

DOs and DON'Ts of Contracting with the Government

FIRST: Read [*Maryland's Government Contracting Guide*](#) - 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
- [Produce and Service Code](#) to classify products and services, and read the [manual](#)
- [DUNS Number](#) obtained from Dun & Bradstreet

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 - [beta.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
- Insure 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

Preparation Preparation Preparation

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.

Preparation Preparation Preparation

HOMework

DO

- Review the solicitations you receive through [beta.SAM.gov](#) or eMMA to determine if you have accurately classified and described your business
- Regularly review business opportunities on [beta.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 the your specific product or service niche
- Prepare a customized capabilities statement with product/service niche and technical specifications

Homework Homework Homework

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**

Relationships

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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

Performance

Performance

Performance

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 customers time
- Be unprepared with staffing or financial capacity
- Forget your contacts and rolodex
- Fail to perform

DO Review the Maryland Department of Commerce's *Business to Government* website to access the links within this document and many resources and tools including:

- [Maryland's Guide to Government Contracting](#)
- Links to federal agency profiles containing missions, key contacts and portals to other information including acquisitions forecasts. And links to each agency's How to Do Business site.
- Portals to prime contractors' suppliers sites
- How the State of Maryland procures
- and links to county procurement sites.

Go to commerce.maryland.gov/b2g

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Authored by Helga Weschke of 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. 7/20



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