) Business Development Program is a business assistance program for small disadvantaged businesses. The 8(a) Program offers a broad scope of assistance to firms that are owned and controlled at least 51% by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.
- The 8(a) Program is an essential instrument for helping socially and economically disadvantaged entrepreneurs gain access to the economic mainstream of American society. The program helps thousands of aspiring entrepreneurs to gain a foothold in government contracting.
- Participation in the program is divided into two phases over nine years: a four-year developmental stage and a five-year transition stage.

Benefits

The following is a list of benefits of participating in the 8(a) Business Development Program.

- Participants can receive sole-source contracts, up to a ceiling of \$4 million for goods and services and \$6.5 million for manufacturing and construction. The 8(a) Program helps firms build their competitive and institutional know-how, as well as encouraging participation in competitive acquisitions.
- 8(a) firms are also able to form joint ventures and teams to bid on contracts. This enhances the ability of 8(a) firms to perform larger prime contracts and overcome the effects of contract bundling – the combining of two or more contracts together into one large contract. For additional opportunities for 8(a) companies to learn the ropes from other experienced 8(a) businesses see the section on the Mentor-Protégé Program.
- Participation in the program is divided into two phases over nine years: a four-year developmental stage and a five-year transition stage.

Eligibility Requirements

To qualify for the program, a small business must be owned and controlled by a socially and economically disadvantaged individual.

Under the Small Business Act, certain individuals are presumed socially disadvantaged: African-Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Pacific Americans, Native Americans (American Indians, Eskimos, Aleuts, or Native Hawaiians), and Subcontinent Asian Americans. An individual who is not a member of one of the groups listed can be admitted to the program if he/she shows - through a “preponderance of the evidence” - that he/she is socially disadvantaged. An individual may show social disadvantage due to race, ethnic origin, gender, physical handicap, long-term residence in an environment isolated from the mainstream of American society; or other similar causes. In addition, a socially disadvantaged individual must show economic disadvantage by submitting a narrative and personal financial documentation about one’s income, assets, and net worth.

Generally, successful applicants must also meet the following additional requirements:

- The business must be small according to the size standards for small business concerns
- The business must demonstrate a potential for success (generally by being in business for at least two years)
- The business must be unconditionally owned and controlled by
 1. one or more disadvantaged individuals who
 2. are US citizens and who
 3. are of good character.

For general questions about the 8(a) Business Development program, please contact 8aquestions@sba.gov.

How to Apply

You should submit your application for the 8(a) Business Development Program electronically. Go to this link to learn how to apply: <https://www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/how-apply>.

SBA's Mentor-Protégé Program

The SBA's Mentor-Protégé program enhances the capability of 8(a) participants to compete more successfully for federal government contracts. The program encourages private-sector relationships and expands SBA's efforts to identify and respond to the developmental needs of 8(a) clients.

This mentoring program is offered under SBA's 8(a) Business Development Program serving disadvantaged firms. SBA's 8(a) Program, named for a section of the Small Business Act, is a business development initiative that helps socially and economically disadvantaged Americans gain access to economic opportunity. The program provides an avenue for disadvantaged Americans to achieve entrepreneurial success and contribute to the strength and vigor of our economy.

As a small business owner, you can join the Mentor-Protégé Program as either the mentor or the protégé. The SBA Mentor-Protégé Program is designed to encourage approved mentors to provide various forms of assistance to eligible 8(a) participants as protégés. The SBA's Mentor-Protégé Program is great way for both mentor and protégé to become more successful and grow as small businesses.

The purpose of the SBA Mentor-Protégé program is to:

- Enhance the capabilities of the protégé (an 8(a) BD Program Participant),
- Assist the protégé with meeting the goals established in its SBA-approved business plan, and
- Improve the protégé's ability to successfully compete for contracts.

Note: The SBA will determine the eligibility of participants in the program (whether it is as mentor or as protégé), approve the Mentor-Protégé Agreement, and annually review existing mentor-protégé relationships (serving as mediator of disputes between mentor and protégé if necessary).

For more information on SBA's Mentor-Protégé program visit <https://www.sba.gov/content/mentor-protege-program>.



Veteran and Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business



To qualify as a Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB), a business concern must be at least 51% owned by one or more eligible veterans; or, in the case of any publicly-owned business, at least 51% of the stock is owned by one or more veterans, and whose management and daily business operations are controlled by such veterans.

In 2003, Congress created a procurement program for small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans (commonly referred to as the "Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) Procurement Program"). The purpose of the program is to provide federal contracting assistance to SDVOSBs.

The SDVOSB program requires that federal contracting agencies establish and achieve a participation goal of 3% of the total value of all prime contract and sub-contract awards for each fiscal year for small businesses owned and controlled by veterans with service-connected disabilities.

The Center for Verification and Evaluation (CVE)

To obtain verification from CVE as a Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) and Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB), visit <http://www.vetbiz.gov/>.

This site provides information about the Center for Verification and Evaluation (CVE) efforts to verify Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (SDVOSBs) and Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSBs). SDVOSBs and VOSBs who want to participate in the VA's Veterans First Contracting Program must be verified by CVE in order to be eligible for VA contract set-asides.

What is Verification?

Verification is the process that SDVOSBs and VOSBs must undergo in order to qualify for VA set-asides. This process is managed by CVE.

To determine if your business qualifies for CVE verification, go to <http://www.va.gov/osdbu/docs/vetsFirstApplicationGuideCMP071615.pdf> and review the initial application guide. This guide will explain all the phases involved in the CVE verification process.

SECTION FOUR: REVIEWING THE FEDERAL ACQUISITION REGULATION (FAR)

If you want to do business with the government you must know the rules. The primary source of federal procurement information and guidance is the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), which consists of Parts 1-53 of Title 48 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Be sure to keep a copy of FAR handy, available at <http://www.acquisition.gov/far>. The FAR covers contractor qualifications, types of contracts, small business programs, federal supply schedule contracting, and more. The FAR also includes, in Part 2, definitions of procurement words and terms, and, in Part 52, solicitation provisions and contract clauses.

The FAR is a complex regulatory manual and the better your firm can be at learning these regulations the better you will do in federal contracting. Do not get intimidated by the terminology used in FAR.

The FAR is divided into 53 parts; the following is an outline of each part as a quick reference guide:

- Part 1—Federal Acquisition Regulations System
- Part 2—Definitions of Words and Terms
- Part 3—Improper Business Practices and Personal Conflicts of Interest
- Part 4—Administrative Matters
- Part 5—Publicizing Contract Actions
- Part 6—Competition Requirements
- Part 7—Acquisition Planning
- Part 8—Required Sources of Supplies and Services
- Part 9—Contractor Qualifications
- Part 10—Market Research
- Part 11—Describing Agency Needs
- Part 12—Acquisition of Commercial Items
- Part 13—Simplified Acquisition Procedures
- Part 14—Sealed Bidding
- Part 15—Contracting by Negotiation
- Part 16—Types of Contracts
- Part 17—Special Contracting Methods

- Part 18—Emergency Acquisitions
- Part 19—Small Business Programs
- Part 20—[RESERVED, not currently in use]
- Part 21—[RESERVED, not currently in use]
- Part 22—Application of Labor Laws to Government Acquisitions
- Part 23—Environment, Energy and Water Efficiency, Renewable Energy Technologies, Occupational Safety, and Drug-Free Workplace
- Part 24—Protection of Privacy and Freedom of Information
- Part 25—Foreign Acquisition
- Part 26—Other Socioeconomic Programs
- Part 27—Patents, Data, and Copyrights
- Part 28—Bonds and Insurance
- Part 29—Taxes
- Part 30--Cost Accounting Standards Administration
- Part 31—Contract Cost Principles and Procedures
- Part 32—Contract Financing
- Part 33—Protests, Disputes, and Appeals
- Part 34—Major System Acquisition
- Part 35—Research and Development Contracting
- Part 36—Construction and Architect-Engineer Contracts
- Part 37—Service Contracting
- Part 38—Federal Supply Schedule Contracting
- Part 39—Acquisition of Information Technology
- Part 40--[RESERVED, not currently in use]
- Part 41—Acquisition of Utility Services
- Part 42—Contract Administration and Audit Services
- Part 43—Contract Modifications
- Part 44—Subcontracting Policies and Procedures
- Part 45—Government Property
- Part 46—Quality Assurance
- Part 47—Transportation
- Part 48—Value Engineering
- Part 49—Termination of Contracts
- Part 50—Extraordinary Contractual Actions and the Safety Act
- Part 51—Use of Government Sources by Contractors
- Part 52—Solicitation Provisions and Contract Clauses
- Part 53—Forms

Supplements to the FAR

In addition to the FAR, each agency can issue supplements specific to their agency's procurement. The Department of Defense offers its own comprehensive regulatory manual called the DFARS. Contractors can view all of these supplemental regulations at <http://farsite.hill.af.mil>. Do not become concerned with these supplemental regulations until you know what agencies your business will be marketing toward.

The following are commonly referenced supplements to FAR:

- DFARS—Department of Defense
- DTAR—Department of the Treasury Acquisition Regulation
- DOLAR—Department of Labor Acquisition Regulation
- DEARS—Department of Energy Acquisition Regulation
- AFARS—Army FAR
- AFFARS—Air Force
- DLAD—Defense Logistics Acquisition Directive
- CAR—Department of Commerce
- DOSAR—Department of State
- GSAM—General Services Administration
- HSAR—Department of Homeland Security
- TAR—Department of Transportation
- VAAR—Department of Veteran Affairs



CHAPTER THREE

REGISTERING YOUR BUSINESS

Once you have gathered your firm's appropriate codes to identify your product or service and you have defined your business, you must register your company to do business with the government. This will involve registering your business in SAM, the official on-line contractors' database for the U.S. Federal Government. SAM collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of agency acquisition and award missions. Registration in the SAM is free.

Before you begin, gather the following key items:

- Your firm's Employer Identification Number (provided by the IRS)
- Your firm's average annual receipts
- Your firm's average number of employees throughout the last 12 months (full and part-time)
- Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) Information: This will include your business account's ABA routing number, account number, account type, lockbox number, Automated Clearing House Point of Contact for your firm and contacts for remittance and accounts receivable
- Contact information (name, phone number, email address) on at least 2 people in or associated with your business.
- Request a Data Universal Number (DUNS)

STEP ONE: OBTAIN A DATA UNIVERSAL NUMBER (DUNS)

The SAM registration process will require a DUNS Number, so before you begin registering within SAM, you will need to gather or acquire your firm's DUNS Number. A DUNS is a unique nine-character identification that is used by both government and corporate officials searching for background information on companies. DUNS Number assignment is free for all businesses required to register with the US Federal government for contracts or grants. If a DUNS number does not exist for your firm, it can be created within 1 business day.

You must have a different nine-digit DUNS Number for each physical location or different address of your business or organization as well as each legal division that may be co-located.

If your firm does not have a DUNS number, please visit <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/> or contact Dunn & Bradstreet customer service at (888) 814-1435 to obtain one.

If your firm already has a DUNS number you can access your Duns number at <https://iupdate.dnb.com/iUpdate/companylookup.htm> or by contacting Dun & Bradstreet customer service at (800) 333-0505.

STEP TWO: REGISTER WITH SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT (SAM)

Creating an Account in SAM

- 1) Go to www.sam.gov and click on “Create an Account” (first box on the left) OR click on the link in the upper right corner under the “Log In”
- 2) Click the “Create an Account” button on the left side, bottom, for “Individual”
- 3) Fill out the information for individuals – you only need to provide the required fields
- 4) Create a username and password
- 5) Complete the 3 security questions
- 6) On the summary page, review the information and make any necessary changes
- 7) Click “Submit”
- 8) You will get a confirmation page – you can save or print and then click “Done”. It is mandatory to click “Done” to force a log out. If “Done” doesn’t log you out of your account, use the “Log Out” button in the upper right corner
- 9) You will receive an email to validate and activate your SAM account. You MUST click on the link provided in the email to trigger the activation – activation must be done within 48 hours or you will have to start over. Once you click the link, you will receive notification that you have successfully activated your account.
- 10) Once you have successfully activated your account, you may now proceed to “Migrating a Legacy Account” (an old CCR record) or “Register in SAM” for the first time if you have never had a CCR account.

Migrating a Legacy Account in SAM

- 1) Log In to your SAM account, “Accept” the terms and conditions every time you log in
- 2) It will ask you if you want to migrate your legacy system account – click “yes” after the question or select “Manage My User Roles” from the menu on the left and then select “Migrate a Legacy Account”
- 3) Choose the system you wish to migrate – in this case “CCR”
- 4) Enter the email address that was associated with the old CCR registration (you must have access to that old email for confirmation of the account)
- 5) If the email address from the old CCR doesn’t match your SAM email, you will find a confirmation email in the old account address. Log Out of SAM, access the email from the old account, click on the link that is provided and log back in to your SAM account and the old CCR profile will have migrated to your new SAM account.
- 6) If the emails do match, click on that option and then “next”, you will get a message screen informing you of successful migration. (We hope) if not proceed to step 7 anyway.
- 7) To complete the migration, you have to log out and then log in again
- 8) When you log back in to your account, on your My SAM page, you will now see “Manage My User Roles” on the menu at the left, click to open and click on the tab “My Roles” to see what level you have. You can also click “Migrated Accounts” section to view the list of accounts with which you are associated.
***If you do this and you cannot find your migrated CCR registration, don’t panic. Due to the high traffic of SAM and depending on the time of day you are doing this migration, you may encounter a waiting period. Your profile can take two to three days to show up in your new account. If it takes longer than that, please call your PTAC counselor for assistance!*
- 9) Proceed to “Update your Profile” below.

Register a New Entity or Update your Profile

- 1) If you are registering in SAM for the FIRST time, (never had an old CCR), login and select “Register/Update Entity”, then click “Register New Entity”. Proceed page by page to answer all questions, and get your items checked off (see list of items on extreme left of registration; each one should turn to a green circle, if there are any red “x” marks, you have to fix the error before submitting) proceed to step 3.
- 2) If you are returning to SAM or updating your newly migrated CCR, you will find your account under “Complete Registrations” OR in “Incomplete Registrations” within the menu found under “Register/Update Entity”. Click on your registration and it will open up – proceed to update by clicking the “Update” button in the bottom right hand registration box. Update all information, going page by page, answer all questions, and get your items checked off (see list of items on extreme left of registration; each one should turn to a green circle, if there are any red “x” marks, you have to fix the error before submitting) proceed to step 3.
- 3) When you have completed all sections and all items are checked as green, click on the “Submit” button at the very bottom of the last page.
- 4) You should receive a successful submission confirmation that starts with “Congratulations”
- 5) Please read the successful submission information and be aware to follow the instructions to insure the submission is completed.
- 6) Continue to monitor your profile “Status” over the next 3-10 days and await an official email from SAM stating you have been activated. (see next page for instructions how to monitor your status.)

Monitor My Status

- 1) Log in to your personal SAM account and find your entity either in “Completed” or in “Incomplete” registrations.
- 2) Open up your profile by clicking on the entity name, and it will populate the Registration box on the right
- 3) You should see three buttons – “Update”, “View” and “Delete” (If you only see a “View” button, you are locked out while IRS or CAGE are in your account reviewing)
- 4) Click on “View”
- 5) You will come to the Entity Overview page, where you will see a Registration box with Status listed at the bottom.
- 6) Read your status – You are ok as long as it appears to be moving through the process. Messages include “Submitted”, “IRS Validation”, “CAGE validation”
- 7) Remember: Anytime you enter SAM and see the Status of “Work in Progress” this is SAM’s message to YOU – SAM is waiting on you to do something – which means it is still waiting for you to submit. I know you think you did, but SAM can reject your submission and doesn’t always tell you, so just resubmit it. This is especially true with CAGE Code Validation. You may only receive a notice saying you failed validation. You will need to call the CAGE service desk to find out why!
- 8) Fix the CAGE issue or any issue you may have and resubmit to keep the document moving in the process. If you need assistance, call your PTAC counselor.

How do I update my NAICS or my SBA Dynamic Small Business Profile?

The best answer is to log in to your SAM account and complete every page again – Unfortunately, this is what is required every time you want to make any changes. You can try the quick way below – but use caution - this way only works for those entities that have gone through SAM at least once and have completed all items in SAM the first time, including the SBA profile, and were active. So as a caution, if you use the short cuts described below, you must check your status messages for the next 3-5 days after submitting. If you receive a status of “Pending Submission” or “Work in Progress”, you now must go back in and go page by page to get ALL checkmarks completed. (As you can surmise – maybe it is better to just do it ALL again rather than keep checking.)

Remember: Anytime you enter SAM and see the Status of “Work in Progress” this is SAM’s message to you – SAM is waiting on you to do something – which means it is still waiting for you to submit. SAM can reject your submission and doesn’t always tell you. Be sure to resubmit it.

To Update Your NAICS codes:

- 1) Log in to SAM account; accept terms and conditions; arrive on User Dashboard home page
- 2) From the menu on the left, click on “Register /Update Entity” (Entity means your business)
- 3) Select “Complete Registrations” (unless you are in an incomplete status already, then select “Incomplete Registrations”) Find the business name in the “Entity List” and click on it; information from the business will open in the “Registration Details” box.
- 4) Select the “Update Entity” button by clicking on it
- 5) You will be asked “Do you want to update the Purpose of Registration?” – select “no” from drop down menu and click “Next”
- 6) Your “Core Data” section from tabs on the left side of page will open up. Just read all tabs on the left side (Section Titles) and select “Assertions” tab; you will be brought to the page that has your “Assertions” with all items in this section now open on the left. Select the section “Goods and Services” and you will be brought to the NAICS search page where you can add or delete NAICS codes.
- 7) *When finished updating codes, click on “Save and Continue” then look again to the links on the left and select “Representations and Certifications” – when it opens, click on “Review Representations and Certifications” When the page opens, you must scroll all the way to the bottom of the page and re-check the box that states you are certifying that the above is true... and hit save and continue. (* This is a glitch in SAM which will be fixed someday or in a year or so – for now you have to follow these steps)
- 8) Now – look at all sections on the left by opening each section and making sure there is a green (not grey) checkmark next to every item including the three “Continue to next page” buttons! (one at end of “Core Data”, one at end of “Assertions”, and one at end of “Representations and Certifications”) If there are checkmarks on all, proceed to step 9. If you have to go back and click on anything else to get a checkmark then you must repeat step 7 again – then proceed to step 9
- 9) Once all items are checked, click on “Submit Certification” and then click on “Entity Review” and scroll to the bottom of the page and click “Submit”
- 10) You should receive a “Congratulations”. You may now log out of SAM

Remember: Anytime you enter SAM and see the Status of “Work in Progress” this is SAM’s message to you – SAM is waiting on you to do something – which means it is still waiting for you to submit. SAM can reject your submission and doesn’t always tell you. Be sure to resubmit it.

To Update Your SBA - Dynamic Small Business Search Profile:

- 1) Log in to SAM account; accept terms and conditions; arrive on User Dashboard home page
- 2) From the menu on the left, click on “Register /Update Entity” (Entity means your business)
- 3) Select “Complete Registrations” (unless you are in an incomplete status already, then select “Incomplete Registrations”) Find the business name in the “Entity List” and click on it; information from the business will open in the “Registration Details” box.
- 4) Select the “Update Entity” button by clicking on it
- 5) You will be asked “Do you want to update the Purpose of Registration?” – select “no” from drop down menu and click “Next”
- 6) Your “Core Data” section from tabs on the left side of page will open up. Just read all tabs on the left side (Section Titles) and select “Small Business Certification” tab; you will be brought to the page that has the link to “Register or update SBA Profile” Click on the link and a new browser opens at the SBA Profile cite.
- 7) Once completed with SBA Profile, close out of the web browser for the SBA Profile
- 8) You will be at the “SAM” profile again –
- 9) *When finished updating, click on “Save and Continue” then look again to the links on the left and select “Representations and Certifications” – when it opens, click on “Review Representations and Certifications”. When the page opens, you must scroll all the way to the bottom of the page and re-check the box that states you are certifying that the above is true... and hit save and continue. (* This is a glitch in SAM which will be fixed someday or in a year or so – for now you have to follow these steps)
- 10) Now – look at all sections on the left by opening each section and making sure there is a green (not grey) circle next to every item including the three “Continue to next page” buttons! (one at end of “Core Data”, one at end of “Assertions”, and one at end of “Representations and Certifications”) If there are green circles on all, proceed to step 9. If you have to go back and click on anything else to get a green circle, then you MUST REPEAT step 7 again – then proceed to step #9
- 11) Once all items are green, click on “Submit Certification” and then click on “Entity Review” and scroll to the bottom of the page and click “Submit”
- 12) You should receive a “Congratulations” message, click done
- 13) You may now log out of SAM

Remember: Anytime you enter SAM and see the Status of “Work in Progress” this is SAM’s message to you – SAM is waiting on you to do something – which means it is still waiting for you to submit. SAM can reject your submission and doesn’t always tell you. Be sure to resubmit it.



CHAPTER FOUR

MARKETING YOUR COMPANY

SECTION ONE: MARKET ANALYSIS – PROCUREMENT HISTORIES

After you have identified your business, identified your products and services, and registered your business, you will have completed the prerequisites to begin marketing your company for federal procurement opportunities.

Just as with any type of marketing, you should know your company's target market to properly and effectively market your firm for government contracting. You should spend some time preparing a market analysis to find out what agencies are purchasing your firm's specific product or service. Fortunately, there are a number of online resources you can use to analyze federal procurement histories. These resources will help you answer questions like:

- How frequent does the Federal Government purchase your product or service?
- Who is my potential competition in federal contracting?
- Who are the prime contractors within my business class?
- What agencies are purchasing my product or service?



USASpending.gov

www.usaspending.gov

This site is a requirement of the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act. The contracting data on this site is the most recent available and may be manipulated to view state, district, agency, or product/service categories.

Top Awarding Agencies – Alabama - 2014

The following table was derived from www.usaspending.gov and shows the top contracting agencies awarding contracts/funds within Alabama in 2014.

AGENCY	FUNDS AWARDED	NUMBER OF TRANSACTIONS
Department of Health and Human Services	\$15,467,391,064	1,092
Social Security Administration	\$12,707,893,366	3,859
Department of Defense	\$4,664,859,392	10,317
Department of Veterans Affairs	\$2,190,998,745	16,272
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	\$997,019,289	1,263
Department of Education	\$780,461,518	6,812
Department of Transportation	\$550,294,133	2,687
Department of Agriculture	\$456,642,308	11,252
General Services Administration	\$129,063,608	202
Railroad Retirement Board	\$112,454,541	690
Department of Housing and Urban Development	\$81,038,340	433
Department of Homeland Security	\$69,035,926	1,057
Department of Justice	\$68,291,740	2,719
Department of Labor	\$54,577,463	131
Environmental Protection Agency	\$19,719,713	66
National Science Foundation	\$15,584,043	108
Department of the Interior	\$12,626,292	223
Small Business Administration	\$12,076,989	632
Department of Energy	\$6,146,607	63
Corporation for National and Community Service	\$4,476,748	48
National Foundation/Arts and the Humanities	\$4,326,598	19
Department of Commerce	\$4,197,475	75
Department of the Treasury	\$1,793,460	68
Department of State	\$997,924	55
Executive Office of the President	\$994,447	1

Funds Awarded Alabama Businesses by Counties - Fiscal Year 2014

COUNTY	FUNDS AWARDED	NUMBER OF TRANSACTIONS
Madison	\$6,878,990,443	15,298
Montgomery	\$3,005,634,711	5,604
Jefferson	\$2,983,051,168	6,934
Mobile	\$2,519,574,641	3,986
Dale	\$1,053,451,582	2,350
Shelby	\$858,721,589	1,272
Baldwin	\$827,799,682	1,926
Calhoun	\$795,341,816	3,177
Tuscaloosa	\$769,573,947	1,917
Etowah	\$496,053,519	502
Morgan	\$439,999,877	671
Talladega	\$435,212,459	1,050
Lee	\$430,166,097	827
Houston	\$417,263,006	857
Lauderdale	\$397,354,108	843
Limestone	\$376,466,056	1,468
Walker	\$365,707,069	352
Marshall	\$355,752,855	599
Cullman	\$339,436,147	395
St. Clair	\$322,941,008	284
Elmore	\$286,064,986	414
Colbert	\$283,247,146	675
DeKalb	\$260,496,089	483
Jackson	\$225,151,791	644
Blount	\$219,692,953	342
Chilton	\$219,548,208	732
Dallas	\$213,026,778	653
Tallapoosa	\$202,606,230	184
Russell	\$188,728,507	310
Coffee	\$179,886,909	545
Autauga	\$177,366,275	267
Chambers	\$166,298,122	290
Covington	\$156,602,307	437

COUNTY	FUNDS AWARDED	NUMBER OF TRANSACTIONS
Escambia	\$155,990,429	445
Lawrence	\$147,130,832	655
Marion	\$145,863,660	262
Franklin	\$127,838,482	195
Cherokee	\$125,986,291	518
Geneva	\$124,287,809	440
Lamar	\$119,358,578	188
Macon	\$115,636,647	653
Clarke	\$111,323,307	262
Barbour	\$105,892,148	384
Pike	\$105,043,977	274
Winston	\$102,519,188	183
Marengo	\$100,387,126	230
Cleburne	\$97,165,240	204
Randolph	\$96,656,069	203
Monroe	\$96,165,903	526
Butler	\$85,353,036	223
Henry	\$84,591,075	618
Pickens	\$84,414,993	175
Fayette	\$83,203,981	209
Crenshaw	\$82,443,004	233
Bibb	\$81,045,643	109
Conecuh	\$79,120,263	395
Choctaw	\$75,411,331	126
Washington	\$73,472,203	170
Hale	\$73,379,340	134
Clay	\$65,428,276	140
Perry	\$63,157,141	313
Lowndes	\$62,819,099	204
Wilcox	\$61,651,374	213
Sumter	\$61,421,270	488
Greene	\$52,587,595	147
Bullock	\$42,226,550	175
Coosa	\$34,904,038	252

SECTION TWO: PREPARING YOUR CAPABILITIES STATEMENT

Before you begin marketing to the federal government, you should prepare a capabilities statement. The capabilities statement is your opportunity to clearly and precisely state your firm's ability to satisfy an agency's requirements. The information should also include your current and past performance within the government sector, as well as a succinct description of your competitive advantage with an emphasis on what differentiates your company from other small businesses in your market niche. Think of it as a one-page resume for your business!

Please see the government-oriented capabilities statement template below.

CAPABILITY STATEMENT SAMPLE TEMPLATE

Show your logo and contact information, with a specific person's name, phone and email.

This is a CONTENT template, not a design template. Add color & graphic elements!

CORE COMPETENCIES

Short introduction statement relating the company's core competencies to the agency's specific needs followed by key-word heavy bullet points

TIPS:

- No long paragraphs.
- Use short sentences followed by keyword heavy bullet points
- Create a new document for each agency, prime or teaming opportunity
- Tailor each Capability Statement to the agency mission or specific opportunity
- Call this document a Capability Statement
- Preferably, this Capability Statement is one page, one side
- Go to two sides only if absolutely necessary
- Save and distribute as a PDF, not a Word, PowerPoint or other format

PAST PERFORMANCE

List past customers for whom you have done similar work. Prioritize by related agency, to all federal to other government to commercial contracts. If the past projects do not relate to the targeted agency's needs, do not list it.

TIP: Ideally, include specific contact information for immediate references. Include name, title, email, phone.

DIFFERENTIATORS

Identify what makes you different from your competitors and how this benefits the targeted agency

COMPANY DATA

One very brief company description detailing pertinent data.

LIST SPECIFIC PERTINENT CODES

DUNS Number
Certifications: 8(a), HUB Zone, SDVOB, etc.
NAICS Codes
CAGE Code
GSA Schedule Contract Number
Accept credit cards

Your logo, address, phone numbers (voice, mobile and fax) email, web site and other related contact information.

SECTION THREE: SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAMS

Each federal contracting agency has online information about how to do business with them and support mechanisms for small businesses. The following website links are good places to start in seeking specifics about doing business with them.

AGENCY	WEBSITE
Defense Logistics Agency	http://www.dla.mil/db/
Department of the Air Force	http://www.airforcesmallbiz.org/
Department of Defense	http://www.acq.osd.mil/osbp/
Department of the Army	http://www.sellingtoarmy.info/
Department of the Navy	http://www.secnav.navy.mil/smallbusiness/pages/index.aspx
General Services Administration	http://www.gsa.gov/smallbusiness
U.S. Department of Agriculture	http://www.da.usda.gov/osdbu/
U.S. Department of Energy	http://energy.gov/osdbu/downloads/small-business-program-manager-directory
U.S. Department of Commerce	http://www.osec.doc.gov/osdbu/
U.S. Department of Homeland Security	http://www.dhs.gov/openforbusiness
U.S. Department of Justice	http://www.justice.gov/osdbu/meet-small-business-specialist
U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs	http://www.va.gov/OSDBU/
U.S. Department of Transportation	http://www.osdbu.dot.gov/

Department of Defense Small Business Specialists

The Military Services and some Defense Agencies have small business specialists at each of their procurement and contract management offices to assist small businesses, including veteran-owned, service-disabled veteran-owned, HUBZone, small disadvantaged, and women-owned small business concerns with marketing their products and services to the DOD. Among other services, these specialists provide information and guidance on:

- Defense procurement procedures
- How to be placed on the solicitation mailing lists
- How to identify prime contract and subcontract opportunities



CHAPTER FIVE

SEARCHING FOR OPPORTUNITIES

There are a variety of resources at your disposal to search for contracting opportunities. The specific direction that your firm chooses will depend significantly on the product or service that you provide.

This chapter will cover the following major federal contracting resources:

- Subcontracting Resources
- FedBizOpps
- The DLA Internet Bid Board System (DIBBS)
- Army Single Face Industry (ASFI)
- FedBids
- FedConnect
- The Department of Veterans Affairs

SECTION ONE: SUBCONTRACTING

One of the first choices you should make before you begin pursuing federal contracting opportunities is whether prime contracts or subcontracting opportunities are a better fit for your firm. If, after assessing the capabilities and capacity of your business you conclude that you are not ready to bid competitively for prime contracts, consider the opportunities available through subcontracting.

Subcontracting is an excellent way to gain experience as a government contractor. In addition, it can significantly reduce the lead-time and investment required to enter the government contracting arena. For many businesses, it is the only practical way to enter the market. Subcontracting with a prime contractor can be a profitable experience as well as a growth opportunity for your business.

The many benefits of subcontracting include:

- Less risk
- Reduced investment in time and resources
- Learning federal contracting process gradually
- Increasing annual profits
- Working on large government procurements
- Building direct relationships with large companies
- Increasing visibility
- Focusing on core capabilities
- Gaining experience with a diverse workforce
- Allowing more opportunities for small and small disadvantaged businesses

Prime contractors need small businesses as much as small businesses need them. The reality is that prime contractors, even large businesses, cannot do everything in-house, and they require products or services only qualified small businesses can fulfill.

In addition, large businesses with prime contracts exceeding \$650,000 (except for construction, which is \$1.5 million) must provide a plan with subcontracting opportunities for all categories of small businesses.

Locating Subcontracting Opportunities

Unlike prime contracts, to be effective at subcontracting, the key is to be effective at networking and resourcefulness. You might have to be creative to locate prime contractors in your area, and once you identify them you will need to introduce your firm to them directly.

The good news is that once your firm has established these relationships with prime contractors you will have consistent revenue opportunities going forward. In order to reduce their own hardships related to subcontracting requirements, prime contractors will often use the same small businesses for future projects.

SBA's Subcontracting Network

One indirect approach is through the use of SBA's Subcontracting Opportunities Directory. To find prime contractors that have asked for additional subcontractors, go to <https://www.sba.gov/subcontracting-directory>

FedBizOpps

The Federal Business Opportunities website (discussed in the next section) will not post subcontracting opportunities, but you can use the site to view what large companies have been awarded prime contracts in your area or state. Use the "Award Notices" in FBO's search function to locate these prime contractors. Gather a list of these companies and contact them directly.

FedSpending.org

At this site (also discussed in Chapter 4), you can search for contracting histories for your particular industry and area. This site will list the top awarded contractors within the particular product or service class.

Matchmaker Workshops

The Alabama Procurement Technical Assistance Center offers various networking events that can provide subcontracting opportunities for your company. A Matchmaker workshop is organized like speed dating and provides your company with the opportunity to market your products or services one-on-one to government agencies and prime contractors. To view upcoming Matchmaker Workshops visit AL-PTAC's Event Calendar at <http://al-ptac.org/event-calendar>.

Subcontracting Coordinators

Large prime contractors will typically have subcontracting coordinators in place to handle their company's subcontracting goals. You will want to market your company to these coordinators. Large companies often have subcontracting coordinators on staff because they are not only necessary but also required by law. Under FAR, contracting officers require large businesses that win contracts valued greater than \$650,000 (construction contracts in excess of \$1,500,000) to submit a small business subcontracting plan. The plan includes the name of the person who will administer the program on behalf of the large business.

Supplier Diversity Websites

Many prime contractors offer Supplier Diversity websites to handle and maintain their subcontractor network. These sites will offer online registrations and other key information for potential subcontractors. You can view Alabama Power's Supplier Diversity site at <http://www.southerncompany.com/suppliers/diversity.aspx>.

Teaming Arrangements

Teaming agreements are another type of mechanism available to small businesses that could provide entry-level opportunities for your firm in federal procurement. Teaming agreements are established when two or more companies form a partnership or joint venture to act as a potential prime contractor; or a potential prime contractor agrees with one or more other companies to have them act as its subcontractor under a specified Government contract or acquisition program.

SECTION TWO: FEDERAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES WEBSITE

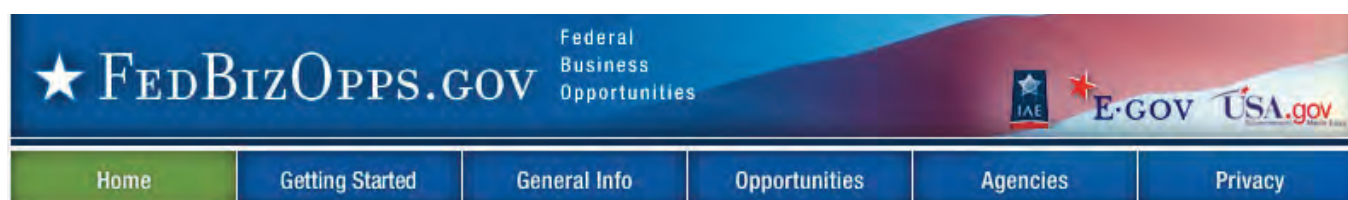
www.fbo.gov

The Federal Business Opportunities (FedBizOpps) is the single government point of entry for federal government procurement opportunities over \$25,000. FedBizOpps will provide you with the ability to search, monitor, and find opportunities solicited by all federal contracting agencies.

Federal agencies are required to post any purchases that are estimated to be over \$25,000 on the FedBizOpps website.

Site Navigation Overview

The Navigation across the top of the login page allows users access to the following features prior to being logged onto the system:



Vendor Opportunity Review Features:

- Vendors can search for opportunities based on the following elements:
 - Keyword/Solicitation#
 - Opportunity/Procurement Type
 - Posted Date
 - Response Deadline
 - Last Modified Date
 - Contract Award Date
 - Place of Performance State
 - Place of Performance Zip Code
 - Set-aside code (“set-aside” solicitations allow only specified business concerns)
 - Classification code
 - NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) code
 - Agency/Office location(s)
 - Recovery and Reinvestment Act Action
 - Active vs. Archived Status
 - J&A Statutory Authority (Justification & Approval)
- Vendors can set up “search agents” based on detailed search elements that highlight newly added opportunities aligning with their search criteria.
- Vendors can add opportunities to a “watched list” list (a “favorites” list). This allows for ease in referencing targeted opportunities. Additionally, vendors will receive updates about opportunities on their Watched List.
- Per the vendor’s profile status, a vendor can review documents associated with the opportunity (Packages).

FBO Registration

You do not have to register to view opportunities in the FedBizOpps site, but there are various details within the solicitations that you may not be able to view unless you are registered.



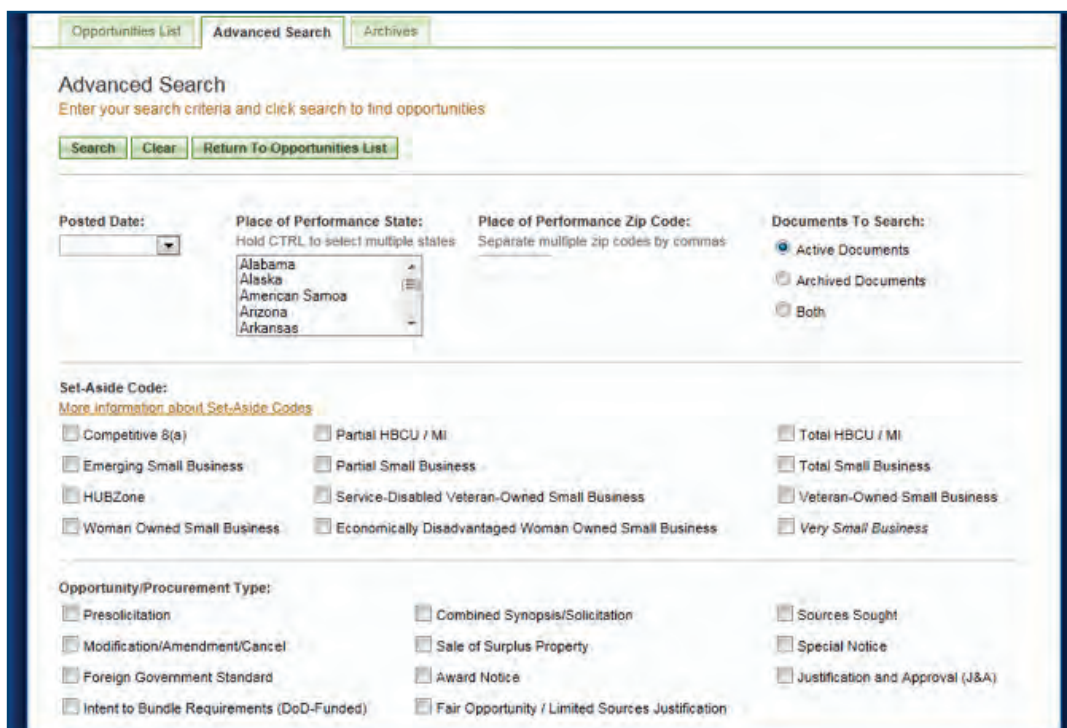
The screenshot shows the 'Vendors / Citizens' registration page. It includes a header with the title and a sub-header stating that vendors and citizens can search, monitor, and retrieve opportunities. Below this are input fields for 'Username' and 'Password', and a 'Login' button. To the right of the input fields are several links: 'Find Opportunities' (with a note that no login is required to view opportunities), 'Register Now', 'Password Reminder', and 'Recovery FAQs'.

1. From the homepage of the FBO site, scroll down and click on the “Register Now” link.
2. The first screen will ask for your DUNS number. If you do not enter it, you will not be able to view certain documents.
3. The next screen will ask for your company information, including your CAGE code.
4. Create your username and password, and log in.

Using the Advanced Search Form

Now that you are logged in, you should be on the “My FBO” page. Click on “Search and Create Saved Searches,” which should take you to the Advanced Searched tab.

- *Posted Date:* You can set the posted date from the last 2 to 365 days.
- *Place of Performance:* If your firm has certain geographic limitations, then you will want to highlight the specific states that you can provide products or services to. If you are constrained to a very specific geographic area you can enter the appropriate zip codes.
- *Documents to Search:* You will want to set this to “Active Documents.” Solicitations on FBO are normally archived 30 days after the bid.
- *Set-Aside Codes:* If your firm qualifies for one of the set-aside programs, you can use this field to limit your results. If you are a small business, you may want to select the “Total Small Business” field.



The screenshot displays the 'Advanced Search' form on the FBO website. At the top, there are tabs for 'Opportunities List', 'Advanced Search', and 'Archives'. Below the tabs, the form is titled 'Advanced Search' and includes a prompt to 'Enter your search criteria and click search to find opportunities'. There are three buttons: 'Search', 'Clear', and 'Return To Opportunities List'. The form is divided into several sections: 'Posted Date' with a dropdown menu; 'Place of Performance State' with a list of states (Alabama, Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, Arkansas) and a note to hold CTRL to select multiple states; 'Place of Performance Zip Code' with a text input field and a note to separate multiple zip codes by commas; 'Documents To Search' with radio buttons for 'Active Documents' (selected), 'Archived Documents', and 'Both'; 'Set-Aside Code' with a link for more information and several checkboxes for various business categories; and 'Opportunity/Procurement Type' with checkboxes for various procurement types.

Advanced Search: Opportunity/Procurement Types

Pre-Solicitation	Will let you know that an agency plans on issuing a solicitation in the near future. Many times, the agency will provide an estimated date for the release of the solicitation.
Combined Synopsis/Solicitation	A synopsis is a brief description of the items that will be in the solicitation document. When an agency simultaneously issues a pre-solicitation synopsis combined with the official solicitation document it is termed a “Combined Synopsis/Solicitation.
Sources Sought, Market Research, or Request for Information (RFI)	An agency may post one of these to gather preliminary information regarding a contract. The preliminary information will help the agency determine what type of contract to post, if any. For example, the agency might be posting one of these to find out if there are any women-owned small businesses capable of supplying a specific product or service. In this type of post, the agency will more often request a capability statement from interested parties.
Modification/Amendment/Cancel	Modifications are used to notify vendors of changes to synopses. Modifications can change specifications, due dates, or can cancel the solicitation all together. An amendment is used when an agency posts changes to solicitation packages. Amendments can change specifications, due dates, or can cancel the solicitation all together. If your firm bids on a solicitation, it will be important that you check the FBO site regularly for Modifications or Amendments to the original solicitation.
Sales of Surplus Property	These are items or solicitations that are surplus to their requirements.
Special Notice	Can cover various elements of federal procurement, including sponsorship opportunities, industry days, upcoming trade shows, etc.
Foreign Government Standard	These notices would be relevant if your firm was planning on shipping a product overseas.
Award Notice	Will provide the details of a bid after it is awarded.
Justification & Approval (J&A)	These documents are required whenever an agency plans to award a contract on sole-source basis. A sole-source solicitation is used by agencies when they believe there is only one qualified contractor to supply the product or service.
Intend to Bundle Requirements (DOD-Funded)	This is a requirement for contracting officers to post notice of intent to use contract bundling procedures 30 days prior to releasing a solicitation or placing an order. This only applies to actions funded solely with DOD funds.
Fair Opportunity/Limited Sources Justification	FAR equires that contracting officers post justifications to FBO whenever they make a delivery/task order award under a multiple-award Indefinite Delivery Vehicle (IDV) and do not provide fair opportunity.

Note: If you are just beginning to search for contracting opportunities for your firm, you should begin by selecting the following types of solicitations:

- Pre-solicitation
- Combined Synopsis/Solicitation
- Modification/Amendment/Cancel
- Special Notice
- Sources Sought

Agency/Office/Locations: In this field you can select specific agencies. For example, use this field if you know there is a certain agency located geographically near your firm or if you know your product or service will only be purchased by certain agencies.

Recovery and Reinvestment Act Action: This field will allow you to search only opportunities funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Unless you know that you want to include or exclude ARRA opportunities, ignore this section.

Keyword or SOL#: The keyword search option in FBO's advanced search allows Boolean search strings ("and," "or," quote marks, etc.). The keyword search feature can be useful if you want to greatly narrow down your search criteria. There is a "tips" button next to this field that offers some great advice in using this feature.

NAICS and Classification Codes: In these fields you will enter your firm's federal contracting codes. You will be able to locate a broader number of results by entering fewer of your firm's respective codes. Be sure to use different combinations of your contracting codes to find various opportunities.

Justification & Approval (J&A): To begin searching for opportunities, you should ignore this portion. When an agency plans to award a contract or solicitation and they believe that there is only one contractor qualified to supply the product or service they will issue a J&A notice. You can use this section to locate the J&A notices if you believe your firm can also supply these products or services. The FAR provides guidance for the requirements information included in the J&A. Pursuant to FAR 6.302 there are limited circumstances that allow for contracting using other than full and open competition. These are:

- 1.6.302-1-- Only One Responsible Source and No Other Supplies or Services Will Satisfy Agency Requirements
- 2.6.302-2-- Unusual and Compelling Urgency
- 3.6.302-3-- Industrial Mobilization; Engineering, Developmental, or Research Capability; or Expert Services
- 4.6.302-4-- International Agreement
- 5.6.302-5-- Authorized or Required by Statute
- 6.6.302-6-- National Security
- 7.6.302-7-- Public Interest

Date Range: In these fields you can specify a date range for your opportunity results. If it is your first time searching for opportunities select "Posted Date Range" and go back about one month.

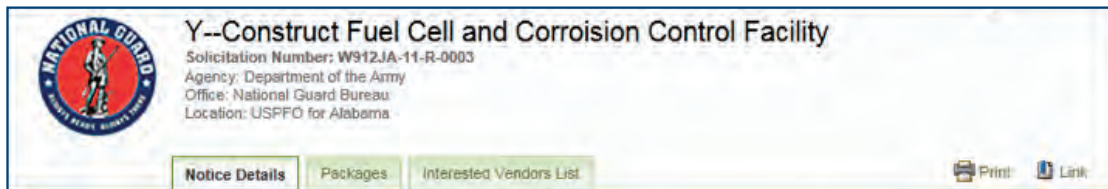
Saved Searches

Saved Searches allows contractors to create automated searches that will be sent directly to your e-mail address. You can set up several automated searches based on various options. At the top of the Advanced Searches page, click on the “Search Agents” link.

The Search Agent Label option enables you to title your search and set up multiple automated searches. Each automated search that you set up can have different parameters. When you have selected the appropriate search parameters for each automated search, click on “Save and Schedule Search Agent” and click the “Yes” button to set up a schedule for the automated searches, and then click “Save.”

How to Read the Results of Searches

As you view the results of your searches, each notice will show a header at the top of the page. This header will provide details including solicitation number, title, locations, and agency.



Below the header will typically be a list of tabs including “Packages” where you may view any technical information regarding the solicitation. Every notice will feature an “Interested Vendors List,” which will reveal any contractors that have indicated interest in the solicitation. The Interested Vendors List is a great way for you to locate your competition in the federal contracting arena and could also provide your firm with subcontracting opportunities. Even if you feel your firm has a slim chance of winning the award, add your company to this list, as it could lead to subcontracting opportunities down the road.

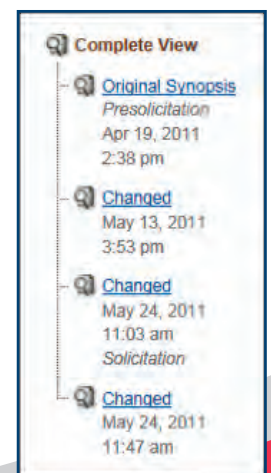
On the right-hand side under “General Information” you will find the Response Date. Always take note of the response date if you are interested in a solicitation. Under General Information you will also find other details like the Set Aside.

Directly above the General Information section is a listing of all the files or documents that have been issued for that particular notice, including any amendments to the solicitation.

On the left side of the solicitation notice will be a file tree outlining any amendments or changes to the notice. Be sure that you pay close attention to any changes or amendments to a solicitation that your firm is interested in. You are required to include any amendments when you submit your bid or proposal. If you fail to do so, it could result in your proposal being rejected.

Point of Contact

Finally, within the Notice Details tab is a Point of Contact (POC). This will typically be the Contracting Officer. Take note of the Point of Contract of any solicitations that relate to your firm even if you do not bid on them. Contacting the Contracting Officers directly can be a great way to market your firm for opportunities in the future. You may also contact the POC if you have any questions or concerns regarding a particular solicitation.



Further Assistance

You should now be on your way to searching for opportunities within Federal Business Opportunities. If you need further assistance regarding the FedBizOpps system, visit the Federal Service Desk at www.fsd.gov.

At the Federal Service Desk you can:

- Find information you need by searching several ways in the Answer Center
- Submit a request online for service
- Check on your help desk ticket online
- Give feedback through a customer satisfaction survey
- Chat live with a Customer Service Representative
- Phone FSD toll free at 1-866-606-8220

SECTION THREE: THE DEFENSE LOGISTICS AGENCY'S INTERNET BID BOARD SYSTEM (DIBBS)

<https://www.dibbs.bsm.dla.mil/dodwarning.aspx?goto=/default.aspx>

The Defense Logistics Agency procures, manages, stores, and distributes almost every consumable item the military needs to operate. Commodities include everything from maritime and land weapons systems support to medical supplies. DLA employs about 26,000 employees. The Agency's headquarters is at Fort Belvoir, in Northern Virginia.



The DLA Internet Bid Board System (DIBBS) is a Web-based system to view and submit secure quotes on DLA items of supply. DLA DIBBS also allows users to search and view Requests for Proposals (RFPs) and Invitations for Bid (IFBs), awards, award modifications, and other procurement-related information.

As a small business entering the federal contracting arena, DIBBS is a great way for you to get your feet wet with contracting. Keep in mind that many of these opportunities are small amounts, but together they can provide significant revenue for your firm.

Federal agencies are required to post all procurements that are estimated to be above \$25,000 onto the FedBizOpps site, so when you are using DIBBS to locate opportunities you should be seeking solicitations less than \$25,000.

Vendor Registration

You are not required to register with DIBBS to search for opportunities, but if you wish to submit quotes electronically you will need to register. Registration can be accomplished by clicking on the "Vendor Registration" link on the home page.

Registration for DIBBS is very simple and streamlined. You will simply enter your firm's CAGE code and your firm's information will be pulled in from your SAM registration. The registration process will provide you with a login account and password.

The registration page will also provide you with the option to receive notifications regarding solicitations that match specified Federal Supply Codes (FSC), National Stock Numbers (NSN), or Approved Manufacturers.

Searching for Opportunities in DIBBS

To begin searching for opportunities on DIBBS you will click on the “Solicitations” tab and search for Requests for Quotes (RFQ’s), which will be opportunities less than the Simplified Acquisition Threshold of \$100,000. As mentioned earlier, focus on opportunities less than \$25,000. Opportunities more than \$25,000 can be found on FedBizOpps.

Within the “RFQ Database Search” you can click on the drop-down arrow to reveal a host of search categories:

- **National Stock Number:** If your firm supplies a particular product of supply that has a designated NSN. See Chapter 2, Section One: Identify Your Product or Service.
- **Federal Supply Class:** You may use this search function to find solicitations under a particular category (i.e. 3895: Miscellaneous Construction Equipment).
- **Solicitation Number:** Use only if you are seeking a particular solicitation or document.
- **Purchase Request Number:** Use only if you are seeking a particular solicitation or document.
- **Nomenclature:** You can use this general search function to search keywords within the main description of the solicitation. For example, to search for solicitations with the word “fire” in them, enter “fire” within the “Search Value” field to locate all solicitations with the word “fire” in them. The wildcard character (*) may be added before or after the search term to expand the search. For example, “*fire” will return solicitations including “Forestfire Rake,” while “fire*” will return solicitations including “Firewall.” The wildcard character (*) preceding search values is only permitted on the Nomenclature Search Category.
- **Approved Part Number:** Use this search function if you are a distributor and know the CAGE code or part number for a particular item.
- **Approved CAGE:** Use this search function if you are a distributor and know the CAGE code or part number for a particular item.

Text Search: In the second column of the RFQ search page will be the “Text Search.” Use this field to search for solicitations with the particular keyword within the main description or in the body of the notice. Keep in mind that this type of search may produce many irrelevant results.

Additional Search Options: you may also search RFQ’s by selecting:



- **Items with Bid Sets:** Selecting this option will eliminate solicitations where the contracting agency has restricted the bidding to certain pre-approved manufacturers.
- **Fast Award Candidates:** These solicitations have an estimated value of \$2,500 or less. It is important that your firm submits a quote quickly, as these solicitations may be awarded before the return date.
- **Small Business Set-Asides:** Narrow your search to solicitations set-aside for small business certifications (i.e. small business, woman-owned, etc.)

- **HUBZone Set-Asides:** Solicitations set aside for HUBZone small businesses.
- **Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business Set-Asides:** Solicitations set aside for Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses.
- **Combined Set-Asides:** solicitations with a combination of all set-asides.
- **Auto-IDPO:** Indefinite, Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) awards are estimated below the Simplified Acquisition Threshold of \$100,000. An auto-IDPO awards solicitations automatically by using pricing parameters and automated filters.

Your firm may also search the RFP/IFB database from the DIBBS page, but we recommend that you use the FedBizOpps website to search for opportunities over \$100,000 to maximize your firm's opportunities.

SECTION FOUR: ARMY SINGLE FACE INDUSTRY (ASFI)

<https://acquisition.army.mil/asfi/>

The ASFI is the U.S. Army's designated site to host all Army contracting opportunities. Army contracting personnel use the application to post procurement notices.

Vendors (also referred to as 'industry') use the application to locate and respond to Army solicitations for goods and services. You should use ASFI to search for opportunities with an estimated value less than \$25,000, as all other opportunities will be listed in FedBizOpps. You may also be referred to this site from a FedBizOpps posting or solicitation.

Although the ASFI is a publicly accessible site, some features are restricted to government personnel only and require ASFI registration and approval to use these features. To use most of the ASFI industry features, vendors must have an active SAM registration.

User guides for ASFI are at https://acquisition.army.mil/asfi/ASFI_FAQ.cfm. These guides provide more detailed instructions on the use of specific ASFI application features.

ASFI Benefits for Contractors:

- The ASFI provides vendors with a single point of access to all U.S. Army contracting opportunities.
- The Contracting Opportunities Search feature allows vendors to easily locate opportunities and submit offers/bids online if electronic submission is authorized.
- The Vendor Notification Service allows vendors to request email notification of solicitations that meet their search criteria based on contracting office and/or NAICS code.
- Vendors may use the ASFI to respond to Army opportunities via the secure Bid Response System. To use the Bid Response System, vendors must have an active SAM registration. This is validated each time a bid response is initiated within the ASFI.
- Vendors may access their solicitation bid history for summary information on offers/bids placed within the last 60 days.
- Procurement Notifications allow vendors to search for solicitation award postings. *Note: Not all award postings are available on the ASFI. Vendors should also search for award postings at FedBizOpps (www.fbo.gov).



**Army Single Face to Industry (ASFI)
Acquisition Business Web Site**

"Serving the U.S. Army Acquisition Community"

SECTION FIVE: FEDBID ONLINE REVERSE AUCTION

<http://www.fedbid.com/>

FedBid, Inc. is a privately held company that provides an online marketplace where the government buys commodities. FedBid provides online procurement services, including Reverse Auction and associated support services, through The Buyer-Driven Online Marketplace.



Focusing primarily on federal, state, and local government agencies and associated prime contractors, FedBid is the leading online marketplace for public sector acquisition of commodities, from computer products, security gear, and office supplies to tools, laboratory supplies, and equipment.

“Small businesses are our nation’s job creators, creating two-thirds of the net new jobs across the country. They drive innovation, producing up to 16 times more patents per employee than large patenting firms. And, small businesses are the heart and soul of our cities and towns – where Main Street businesses and their owners are pillars in their communities, providing not only jobs, but also leadership in areas including philanthropy, education and government”.

Joe Jordan, CEO at FedBid

What is a Reverse Auction?

A reverse auction is a competitive process in which a buyer solicits bids from sellers during a period of time set by the buyer. During the reverse auction, sellers have the opportunity to submit a single bid or multiple bids that decrease in price. On FedBid, sellers do not see competitors’ names or prices but do see a bid status of either LEAD or LAG, depending on their bid price.

Requests and contracts are issued very quickly at FedBids, so you will need to make sure you are organized before you participate. Be very sure you know your company’s profit margins. You will not have time to search for a supplier, calculate pricing, etc.

Registration

You will need to register on FedBid in order to view and submit offers. Seller registration is a two-part process that requires certain confirmations and approvals.

Part 1 of the registration process involves offline completion of FedBid's online registration form for the Seller organization.

1. Go to www.fedbid.com and click on "Seller Sign In."
2. On the Seller Log In page, click "Continue" in the Create an Account box.
3. On the FedBid Seller Registration page, click on the first letter of your company name in the Company Name Index, and review the dropdown list to see if your company is already registered with FedBid. If so, continue to Part Two.
4. If your company is not already registered, submit the online FedBid Seller Registration Form by clicking on the Form link.
5. FedBid will review the information and compare it with data posted on both the federal government's Central Contractor Registration (CCR) at www.ccr.gov and the Excluded Parties List (EPLS). Once FedBid has confirmed the company's information on CCR and that it has not been included in the EPLS, FedBid will add the company's information to the FedBid database, and FedBid will contact the specified Seller POC within one business day to complete Part 2 of the registration process.

Part 2 involves registration of individual sales agents under a company that has previously registered on FedBid.

1. Go to www.fedbid.com and click "Seller Sign In."
2. On the Seller Log In page, click "Continue" in the Create an Account box.
3. On the FedBid Seller Registration page, click on the first letter of your company name in the Company Name Index, select your company name from the dropdown box, and click "Continue."
4. Complete the Sales Agent form and click "Continue."
5. On the confirmation page review all information entered. If you need to make changes, click "Edit." If the information is complete and correct as entered, click "Submit Registration."
6. FedBid will then activate the sales agent account and send the sales agent an e-mail with a link for creating a password and security question. After creating these two items the sales agent can begin using FedBid.

Note: Sellers should review their socio-economic classifications as well as their individual category/subcategory selections on a regular basis in order to ensure they are viewing the most relevant opportunities possible.

Example: A seller will not be able to view a procurement that is restricted to small businesses if that seller is not registered as a small business.

Searching for Opportunities on FedBids

Review “buys” in the “Opportunities” section of the “My Home page.” The “Opportunities” tab will be divided into “My Opportunities” and “Marketplace Opportunities.” “My Opportunities” will show bid opportunities based upon the specific information you entered in your company profile. The “Marketplace Opportunities” tab is where you can search and view all other bid opportunities.

The “Opportunities” page will show you the FedBid reference number, a brief description of the requirement, the purchasing agency, and an indication of whether the item is being purchased Open Market or through GSA Schedules. The item may indicate GSA Schedules Preferred, GSA Schedules Required, or Open Market (indicating that the items do not need to be listed on a GSA Schedule). The “buy end date” will also be listed with a countdown timer.

Viewing Buys

To view the specific details of a buy, click on the 5-digit Buy Number located to the left of the bid description under Opportunities. To decline to Bid, click on the “No-Bid” button to the right of the description. This will notify the buyer that you have viewed the opportunity but have determined not to submit a Bid. The solicitation will then be removed from your Opportunities list. If you change your mind later and wish to bid on a Buy for which you previously submitted a No-Bid, you can view those Buys under the Active Bids tab/No Bids sub-menu. In order to view all of your Bids, you will need to click the “Complete List” tab under Active Bids on the dashboard, or go to the top of your screen and click on the “Active Bids” tab.



Submitting a Bid on FedBids

Submitting a Bid is fast and easy. Assuming pricing has been prepared, the process takes approximately 5 minutes to enter the data. (Please note that it may take longer based on the number of line items in the Buyer’s request.) The process consists of a few simple steps:

1. Click the “Buy #” link to the left of each Buy Description.
2. After reviewing Buy Specifications, click “Place Bid.” Please note that some Buys may include bad specs (e.g., discontinued, end of life, wrong part number). If you are unable to deliver the line item as requested due to a bad spec, DO NOT BID, unless the Buy terms instruct otherwise. Instead, notify FedBid by clicking the “Submit a Question” button in the FedBid system.
3. Complete the first page of the Bid form, which includes general Bid description, seller internal reference number information, acknowledgement of compliance with Buyer’s contract request and Buy terms, and click “Continue.”
4. Complete the second page of the Bid form, which contains all pricing and line item description responses, and click “Continue.” Use extreme care in this phase as you are committing to provide the specific item(s) at your stated price. All opportunities on the FedBid system are “all or nothing” (unless otherwise stated within the specification), so you MUST bid all of the requested items; no partial bidding is allowed.
5. Review the Bid Confirmation Page then click “Submit Bid.” Please note that your Bid will not be received unless this step is completed.

6. View immediate Bid Status of LEAD or LAG. (LEAD means that a Bid is in the lead position at a specific moment in time during the Buy process; LAG means that a Bid is not in the lead position at a specific moment in time during the Buy process and that it may be lagging to competitor Bids and/or an Active Target Price.)
7. You may submit a single price and leave it or adjust your pricing accordingly. For example, your initial bid might be \$500 and you may reduce your price by \$20 until you either reach the LEAD position or you reach your company's minimum price, which will be the point that you withdraw.

Note: You may submit any questions regarding the bid opportunity by clicking on the "Submit a Question" link on the top of the page.

If you have any questions on FedBid or you would like additional information, visit the seller's information section of the site at <http://www.fedbid.com/sellers/>.

SECTION SIX: FEDCONNECT

www.fedconnect.net

FedConnect is a centralized marketplace where vendors seeking to do business with the US Federal Government can find opportunities for contracts and awards. There is no charge for using FedConnect. Simply register with FedConnect and begin applying for contracts and grants.

Federal agencies currently subscribed to FedConnect:

- Department of Energy
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Department of the Interior
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Small Business Administration
- Social Security Administration

Hosted by Compusearch and provided as a cloud computing solution, FedConnect bridges the gap in the electronic acquisition and grants management processes by helping government agencies efficiently capture and manage both transactions and interactions with vendors/grant applicants in a structured and secure environment.

FedConnect is much more than just an advertising site for government opportunities. FedConnect provides secure, bi-directional communication between the government and vendors/grant applicants, as well as the ability for direct submission of bids, proposals, and grant applications directly into the agency acquisition/grants management systems. Once the award determination is made, FedConnect can deliver the award and manage all post award communication and activity with the vendor/grant recipient.

FedConnect Registration

Before you can register with FedConnect, you will need the following:

- Your company's DUNS (and plus 4 extension if applicable).
- An active SAM registration.
- If you are the first person from your company to register, FedConnect will need to create a company account.

1. Click "Register as a Vendor."

This link is available on the FedConnect home page at www.fedconnect.net.

2. Fill in the requested information.

The email address that you enter on this page will become your FedConnect user ID and will be used for all communication between FedConnect and you. Make sure that any SPAM filters you or your company may use are set up to allow communication from the fedconnect.net URL. If not, important notices and alerts might never reach you.

3. Click the "Register" button.

4. FedConnect will confirm your SAM registration.

This process normally takes just a few seconds. If your registration is valid and active, FedConnect will create a FedConnect company profile for you, download your address from SAM, and populate preferences such as your SAM-specified NAICS and PSC/FSC codes.

5. FedConnect will create a personal account for the person creating the company account and will make that person a FedConnect administrator. Since the person who sets up the initial company account on FedConnect must know your agency's MPIN, that person is designated as an administrator for the FedConnect company account. As an administrator, that person will be able to perform a variety of management duties within FedConnect, including updating company information and activating or denying registration requests by others in your company.

6. An email will be sent to the new administrator.

Once the registration is complete, the new administrator will receive an email notification that the account has been activated.

SECTION SEVEN: THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

<http://www.va.gov/>

The mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs is one of service to more than 27 million veterans who have so unselfishly served their country. To accomplish this mission, the products and services of industry are required by a nationwide system of hospitals, clinics, Veterans Integrated Service Networks (VISN), data processing centers, and National Cemeteries which require a broad spectrum of goods and services. The VA purchases these goods and services on a national, regional, and local level. Regardless of how large or small your business is, the VA is a potential customer.

In FY2014, the VA spent over \$168 million within Alabama. There are numerous opportunities in contracting to the VA; the following are the top products or services purchased by the VA within Alabama by PSC code:

Veteran-Owned and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses

In 2009, the VA issued a final rule that created a set-aside program specifically for Veteran-Owned and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VOSB and SDVOSB). If your firm is a VOSB or SDVOSB, there are substantial opportunities within the VA:

- VA contracting officers must set-aside procurements between \$100,000 and \$5 million if they expect two or more eligible contractors to submit a fair and reasonable offer.
- VA Contracting Officers are allowed to award sole-source contracts to VOSB or SDVOSB for awards from \$3,000 to \$5 million.
- Contracting Officers are also required to give these firms priority over all other socioeconomic groups.

Veteran Verification Program

If your firm is VOSB or SDVOSB and you wish to participate in the VA's program you must register at the VetBiz website, www.vetbiz.gov to get CVE (Center for Veterans Enterprise) verified. Several of our PTAC counselors are certified to assist you with this effort.

Searching for Opportunities with the VA

If you are interested in contracting with the VA, they encourage small businesses to contact each facility directly for inclusion into their procurement process. The following are major VA Medical Centers located within Alabama:

Birmingham VA Medical Center

700 South 19th Street
Birmingham, AL 35233
205-933-8101

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System

West Campus

215 Perry Hill Road
Montgomery, AL 36109
334-272-4670

Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center

3701 Loop Road East
Tuscaloosa, AL 35404
205-554-2000

Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System

East Campus

2400 Hospital Road
Tuskegee, AL 36083
334-727-0550

While the VA purchases many of its products and services through either FedBizOpps or through their own General Services Administration Schedules, they also use various other programs for contracting.



National Contract Service

National Contract Service is one of three services within the National Acquisition Center (NAC). The NAC is a centralized contracting unit within the Office of Acquisition and Logistics (OAL) in the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The National Contract Service is made up of four branches:

- Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacy (CMOP)
- High Tech Medical Equipment (HTME)
- Medical/Surgical
- Pharmaceutical

Within these four branches are the program responsibilities for High Tech Medical Equipment, Pharmaceutical, Subsistence and Medical/Surgical Standardization, Pharmaceutical Repackaging, Specialized Contracting for the Consolidated Mail Outpatient Pharmacies and Pharmaceutical, Subsistence and Medical/Surgical Prime Vendor Distribution Programs. These programs encompass such commodities as high tech medical equipment, pharmaceuticals, direct-to-patient distribution, I.V. solutions and sets, prescription vials, medical and surgical supplies, dental supplies and equipment, and just-in-time prime vendor distribution programs for pharmaceutical, subsistence and medical/surgical items. Most of the solicitations for these contracts and agreements are competitive, best value procurements. The performance period for these contracts is normally one year with up to four option years.

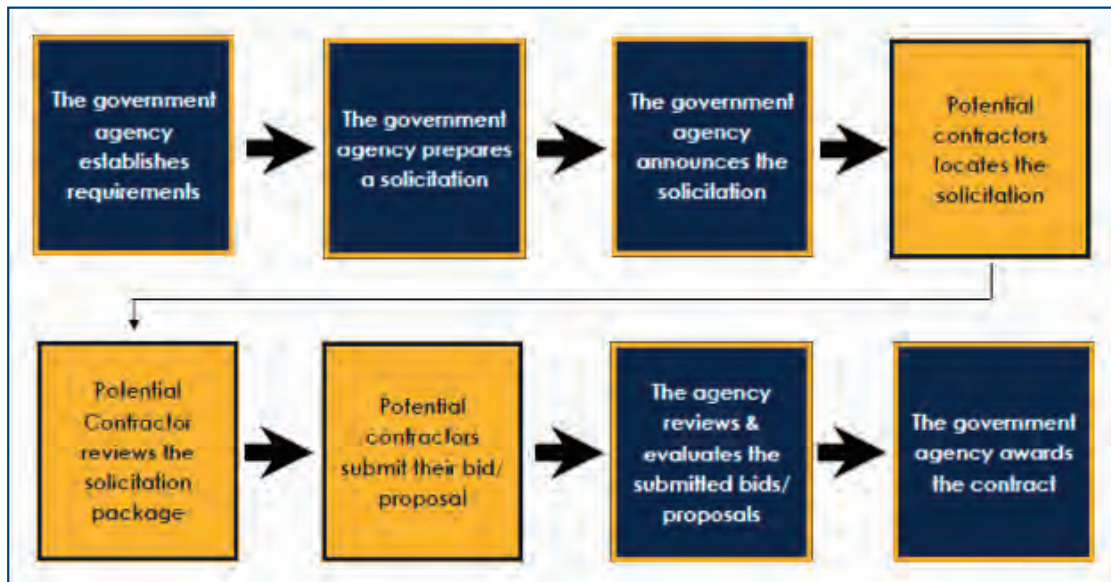
If the National Contract Service sounds like a good fit for your company's capabilities visit <http://www.va.gov/oal/about/nacncs.asp> for more information.



CHAPTER SIX

UNDERSTANDING SOLICITATIONS

The federal procurement process is highly structured to ensure that the award of a contract is accurate and fair. In the basic federal procurement process, acquisition personnel, after determining their agency's requirements (the goods and services the agency needs), post a solicitation on the Federal Business Opportunities (FedBizOpps) website. Interested companies prepare their offers in response to the solicitation, and, in accordance with applicable provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), agency personnel evaluate the offers. Below is a simplified summary of the federal procurement process:



The first step is to obtain a solicitation package or bid package. The solicitation notice will tell you how to obtain the package. Most solicitation packages may be obtained via the Internet. However, some agencies may require companies to request the solicitation package and will provide a hard copy.

How to determine a “fit” with an agency’s needs

It is not often that a solicitation comes out that is just the right project for your company. An opportunity may meet your financial goals in terms of new business, but the more important question is: Are my team and my company’s capabilities appropriate for this project?

The fit is the first criteria that agency proposal evaluators judge to determine qualified companies. You must be able to demonstrate through both past experience and innovative approaches that your company can meet the procurement needs of the agency. The need for a good fit is why it is essential to present your company’s capabilities to the procurement contacts before you ever bid on a project from that agency. A good procurement office will guide you through the process; therefore, it is especially important to visit those agencies or facilities that appear to have a need for your capabilities.

Government procurement personnel should be able to suggest some disciplines or talents that you may want to acquire or at least be able to access through teaming. An agency may require specialized equipment, ties to a certain geographic area, or other credentials that will be important to be credible on an upcoming solicitation.

Research on past agency contracts is very important. There may be special rules about pricing – e.g., use of part-time workers, consultants, travel and unallowable costs – that are not always obvious in the solicitation itself. You should be able to obtain examples of winning proposals through a direct request or a Freedom of Information Act request. Pricing data is proprietary, but technical proposals are not. Others in your field may also be of assistance in terms of determining agency needs, preferences, or even biases. It is always helpful to talk with a peer who has been through the process before. You may even team with such a person in a mutually-beneficial partnership. Look for someone in your field of endeavor who may be able to provide valuable insight.

How to Determine What Not to Bid On

Deciding which proposals not to bid on can be critical in terms of wasted time and resources. A lot of businesses put a great deal of effort into a bid and proposal that has very little likelihood of being a winner.

Obvious questions include: Is there an incumbent? Is the incumbent eligible to bid on this solicitation? If, for instance, it is a set-aside for an 8(a) (a type of SBA Small Disadvantaged Business certification allowing one to conduct business with the federal government), the incumbent firm may have graduated from the 8(a) program and therefore cannot bid. If there is an incumbent, ask around to see if the project work they conducted met the agency's needs in a satisfactory manner.

- If there is an incumbent, and they have been doing a good job...you might want to find another opportunity.

It is also important to find out exactly what credentials the agency is looking for in a contractor. If it is a stretch for your company to qualify, you may be able to team with another bidder to present a more unified proposal, with each company bringing different strengths.

- If it is marginal for your firm...don't bid.

It is important to be on the lookout for deal breakers. Carefully check the past performance, staffing, personnel, and evaluation criteria as well as the scope of work (SOW) requirements. Make a realistic assessment of your strengths and weaknesses. You may be able to overcome weak areas by teaming with a person who has the capability your company may lack.

It always makes sense to keep careful notes for your file. Such a paper trail is important in case of a need to protest an award. In any event, if you do not win, when available, be sure and get a debriefing and find out exactly where your proposal came up short.

Be on the lookout for prime contractors who may be large businesses looking for a small/minority business teaming partner or who may want to subcontract with a small business (in the case of a set-aside). In any event, be sure to:

- Meet the prospective buyers
- Plan for their future requirements
- Assess pre-solicitation/solicitation requirements
- Review evaluation criteria
- Have the right experience
- Take the time to prepare a quality response

SECTION TWO: HOW THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT BUYS

Micro-Purchases

All purchases up to \$3,000 in individual items, or multiple items whose aggregate amount does not exceed \$3,000, are classified as “micro-purchases” and can be made without obtaining competitive quotes. These purchases are not reserved for small businesses. Agencies can make micro-purchases using a government credit card.

Credit Card Purchases: According to GSA SmartPay, there are currently over 350 agencies/organizations using government credit cards. These agencies are spending \$30 billion annually, through 100 million transactions on over three million cards. There is no requirement for a federal employee to obtain a competitive price if a purchase is under \$250. For purchases ranging from \$251 to \$3,000, the federal employee must attempt to secure a minimum of three competitive verbal quotes from approved vendors.



Sealed Bids - Invitations for Bid (IFB)

Sealed bidding, which used to be termed “formal advertising,” is a method of contracting that solicits the submission of competitive bids, followed by a public opening of bids. A contract is awarded to the responsive and responsible bidder whose bid is most advantageous to the government, considering price and price-related factors. This process involves an Invitation For Bid (IFB), which typically includes a description of the product or service to be acquired; instructions for preparing a bid; the conditions for purchase, packaging, delivery, shipping and payment; contract clauses to be included; and the deadline for submitting bids. Each sealed bid is opened in public at the purchasing office at the time designated in the invitation.

An IFB is a competitive method of awarding a contract for procurements of more than \$100,000 in estimated value. The contracting agency knows exactly what and how many of the products or services it needs, as well as when and how the products and services are to be delivered. The award will typically be based on price.

Responding to an IFB requires filling out the government bid-package forms. However, you must be extremely careful when completing these documents. The government will closely review the package.

Government-wide IFBs are available daily for review at www.fbo.gov.



Contract Negotiation - Request for Proposal (RFP)

This type of solicitation occurs when an agency is not certain about what it wants and is looking for contractors to develop a solution and cost estimate (i.e. architectural plans). In addition to standard forms, the contractor will have to submit his/her own proposal with the necessary plans, drawings, personnel information, and any other documents that will demonstrate the business’s capability to manage the contract.

In certain cases, when the value of a government contract exceeds \$100,000 or when the product or service being acquired is highly technical, the government may issue a Request for Proposal (RFP). A typical RFP solicits proposals from prospective contractors on how they intend to deliver the requested product or service, and at what price. Proposals can be subject to negotiation after they have been submitted.

This type of solicitation can be either competitive or non-competitive. Responding to this type of proposal can be costly and time-intensive, so be sure that the solicitation matches your firm's capabilities before you respond to it.

Request for Quote (RFQ)

When the government is merely checking into the possibility of acquiring a product or service, it may issue a Request for Quotation (RFQ). A response to an RFQ by a prospective contractor is not considered an offer, and cannot be accepted by the government to form a binding contract. Direct links to government-wide RFPs and RFQs are available daily for review at FedBizOpps.

This type of solicitation is often used to determine current market pricing. The quote you submit is not a binding offer and cannot be accepted by the government. A Standard Form 26, which requires the signatures of both the contractor and the contracting officer, would be required to make the offer binding.



One of the most significant changes in government acquisition is the increased importance of “best value.” Rather than making awards to the lowest bidder, as it generally did in the past, the government can now make awards for the item that best satisfies its needs at a slightly higher price. If an agency is going to make a contract award based on best value, it must state its intent in the solicitation document and include a description of the evaluation criteria, award conditions, and factors other than price that will be considered in making the award.

When evaluating best value in an RFQ, contracting officers may consider, among other things, any or all of the following:

- Ability to provide special features of the product or service that is required
- Environmental and energy efficiency considerations
- Maintenance availability
- Past performance of the contractor
- Probable life of an item as compared to the life of a comparable product
- Trade-in considerations
- Warranty considerations.

Consolidated Purchasing Programs

In many cases, Federal agencies can make purchasing more efficient and effective by centralizing the purchasing of some products or services. Many times, these purchases are common needs such as carpeting, furniture or office supplies. There are various types of purchasing vehicles that fall under this type of program:

Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ)

IDIQ contracts are most often used for service contracts and Architect-Engineering (A/E) services. Awards are usually for base years as well as options years. The Government will use an IDIQ contract when it cannot pre-determine, above a specified minimum, the precise quantities of supplies or services that the Government will require during the contract period. Many times, the solicitation document will give an estimated quantity, and sometimes a guaranteed minimum.

Blanket Purchasing Agreement (BPA)

A Blanket Purchase Agreement is a simplified method of filling anticipated repetitive needs for supplies or services by establishing “charge accounts” with qualified sources of supply. Many times, the BPA is a multi-year contract that will allow the agency to purchase items as needed throughout the life of the contract. At the end of the contract term the agency may reissue the solicitation, allowing other companies to compete for the contract.

BPA's offer the following types of benefits to agencies:

- Provide opportunities to negotiate improved discounts;
- Satisfy recurring requirements;
- Reduce administrative costs by eliminating repetitive acquisition efforts;
- Permit ordering activities to leverage buying power through volume purchasing;
- Streamline ordering procedures;
- Permit ordering activities to incorporate Contractor Team Arrangements (CTAs)
- Reduce procurement lead time; and
- Permit ordering activities the ability to incorporate terms and conditions not in conflict with the underlying contract

Broad Agency Announcement (BAA)

A BAA is a method of soliciting proposals for R&D using notices published on the Federal Business Opportunities (FedBizOpps) website and federal laboratory websites.

Request for Information (RFI)

An RFI or Market Research, or Sources Sought Notice is used when an agency wants to find out if a commercial solution to its needs exists. In this type of request, there is no guarantee that the agency will issue an actual solicitation. The agency may request contractors to submit a capability statement. More often than not, the agency just wants to know if there are contractors capable of providing the product or service.



Sources Sought

Contracting agencies will post a sources sought when they are interested in whether there are enough interested and capable vendors to accomplish a particular requirement so as the government feels assured they may set the requirement aside to satisfy one of its small and/or disadvantaged contracting requirements.

SECTION THREE: HOW TO PREPARE A PROPOSAL

Solicitations consist of standardized forms that must be completed, as well as an explanation of your plan for solving the stated problem and meeting the requirements. Your proposal must include all requested and relevant supporting documentation. In addition, your proposal must be easy to understand, concise, and complete.

When requesting a bid package, be sure to:

- Have the correct solicitation number
- Ask for or look for any amendments or changes to the requirements or terms that might have been issued

It is important to read the solicitation package very carefully, as it contains all of the information you will need to respond with your offer. The solicitation package will include the following information:

- What the agency wants to procure
- The type of contract (e.g., fixed-price, cost-reimbursement, time and materials, etc.)
- Quantities, timeframes, and delivery schedules
- Special requirements or conditions
- The point of contact (POC) with a phone number

You should fully understand what the agency is requesting and what you are proposing to provide. If the contract is awarded to you, your bid/proposal constitutes a binding contract and you will be required to fulfill the terms of the contract as specified.

What to Find in a Request for Proposal (RFP)

Most solicitations will be in the form of an RFP. Additionally, most RFPs are available in an electronic format and can be downloaded. Although there are standard sections in any RFP, the most important are: Section C – the statement of work (or performance work statement); Section L – proposal preparation instructions; and Section M – the evaluation criteria. Be sure to analyze these sections carefully.



The standard sections of an RFP are:

Section A - Solicitation/Contract Form. This section identifies the title of the procurement, procurement number, point of contact (POC), how to acknowledge amendments, and how to indicate “No Response” if you decide not to bid. Section A often appears as a one-page form.

Section B - Supplies or Services and Prices/Cost. This section provides a listing of all supplies, data and services to be acquired. This section also provides pricing information, identifies the type of contract, identifies Contract Line Item Numbers (CLINs), and provides Sub-line Item Numbers (SLINs) that identify billable items, describes period of performance, identifies option periods, if any, and provides cost and pricing guidelines.

Section C - Description/Specification/Statement of Work. This section describes what the Government wants you to do or supply. Outside of your pricing, most of your proposal will be responding to this section, telling them how you will deliver what they need. Sometimes this section is contained in a separate appendix, and it is frequently associated with other appendices in Section J with details to enable the bidder to understand the nature and scope of the tasks requested in Section C.

Section D - Packaging and Marking. This section defines how all contract deliverables such as reports and materials will be packaged and shipped. This information is important because these instructions may affect costs and raise logistics issues.

Section E - Inspection and Acceptance. This section describes the process by which the Government will officially accept deliverables and what to do if the work is not accepted. This process can also affect costs and identifies tasks you must be prepared to undertake.

Section F - Deliveries or Performance. This section defines how the Government Contracting Officer will control the work performed and how you will deliver certain contract items by describing the time, place, and method for delivering the procured line items, sub-line items, and services.

Section G - Contract Administration Data. This section describes how the Government Contracting Officer and your firm will interact and how information will be exchanged in administration of the contract to ensure both performance and prompt payment.

Section H - Special Contract Requirements. This section contains a range of special contract requirements important to the particular procurement, such as procedures for managing changes to the original terms of the contract, government furnished equipment (GFE) requirements, and government furnished property (GFP) requirements.

Section I - Contract Clauses. This section identifies the contract clauses incorporated by reference in the RFP. These clauses will be incorporated into the contract. Although this section does not require a separate response, its terms are binding. The appropriate regulation clauses from the FAR/DFARS will be selected and inserted into this section.

Section J - List of Attachments. This section lists the appendices to the RFP. These attachments can cover a wide range of subjects ranging from technical specifications to lists of GFE, and are generally used to provide data you need in order to respond to the Statement of Work. The list will include a title, date, and number of pages for each attachment. Documents that might be identified in Section J include:

- Specification
- Statement of Work
- Statement of Objectives
- Training Systems Requirements Document
- Training System Functional Description
- List Of Addressees For Contracts Data Requirements List (CDRL) Exhibits
- DD Form 254, Contract Security Classification Specification.

Section K - Representations, Certifications and Other Statements of Offerors. This section contains information that you must certify to bid on the contract: certification that you have acted according to procurement integrity regulations, your taxpayer identification, the status of personnel, ownership of your firm, type of business organization, authorized negotiators that your facilities are not segregated, that you comply with affirmative action guidelines, whether you qualify as a small business, disadvantaged business, and/or women owned business, etc. A large amount of this section is now covered by an active SAM registration.

Section L - Instructions, Conditions, and Notices to Offerors or Respondents. This section provides instructions for preparing your proposal. These instructions may include formatting requirements, how the material should be organized or outlined, how to submit questions regarding the RFP or procurement, how the proposal is to be delivered, and sometimes notices, conditions, or other instructions. For example, the instructions may specify further organization of proposal or response parts, such as:

- Administrative
 - Management Technical
 - Logistics
 - Past performance
 - Cost or pricing data (see Table 15-2 of FAR 15.408), or information other than cost or pricing data.
-

Section M - Evaluation Factors for Award. This section defines the factors, sub-factors, and elements that the government uses to grade the proposal. The government grades proposals and then considers cost to determine who wins the award and gets the contract.

Responding to a Solicitation

Your response to a government solicitation is called an offer. There are two types of offers: bids and proposals. Bids are used in sealed bidding purchases, while proposals involve awards to be made following negotiations. The type of bid or proposal you will develop and submit to the agency will depend on the type of solicitation the agency published.

Bids and proposals should always be prepared with utmost care. Contracts awarded on erroneous offers may result in serious financial loss or other difficulty for the bidder. Before preparing an offer, you should carefully study the specifications to ensure that your company can meet all the requirements. Particular attention should be given to the instructions and to the conditions of purchase, delivery and payment.

When determining the amount of your offer, you should be especially careful to include all costs of material, labor, overhead, packaging, and transportation. Also, you should be sure to comply with such important provisions of the solicitation as submitting the required number of copies, mailing the offer in sufficient time to reach the purchasing office before the closing date, and properly tagging, marking, and mailing any required samples well in advance of the opening date.

If you want to change or withdraw a bid, you may send a letter to the purchasing office. However, the notification must reach the office prior to the time set for the sealed bid opening. When preparing a proposal on a negotiated procurement, the same care should be taken as with a sealed bid. However, because the negotiated purchase procedure is more flexible than the sealed bid procedure, there is greater opportunity to seek modification of specifications, conditions of purchase, or delivery and payment. If the contracting officer decides to negotiate on your company's proposal, a complete cost analysis may be required. Therefore, your company should be prepared to support the quotation with facts and figures.

Organizing Your Proposal

Your proposal must demonstrate that:

- You understand the agency's need
- You understand the product or service requirements
- Your proposed solution meets (or exceeds) the requirements, is appropriate to the problem, is viable, is without great risk of failure, and is reasonably priced

In addition, you may be asked to include:

- Relevant product samples
- Resumes of key personnel
- Management plans
- Other documents that demonstrate your company's capability to fulfill the requirements

These requirements illustrate why it is important that you have a capabilities statement completed.

Most proposals are divided into three sections: (1) technical, (2) costing, and (3) past performance. The technical section will consist of how you will respond to the scope of work. The costing section includes your estimated cost, the number of employees who will perform the work, and the time it will take to complete the project. The past experience section includes a list of pertinent projects, contacts, and clients that demonstrates your relevant exposure to the requirement.

You may include any documentation you think strengthens your proposal; all supporting documentation that is requested in the RFP must be submitted to be considered for the contract award. Regardless of the type of offer you are preparing, there are certain guidelines that you should follow:

- Make sure that the products and services you are offering fulfill the needs (meet the requirements, as stated in the solicitation)
- Make sure that you complete and submit all of the appropriate standardized forms
- Make sure that your offer is clear, concise, and understandable
- Make sure that your pricing makes sense for you and the government

Also, if there is a page limit, be sure you do not exceed it. (Sometimes attachments like resumes are not included in the limit.) Remember, the contract is awarded to the vendor whose proposal achieves the highest score in the evaluation. The award decision is fully documented to withstand public scrutiny and a possible legal protest from a losing vendor.

It is also important, both in the technical and past experience sections, that you stress certain highlights, such as:

- Your company has experience supporting the requesting agency or similar work
- Your company has successfully performed on a project of similar work scope and complexity
- Your company has credentialed staff or has access to required personnel that can be directed to this project
- Your company has work facilities in close proximity to project work site

Forms you Might Encounter in Sealed Bids

Among the forms that you might be required to submit in a sealed bid are:

- **Standard Form 33, Solicitation, Offer, and Award.** The government uses this form to solicit offers and award the contract. The bidder completes and signs the form, which constitutes the bid. Upon acceptance of the bid (award), the government signs the same document, establishing a binding contract.
- **Standard Form 30, Amendment of Solicitation/Modification of Contract.** The government uses this form to amend (change the requirements of) the solicitation before it closes or to modify the contract once it has been awarded. The government completes and sends the form to the bidder or contractor for signature.
- **Standard Form 1149, Solicitation/Contract/Order for Commercial Items.** The government uses this form to buy, ship, and receive commercial items when using simplified acquisition procedures.

Responses to sealed bids will consist of the forms provided in the bid package that you have completed.

Forms you Might Encounter in RFQ

Among the forms that you might be required to submit in response to an RFQ are:

- **Standard Form 18, Request for Quotation.** The government uses this form to obtain company information and the quote.
- **Standard Form 26, Award/Contract.** The government uses this form to specify the contract conditions if a contract is awarded.
- **Standard Form 44, Purchase Order-Invoice-Voucher.** The government uses this form for on the spot, over-the-counter supplies and services where the supplies or services are immediately available, and one delivery/one payment will be made.

An RFQ may require the submission of a proposal.

How to Price a Response

Make sure that your pricing makes sense for you and the government. Carefully consider your pricing as it is binding if you are awarded the contract.

You should identify and estimate every cost such as direct labor, fringe benefits, materials and services, overhead, royalties, and travel. In addition, you should research past historic costs for similar contracts to get an idea of your projected costs.

Your cost strategy should be based upon information provided by the federal agency and your competition, as well as your company's goals. You should always research the agency in order to obtain information about the agency's budget and target price.



Make sure you accurately calculate your figures in order to avoid mathematical errors. You do not want to lose a contract because your bid was too high or be hit with a substantial loss because you miscalculated your bid. Make sure your budget analysis is clear, concise, and easy to understand.

Consider the following when you establish your price:

- Your fully loaded costs to provide the products and services
- What your competitors might bid to provide the same products or services
- A reasonable profit

If your response involves either service or construction workers, be careful to adhere to the wage determinations established (often on an area or regional basis) for certain categories of workers. Federal contracting officers must make sure that all pertinent contracts adhere to these rates – whether covered by the Service Contract Act or the Davis-Bacon Act. These rates also specify fringe benefit rates for each classification of worker.

Wage determinations change frequently, so it is best to go online to the U. S. Department of Labor’s website (<http://www.dol.gov/>) and follow the link to the Wage and Hour Division. From there you can find the rates for the region or area where the workers will be.

It is extremely important to follow and conform to the various regulations affecting the proper pricing of proposals and preparations of bids.

How the Government Evaluates a Bid

Whether or not your firm wins the award is based upon price, past performance, socioeconomic programs, and other evaluation factors. Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) clearly specify that ALL offers must be evaluated according to the criteria announced in the solicitation.

The technical evaluation of a product may include the examination of provided specifications, product samples, technical features, warranty, and product literature. The technical evaluation of a service-oriented bid might include how well your firm understands the service to be performed, your firm’s past performance in keeping budget and schedules, and your firm’s managerial structure. Your firm must demonstrate that it fully understands the requirements of the project.

Contract officers will often use the following types of evaluation methods to award a solicitation:

Past Performance Evaluation

One of the most important factors federal agencies consider in negotiating procurements is the past performance of a contractor. Contract Officers have the ability to access the performance evaluations from a contractor’s prior federal contracts.

Small Business Cascading Evaluation

The evaluation process begins with the solicitation being issued for a small business set-aside; for example, a woman-owned small business. Cascading refers to the small business set-aside offer moving to a lower tier if the competition is inadequate at the tier of the original solicitation. For example, the first priority might be to award the contract to a woman-owned small business, but if there is not adequate competition at that level (adequate competition is considered two or more qualified contractors) then the CO might move on to HUBZone contractors, and so on.

Procurement Automated Contract Evaluation

The Department of Defense Internet Bid Board System (DIBBS) uses an automated evaluation system known as PACE. The PACE system solicits, evaluates, and awards automatically.

Automated Best Value System (ABVS)

The Automated Best Value System (ABVS) collects vendor past performance data and translates the data into numeric scores. DLA contracting officers use those scores as an additional evaluation factor when making best value award decisions.

DLA vendors receive scores based upon their consolidated performance history across the three DLA hardware centers. Scores are assigned for each Federal Supply Class (FSC) the vendor performed on during the rating period which includes the past two years for fully shipped lines and the past three years for lines not fully shipped. The vendor also receives an overall DLA score which is a weighted average of the vendor's individual FSC scores for all business conducted with DLA.

ABVS FSC scores are derived from individual delivery and quality factors and range from zero to a perfect score of 100. DLA provides vendor access to all negative data used in the score calculations. Vendor access is restricted to only those data and scores related to that vendor.

The following Discrepancy Codes are used to reference negative data about your company:

- A1 – A5 Stored Material Deficiencies
- C1 – C6 Supplies Damaged or with Expired Shelf-Life
- L1 – L8 Wood Product Deficiencies
- P0 – P8 Packaging Deficiencies
- Q1 – Q7 Product Quality Deficiencies
- T1 – T6 Technical Data Deficiencies
- W0 – W9 Wrong Item/Incomplete Item Shipped
- X1 – XL Damaged Material

Contractors with no past performance history will not be evaluated favorably or unfavorably. A “999.9” value is used to designate those instances where a contractor is unscored (has no past performance history), has no history for the particular FSC, or has no history for the timeframe being rated. Updated ABVS scores and negative data are posted at the ABVS Vendor Web Site available to DLA vendors at <http://www.aviation.dla.mil/UserWeb/proc/ABVM/Abvm.htm> The data is updated daily.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (GSA)

SECTION ONE: GSA OVERVIEW

GSA is America's only source solely dedicated to procuring goods and services for the government. GSA is the federal government's business manager, buyer, real estate developer, telecommunications manager, and IT solutions provider. GSA offers businesses the opportunity to sell billions of dollars worth of products and services to federal agencies through contract vehicles.

GSA advertises locally and nationally. All GSA contracting opportunities over \$25,000 are advertised on FedBizOpps available at <http://www.fedbizopps.gov>.

Office of Small Business Utilization (OSBU)

The Office of Small Business Utilization's mission is to promote increased access to GSA's nationwide procurement opportunities.

Small business specialists at GSA headquarters and in 11 Regional Offices advocate for small businesses, including those owned by women, minorities, socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, and Armed Forces veterans.

To learn more about how GSA is there for small businesses and what programs they offer, click here: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/105221>



Vendor Support Center

The Vendor Support Center (VSC) is the online source for vendors to research the federal market, report sales, and upload information to GSA Advantage!®. The VSC website contains a wealth of information to assist both potential and existing contractors in maximizing the success of their respective contracts. It's the perfect starting point for researching the federal market, or gaining more information about any of GSA's contracting vehicles.

To be successful under the GSA Schedules program, new vendors should be prepared to take necessary steps to be productive in a highly competitive marketplace - visit For Vendors - Getting on Schedule to learn more. <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/category/100635>

GSA Schedules

The GSA Schedules program is the premier acquisition vehicle in government, with approximately \$50 billion a year in spending or 10 percent (10%) of overall federal procurement spending.

GSA Schedules are fast, easy, and effective contracting vehicles for both customers and vendors. For GSA Schedules, GSA establishes long-term, government-wide contracts with commercial companies to provide access to millions of commercial products and services at volume discount pricing.

GSA continually updates the offerings under the GSA Schedules program, and aids vendors in being successful in the government marketplace. Particularly, the GSA Schedules program has a strong record of small business achievement.

To be successful under the GSA Schedules program, vendors should be prepared to take necessary steps to be productive in a highly competitive marketplace. Having a GSA Schedule contract is a significant investment on the part of the vendor and GSA. Careful analysis, planning, and proactive steps are required to ensure vendors are successful under the GSA Schedules program.

SECTION TWO: GETTING STARTED WITH GSA SCHEDULES

First, you must carefully consider whether or not you have the resources to pursue a Schedules contract, and the time to both market and compete for business once you have a contract. Submitting an offer involves many steps, and the process may take months to complete. However, submissions are accepted continuously, allowing you to decide when to pursue the solicitation process.



GSA has developed the Vendor Toolbox, which is a collection of resources that will ultimately help you decide if getting a GSA Schedule contract is in your best interests. It contains educational information that includes online training, links to vital acquisition websites, and tips for success in the federal market. You can access the Vendor Toolbox through our Vendor Support Center.

The GSA Schedules program offers great opportunities for both large and small businesses. It is often the first step new businesses take when entering the federal marketplace. Being on Schedule makes it easier for agencies to do business with your company. However, becoming a Schedules contractor may involve significant investments of time and resources – which is why the first step for all interested businesses is to think it through.

The Vendor Toolbox outlines important questions to answer before preparing a solicitation response:
<https://vsc.gsa.gov/RA/toolBox.cfm>

SECTION THREE: WRITE UP A BUSINESS PLAN

Being on a GSA Schedule is not a guarantee of government sales. Vendors should understand that once a contract has been awarded, they are responsible for marketing both their company and their GSA contract. Vendors should be prepared to compete with other contractors on Schedule for request-for-quotes issued by government agency customers.

Before committing to the Schedule contract process, experts recommend that firms create a business plan that includes items such as:

- An estimate of the expected Return on Investment;
- A marketing plan; and
- A determination of whether or not you have dedicated personnel for this new venture.

SECTION FOUR: FIND THE RIGHT SOLICITATION

After your company has decided to pursue a Schedules contract, you must first find the correct Schedules solicitation for your offerings. Review the information at the GSA Schedules Solicitations page. This provides a brief description of the acquisition centers and the specific GSA Schedules, including links to GSA eLibrary and to FedBizOpps. GSA eLibrary is the online source for GSA and VA Federal Supply Schedule award information, and includes descriptions of each Schedules' Special Item Numbers (SINs). At FedBizOpps you can search all active federal opportunities and download the solicitation files and instructions related to a particular contract.



SECTION FIVE: GETTING REGISTERED AND CERTIFIED

After carefully considering whether or not you have the resources to pursue a Schedules contract, and the time to both market and compete for business once you have a contract, you must complete a number of registrations and certifications before responding to a solicitation. Complete these administrative steps now, so you will be prepared to complete the solicitation process later.

With the exception of the Past Performance Evaluation, the following registrations are free:

- **DUNS** – The nine-digit Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS), managed by Dun & Bradstreet, is a widely accepted, unique identifier for companies around the world.
Note: Link goes to a nongovernment site.
- **SAM** – All records from the Central Contractor Registration (CCR)/FedReg and Online Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA) and exclusion records from EPLS, active or expired, were moved to the System for Award Management (SAM). CCR collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of agency acquisition missions. Vendors should remember to update their registration annually. ORCA offers a consolidated certification process to be applied to all Schedules solicitations and federal contracts. Vendors must update information annually to make sure it is complete and accurate, especially regarding size status.
- **Past Performance Evaluation** – Open Ratings, a Dun & Bradstreet company, surveys past customers in order to assess a company's work performance. Your company must register and provide the names and email addresses of six to 20 of your customers. This service has a fee.
Note: Link goes to a nongovernment site.

SECTION SIX: RESPONDING TO A SOLICITATION

Your firm has completed the vendor toolbox training, decided which GSA Schedule contract is the best fit, and preliminary registrations have been completed. Now you can dedicate the required time and resources to respond to a GSA solicitation. Go here for further instructions: <http://www.gsa.gov/portal/content/202577>



Completing the Solicitation

Once you have found the appropriate solicitation, be sure to read all documents thoroughly, so you understand all of the requirements. Failure to submit all required documentation may result in your offer being returned. This will greatly increase the processing time. You may contact the person listed on Standard Form 1449, (page one, block seven) of each solicitation, with any questions.

Some basic guidelines a successful vendor should always follow:

- Read the solicitation thoroughly and follow the instructions.
- Provide the requested information in the appropriate format.
- Submit your completed Standard Form 1449 with your electronic signature when responding. Only the person legally authorized to enter into contracts for your company should sign the form.
- Submit a dated copy of your commercial pricelist(s), with the appropriate Special Item Number (SIN) next to each offered item. Also include the Commercial Sales Practice Format (CSP-1), to provide details about your pricing history.
- Pay close attention to the pricing included in your submission, and be ready to negotiate your best offer for the government. All products or services offered in your pricelist should be within the scope of the solicitation as well as the specific SIN(s) being utilized. Take the time to understand all the requirements detailed in the solicitation. Once on contract, your company will be responsible for adhering to all relevant portions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation.

Offer Review Process

GSA's offer review process usually takes between 30 and 120 days. A complete and accurate offer will help speed the process – a majority of offers are returned to the vendor for correction or clarification. The review is handled by a GSA Procurement Contracting Officer (PCO), who evaluates the offer based on the following criteria:

- **Responsibility** – You should be in a healthy financial state, i.e., financial resources to perform are available, accounting system and controls are in place and a good record of positive past performance is evidenced.
- **Responsiveness** – Follow all instructions and include the necessary documentation.
- **Scope** – Ensure your offered products or services match the Schedule / SIN descriptions.
- **Subcontracting plan** – Large businesses are required to have a plan in place for subcontracting a percentage of their work to various types of small businesses to help agencies achieve their socioeconomic goals. Contact the Small Business Administration (SBA) Commercial Marketing Representative (CMR) with questions about the subcontracting program and for help locating resources.
- **Pricing Analysis and Review of Terms** - Prices should be fair and reasonable, with appropriate data supporting and explaining the pricing structure.

Negotiation and Contract Award

Once the PCO completes a review of the offer, if necessary, a meeting will be scheduled to discuss terms and negotiate pricing. If additional information is needed prior to awarding a contract, the PCO will send a deficiency letter that explains what is needed. The goal of negotiations is to create a discount ratio in regards to your Most Favored Customer (MFC). Your MFC is the customer or class of customers who obtain your best pricing and discounts. After negotiations, you must prepare a final version of your offer, including discounts or concessions agreed upon at the meeting.

If an offer fails to meet the evaluation criteria or offer fair and reasonable pricing, it may be rejected. If an offer is rejected, you can request a meeting with the PCO for an explanation. You can alter and re-submit the offer based on feedback received in this meeting.

If the offer is accepted, you will receive a Schedules contract and will be eligible to start doing business with the government through the Schedules program.

Next Steps

A new Schedules contract brings great opportunities for federal sales. However, these do not come without important contract compliance responsibilities and a concerted effort to market your business. Newly awarded Schedules contractors are encouraged to read about Managing a Schedules Contract.



SECTION SEVEN: MANAGING A SCHEDULES CONTRACT

Congratulations! Your company has started the Schedules process by responding to a solicitation, and has been awarded a Schedules contract. All of your hard work has paid off and you are about to take a major step toward connecting your business with government customers. However, there is still a lot of work to be done in order to maximize your contract's potential.

Becoming a Schedule contract holder is not a guarantee of sales. In order to be successful in the federal marketplace,

you must market your company's offerings amidst a competitive pool of existing contractors and continue to manage your contract throughout its lifespan. GSA Schedule contracts are issued with a five-year base period, with the potential of three five-year options.

This page walks you through your responsibilities as a GSA contractor and offers resources and strategies for maximizing business opportunities.

First Steps as a GSA Contractor

Preparing an offer is not the only time there are administrative tasks to complete. New GSA Schedule contractors must also complete important contract administration tasks when building a customer base. They include:

- Register with the Vendor Support Center. This site provides training, publications, and resources for helping contractors achieve success.
- Begin with the “New Contractor Orientation Webcast” and “The Steps to Success” guide, which can be found under the Vendor Support Center Publications tab.
- Refer to the Training for Vendors page and to Events for Vendors With Government Contracts.
- Create, distribute, and maintain your company pricelist. New contractors are required to upload their current approved pricelist to GSA Advantage!®, GSA's online shopping and ordering system, within six months of contract award. Two copies of the pricelist should also be forwarded to your GSA Procurement Contracting Officer (PCO) within 30 days of award. The information on GSA Advantage!® should be kept current throughout the life of the contract.

Marketing to the Government

The success of your Schedules contract will require active promotion of your business to potential customers. The way in which you market is up to you. If you are a small business, a good place to look for opportunities is the web page section of each agency entitled, “Forecast of Opportunities.” Each agency's Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization specialist (SDBU) posts this information early in each fiscal year. Be sure to subscribe to the “Schedules Contractor Success - Marketing Matters!” group on GSA's Interact, and view the webinar video series.

Your Potential Customer Base

Your customer base includes organizations eligible to Use GSA Sources of Supply and Services [PDF, 648K], such as executive, military, and other federal agencies. Through Cooperative Purchasing and Disaster Purchasing, state and local governments can also use Schedules.

Government buyers can post a Request for Quote via eBay, a component of GSA Advantage!®. Schedules contractors can submit quotes to any RFQ corresponding to the Schedule and Special Item Numbers (SINs) listed in their contract. eBay is an excellent tool for finding new business and is only available to contractors on Schedule or on a Governmentwide Acquisition Contract (GWAC). Watch for orders or BPAs that may be set aside for small businesses.

You can also use FedBizOpps to search for active federal opportunities. Government buyers are required to post any open market procurements over \$25,000 at FedBizOpps (excluding such vehicles as Schedules, GWACS, and orders under agency IDIQ contracts). Please note that FedBizOpps is not used for GSA Schedule buys, but it serves to inform interested companies about federal contracting opportunities.

Sales Strategies

In addition to the myriad of resources available on the web, these are a few smart strategies that will help maximize your business opportunities.

- Optimize your web presence by placing the GSA logo on your website and providing a link to your online pricelist. Be sure to read and follow the GSA Star Mark Logo Policy.
- Include your company web address on your pricelist.
- Train your personnel about your GSA Schedules contract – how should be used, and how to best promote your business to potential government customers.
- Small Business Goals: If your company is a small, disadvantaged, women-owned, HUBZone, veteran-owned, service-disabled veteran-owned, or economically disadvantaged women-owned business, know that all federal agencies set Small Business Goals, which aim to put a percentage of procurement dollars toward these business categories. Additionally, ordering activity contracting officers may, at their discretion, set aside orders or BPAs for small businesses. Learn more about how to participate through GSA's Office of Small Business Utilization.
- Contractor Team Arrangements (CTAs): If the scope of your contract cannot meet all of a customer's requirements, you may work with another Schedule contractor. In a CTA, two or more Schedule contractors work together to meet the needs of a customer.
- Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPAs): Setting up a BPA based on your Schedule contract (for terms and conditions) is a way to obtain regular business from a customer with repetitive needs for the product(s) or service(s) you offer. Because a BPA brings in continuous sales, it is appropriate to offer additional price discounts to your customer as part of the agreement.



Maintaining Your Contract

In order for your Schedule contract to be maintained by GSA, your company must accrue at least \$25,000 of GSA reportable sales during the first 24 months of your contract, and maintain an additional \$25,000 in sales each year thereafter.

There are a few additional responsibilities for properly maintaining your Schedules contract. Contracts may be cancelled, or options not exercised, if you do not meet contract requirements. Some of these include:

- Report sales and remit the Industrial Funding Fee (IFF) to GSA. Sales reports and the IFF (currently 0.75 percent of total sales) are both due 30 days after the end of each quarter. Visit the 72A Quarterly Reporting System for more information.
- Participate in Contractor Assistance Visits (CAVs). These are site visits by GSA's Industrial Operations Analysts (IOA) that occur at least twice during a five-year contract period. CAVs are not audits and are intended to assist and educate contractors to get the most from their contract. The Administrative Contracting Officer (ACO) will issue a Report Card with feedback on your compliance with the contract.
- Keep registrations and certifications up to date. These include Central Contractor Registration (CCR) and other certifications made when your company responded to a Schedules solicitation. Remember that most certifications will require an annual update. If you are a small business, be sure to update your size status and applicable NAICS codes annually.

Further details can be found in the "Steps to Success" guide found in the Publications section of the Vendor Support Center.

How to Modify Your Contract

During the life of your contract, it may be necessary to request modifications to its terms and conditions. Modifications may include adding or deleting a product or service SIN, reducing/increasing your price, or making administrative changes. Modifications are to be requested online via eMod, a module of the eOffer site you used to submit your solicitation response.



Contract Policies and Obligations

The following is a brief overview of many of the significant policies and obligations pertaining to your contract. For any advice or clarifications, contact your GSA Procurement Contracting Officer (PCO), or visit the Vendor Support Center.

- **Maximum Orders.** Schedules contractors are obligated to accept any order from an executive agency that is below the Maximum Order threshold. Outside of the executive branch, a contractor is encouraged though not required to accept an order under this threshold. For orders over the Maximum Order threshold, agencies will generally expect a price break due to the large volume of the sale. The Maximum Order threshold is determined on a schedule by schedule or sometimes on a SIN by SIN basis.

- Orders and Blanket Purchase Agreements that Exceed the Simplified Acquisition Threshold (SAT) For orders exceeding that SAT and for Blanket Purchase Agreements established under Schedule contracts for which the total of all orders is expected to exceed the SAT, federal agencies are required to request additional price reductions from the Schedule prices. Ordering activities must compete requirements over the SAT among three Schedule contract holders, unless appropriate procedures are followed for limiting the sources.
- What Qualifies as a Schedules Sale? If the product or service falls within the description of the SINS on your contract and the customer is an eligible ordering activity, the sale is a Schedules sale although in some cases, the ordering activity may indicate exceptions to this. You must have a tracking system and methodology in place that allows you the ability to differentiate between Schedules and non-Schedules sales – correct sales reporting is a contract requirement.
- Price Reductions. The prices negotiated on your Schedule contract will be based on a customer or class of customer with which you currently conduct business. This customer will be known as your Basis of Award. You must maintain your approved Basis of Award discount relationship that has been established in your contract, as a minimum. This means that, with a few exceptions, if you lower your prices to that customer (or class of customer), you are obligated to make the same reduction for your Schedules contract. It does not mean that if you offer additional price breaks for orders under your Schedule contract that identical breaks must be provided to all ordering activities under all circumstances.
- Trade Agreements Act (TAA). The federal government maintains a list of countries with which it has trade agreements. If a country does not have a trade agreement with the United States, then you may not provide these products or services on your GSA Schedules contract. The TAA states that all products purchased by the government must be manufactured or “substantially transformed” in the United States or in one of these listed countries. The TAA pertains to all Schedules contract sales.
- Government Purchase Card. Schedules contractors must accept the government purchase card for all sales up to \$3000.



APPENDIX

Additional Resources

There are numerous resources that can provide your small business with assistance on federal contracting:

Alabama Procurement Technical Assistance Center

<http://al-ptac.org/>

Small Business Administration

www.sba.gov

Women-Biz

www.womenbiz.gov

www.Recovery.gov

This website is the government's official site providing information about the 2009 American Recovery Act (ARRA).

www.whitehouse.gov/Recovery

Additional information on the Recovery Act.

www.FederalReporting.gov

This site provides details of the reporting requirements.

Business Partner Network

www.bpn.gov

The Business Partner Network will provide users with several key databases across Federal Agencies.

www.grants.gov

The Federal Grants website contains information on more than 1,000 grant programs. By registering your firm on this site, you can apply for grants from 26 different Federal Agencies.

www.USA.gov

USA.gov is the U.S. Government's official site and will provide federal contracting information as well as other resources.

Minority Business Development Agency

www.mbda.gov

The MBDA is a part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, which was created specifically to foster the establishment and growth of minority-owned businesses in the U.S.

Integrated Acquisition Environment (IAE)

www.acquisition.gov

At IAE, your firm can learn more about regulations, systems, resources, opportunities, and training.

SBA Resources

SBA offers a wide variety of resources for small business owners to help them learn about and profit from government contracting opportunities. Here are some of the resources you can draw on as a government contractor.

Federal Business Opportunities (FedBizOpps)

<https://www.fbo.gov/>

FedBizOpps is a comprehensive listing of all government procurement opportunities over \$25,000.

ACRONYMS

APG	Aberdeen Proving Ground	FR	Federal Register
ATTI	Aberdeen Technology Transfer Initiative	FSC	Federal Supply Code
ARL	Army Research Laboratory	FSS	Federal Supply Schedule
ARS	Agriculture Research Service, USDA	GC	Government Contracting
BAA	Broad Agency Announcements	GCE	Global Computer Enterprises
BARC	Beltsville Agricultural Research Center	GFE	Government Furnished Equipment
BDO	Business Development Office	GFP	Government Furnished Property
CAGE	Commercial and Government Entity	GOMA	Governor's Office of Minority Affairs
CCR	Central Contractor Registration	GPE	Government Point of Entry
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations	GSA	General Services Administration
CLINS	Contract Line Items	GSFC	Goddard Space Flight Center
COC	Certificate of Competency	GWAC	Government-wide Acquisition Contracts
CRADA	Collaborative Research and Development Agreement	HHS	Department of Health and Human Services
CSM	College of Southern Maryland	HUB Zone	Historically Underutilized Business Zone
DA	Department of the Army	IAE	Integrated Acquisition Environment
DBED	Maryland Department Business and Economic Development	IFB	Invitation for Bid
DFARS	Defense Federal Acquisition Regulations	MBIA	Maryland Business Incubation Association
DHS	Department of Homeland Security	MSBDC	Maryland Small Business Development Center Network
DLA	Defense Logistics Agency	MTA	Material Transfer Agreement
DOC	Department of Commerce	MTPI	Maryland Technology Partnership for Innovation
DOD	Department of Defense	MTTF	Maryland Technology Transfer Fund
DOE	Department of Energy	NAICS	North American Industry Classification System (replaces SIC code)
DUNS	Data Universal Number System	NAWCAD	Naval Air Warfare Center – Aircraft Division
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation	NBIA	National Business Incubation Association
FDA	Food and Drug Administration	NC	National Cancer Institute
FBO	FedBizOpps	NIH	National Institutes of Health
FFRDC	Federally-funded R&D Center		
FDTTI	Fort Detrick Technology Transfer Initiative		
FPDC	Federal Procurement Data Center		

NIST	National Institute of Standards and Technology	SBIR	Small Business Innovation Research Program
NTCI	Naval Air Systems Command (NAVAIR) Technology Commercialization Initiative	SDB	Small Disadvantaged Business
NTIS	National Technical Information Service	SDVOSB	Service Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business
OED	Office of Economic Development	SIC	Standard Industrial Classification (replaced by NAICS codes)
ORCA	Online Representations and Certifications Application	SLINs	Subline Items Numbers
OSBU	Office of Small Business Utilization	SOW	Scope of Work
OSDBU	Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization	STTR	Small Business Technology Transfer Program
PLA	Patent License Agreement	TEDCO	Maryland Technology Development Corporation
POC	Point of Contact	TSA	Test Service Agreement
PPE	Past Performance Evaluation	UCF	Uniform Contract Format
PSC	Product Service Code	UMES	University of Maryland Eastern Shore
PTAC	Procurement Technical Assistance Center	USAMRMC	United States Army Medical Research and Materiel Command
PTAP	Procurement Technical Assistance Program	USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
R & D	Research and Development	USNA	United States Naval Academy
RBI	Rural Business Incubation Initiative	UTDF	University Technology Development Fund
RFI	Request for Information	VETS	Veterans Technology Services
RFQ	Request for Quotation	VHA	Veteran's Health Administration
RFP	Request for Proposal	VOSB	Veteran-Owned Small Business
SBA	Small Business Administration	WCLF	Working Capital Loan Fund
SBDC	Small Business Development Center	WOSB	Woman-Owned Small Business



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