



# Federal Sales Strategies

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## **Selling to the Government – The Hard Part**

By Peter Adler, Seneca Creek Consulting

### **In a phrase, it's ALL the hard part.**

For those enterprises who are considering entering the Federal Government market place, it is of paramount importance to understand the entire process from plans to procure to an executed contract with your firm.

As with any new market, there is a necessary adoption of cultural understanding, lingo, and most importantly, buyers' motivation, in this new market space. Face-to-face contact with the prospective buyer is often difficult to achieve unless you already know decision-makers within the Government or the prime contractors you wish to team with to pursue Government opportunities.

Expectations must be managed in order to align with the realities of this huge marketplace. We all read about major Government contract expenditures, with Information Technology support contracts contributing \$65+ billion in this one area alone.

It should be noted that more than 50% of contract dollars in the IT arena are procured from the Government's General Services Administrations schedule and other multiple award contracting vehicles like NIH CIO SP.

While not absolutely essential, it is clear that a firm has a better opportunity to acquire Government business if they are on one or more of these contracting vehicles that is already in place. Generally those firms that are new to this segment will bid requirements as a subcontractor to a larger prime contractor. Without a record of past performance in the government, this method provides one of the best means of approaching the market.

Did I say it is ALL hard when you enter this business? The real issue is that there are potentially huge rewards for those that are patient and are willing to work with the inherently slow Government sales cycle.

If your enterprise qualifies as a Set-Aside business; e.g., 8a, Small Disadvantaged, Service-Disabled Veteran Owned, Women-Owned, Hub-Zone or Veteran-Owned, then entry is a little bit easier.

Happy hunting.

## **The GSA Corner: What are my responsibilities after I receive my GSA Schedule?**

By Lauren Binn, Sharp Minds, Inc.

An effective General Services Administration (GSA) Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) compliance program is no longer a choice; it is mandatory. Companies must have bona fide compliance programs that are integrated into the organizational culture and are a way of life for all employees. Many companies are not aware of the myriad of

requirements for a FSS compliance program making compliance a challenge for any organization.

As a GSA FSS schedule holder, a company is responsible for complying with all of the terms and conditions inherent within the GSA schedule program. Based on SharpMinds experience, three reasons emerge as to why companies struggle to comply with FSS program requirements:

- Compliance programs are poorly designed or are non-existent.
- Inadequate recordkeeping systems are implemented.
- Company personnel are not adequately trained.

FSS contract compliance consists of three important responsibilities:

- Aligning internal organizational processes and procedures to meet ongoing GSA FSS program requirements.
- Establishing desirable organizational behavior in order to avoid compliance discrepancies.
- Developing an on-going program to ensure that employees continue to be educated regarding compliance.

While a number of schedule holders have corporate compliance programs, many of these programs fall short in the area of government contracts compliance, and very few address GSA/FSS schedule issues specifically. Because the rules and regulations that apply in the government contracts arena are substantially different than those in the commercial sector, compliance plans must be in place to specifically address compliance with GSA/FSS requirements.

No compliance system will eliminate every risk or liability. However, a well-designed system can minimize exposure to those risks that can ambush a GSA Schedule contractor. Aside from the fact that a GSA FSS compliance program is the ethical and *right thing* to do, the compliance system can be beneficial in the event an organization is accused of wrongdoing demonstrating that a company takes compliance requirements seriously.

For more information visit the web site at: [www.sharpmindsinc.com](http://www.sharpmindsinc.com)  
Or email Lauren at: [lbinn@sharpmindsinc.com](mailto:lbinn@sharpmindsinc.com)

## **Presidential Task Force Seeks Contracting Ideas**

By Warren Corbett, Set-Aside Alert

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A presidential task force is asking for comments on how to increase contract opportunities for small firms. The interagency task force, created by President Obama in an April 26 memorandum, is due to submit recommendations by September. It is headed by the secretary of commerce, SBA administrator and director of the Office of Management and Budget.

In announcing the task force, the president said it would look at familiar strategies to open opportunities for small businesses, such as teaming arrangements and unbundling contracts. In a Federal Register notice on June 14, the task force asked for comments on these questions:

- What steps can be taken to increase participation in contracting through teaming arrangements and mentor-protégé programs?
- How can subcontracting practices, such as tracking and evaluation of subcontracting plans, be improved?
- How can prime contractors be more effectively held responsible for their subcontracting plans?
- What aspects, if any, of the rules governing set-asides should be changed?
- What further guidance might be helpful?
- What strategies best mitigate the effects of contract bundling?
- Are there specific examples that might be shared as success stories or models for

agencies to follow in mitigating contract bundling?

- What types of training would improve small businesses' ability to participate in the federal marketplace and what are the best ways to deliver this training to the small business community?
- What federal organizations do the best job in their small business outreach strategies?
- What specific practices do they employ that are most helpful?
- What technology systems and applications are most helpful to small businesses in finding contracting opportunities?
- What improvements can be made to existing technologies?
- What new applications might be considered to make doing business with the federal government easier and more attractive?
- What is the best way to train federal employees in the procurement process?
- How can we ensure they have the skills needed to serve small businesses?

Comments may be sent to: [SB\\_TaskForce\\_Comment@SBA.gov](mailto:SB_TaskForce_Comment@SBA.gov)

## **White Paper: I have a GSA Schedule...What do I do Now?**

For a copy, please visit: [www.SenecaCreekConsulting.com](http://www.SenecaCreekConsulting.com)

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