

SBA

U.S. Small Business Administration

Doing Business With the Federal Government

The federal government is the largest buyer of goods and services in the world. While small businesses are often at a disadvantage when trying to win federal contracts, the U.S. Small Business Administration can help overcome the barriers. The SBA works closely with other federal agencies and the nation's leading federal contractors to ensure that small businesses obtain a fair share of government contracts and subcontracts. The SBA also seeks fair access to government-owned property and resources that are being sold. In fact, the SBA has many programs to help small firms do business with the federal government.

The Prime Contracts Program

Through the Prime Contracts Program, the SBA helps to increase small businesses' share of government contracts. The program also advocates for the breakout of items for procurement through full and open competition.

To expand contracting opportunities for small businesses, the SBA has specially-designated procurement center representatives. These PCR's review contracting actions at major federal procurement centers, review subcontracting plans, recommend contracting sources and provide counseling.

There are two types of PCR's: traditional and breakout. Traditional PCR's work to increase the number of procurements set aside for small businesses. Breakout PCR's work to remove components or spare parts from sole-source to competitive procurement. This effort generates large savings for the federal government.

The Subcontracting Assistance Program

The Subcontracting Assistance Program promotes maximum use of small businesses by the nation's large prime contractors. Specially-designated SBA commercial market representatives visit large businesses to identify and expand subcontracting opportunities for small businesses, and counsel small businesses on how to market their products and services to large contractors. CMR's also conduct program reviews of large businesses to ensure compliance with subcontracting program requirements.

The Certificate of Competency Program

The Certificate of Competency Program allows a small business to appeal a contracting officer's determination that it is unable to fulfill the requirements of a specific government contract on which it is the otherwise successful offeror. When the small business applies for a COC, SBA industrial and financial specialists conduct a detailed review of the firm's capabilities to perform on the contract. If the business demonstrates the ability to perform, the SBA issues a COC to the contracting officer requiring the award of that specific contract to the small business.

The Procurement Marketing and Access Network

The SBA's Procurement Marketing and Access Network, or *PRO-Net*, is a "virtual" one-stop procurement shop. The Internet web site — <http://pronet.sba.gov> — is an electronic search engine for contracting officers, as well as a marketing tool and link to procurement opportunities and other important information. All small firms seeking federal, state and private contracts can fill out — and update — their own profiles at the site. These profiles are available to federal and state government agencies as well as prime and other contractors seeking small business contractors, subcontractors and/or partnership opportunities. Thousands of small firms have their profiles in the database. If your business isn't among them, sign up today.

The Size Determination Program

The Size Determination Program ensures that only small firms receive contracts and other benefits set aside exclusively for small business. When a firm's claim that it is small is challenged, SBA size specialists determine if the firm does, in fact, meet established SBA size standards. Size determinations may also be requested in connection with other federal programs.

The Natural Resources Sales Assistance Program

Through the Natural Resources Sales Assistance Program, the SBA ensures that small businesses obtain a fair share of federally owned property and resources that are available for sale or lease. SBA industrial specialists work with other federal agencies to make it easier for small businesses to make the purchases, which include —

- timber and related forest products;
- strategic materials from the national stockpile;
- leases involving rights to minerals, coal, oil and gas;
- royalty oil; and
- surplus real and personal property.

Getting Ready for Online Business

While the SBA's programs can help you overcome many barriers to obtaining federal contracts, you also need to prepare for doing business electronically. That means participating in Electronic Commerce/Electronic Data Interchange. EC/EDI is the computer-to-computer exchange of business information using electronic mail (e-mail), computer bulletin boards, electronic funds transfer or other similar technologies.

By the end of September 1999, the federal government will use charge cards as the preferred means of procuring products and services. The General Services Administration has already issued more than 250,000 SmartPay cards to federal employees. If your business accepts VISA or MasterCard, you can also accept GSA SmartPay cards, and the transactions can be processed through your existing merchant account. If you do not currently accept these credit cards, you can establish a merchant account by contacting your local bank or the GSA SmartPay contractors listed at the GSA web site: <http://pub.fss.gsa.gov/fm/future/merchant.html>

For More Information

For additional information on government contracting programs, visit our Office of Government Contracting home page at: www.sba.gov/gc. You may also call your local SBA district office or your closest SBA government contracting area office.

SBA Government Contracting Offices

10 Causeway Street, Room 265
Boston, MA 02222-1093
617-565-5622

900 Market Street, 5th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107
215-580-2762

1720 Peachtree Road NW, Room 318N
Atlanta, GA 30309
404-347-4483

500 W. Madison Street, Suite 1250
Chicago, IL 60661-2511
312-353-7381

4300 Amon Carter Blvd., Suite 116
Fort Worth, TX 76155
817-334-5900

455 Market Street, 6th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105-2939
415-744-8429

- SBA offices are located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Guam. For the office nearest you, look under "U.S. Government" in your telephone directory, or call the SBA Answer Desk.
- SBA Answer Desk: 1-800-U-ASK-SBA
- Fax: 202-205-7064
- TDD: 704-344-6640
- Your rights to regulatory fairness: 1-800-REG-FAIR
- OnLine Electronic Bulletin Board (modem and computer required)
1-800-697-4636 (limited access)
1-900-463-4636 (full access)
202-401-9600 (D.C. metro area)
- Internet
Home page: www.sba.gov
Gopher: <gopher.sba.gov>
File transfer protocol: <ftp.sba.gov>
Telnet: <telnet.sba.gov>
U.S. Business Advisor: www.business.gov

SBA Affiliates

Inquire at your local SBA office for the location nearest you.

- BICs — Business Information Centers
- TBICs — Tribal Business Information Centers
- OSCSs — One Stop Capital Shops

- SCORE — Service Corps of Retired Executives
- SBDCs — Small Business Development Centers
- USEACs — U.S. Export Assistance Centers
- WBCs — Women's Business Centers

SBA Publications

Call your local SBA office or the SBA Answer Desk.

- *The Resource Directory for Small Business Management* — a listing of low-cost business management publications and videotapes
- *The Facts About . . . SBA Publications* — a listing of free SBA publications

Did you know that America's 23 million small businesses —

- employ more than 50 percent of the private workforce,
- generate more than half of the nation's gross domestic product, and
- are the principal source of new jobs?

All of the SBA's programs and services are provided to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis.

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