Government Contracting for Your Veteran-Owned Business

Tap into the U.S. Small Business Administration to navigate through the complexities of government contracting and learn how to best position your veteran-owned business in the federal marketplace.

What is Government Contracting?

The process where you sell your goods or services to and for use by the government.

The process generally starts with procurement, where an agency defines their requirements and determines the best method for purchasing services.

Did you know?

U.S. government agencies buy nearly $100 billion worth of goods and services from small businesses each year.

Acquisition is what occurs once you’ve already won an agency contract.

Do I Need to Be Certified?

The government must adhere to certain set-aside guidelines—meaning there’s a certain percentage of business set aside for different types of companies. Small Business Certification isn’t necessary for day-to-day operations, but highly recommended if you’re planning to sell to the government.

Here are a few certifications to consider if you’re a veteran- or military-owned small business:

8(a) Business Development Program

51% owned and controlled by a socially and economically disadvantaged individual or group of individuals. Certain presumed groups include African American, Hispanic Americans, Asian Pacific Americans, and Subcontinent Asian Americans

Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business (SDVOSB)

At least 51% owned, operated, and controlled by one or more veterans with a service-connected disability

Veteran-Owned Small Business (VOSB)

At least 51% owned and controlled by U.S. citizens who are veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces

Typically, this only certifies you to do business with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). While it’s good for other agencies to know you are a certified veteran-owned small business (VOSB), many federal agencies have their own systems of self-certification for the businesses who wish to do business with them. Large businesses with subcontracting plans have goals to subcontract with veteran-owned businesses.

How Can I Prepare My #VetBiz for Government Contracting?

Training

The Veteran Federal Procurement Entrepreneurship Training Program (VFPETP) equips veteran business owners with the knowledge and skills required to successfully enter and compete for government contracts. The program offers three levels, depending on contracting experience — starting, growing, or expanding internationally.

Advising

Set up a meeting with a local SBA District Office or SBA Resource Partner — including Veterans Business Outreach Centers (VBOCs), SCORE, Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs), and Women’s Business Centers (WBCs) — to chat with an experienced adviser who can guide you through either the contracting or certification process.

Learning

The SBA’s online tools, such as the Government Contracting Classroom, provide you with a basic understanding of the federal marketplace — and how you can start to position your business to compete for contracts.

Supporting

The SBA provides surety bonds for certain surety companies — and also covers the different types, including bid, payment, performance, and ancillary.

Surety bonds help small businesses win contracts by providing the customer with a guarantee that the work will be completed.

1 According to the Small Business Act. Other individuals may be admitted to the program if they provide evidence of their disadvantaged status due to race, ethnicity, gender, physical handicap, or isolated residence.

To learn more about the programs and services available for veteran, service member, National Guard and Reserve, and military spouse entrepreneurs, visit SBA.gov/VETERANS.