



Guide to Doing Business with the Federal Government

A Twelve Step Program for Success

1. Become familiar with the SBA/GC Internet Homepage.

The SBA offers a wide array of programs and “hands-on” assistance to small businesses considering the federal marketplace. Go to our website at <http://www.sba.gov/GC/> and familiarize yourself with the services we offer. From this site you can identify local SBA contracting experts who can be an invaluable resource to you, whether you are new to government contracting or are currently doing business with the Government and are seeking advice on how to deal with a particular issue. From the “Resources and Opportunities” section on our website, you will find links to additional procurement-related programs and assistance. In addition, this site provides information about other SBA resources including Small Business Development Centers, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), and Women’s Business Development Centers. Log onto the SBA/GC website today and find out why we believe that it is truly the entrance ramp to the Government’s procurement Super-Highway.

2. Determine if your firm qualifies for one of SBA’s Certification Programs.

Formal certification by small business concerns is not required to bid on Federal contracts. Firms self-certify that they are small at the time of bid/proposal submission. The SBA currently has 3 contracts-related certification programs. Our 8(a) Business Development program assists eligible small businesses to compete through business development assistance. Although primarily a business development program, there are certain contracts restricted to certified 8(a) concerns. Certification in our Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) and Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) programs entitles qualified firms to special bidding benefits in the Federal-contracting arena. To learn more about these programs and to determine if your firm qualifies for 8(a), SDB, or HUBZone certification go to the SBA website (<http://www.sba.gov/>) and click on “Business Opportunities” and then select which program you are interested in under “Contracting Program Topics.” An online training course for the three certification programs is also available at <http://www.sba.gov/training/certprograms.html>.

3. Identify your product or service.

It is helpful to know the Federal Supply Classification Code (FSC) and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Code for your product or service. Many government product/service listings and future procurements are identified by FSC at <http://www.dlis.dla.mil/h2/>. Detailed information regarding NAICS can be found on the SBA website by clicking onto: https://eweb1.sba.gov/naics/dsp_naicssearch2.cfm. **NOTE:** Effective October 1, 2000, Small Business Size Standards for all Federal Government programs formerly associated with Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes were replaced by those that SBA has established for industries as described in the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). SBA has established a new table of small business size standards based on NAICS (www.sba.gov/size/)

4. Obtain a DUNS Number

Contact D&B at <http://www.dnb.com/> to obtain a DUNS number.

5. Register in the Centralized Contractor Registration (CCR) System.

The Central Contractor Registration (CCR) is a database designed to hold information relevant to Federal Government procurement and financial transactions. CCR affords you the opportunity for fast electronic payment of your invoices. You must be registered in CCR to be awarded a contract from the Department of Defense (DOD) and certain other Federal agencies. To learn more about CCR log onto the website at <http://www.ccr.gov/>. It’s *f-r-e-e* to register.

SBA has now integrated its PRO-Net database of small businesses with the CCR. There is now only one portal for entering and searching for small business sources. Contracting Officers are able to log into CCR and search for small businesses in the *Dynamic Small Business Search*. This database is used extensively by Federal Government buying offices as well as many large prime contractors to identify firms for prime and subcontracting opportunities. So it's in your best interest to periodically review your profile to ensure that it is current, up-to-date and accurately reflects your firm's capabilities.

6. Identify current Federal procurement opportunities.

As of January 2, 2002 Federal Business Opportunities (FedBizOps) <http://www.fedbizopps.gov/> – the designated government-wide point of entry- is the exclusive official source for public access to notices of Federal contracting actions over \$25,000. (Agencies are also encouraged to use FedBizOps to provide notices for actions less than \$25,000). FedBizOps is the one-stop Internet gateway to procurement opportunities. You can register with FedBizOps to have solicitations and notices in your commodity sent to you by email periodically. Once you have identified those Agencies and buying offices that purchase your products and services, it's a good idea to contact them directly to learn more about upcoming procurements (i.e., procurement forecasts) posted on websites or electronic bulletin boards. For example, to identify current DOD procurement opportunities in your product or service area, check the DOD Business Opportunities website: <http://www.dodbusopps.com/>.

7. Familiarize yourself with the Government's contracting procedures

Be familiar with Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) (<http://www.arnet.gov/far>) and the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) <http://www.acq.osd.mil/dp/dars/>. You can also get access to other Federal agency FAR supplements from their respective WebPages. These are the guidelines by which the Federal Buying Activities purchase.

8. Investigate Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) contracts.

The General Services Administration (GSA) manages Multiple Award Schedules (MAS) contracts, also known as Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) contracts. Under MAS/FSS, contracts are awarded to multiple companies supplying comparable products and services at pre-negotiated prices, terms and conditions. Once GSA awards the contracts, Federal Contracting officers from all federal agencies and other authorized users order directly from the Schedule contractor. Contact the General Services Administration (GSA) for information on how to obtain a MAS/FSS contract: <http://www.fss.gsa.gov/> (Be sure that your CCR profile contains information on any MAS/FSS contracts held by your firm).

9. Seek additional assistance as needed in the Federal marketplace.

There are a number of important resources that are available to provide you with "hands-on" assistance in the Federal marketplace:

-SBA Procurement Center Representatives (PCRs) and Commercial Marketing Representatives (CMRs) SBA has a nationwide cadre of procurement professionals who are charged with assisting small businesses and acting as their advocates at both the prime and subcontracting levels. PCRs assist small firms interested in doing business, as prime contractors, directly with Federal agency buying offices. Our CMRs work with those small firms interested in identifying subcontracting opportunities with large businesses that have been awarded a Federal contract. To identify the PCR or CMR located nearest to you go to <http://www.sba.gov/GC/indexcontacts.html>.

-Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (www.dla.mil/db/procurem.htm) are located in most states to provide small business concerns with information on how to do business with the Department of Defense. They provide training and counseling on marketing, financial, and contracting issues at minimal or no cost.

-Small Business Specialists are located at each Federal buying office and can provide assistance on how to market to that Agency. A complete listing of Small Business Specialists can be obtained from each Agency's website. For example, links to the homepages of every DOD activity can be found on the *DefenseLink website*: <http://www.defenselink.mil/>. This information can be invaluable in researching the Federal marketplace and identifying your target market. Links to *Agency Procurement Forecasts* (<http://www.sba.gov/GC/forecast.html>) and other program information are available on their individual websites.

10. Explore subcontracting opportunities/ Accept credit cards

Regardless of your product or service it is important that you do not neglect our very large secondary market, subcontracting opportunities with Federal Prime Contractors. Be sure to check out our website at <http://www.sba.gov/GC/indexcontacts-sbsd.html>. The SBA/GC Subcontracting Opportunities Directory lists, by state, large business Federal prime contractors along with the name and telephone number of each firm's Small Business Liaison Officer (SBLO). We encourage you to investigate potential opportunities with these firms. Many of these firms also have websites that may be useful and we encourage you to contact their respective SBLO for subcontracting and teaming opportunities. Some large prime contractors have also posted current commodities that they are seeking small businesses for on SBA's SUB-Net site (<http://web.sba.gov/subnet/>).

More than 250,000 Federal employees are using the GSA Smartpay cards. As a vendor you can maximize your ability to capture government sales by accepting credit cards (Visa, MasterCard and Voyager). If you already accept these cards, you have no additional work to do. If you do not accept these cards contact a bank to establish a merchant account. For more information, visit GSA's website at <http://pub.fss.gsa.gov/services/gsa.smartpay/>

11. Investigate other Federal programs.

There are several other programs that may be of interest you, such as individual Agency Mentor-Protégé Programs, the SBA's Small Business Innovation Research Program <http://www.sba.gov/sbir/indexsbir-sttr.html>, etc. Information on these and other programs is available on Agency websites <http://www.sba.gov/gc/indexresources.html>, and "click on" miscellaneous links to other Federal Government Acquisition sites.

12. Market, Market, Market!

The 3 most important words to remember in order to be successful in the Federal Procurement Arena is market, market, market. Hopefully, this guide will have given you some good ideas on how to market your firm. After you have identified your customers, researched their requirements, and familiarized yourself with the Government's procurement regulations and strategies, it is time to market your product or service. Present your capabilities directly to those buying offices that purchase your products or services. Realize that, like you, their time is valuable and if the match is a good one and you can provide them with a cost-effective, quality solution to their requirements the contract could be yours.