

# A Twelve Step Guide to Getting Started in Federal Contracting



## 1. Become familiar with the SBA and 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 websites at <http://www.sba.gov>. The site provides information about SBA programs, District office contacts, and other resources, such as Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) and the Service Corps of Retired Executives. (SCORE).

The Government Contracting link <http://www.sba.gov/bussinessop/index.html> provides SBA government contracting FAQs, programs, resources, contacts, and a glossary.

## 2. Seek additional assistance as needed in the Federal marketplace.

Procurement Technical assistance Centers (PTACs) help do business with the government at little if any charge. Check the link: <http://www.dla.mil/db/procurem.htm>. PTACs are funded by the DOD and provide excellent provide training and counseling on marketing, financial, and contracting issues at minimal or no cost.

Small Business Specialists are located at each many federal buying offices 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.

## 3. 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 two contracts-related certification programs. Our 8(a) Business Development program assists eligible small businesses to compete through business development assistance. Certification in our 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) and HUBZone certification check the links: <http://www.sba.gov/certifications/>  
<http://www.sba.gov/8abd>  
<http://www.sba.gov/hubzone>

Although not a formal certification program, the veterans may wish to check the link for the Center for Veterans Enterprise, [www.vetbiz.gov](http://www.vetbiz.gov)

## 4. Obtain a DUNS Number, and register in the Centralized Contractor Registration (CCR) System and On Line Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA).

If you do not already have a “DUNS Number,” contact Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) at <http://www.dnb.com/> to obtain one. Your DUNS Number is an important “identifier”, used for a multitude of purposes by the Government in the contracting arena to include processing electronic

funds transfer for the payment of invoices. Call 1-800-333-0505.

The Government's Central Contractor Registration (CCR) database holds information relevant to procurement and financial transactions. All contractors must be registered in CCR to be awarded a Federal contract. To learn more about CCR log onto the website at <http://www.ccr.gov> . The SBA's Dynamic Small Business Search was integrated into CCR to provide a single portal to assist small businesses with marketing their goods and services to the Federal government.

CCR will make changes to firm's Trading Partner Profile (TPP) to display a firm's small business size status according to each NAICS code listed, based on the company-provided revenue information and/or employee size information. The SBA's small business size logic will populate fields indicating if a firm is small or certified as an 8(a) Business Development or historically underutilized business zone (HUBZone) program participant. Questions concerning your CCR registration should be directed to the CCR Assistance Center, at 888-227-2423 or your local PTAC.

The Government requires all offerors/bidders to complete Representations and Certifications (more commonly referred to as "reps and certs") using the Online Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA) in lieu of the paper based reps and certs submitted with each response to a Sealed Bid (IFB) or Request For Proposal (RFP). Using ORCA, a prospective contractor enters their information just once and it can then be downloaded electronically from the web. This is a mandatory requirement and firms must review/update their data, at least, annually or as circumstances change. The ORCA website can be found by going to <http://www.bpn.gov> and clicking on "Online Reps and Certs" on the left side of the screen or using <http://orca.bpn.gov> .

#### **5. Identify your product or service.**

Learn the Federal Supply Classification Code (FSC) and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) Code for your product or service. To identify FSCs applicable to your company, log onto <http://www.softshare.com/tables/pscs/>. NAICS can be found on the SBA website by clicking onto: [https://eweb1.sba.gov/naics/dsp\\_naicssearch2.cfm](https://eweb1.sba.gov/naics/dsp_naicssearch2.cfm) or by going to the link [www.naics.com](http://www.naics.com)

SBA has established a new table of small business size standards based on NAICS [www.sba.gov/size/](http://www.sba.gov/size/)

#### **6. Identify current Federal procurement opportunities.**

Federal Business Opportunities (FedBizOpps) <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 encouraged to use FedBizOpps to provide notices for actions of \$25,000 or less). Once you identify 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.

#### **7. Familiarize yourself with the Government's contracting procedures**

Know the 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 websites.

#### **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 schedules, Federal contracting officers 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 marketing information and CCR profile contains information on any MAS/FSS contracts held by your firm). To learn about marketing your GSA schedule contract, check the link at [http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentType=GSA\\_OVERVIEW&contentId=12783](http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentType=GSA_OVERVIEW&contentId=12783)

### **9. Explore subcontracting opportunities**

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. The SBA's SUB-Net (<http://web.sba.gov/subnet>) is a valuable source for obtaining information on subcontracting opportunities. In addition, check for subcontracting opportunities for DOD at [www.acq.osd.mil/publications](http://www.acq.osd.mil/publications) and for GSA at [www.gsa.gov/smallbusiness](http://www.gsa.gov/smallbusiness).

### **10. Investigate other Federal programs.**

There are several other programs that may be of interest to 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.

### **11. Accept credit cards**

More than 250,000 Federal employees are using the GSA purchase 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.

### **12. Market, Market, Market!**

The 3 most important words to remember in order to be successful in the Federal Procurement Arena are market, market, market. 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 or end users 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.