



## Twelve Step Program for Federal Procurement Contracts

*Dealing with the Federal Government can seem like a formidable task at times. However, with a little patience, persistence and perseverance on your part -- your efforts will be rewarded in the long run. To assist you, we developed a series of procedural steps essential for success. Good Luck!*

### 1. Become familiar with the [SBA/Government Contracting Internet Homepage](http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/gc) ([www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/gc](http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/gc)).

The SBA offers a wide array of programs and hands-on assistance to small businesses considering the federal marketplace. Go to our website [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov) and familiarize yourself with the programs and 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](http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/gc/resources/index.html)” (<http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/gc/resources/index.html>) 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: Federal Acquisition and Procurement Opportunities, Federal Agency Procurement Forecast, Department of the Executive Branch and Independent Federal Agencies, Electronic Commerce in the Federal Acquisition Arena, Miscellaneous Links to Other Federal Government Acquisition Sites and Outside Resources for Government Contracting. You can also locate sources for ISO 9000 Information and Regulation for Office of Government Contracting Programs CFR 13 Part 125 at this site.

**NOTE:** When you see “Registration Complete” at the bottom of the page, you will see two SBA symbols. Click on the one on the right hand side that says “SBA Register or Update your SBA Profile”. Once you click on this, you will get a message that states you will log out of CCR Update and you will be taken to the Small Business Administration’s profile registration and update page. (If you wish to make further changes to your CCR Registration at this time then click CANCEL.) In the Small Business Administration’s profile registration and update page profile, you will place your Construction and Service Bonding Levels, Quality Assurance Standards, Capabilities Narrative, Special Equipment/Material, Past Performance, etc. All this information will be accessible by contracting staff under the [SBA - Dynamic Small Business Search](http://dsbs.sba.gov/dsbs/search/dsp_dsbs.cfm) ([http://dsbs.sba.gov/dsbs/search/dsp\\_dsbs.cfm](http://dsbs.sba.gov/dsbs/search/dsp_dsbs.cfm)).

The SBA also offers excellent on-line courses and training resources thru our Small Business Training Network (SBTN). The SBTN is a virtual campus providing quality and targeted online training to meet the information needs of prospective and existing small business owners. The website is at [www.sba.gov/training](http://www.sba.gov/training).

### 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 two contracts-related certification programs: 8(a) and HUBZone. 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 Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) program entitles qualified firms to special bidding benefits in the federal contracting arena.

The SBA offers an on-line application process that makes it easier, faster and less expensive for small firms to apply for [8\(a\) Business Development](http://www.sba.gov/8abd) ([www.sba.gov/8abd](http://www.sba.gov/8abd)) and [HUBZone certification](http://www.sba.gov/hubzone) ([www.sba.gov/hubzone](http://www.sba.gov/hubzone)) directly from SBA’s website, eliminating the need to download and complete a paper application. The applications are 100% web-based, which incorporates context sensitive help, real-time validation, printer-ready versions and integrates with the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) database.

Although not a formal certification program, in May 2004, the SBA announced a new procurement program to boost



federal contract opportunities for service-disabled veteran-owned small business (SDVOSB) concerns. Under the rule, contracting officers *may* restrict contract awards to SDVOSBs where there is a reasonable expectation that two or more SDVOSB concerns will submit bids at a fair market price. If the anticipated contract price will not exceed \$3 million (or \$5 million for manufacturing contracts), the new rules allow for a sole-source award, if there is not a reasonable expectation of competitive bids/offers from two or more SDVOSB concerns. In addition, the rule allows SDVOSB concerns to self-certify. Any challenge to a concern's status as a small business or as a SDVOSB must be referred to the SBA for resolution.

**NOTE:** On September 22, 2008, the SBA announced that it was indefinitely suspending formal certification for the Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) Program. The SBA will continue to process protests of SDB eligibility in connection with specific government contracts or subcontracts during the suspension.

### 3. Obtain a DUNS Number, and register in the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) System.

If you do not already have a Data Universal Number System (DUNS) number, contact Dun & Bradstreet (D&B) at [www.dnb.com](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.

The government's Central Contractor Registration (CCR) database holds information relevant to 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 federal contract. To learn more about CCR, log onto the website at [www.ccr.gov](http://www.ccr.gov). On January 1, 2004, the SBA's Procurement and Marketing Access Network (PRO-Net) was integrated into CCR to provide a single portal to assist small businesses with marketing their goods and services to the federal government. The CCR-PRO-Net linkage is part of a comprehensive strategy to transfer PRO-Net's functions to the E-Gov Business Partner Network (BPN) in order to simplify government-wide vendor registration. The BPN is part of the [Integrated Acquisition Environment \(IAE\)](#), one of the e-government initiatives to create integrated business processes for buyers and sellers in the federal marketplace. For more information about IAE, visit the website at [www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentType=GSA\\_OVERVIEW&contentId=20144&noc=T](http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/contentView.do?contentType=GSA_OVERVIEW&contentId=20144&noc=T)

Effective April 2005, CCR made changes to the firm's Trading Partner Profile (TPP) to display a firm's small business size status according to each NAICS code listed (CCR will use 2007 NAICS codes), based on the firm's inputted revenue and/or employee size information. The SBA's small business size logic will populate fields indicating if a firm is certified as an 8(a) Business Development, Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) program participant or small disadvantaged business (SDB). Questions concerning your CCR registration should be directed to the CCR Assistance Center, by e-mail at [www.ccr.gov/ContactCCR.aspx](mailto:www.ccr.gov/ContactCCR.aspx) or by phone at 1-888-227-2423.

The government has implemented the Online Certifications and Representations Application (ORCA) initiative to replace the paper based representations and certifications (more commonly referred to as "reps and certs") process required with the submission of each sealed bid (IFB) or request for proposal (RFP). Now using ORCA, a prospective contractor can enter their reps and certs information over the web once and will then be able to submit them electronically from the web. **This is a mandatory requirement** and firms must review/update their data at least once annually or as circumstances change. The ORCA website can be found by going to [www.bpn.gov](http://www.bpn.gov) and clicking on "Online Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA)" on the left side of the screen.

The SBA manages the Business.gov website which has a search engine that can find forms, such as wage and tax statements by their identifying number, or by keywords, in a database of 5,400 documents. Federal forms used by companies are only a click away at [www.Business.gov](http://www.Business.gov).

### 4. 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. To identify FSCs applicable to your company, log onto [www.dlis.dla.mil/hcfsch21.asp](http://www.dlis.dla.mil/hcfsch21.asp). Detailed information regarding NAICS can be found on the SBA website at [https://eweb1.sba.gov/naics/dsp\\_naicssearch2.cfm](https://eweb1.sba.gov/naics/dsp_naicssearch2.cfm).

**NOTE:** Small Business Size Standards for all federal government programs formerly associated with Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes were replaced by those the SBA has established for industries based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS). You can access the table at [www.sba.gov/size](http://www.sba.gov/size).

## 5. Identify current federal procurement opportunities.

Federal Business Opportunities (FedBizOpps) <https://www.fbo.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). FedBizOpps is designated as the one-stop internet gateway to procurement opportunities. 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.

The Department of Defense website has links for small business opportunities in Iraq. For additional information, visit [www.acq.osd.mil/osbp/news/iraq.htm](http://www.acq.osd.mil/osbp/news/iraq.htm).

The government is encouraging agencies to utilize environmentally-friendly oriented products and services (Buy Green). To learn more about the government's Buy Green/Comprehensive Procurement Guideline, log onto [www.epa.gov/cpg](http://www.epa.gov/cpg).

The SBA has established a Disaster Contracting Assistance Center (DCAC) to provide a central point of reference for small businesses, particularly minority, women and veteran-owned businesses, to register for and learn about federal contracting opportunities related to disasters. Business owners can visit the website at [www.disastercontractingassistance.gov](http://www.disastercontractingassistance.gov) for a detailed look at how to seek government contracts. Also, on the main page of the DCAC website, there is a link to FedBizOpps, which allows businesses to sign up for e-mail notification of open contracts related to specified fields. In addition, steps on how to register for a DUNS number from Dun & Bradstreet, and information on how to sign up with the CCR - which establishes a company's eligibility to seek federal contracts - are provided on the DCAC site. The site also provides information on prevailing wages in construction contracts, sub-contractor information and Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR).

The DCAC can be contacted by phone at 1-888-4USADOC (1-888-487-2362) Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST. You may also contact the Center by e-mail at [disastercustomerservice@sba.gov](mailto:disastercustomerservice@sba.gov).

## 6. Familiarize yourself with the government's contracting procedures.

Be familiar with Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) (<https://www.acquisition.gov/>) and the Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement (DFARS) [www.acq.osd.mil/dpap](http://www.acq.osd.mil/dpap). You can also get access to other federal agency's FAR supplements from their respective webpage. The "Where in Federal Contracting" website, which can be accessed at [www.wifcon.com](http://www.wifcon.com), provides quick access to acquisition information such as contracting laws and pending legislation, current and proposed regulations, guidance, courts and boards of contract appeals, bid protest decisions, contracting newsletters, and selected analysis of federal acquisition issues.

## 7. Investigate Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) contracts.

The General Services Administration (GSA) manages Multiple Award Schedule (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 and other authorized users order directly from the contractor. Many federal purchases are, in fact, orders on MAS/FSS contracts. Contact the General Services Administration (GSA) for information on how to obtain a MAS/FSS contract or visit [www.fss.gsa.gov](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).

## 8. 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, visit: [www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/gc/contacts/index.html](http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/gc/contacts/index.html).

**-Procurement Technical Assistance Centers** ([www.dla.mil/db/procurem.htm](http://www.dla.mil/db/procurem.htm)) are located in most states. Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, while funded by the Department of Defense, provide technical contracting and marketing assistance to small businesses wishing to do business with any federal agency. They provide training and counseling on marketing, financial, and contracting issues at minimal or no cost.

### **-Small Business Development Centers**

([www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/sbdc/sbdclocator/SBDC\\_LOCATOR.html](http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/sbdc/sbdclocator/SBDC_LOCATOR.html)) offer training and counseling services to small businesses and would-be entrepreneurs. They offer free, one-on-one consulting, and training programs on a variety of issues, including marketing, regulatory compliance and international trade.

**-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. Links to the homepages of every DOD activity/agency can be found on the *DefenseLink* website at [www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil). This information is invaluable when researching the federal marketplace and identifying your target market. Links to *Agency Recurring Procurement Forecasts* are located at [http://acquisition.gov/comp/procurement\\_forecasts/index.html](http://acquisition.gov/comp/procurement_forecasts/index.html). Additional program information may be located on each agency's website.

**-Directors of Federal Agency Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU)/Directors of the Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP)** (<http://www.osdbu.gov/>) for Defense agencies, are in place at the headquarters level of each federal agency and department. They are responsible for ensuring that small businesses are afforded an equitable opportunity to compete for prime contracting opportunities. The OSDBU Directors have formed an Interagency Council which meets regularly to, among other functions, identify procurement practices that will enhance small business participation for the government's procurement opportunities. A listing of each of the OSDBU offices is located on the OSDBU website on the members page at <http://www.osdbu.gov/offices.html>.

**-The SBA's Women's On-Line Business Center** at <http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/onlinewbc/index.html> and the *Gateway for Women-owned Businesses Selling to the Federal Government* at [www.womenbiz.gov](http://www.womenbiz.gov) are excellent resources for women-owned firms seeking to do business with the government.

**-Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)** – [www.score.org](http://www.score.org) – is a nonprofit association dedicated to educating entrepreneurs and the formation, growth and success of small businesses. SCORE provides mentoring to both start-up and existing small businesses through face-to-face and email counseling as well as educational workshops. All counseling is provided free of charge.

## 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



[www.sba.gov/GC/indexcontacts-sbsd.html](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.

#### **10. Investigate other federal programs.**

There are several other programs that may be of interest to you, such as individual agency Mentor-Protégé Programs and the SBA's Small Business Innovation Research Program ( [www.sba.gov/sbir/indexsbir-sttr.html](http://www.sba.gov/sbir/indexsbir-sttr.html)). Information on these and other programs is available on the SBA website at

<http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/gc/programs/index.html>.

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

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 [www.gsa-smartpay.com](http://www.gsa-smartpay.com).

#### **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 provided you with 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. Good luck and remember – you're not alone.

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