

## A Crash Course in Selling Your Green Products/Services to the Government

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**Summary:** *Driven by the need to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels, improve the economy and national security, create green jobs and reduce environmental impact, the federal government is taking the lead on green purchasing in a number of markets and sectors.*

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All agencies are directed to acquire recycled content, energy efficient, renewable, bio-based and environmentally preferable products and services towards achieving certain goals. Under the Energy Independence and Security Act, all federal managers are required to cut their fossil fuel use at new and renovated government facilities to 55 percent by the end of 2010 and 100 percent by 2030.

There are many "Buy Bio" and "Buy Green First" programs throughout the government, and the Department of Defense requires that green products and services must be considered as the first choice in all procurements. The government's premier purchasing agency, the General Services Administration (GSA), has implemented Go Green Initiatives giving preference to products and services that meet green purchasing criteria. These policies are not limited to products. The environmental services and green or LEED construction management sector are also in high demand.

Green procurement does not intend to rewrite the book on buying, but merely adds an environmental dimension to the decision-making process. The standard purchasing criteria of price, quality, and availability remain paramount. The environmental impacts can be seen as part of the quality criterion.

First and foremost, you must understand the basics on how to do business with the government and then you can use these attributes as part of your marketing strategy. The bottom line when dealing with the government is to make it easier for them to do business with you over others. Here are some tips:

1) **Question yourself.** Is this something you really want to do? It will take a focused effort up front to unravel the red tape and figure out the game. Are you willing to make the investment of time and resources to penetrate the market? Once you're in, your business can grow at warp speed -- the challenge is just in getting there.

### 2) Getting started with the administrative steps

- a. Obtain a Dun & Bradstreet # (DUNS) [www.dnb.com](http://www.dnb.com)
- b. Register at the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) [www.ccr.gov](http://www.ccr.gov)  
Figure out your business NAICS codes to determine size and placement at <http://www.sba.gov/contractingopportunities/officials/size/table/index.html>
- c. Register at the Department of Veterans affairs if applicable  
[www.vetbiz.gov/vip/vip.htm](http://www.vetbiz.gov/vip/vip.htm)
- d. Register with the Small Business Administration (SBA) [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov)
- e. Register at the Online Representations and Certifications Application (ORCA)  
<https://orca.bpn.gov>

### 3) Stay informed.

- a. If inclined, visit local SBA and Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC)
- b. Go to this online resource for quick links  
<http://www.courtneysolutions.com/resources.html>
- c. See who is buying what from whom at the Federal Procurement Data Service at  
<https://www.fpds.gov/fpdsng/cms/>

- d. Sign up to receive emails about federal opportunities at the Central Federal Business Opportunities site [www.fedbizopps.gov](http://www.fedbizopps.gov)
  - e. Check out the Federal Procurement Data System at <https://www.fpds.gov/fpdsng/cms/> to view who is buying what and from whom
- 4) **Implement an aggressive federal sales program.** You'll need to create or augment your business plan and simultaneously work towards obtaining a GSA Schedule contract or a long-term fixed price contract with the government.

For a number of reasons, getting a Scheduled contract is the only practical way a business can realistically compete. It reduces award time to 14 days from 248 days on average, minimizes the federal buyer's risk and increases transparency, and a fixed-price contract is used most often throughout the government.

Although a Scheduled contract is really just something that gives you the "right" to sell to the government, they're difficult to get and often buried under layers of government speak. But if you persevere, you'll face significantly less competition, federal buyers will reach out to you rather than you going after business, and such contracts can be extremely profitable and a main source of revenue for your business.

- 5) **Sell in your own backyard.** There's no need to head to Washington to sell to the government -- unless that's your backyard. You can find information about local government offices in any number of locations, including USA.gov, federal telephone directories and the Federal Citizen Information Center, local blue pages, and installation guides on military.com. There are also tools to locate federally funded research and development centers, Department of Veterans Affairs facilities, and a federal contracts database at [FedSpending.org](http://FedSpending.org).

And then as with any type of business, get out in the market -- go to trade shows and events, meet people and develop your network. The personal connection goes a long way, even when dealing with the government.

6) **Get familiar with regulation**

- a. Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) [www.arnet.gov/far/](http://www.arnet.gov/far/)

- 7) **Market your company effectively.** To develop marketing materials that speak to a federal buyer, you'll want to do the following:

- i. Simple brochure
- ii. Augment business card as it is the most important leave behind
- iii. Add a government tab to your web site
- iv. Understand how to use Sole Source and Blanket Purchase Agreements
- v. Develop a separate email address to allow for quick response
- vi. Have a one page briefing sheet for you reference
- vii. Design and distribute an authorized contract list if on GSA

When you're marketing your business, emphasize key points like the warranties you may offer, your experience, your core competencies and capacity, the ROI or pay-back period of your products or services, and the ease of maintenance for your products and quality assurance certifications you've received.

You'll also want to list any trademarks or patents you've earned, your GSA contract number, and if you have any socioeconomic factors that might meet procurement guidelines for small businesses, list your business size and classification as identified by the SBA or NAICS coding.

When discussing environmental or social benefits, list any certifications or awards you've received. Can you quantify the benefits? How much carbon are you keeping out of the atmosphere -- compare yourself to a conventional product or service. Are you contributing to workforce development -- are you a U.S. manufacturer or service provider? How much electricity can you keep from being consumed -- are you sending anything back to the grid that serves the community due to increased demand? If you think along these lines, you can differentiate yourself from others.

If you are a supplier trying to tap into the federal marketplace, being green is a major differentiator and competitive advantage. Get your facts straight, develop a strategy, and market your products and services effectively. The new green in government can mean big green for your business.

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