

Contracting with USDA's Rural Development Mission Area

Advice from Contracting Officers to Small Businesses

When contracting with the federal government

- Preparing to do business with the federal government
- Market research matters
- Follow the guidelines of the solicitation to the word!

Prepare To Do Business with the Federal Government

1. Register with the Central Contractor Registry where federal agencies can find vendors.
2. Make sure you highlight your firm's unique products or services.
3. Make sure you can receive credit card and electronic funds payments.
4. Make sure you highlight your firm's unique products or services.
5. Don't hesitate to reach out to your local PTAC office for help registering in SAM.
 - Their services are free and the frequency with which they work with vendors in SAM gives them knowledge to provide solutions for you.
 - Find your closest PTAC by visiting this link: <http://www.aptac-us.org/>
6. Speak with your local SBA office concerning help available
 - Trainings, Programs (8a) and other support

Market Research Matters

Government Market Research Matters! This is how the Government determines if Small Business Set-asides are a viable option.

- Early and often open lines of communication such as industry day and one-on-ones help both the government and industry to fully understand the contracting requirements.
- Include a capabilities narrative when submitting information on SBA's Dynamic Small Business Search. Without this information the vendor may not be considered a viable source.
- When contacting government contracting officials about potential opportunities, request information about both prime and subcontract opportunities.
 - Provide contact information that can be shared with Prime Vendors interested in finding sub-contractors.

Follow the Guidelines of the Solicitation to the Word

- Do not wait until the last minute to begin preparing your proposal. Take advantage of posted draft RFPs and RFQs. This is the best time to give feedback on issues in the solicitation that you may want addressed, changed, or clarified.
- Read the solicitation thoroughly and notify the government if there is anything confusing, conflicting, or if you need more information to understand a submission requirement.
- Don't contact technical and/or program folks during the acquisition process. Your contact should be in writing to the Contracting Officer.
- Do not just copy and paste the PWS or SOW. Write the story about how you would successfully achieve the requirements. What would you look out for? What are your processes?

Follow the Guidelines of the Solicitation

- Don't provide vague, open-ended responses to address technical factors. The burden is on the vendor to provide in writing a demonstration of confidence of capability to perform the technical requirements.
- Do include any assumptions regarding how you formulated your price proposal. This should be in addition to any rationale the government may request.
- Do provide your best prices in your original proposal/quote.
- Do not underbid! Do your homework and bid to ensure your company's success!
- Pay close attention to Deliverables that may be due with your proposal/quote. Oftentimes, the government requires draft plans. Know what they are and the content of which to include. If unsure, send a written request for clarification to the Contracting Officer (CO).
- Remember volumes are separate. You can get an outstanding past performance grade and still fail the technical if you do not address all the elements within the technical volume.
- **Don't miss the deadline.** Nothing can be accepted after the stated delivery date and time.