

Why Hire a Federal Business Development Consultant

The federal procurement marketplace is complex, structured, restricted and highly regulated. The Code of Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) consists of rules that govern the requisition, planning, solicitation, offer, evaluation and management of procurement contracts. The FAR consists of 53 Parts. Each part contains subparts, sections and subsections with a total page count exceeding 1,900. The FAR is being continuously updated by legislation, statute and Presidential Executive Orders.

The federal marketplace is not a pure free market. Unlike the commercial marketplace, there is not a competitive, level playing field where the best price, highest quality offeror wins. The government has a varieties of missions, a security responsibility to the American people, and a social agenda which significantly affect procurement practices. Understanding these set-aside programs, policy priorities and acquisition strategies are critical for the success of companies of all sizes doing business with the federal government. Without a thorough understanding of these constraints and requirements, contractors can spend significant resources with little or no return on their business development investment.

The “acquisition team” for any given procurement consists of up to 32 unique roles ranging from program management, technical, finance, legal, customer, contractors and buyers to senior procurement officials (see attached graphic). Each of these roles is carried out by 1-15 individuals. A typical \$1m acquisition involves approximately 92 individuals on the government side. On the contractor side there are business development, marketing, capture, proposal, pricing, legal, accounting, contract management and executive personnel from both the prime contractor and the subcontractors, adding approximately 25 individuals to the total team. This assumes there is no protest against the procurement which adds personnel, time and expense to the acquisition cycle. It should also be noted that this personnel count does NOT include the individuals responsible for the *delivery* of the goods and services acquired by the government.

In addition to the agency acquiring the good and services, there are numerous other agencies with regulatory or oversight authority that come into play at various points in the procurement process. These agencies include the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the National Institutes of Standards and Technology (NIST), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the National Security Agency (NSA), the Small Business Administration (SBA), and the Government Accounting Office (GAO), to name a few.

The Federal Register indicates there are over 430 federal departments, agencies, sub agencies in the federal government that acquire products and services equal to approximately \$500b annually. On any given day, there are over 2,000,000 active solicitations in various stages, being managed by federal agencies. There is no single source of information about these solicitations. Vendors must pore over multiple data bases, documents and websites to analyze, understand, plan for and respond adequately to the government's needs.

In addition to the sheer vastness, dynamism and complexity of the formal federal procurement marketplace, there are unwritten rules of engagement, cultural idiosyncrasies that vary among agencies, and an entrenched "ecosystem" within each agency comprised of prime contractors, subcontractors, lobbyists, suppliers and elected officials, among other players, in addition to the layers of government stakeholders.

However, there are best practices for winning profitable federal contracts borne through years of study and practical experience with one of the world's largest bureaucracies.

Rationale

Large businesses spend considerable resources to understand and influence the buying habits of their targeted agencies. Small businesses can rarely afford to hire these experienced personnel full time. Therefore, good federal business development consultants, available on a part time basis, can be an invaluable resource by:

- Applying experiences with a large number of agencies.
- Leveraging the best, proven practices of other companies throughout the federal contracting industry so companies don't have to guess or experiment with a variety of costly approaches to grow revenue.
- Providing efficient access to and analysis of data on federal buying patterns, opportunities and forecasts to objectively inform decision making and provide business development plan validation.
- Objectively researching federal market demand for the company's services and recommending alternatives or adjustments to offerings as necessary, to better position the company to compete and win upcoming contracts.
- Using their unique professional skills, experiences and abilities in the federal marketplace to develop a customized, data-informed business development (and marketing) framework and discipline that improves contract win rates.
- Providing adhoc professional resources to assist with critical, time consuming ongoing business development practices such as hiring, setting goals, coaching staff and executives, analyzing upcoming opportunities, developing teaming relationships,

evaluating marketing activities, reviewing operational processes and participating in Gold Team executive proposal reviews.

Shirley Collier, President of Scale2Market, LLC is a serial entrepreneur with over 30 years of experience in innovation, technology, strategic planning and growing businesses in the federal marketplace. She has helped companies win over \$50m in contracts over the last 3 years.

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