

Preparing for GSA Contracting

Getting Your Ducks in a Row

GSA connects government agencies with commercial vendors who provide the products and services they need. It's kind of like the office manager for the government, helping government buyers get ahold of anything from staplers to consultants. You can find GSA contracts by searching by NAICS code or GSA on [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov), the website that advertises procurement needs for federal agencies.

Two common types of GSA contracting are:

- **Multiple Award Schedules:** long-term governmentwide contracts that give federal, state and local buyers or agencies access to products and services at discount pricing¹
- **Governmentwide Acquisition Contracts (GWACs):** pre-competes, multiple-award, IDIQ contracts primarily for information technology products and services²

Whether you're interested in getting on a **Multiple Award Schedule** or competing for a **Governmentwide Acquisition Contract (GWAC)**, you'll want to take a few first steps to prepare for GSA contracting.

In Steps 1–3 of this exercise, you can dig into research, registration and training to get ready to be a GSA vendor.

“When we got on the GSA Schedule, we were very thoughtful about it. First, we did some research to understand if this was a good business strategy for us. There were a lot of companies in our area of business on the Schedule. We had to focus on what made us stand out. Next, we learned the language of federal contracting. I would highly recommend getting experience as a subcontractor. Before we got on the GSA Schedule, I had been a sub for a major consulting firm. You don't need to be on the GSA Schedule to be a sub. That is where I learned a lot about doing business with the federal government. Third, take advantage of resources. Work with your local Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC). Talk to your local SBA office. Understand what resources are out there. Finally, I had to assess the time and money involved with getting on the Schedule. I made sure I understood the steps and what it was going to take. It was

about 12 months before we got on the GSA Schedule. I had to think, ‘Can we afford this?’ Being a subcontractor and having other business definitely helped us while we did the application, waited for it to go through, and then began marketing.”

–U.S.-Based Entrepreneur

PREP STEP: Check If You Meet the Requirements

Before you get started preparing to pursue GSA contracts, consider your business’ eligibility. Do you meet the requirements for contracting with GSA? Generally, a GSA contractor has to:

- Be in business for two or more years
- Have a yearly revenue of \$25K or more
- Have a “proven track record” in their industry
- Be able to track and report GSA sales and share their Schedule price list on GSA Advantage! (for Multiple-Award Schedules)

If your company fits these criteria for doing business with the General Services Administration, then you can start researching if this agency is looking to buy products and services like yours.

While these requirements apply to most GSA contracting opportunities, keep in mind that there may also be necessary vendor qualifications specific to each contract.

Tip: Additional qualifications will be listed in the solicitation and in Section B (Supplies or Services and Price/Costs), Section C (Statement of Work), Section H (Special Contract Requirements) and Section M (Evaluation Criteria). Use these to understand whether the contract needs to sync up with your business’ capabilities. For more on the components of a federal solicitation, see Federal Solicitations in Ascent.

STEP 1: Research Government Needs

Is your business a match with government needs? To find out, take an initial look at the federal market with these resources:

GSA Forecast of Contracting Opportunities Tool

- Using this tool, you can get a sense early on for what the government may be looking for in the near future.
- Filter by agency, location, NAICS code or type of contract to target opportunities that align with what your business offers.³

> Federal Contract Data Reports

- This repository contains information on government contracts dating back to FY2004.
- Contract details like agencies, administrators and dates can clue you in to the government needs that vendors have filled in previous years, as well as when current contracts expire. (Enter search criteria to get started.)

> GSA Advantage!

- Go shopping on this online catalog to review products and services that have been offered to federal agencies on GSA Schedules. (Browse by product and service categories or enter your own search term.)

> eBuy

- This tool within GSA Advantage! can help you check out government buyers at federal, state and local levels.

Once you've researched federal market needs, you can get registered to do business with the government.

STEP 2: Register to Sell to the Government

If you haven't already established your government credentials, now is a great time to do so. This registration is needed for all methods of government contracting—not only when doing business with GSA.

Learn your NAICS code. Your **North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)** code can tell you what industry your business belongs to and the size standards for qualifying as a small business in that industry,⁴ and help you locate opportunities specific to the work you're doing.

Get a DUNS number. This number comes from **Dun & Bradstreet Inc. (D&B)**—it's a unique identifier that establishes you as a business. You can get one for free with a SAM registration.

Note: According to GSA, "Starting in December 2020, the DUNS number will no longer be the official identifier for doing business with the U.S. Government."⁵ The new system will be a Unique Entity ID generated in the System for Award Management (SAM). For more information, visit gsa.gov/entityid.

Register for SAM. Set up a company profile on **System for Award Management (SAM)**—there is no fee to register, and you can get a free DUNS number.

Get certified (if you qualify). Government certifications allow you to access special contracting opportunities reserved for small businesses if you meet **size standards**.

- Check out the requirements for set-aside program certifications like [8\(a\) Small Business Development](#), [HUBZone Small Business](#), and [Women-Owned Small Business](#) to see if your business qualifies.
- [Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business certification \(SDVOSB\)](#), approved through the U.S. Veterans Affairs Office (VA), is required for the SDVOSB VA set-asides only.
- Set-aside certifications can give you access to GSA contracts that are reserved for certain groups, such as 8(a)-certified small businesses.
- For more information about set-aside certifications, see Ascent's Set-Aside Certifications.

STEP 3: Complete GSA Training

In addition to research and registrations, there is also specific training you will want to take to be able to contract with GSA.

Multiple-Award Schedules

If you're trying to get on a GSA Schedule, you will need to take the GSA-required training. To complete this training:

1. Visit the [Vendor Education Center](#).
2. Log in or register for a new account.
3. Watch the *Pathways to Success* five-part webinar series, which outlines aspects of the Multiple-Award Schedules process.
4. Receive a certificate upon completing the webinar. This certificate is valid for one year, and you will need to submit your Schedules offer within this time period.⁶
5. Next, check out the [GSA Vendor Toolbox](#). With these materials, you can better understand the requirements of the solicitation your company will respond to.
6. Return to the Vendor Education Center and take the *Readiness Assessment*. This assessment will help you determine if your business is ready for pursuing GSA Schedules contracts.
7. Make sure that an officer of your company has signed off on the assessment. When you go to submit an offer, this assessment will be attached to it in the eOffer system.⁷

Governmentwide Acquisition Contracts (GWACs)

Before pursuing a GWAC, you can learn the basics with a series of training videos called [GSA Small Business GWAC Bootcamp](#).

Conclusion:

Research, register and complete the required training to start down the path toward becoming a GSA vendor. Once you've completed these first steps, you can look into potential GSA contracting opportunities that are a fit for you and your business.

¹ *GSA Schedules*, General Services Administration, <https://www.gsa.gov/buying-selling/purchasing-programs/gsa-schedules> (accessed July 12, 2019).

² *Governmentwide Acquisition Contract (GWAC)*, General Services Administration, <https://www.gsa.gov/small-business/choose-how-to-sell-to-gsa/governmentwide-acquisition-contract-gwac> (accessed July 1, 2019).

³ *Forecast of Contracting Opportunities*, General Services Administration, <https://www.gsa.gov/buying-selling/forecast-of-contracting-opportunities> (accessed July 8, 2019).

⁴ *Table of Small Business Size Standards Matched to North American Industry Classification System Codes*, U.S. Small Business Administration, https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/Size_Standards_Table.pdf (accessed July 12, 2019).

⁵ *Unique Entity Identifier Update*, General Services Administration, <https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/organization/federal-acquisition-service/office-of-systems-management/integrated-award-environment-iae/iae-press-kit/unique-entity-identifier-update> (accessed July 12, 2019).

⁶ *Required Training*, General Services Administration, <https://www.gsa.gov/small-business/get-started/required-training> (accessed July 3, 2019).

⁷ Ibid.