

Find and Evaluate Government Solicitations

Are You Ready to Respond?

When you're getting ready to step into the world of government solicitations, you need to have a thorough understanding of your business' capabilities, your target customers and your likely competitors. This understanding will help you find and respond to solicitations that align with your business. But before responding comes a crucial step: evaluating the opportunity and deciding if it's a good match.

In this three-step tool, you'll:

1. Review a few resources to find a government solicitation.
2. Use a handy checklist to assess if it's right for your business.
3. Make a "go" or "no-go" decision.

1. Find Your Next Solicitation (Contract Opportunity)

Use the resource checklist below to research government solicitations related to your business.

You'll have the opportunity to take notes from your research.

- If you'd like to explore government solicitations for prime contracting, check out [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov).¹**

On this website, you'll find:

- active contracting opportunities over \$25,000
- contracts awarded in the past, which may help you with future proposals or bids

You can search for solicitations using criteria such as the date when the solicitation was posted, the solicitation type, the state(s) where the contract-related work can be performed, and any set-asides that may apply. By applying these criteria, you can narrow down your search.

Tip: If you haven't already, check out **Government Contracting Opportunities** path for more information in Ascent.

- **If you'd like to explore government solicitations for subcontracting opportunities, check out [SubNet](#).**²

In this database, maintained by the SBA, you'll find subcontracting solicitations and opportunities posted by prime contractors in search of subcontractors to work with them. On the SubNet home page, you can click your state on the interactive U.S. map and review the applicable opportunities.

Tip: If you haven't already, check out **Government Contracting Opportunities** in Ascent for more on exploring SubNet.

- **If you're looking for bid-matching services, [contact your local PTAC](#).**³

Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (or PTACs) offer bid-matching services, often at no cost.⁴ A PTAC counselor can provide leads on potential contract opportunities that match your business' qualifications.⁵

In the space below, note the findings from your research.

For example: At this time, our business is seeking only subcontracting solicitations. On SubNet, we found a potential opportunity with an Oregon-based solid-waste removal company—they're looking for subcontractors in our state (NY) and are soliciting women-owned businesses, and we fit that criteria. Follow up with Lindy Wong for this solicitation (SOL-SA2019-XX).

2. Evaluate the Solicitation You've Found

With some preliminary research to narrow down the solicitation(s) related to your business, now it's time to take a closer look.

What decision criteria should you consider when assessing if a solicitation is right for your business? Use the table below to guide your assessment.

- *In the space provided at the top, briefly describe the solicitation you chose. Then move through the Action checklist.*
- *Actions (decision criteria) are listed in the left column of the table. You may choose to add other important decision criteria such as: "Do we have a relationship with the customer?" and "Can we price this bid to complete the project profitably?"*

Tip: Work to establish the right decision criteria for your business. Government contractors note this process as critical to their success, often assigning numerical or other rating systems to each criterion.

- *In the Your Notes column, note findings from your assessment.*

Solicitation no. and brief description: _____

Action	Action Description	Your Notes
<input type="checkbox"/> Assess the opportunity's fit.	<p>Before you dive into the details of the solicitation, review these sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C (Statement of Work) • L (Proposal Preparation Instructions) • M (Evaluation Criteria) <p>These sections will give you a good sense for the quality and amount of information included in the solicitation and whether the solicitation requirements are in alignment with how you run your business.</p>	<p><i>Example: The mission of the client's project is consistent with solutions we offer. However, one of the requirements in the SOW says "Contractor must have experience developing and deploying applications in Amazon Web Services." We have experience working with other web apps, but not AWS specifically.</i></p> <p><i>We probably won't meet this requirement. This is also beyond our current capabilities.</i></p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Assess your business needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider if you can use the solicitation as a means to start a relationship with the government agency. Would forming this relationship benefit your business from a networking or future opportunities perspective? It's all about identifying an alignment between the opportunity and your organizational goals, and making business decisions accordingly. • If you haven't already, conduct a SWOT analysis to uncover your business' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This will help you form your strategy and solutions to address the solicitation requirements. 	<p><i>Example: Responding to this solicitation will help us solidify our relationship with the EPA. We'll get a better handle on how the EPA evaluates proposals, specifically how they're evaluating our technical skills compared to what the DoD honed in on for the proposals we submitted to them. Even if we aren't awarded the contract, the debriefing from the EPA will help us greatly in course-correcting if we respond to their future solicitations.</i></p>

Assess your competitors (e.g., can you beat them or team up with them?).

- Are the solicitation requirements changing based on questions that specific vendors (your competitors) are asking?
- Is your business prepared to form strategies to gain competitive advantage?

Example: We have a very good understanding of the competitor landscape. Many of these other vendors are demonstrating the same values as ours and operate similarly to how we run our business. To stand out, we should look at opportunities to collaborate and partner with Recycling Ninjas LLC and Green Balloons LLC, and not just view them as our competitors.

Disclaimer: The business names appearing in this example are fictitious. Any resemblance to an actual business is purely coincidental.

In the space below, note additional factors you think are important in assessing if a solicitation is right for your business.

Tip: If you're evaluating more than one solicitation, consider ranking them based on the decision criteria in this step. Selecting opportunities (solicitations) at the top while turning away opportunities at the bottom can be particularly helpful when you're trying to conserve resources.

Note: An assessment—like the one above—can serve as a start of a replicable process for the government team at your company.

3. What's Your Decision?

Now that you've assessed the government solicitation, what did you decide—will you respond?
Select a response below.

<p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, our business will respond to the solicitation.</p> <p>In the space below, explain why.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No, our business will not respond to the solicitation.</p> <p>In the space below, explain why not.</p>
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Tip: If your business decides not to respond to the solicitation, *consider sharing feedback with the government about why you made this decision.* You may share this feedback in the form of a no-bid decision letter. This communication will strengthen your relationship with the government, and you may even help the government refine their solicitations. For example, if you decided not to bid because the government required that the location of performance be Raleigh, North Carolina, whereas your business would've delivered the results from your offices in Chesapeake, Virginia, the government may decide to make their requirements around work locations more flexible.

Conclusion:

Entering the arena of government solicitations can bring about exciting growth opportunities for your business. This journey begins with researching and finding solicitations related to your business. You'll then need to invest the time and resources to do an honest assessment of the solicitation you're considering and make business decisions that are right for you. Based on your assessment and a thorough understanding of the marketplace and the competition, you'll decide if responding to the solicitation is worth it.

¹ *How to Prepare Government Contract Proposals*, U.S. Small Business Administration (February 2014), https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/2018-02/proposals_workbook.pdf (accessed July 15, 2019).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ *Contracting Assistance*, Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, <http://www.aptac-us.org/contracting-assistance/> (accessed July 15, 2019).

⁵ *How to Prepare Government Contract Proposals*, U.S. Small Business Administration (February 2014), https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/2018-02/proposals_workbook.pdf (accessed July 15, 2019).