

DOs and DON'Ts of Contracting with the Government

FIRST: Read the *Business Resource Guide for Businesses Seeking Contracts with Maryland's Federal Facilities* the "How-To" guide to prepare to do business with the government.

NEXT: 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.

FEDERAL OPPORTUNITIES

Be prepared with:

- [NAICS Code](#) for your product or service
- [Federal Supply Code/Product Service Code](#) to classify products and supplies, and read the [manual](#)
- [DUNS Number](#): Obtained from Dun & Bradstreet

DO

- Learn the basics and use Federal Business Opportunities ([FedBizOpps](#))
- Get classified as a small business and pursue certification of other socio/economic categories if you qualify through the U.S. Small Business Administration ([SBA](#))
- Register with the System for Awards Management ([SAM](#)): government-maintained database is a primary source that Federal agencies use to learn about prospective vendors
- Obtain Commercial & Government Entity Code ([CAGE](#)) through the SAM registration
- 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
- Insure that your accounting system meets the Federal requirements based on your size
- Work with your lender to arrange advancement payment and receivables financing
- Have the ability to accept credit cards and electronic funds transfer capability
- Have a website and a capabilities statement that contains key information, qualifications, certifications and NAICS, Qualified Bidders List (QPL) or CAGE codes. Also include past performance, awards and recognitions that are verifiable
- Distinguish your firm with a niche or unique products or services
- Become familiar with agency regulations and the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR). Take [courses](#) as it is a challenging subject
- Know your customer, understand what and how they buy, learn the culture and process of each agency. Do your homework and study their website and review their forecasts and contracting history
- Regularly review FedBizOpps for business opportunities over \$25,000. Learn how federal agencies purchase goods and services for under \$25,000

- Track awarded contracts and contract winners, view agency websites and the Federal Procurement Data System ([FPDS](#))
- Get training and counseling through the Procurement Technical Assistance Center ([PTAC](#))
- Be prepared to obtain a [Surety Bond](#) to ensure contract completion in the case of default
- Review the many useful government contracting [websites](#)

DON'T

- Forget about keeping your SAM data up-to-date
- Pursue solicitations requiring security clearances if you don't have them
- Have too broad of a scope of products or services and narrow your target agencies focus

Relationships, relationships, relationships

DO

- Meet with the Federal agency's small business office ([OSDBU](#)) to learn about opportunities. Use them to connect you to the project managers whose issue you want to solve
- Pursue subcontracting or teaming opportunities or teaming agreements with [Prime](#) government contractors
- Attend agency business and briefing forums, expos and conferences. Use for educational and networking purposes as many prime contractors also attend
- Provide a presentation to a project officer or a prime contractor that is crisp, precise, and be prepared to provide technical specifications. Request the technical experts attend the meeting
- Describe concisely how you can solve their problem

DON'T schedule a meeting until you have:

- Completed all the steps above
- Finished all your homework, reviewed their websites and researched the customer and their needs
- Identified the problem you will solve with the specific niche of the product or service you provide
- Prepared your capabilities statement and technical specifications

Homework, homework, homework

STATE and LOCAL OPPORTUNITIES

DO register with:

- [eMaryland Marketplace](#): an interactive bidding service for State and local opportunities
- Maryland's Minority Business Enterprise Program (MBE) (through the Maryland Department of Transportation)
- The Maryland [Small Business Reserve Program](#) through eMaryland Marketplace. See if you qualify for MBE or Veteran programs.
- Review processes and identify opportunities with Maryland's [county governments](#)

DON'T

- Forget about keeping your eMaryland Marketplace and MBE Certification data current
- Try to use your Maryland MBE status for federal opportunities—a separate certification process

WORKING with the CONTRACTING OFFICER (CO)

If you are pursuing a prime or subcontract:

DO

- Be honest about your firm's experience and capability and be clear and concise
- Read the solicitation carefully
- Contact the CO with questions about the solicitation and requirements
- Communicate with the government CO on a regular and frequent 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 government
- Offer value and quality service or goods in line with your business expertise
- Offer sustainable or "green" products or materials (USGBC-LEED)
- Offer energy efficient products and equipment

DON'T

- Waste yours and the government's time on solicitations when your firm is not qualified
- Submit an offer that differs from what was requested (non-responsive)
- Submit incomplete documentation that lacks signatures, bond certifications, required information or other required material or information
- Overextend yourself financially
- Leave problems encountered on the job unattended to—address these immediately
- Attempt to sell or transfer your government contract without agency consent and agreement (assignment of claims, novation, change of name)
- Seek or propose on more work than you can manage
- Propose workers or tradesmen that cannot pass the security background checks

Source: Kevin Myles, GSA Acquisition Services—817-978-9942 or kevin.myles@gsa.gov

DO Review the many resources, and links to federal, state and local contracting contacts, along with major prime contractors, at the Maryland Department of Commerce's [Business to Government](#) website

For further information contact: Helga.Weschke@Maryland.gov or 410-767-6920.

Produced by the Office of Military & Federal Affairs (OMFA). The mission of OMFA is to enhance the economic viability and partnering capabilities of Maryland's military and civilian federal agencies, to protect and assist these important economic engines and to assist businesses with opportunities in the federal arena in support of the Department's core focus of job creation and economic growth.



QUICK GUIDE for FEDERAL CONTRACTING RESOURCES

Read and study the “[Dos and DON'Ts of Contracting with the Government](#),” then review these additional links to federal government contracting resources along with networking and training organizations in Maryland that educate and assist potential government contractors.

SBA's Useful Government Contracting Websites – Small Business Issues and Information via the Internet: This document contains a detailed listing websites that every small business should review as they prepare to become a federal contractor.

Acquisition Central: the web site for the federal acquisition community and the government's business partners. From this site you can access shared systems and tools to help you conduct business efficiently. This site links to each agencies' [forecast](#) pages.

Business.Gov: learn how to become a federal contractor, find business opportunities, and the rules and regulations that federal contractors need to follow for executive branch agencies.

Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System (CPARS): hosts a suite of web-enabled applications that are used to document contractor and grantee performance information that is required by Federal Regulations.

Federal Laboratories Consortium – Small Business Resource: Federal labs are charged with leveraging the public investment in research via technology transfer -- by making the results of that investment available to the private sector. The labs have unique technologies, facilities, expertise and other resources available for transfer – and are actively working to find collaborating opportunities with industry partners.

Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS): Government agencies are responsible for collecting and reporting data on federal procurements through the Federal Procurement Data System – Next Generation (FPDS-NG) – The federal government uses the reported data to measure and assess the impact of federal procurement on the nation's economy, learn how awards are made to business in various socioeconomic categories, understand the impact of full and open competition on the acquisitions process, and address changes to procurement policy.

General Services Administration (GSA): is the acquisition arm of the federal government connecting the private sector with federal agencies fulfilling their business needs. GSA offers professional services, equipment, supplies, telecommunications, and information technology from commercial businesses to government organizations and the military through acquisition solutions from its Federal Acquisition Service (FAS). GSA also provides workplaces to the government by constructing, managing, and preserving federal buildings, and by leasing and managing commercial real estate through its Public Buildings Service (PBS). [The GSA offers the “Doing Business with GSA – A Quick Guide ”](#)

Grant Thornton's 2015 Government Contractor Survey: a publication that offers an in-depth look at the industry as a whole and into the day-to-day business of government contracting. The survey reflects findings from well over 100 companies.

Maryland Procurement Technical Assistance Center (MPTAP): offers free counseling and training on “how to do business” with state, local and federal government agencies.

Offices of Small and Disadvantaged Businesses (OSDBU): offices within a federal agencies that are tasked with fostering the use of small business as federal contractors. OSDBU's conduct outreach programs, small business fairs and procurement conferences. A Listing and contact information of each agency's OSDBU office is provided by the OSDBU Interagency Council.

Past Performance Information Retrieval Service (PPIRS): provides timely and pertinent contractor past performance information to the Department of Defense and Federal acquisition community for use in making source selection decisions.

Small Business Administration (SBA): the go-to agency for information, resources and programs that provide contracting support for small businesses. SBA has a series of free online contracting [courses](#) designed to help prospective and existing small businesses understand the basics about contracting with government agencies.

USA Spending.Gov: - a searchable website that tells you where the tax payers' dollars go. Determine what the agencies are spending and the prime contractors that receive the awards.

MARYLAND NETWORKING and TRAINING ORGANIZATIONS

GovConnects: a Howard County Chamber of Commerce initiative providing educational opportunities, a forum for networking focused specifically on this niche market, targeted events and current information guided by experienced contracting participants. A business-to-government initiative that enables federal contracting activity in Maryland.

Government Contracting Council (GovCon): Baltimore Washington Corridor Chamber has the BWCC Government Contracting Council that assists members who are interested in doing business with government agencies – federal, state, and local – by providing information, education, and networking opportunities.

Government Contracting Network (GovConNet): Federal procurement resource for education, connections and information, sponsored by the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce.

Target Gov: provides government contracting counseling and training and manages the Government Contracting Institute (GCI):

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