

PROCUREMENT SPECIALIST AVAILABLE TO ASSIST WITH GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING OPPORTUNITIES

Government contracting. The words immediately evoke an image of mind-numbing bureaucracy, endless meetings, and, worst of all, a mountain of incomprehensible paperwork. Many companies have rejected the idea of working for Uncle Sam for these and other reasons. While there is truth to this image, it is also true that government continues building projects, even in a slow economy. Even better, they pay their bills. These factors are causing many construction firms to reconsider and take a second look at government projects.

If government contracting is something that you have never done before, you may be wondering, where do I start? What do I need to do? Where can I find opportunities? Can I be competitive and still make a profit? The New Hampshire Procurement Technical Assistance Program and the Vermont Procurement Technical Assistance Center (NH-PTAP/VT-PTAC) provide free, professional help with these questions and much more.

In 1985, out of a desire to spend a bigger portion of contract dollars with small businesses, and recognizing the administrative barriers that small businesses face when confronting the federal government, Congress created PTAP to provide assistance with government contracting. Part of the New Hampshire Division of Economic Development and the Vermont Department of Economic Development, PTAPs provides free, specialized and professional assistance to individuals and businesses with the world of opportunities in government contracting and subcontracting. NH and VT-PTAC can help businesses access opportunities with the Department of Defense, Homeland Security and other federal agencies as well as state and local governments.

NH-PTAP serves New Hampshire businesses from a central office in Concord, VT-PTAC is located in Montpelier. Full-time staff are 100% dedicated to the program. They help their clients by providing one-on-one consulting and free training sessions on various topics such as:

- Federal contracting readiness;
- Marketing and market research;
- Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) and the “rules of the road”;
- Sales: bids, proposals and solicitations;
- Government Web site navigation;
- Much, much more.

NH and VT-PTAC clients’ information is all kept strictly confidential. All that is asked of the clients is that they complete a semiannual survey of government contract awards.

Businesses may become PTAP clients by completing the “New Client Signup” at: <http://nhptap.ecenterdirect.com> for NH and <http://vtptac.ecenterdirect.com> for VT. Once the business completes the brief questionnaire, they are contacted within a few days by a Procurement Counselor.

Federal Registrations

Many registrations and certifications are required of government contractors. NH and VT-PTAC can assist with obtaining and renewing them. It all begins with obtaining a free DUNS (Data Universal Numbering System) Number from Dun and Bradstreet. This is a required first step.

Next steps:

- Review and choose the most appropriate North American Industry Classification (NAICS) code(s) that best describe the business;
- Central Contractor Registration (CCR). *Required for all federal government contracts;*
- Complete the business' SBA Dynamic Small Business Search Profile;
- Online Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA).

These registrations should be applied for if appropriate:

- Veteran/Service-disabled Veteran-owned small business certification (VA);
- HUBZone (Historically Underutilized Business Zone) Certification (SBA);
- SBA's 8(a) program;
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (NHDOT).

Business Designations

Some business designations can give your small business an edge in obtaining Federal contracts or being a subcontractor. Whenever a large business (a prime contractor) wins a construction contract valued over \$1,500,000, they must submit a subcontracting plan with their bid. This plan commits them to do their best to meet the contracting agency's small business goals. Each agency has its own goals; the overall Federal goals are:

- 23% to Small Businesses;
- 5%* to Small Disadvantaged Businesses;
- 5%* to Women-owned Small Businesses;
- 3%* to HUBZone Small Businesses;
- 3%* to Service-disabled Veteran-owned Small Businesses.

Each year the Small Business Administration publishes a "Small Business Procurement Scorecard". The Government-Wide Performance 2009 Small Business Procurement Scorecard is as follows:

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|--------------------------------|
| Prime Contracting Achievement: |
|--------------------------------|

| | 2008 Achievement | 2009 Goal | 2009 Achievement |
|---|------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| Small Business | 21.50% | 23.00% | 21.89% (\$96.834B) |
| Women Owned Small Business | 3.39% | 5.00% | 3.68% |
| Small Disadvantaged Business | 6.76% | 5.00% | 7.57% |
| Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business | 1.49% | 3.00% | 1.98% |
| HUBZone | 2.34% | 3.00% | 2.81% |

| Sub Contracting Achievement: | | | |
|---|------------------|-----------|------------------|
| | 2008 Achievement | 2009 Goal | 2009 Achievement |
| Small Business | 28.65% | 23.00% | 31.82% |
| Women Owned Small Business | 4.92% | 5.00% | 5.44% |
| Small Disadvantaged Business | 3.93% | 5.00% | 4.49% |
| Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business | 0.90% | 3.00% | 1.29% |
| HUBZone | 1.53% | 3.00% | 1.71% |

PTAP counselors assist you in finding out whether you fit into any of these categories, and what if anything that you need to do once that possibility is realized.

Davis-Bacon Act of 1931

Commonly known within the construction industry as the “prevailing wage law,” the law was enacted in 1931 to protect local contractors that might be underbid by migrant contractors for federally-funded construction contracts. This Act requires contractors to pay the prevailing wage set by the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division for workers for the geographic area in which the project takes place.

Construction Bonding

For all federal contracts \$25,000 and up, the company awarded the contract must be bonded. The process is somewhat similar to obtaining credit from a bank; you must prove you are qualified by submitting extensive documentation and information. Personal and corporate financial statements, business plan, bank information, CPA contact information, resume, completed jobs, references, worker’s compensation insurance and general liability insurance must be submitted along with any other requests. The surety company will request your credit reports and FICO score. It is vital to build and establish a good relationship with a surety company so that you can meet this requirement of Federal construction contracts.

Opportunity for Federal Contracts for Construction

According to USASpending.gov, Federal dollars for construction projects (not including Federal highway and EPA grant funds that pass through NHDOT and NHDES.) that came into the State of NH between and including the years 2004 to 2009 was \$323.2 million. Adjusting for the \$242.6 million for the Federal Correctional Institution in Berlin, (which was awarded to a Georgia company), 41%, or \$33.2 million - went directly to New Hampshire companies. In Vermont, the total for the same period was \$71,026,602, with \$28.5, or a little over 40% going to

Vermont companies. Vermont and New Hampshire construction companies together did over \$85 million in out-of-state Federal projects, mostly in Maine.

NH and VT-PTAP want to work with and assist more construction companies to assure that more of the Federal dollars spent in New Hampshire and Vermont will stay in New Hampshire and Vermont with local construction companies and trade contractors.

NH-PTAP can be reached at 603-271-7581. Their office is located at 172 Pembroke Road, Concord, NH. VT-PTAP can be reached at 802-828-5243. Services are free and confidential to all NH and VT businesses.