

## DOs and DON'Ts of Government Contracting

Define your business and be able to succinctly describe your product or service – including preparing a concise capabilities statement and a 30 second elevator speech.

Be prepared with:

- [NAICS Code](#) for your product or service
- [Produce and Service Code](#) to classify products and services, and read the [manual](#)

### FEDERAL OPPORTUNITIES

#### DO

- Learn the [basics of contracting](#) from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)
- Get classified as a small business and pursue certification of applicable socio/economic categories through [SBA](#)
- Register with the System for Awards Management – [SAM.gov](#), the database is a primary source that federal agencies use to identify prospective vendors
- Obtain Commercial & Government Entity Code (CAGE) through the SAM registration
- Become familiar with agency regulations and the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) and take [training courses](#)
- Establish a website and a capabilities statement that contains key information, qualifications, certifications, NAICS codes, Qualified Bidders List (QPL) or CAGE codes, past performance, awards and recognitions that are verifiable
- Create a profile in SAM that goes in the Dynamic Small Business Search ([DSBS](#)) to be used by procurement officers to identify qualified government contractors

- Register with prime contractors' vendor websites
- Ensure that your accounting system meets the Federal requirements based on your size
- Work with your lender to arrange advancement payment and receivables financing
- Establish the ability to accept credit cards and electronic funds transfer capability
- Ensure sufficient staffing to complete project before bidding

#### DON'T

- Limit your NAICS codes or description if they accurately describe your business
- Fail to keep your capabilities statement, website, data & profile in SAM and DSBS, & agency/prime registration up to date
- Pursue solicitations requiring security clearances if you don't possess them
- Offer too broad of a scope of products or services
- Be unprepared with staffing and financing to complete the project

### STATE AND LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES

#### DO

- Register in [eMaryland Marketplace Advantage](#) (eMMA) - an interactive bidding service for state and local opportunities

- Register in the Maryland [Small Business Reserve Program](#) through eMMA

- Pursue MBE and DBE status through [Maryland's Minority Business Enterprise Program](#)
- Review processes and identify opportunities with Maryland's [county governments](#).
- Check the agencies' s bid boards for small opportunities
- Review Maryland's state agencies' [procurement forecasts](#)

#### DON'T

- Lose your active registration by not annually updating your eMaryland Marketplace data and MBE certification
- Attempt to use your federal socio-economic certification for Maryland's MBE program and vice versa.

### HOMEWORK

#### DO

- Review the solicitations you receive through SAM.gov or eMMA to determine if you have accurately classified and described your business
- Regularly review business opportunities on SAM.gov over \$25,000 and eMMA over \$15,000, along with contract awards
- Research subcontracting opportunities through SBA's [Sub-Net](#) database
- Research the agency website to learn their mission, how to's, what and how they buy, and the key NAICS codes
- Narrow your target agencies
- Use agency resources such as acquisition forecasts, prime contractor database & outreach events
- Contact Maryland's Small and Minority business Liaisons
- Learn how agencies advertise small procurements, review bid boards
- Consider pursuing agency Sources Sought and RFI's and determine the preferred contract vehicles

- Consider contract vehicles that preauthorizes you as a supplier
- Track awarded contracts and contract winners through agency websites and the Federal Procurement Data System
- Determine the agency's challenges and how you can help to solve them
- Identify the agency's small business office to learn how best to pursue their opportunities
- Get training and counseling through the Governor's Office of Small, Minority & Women Business Affairs (GOSBA) and the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)

#### DON'T schedule a meeting until you:

- Complete all the steps above
- Finish all your homework, reviewed customer websites and research their needs
- Understand the agency culture
- Identify the problem you will solve with your specific product or service niche
- Prepare a customized capabilities statement with product/service niche and technical specifications

### RELATIONSHIPS

#### DO

- Listen and learn

- Seek informational and networking opportunities to meet small business liaisons, project officers (PO) or prime contractor through forums, and industry or vendor days

- Use federal or state agency or prime small business liaisons to connect you with project officers whose issue you want to solve
- Pursue subcontracting and teaming opportunities with primes or event competitors
- Present succinctly and clearly to a PO or prime contractor precisely how you will resolve their need or problem
- Distinguish your firm's niche and competitive advantage
- Be prepared to provide technical specifications and take technical experts to meetings
- Be honest about your firm's experience and capability

- Identify subject matter experts for assistance
- Pursue mentor protégé relationships with primes
- Ask agency contacts for referrals

#### DON'T

- Lead with your socio-economic status, but lead with your unique capability
- Ask "how can I help you." Come with a solution
- Fail to reach out to buyers handling smaller purchase to get on their vendor list
- Forget about your rolodex
- Give up on your outreach – be persistent

## PERFORMANCE

#### DO

- Start with small purchases to build past performance through local, state & federal opportunities
- Read the solicitation carefully, complete the forms and RFI/RFP's accurately.
- Offer value and quality service or goods in line with your business expertise
- Contact the contracting officer (CO) with questions about the solicitation and requirements
- Communicate with the government CO on a regular basis
- Be helpful and provide solutions to problems that arise
- Have a quality assurance or control plan and follow it
- Inspect the work you perform frequently and make sure it is compliant with the contract specifications
- Discuss problems that come up on the job as work progresses with the contracting agency
- Offer sustainable or "green" and energy efficient products or materials (USGBC-LEED

- Be prepared to obtain a [Surety Bond](#) to ensure contract completion in the case of default
- Request a debriefing if your bid was unsuccessful

#### DON'T

- Waste yours and the government's time on solicitations when your firm is not qualified
- Pursue prime contracts without having past performance
- Submit an offer that differs from what was requested (non-responsive)
- Submit incomplete documentation that lacks signatures, bond certifications, or required information
- Wait to inform the CO if there are problems encountered
- Overextend yourself financially
- Be unprepared with staffing requirements and propose workers or tradesmen that cannot pass the security background checks
- Fail to perform as the word gets out
- Attempt to sell or transfer your government contract without agency consent and

agreement Seek or propose on more work  
than you can manage

## KEY POINTS

### DO

- Utilize SBA, SBDC, PTAC & GOSBA
- Understand your customer
- Have a great Statement of Capabilities and website
- Hone your elevator pitch
- Gain past performance through commercial, small, sub or teaming opportunities
- Find a mentor
- Be persistent!

### DON'T

- Miss networking opportunities and vendor/industry days
- Waste your customer's time
- Be unprepared with staffing or financial capacity
- Forget your contacts and rolodex
- Fail to perform!



Contact OMFA:

