

HELPING SMALL BUSINESS START, GROW AND SUCCEED

Recovery Act Contracting Opportunities Questions and Answers

Q. Is there an opportunity for small businesses to get contracts under the Recovery Act?

- A.** Yes. The SBA is committed to helping small businesses get connected with contracting opportunities as a result of the Recovery Act. SBA's Procurement Center Representatives are working with federal agencies to ensure that small businesses get their fair share of the prime and subcontracting opportunities stemming from the Recovery funds. The Recovery Act requires agencies to provide maximum opportunities for small businesses to compete for contracts.

The SBA is working with its district offices and resource partners to make small businesses aware of the contract dollars and information to pursue registration/certification at the state/local levels. Small businesses seeking contract opportunities as a result of the Recovery Act should visit Recovery.gov, an online portal with links to Recovery Act informational pages on federal agencies' Web pages and their weekly update reports. At Recovery.gov, small businesses can get an idea of the areas that federal agencies are targeting for Recovery Act contracts as well as opportunities at the state and local level.

Federal agencies are expected to submit program specific Recovery Act plans with contracting opportunities for small businesses by May 1, 2009. Federal agencies will report contracts awarded using Recovery Act funding to the General Service Administration's Federal Procurement Data System-Next Generation (FPDS-NG) database, which is the government's official source for federal contracting data. Contracting data will also be available on Recovery.gov.

Q. How do small businesses learn about contracting opportunities at the state and local level under the Recovery Act?

- A.** Although these will be federal dollars, they will in many cases be provided directly to the states and localities. The State and local governments, municipal utility and school districts will award contracts using their currently established procedures. Each State's recovery website can be reached through Recovery.gov. The priority will be for projects that are "shovel/project ready;" those that can be rolled-out quickly, putting individuals back to work. This means that small businesses must be "contract ready," i.e., registered/certified to do business with the State and local governmental entities which will most likely be the primary contracting agencies for these projects.

Q. Is there a central location where federal contracting opportunities and requests for proposals are located?

- A.** All federal government contracting opportunities over \$25,000 will be posted to FedBizOpps. Small businesses can access this site at: www.fbo.gov. They can also learn about possible subcontracting opportunities by the prime contractor (large or small) that receive the contract award. Small businesses can identify prime contractors for subcontracting opportunities through the Electronic Subcontracting Reporting System (eSRS) at www.esrs.gov.

Q. Does the SBA offer other tools and services for small businesses seeking federal contracting opportunities?

A. The SBA and its resource partners, including Small Business Development Centers, SCORE, Women's Business Centers and Veteran Outreach Centers can provide technical, financial and contracting assistance to small businesses. For more information on these organizations visit www.sba.gov. Procurement Technical Assistance Centers, funded by the Department of Defense, are also good sources of procurement assistance. A listing of PTAC organizations is located at: www.dla.mil/db/procurem.htm.

Some of the government contracting tools currently available to small businesses include a free online course, Business Opportunities: A Guide to Winning Federal Contracts, which is a self-paced guide and easy-to-follow training course that can be accessed by visiting www.sba.gov/training, clicking on the menu of free online courses and selecting the first course listed under Government Contracting. Participants will receive a certificate of completion upon completing the 30-minute tutorial.

Other tools include a brochure entitled Opening Doors to Federal Government Contracting Opportunities available at www.sba.gov/openingdoors and three fact sheets – *Federal Contracting Opportunities for HUBZone Entrepreneurs*, *Federal Contracting Opportunities for Women-Owned Small Businesses* and *Federal Contracting Opportunities for Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Businesses* available at: <http://www.sba.gov/tools/resourcelibrary/publications/index.html>.

Small businesses seeking contract opportunities can also contact the Office of Small Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) in any of the procuring federal agencies. These offices assist small businesses with obtaining contracts and subcontracts with federal agencies and prime contractors. For a list of OSDBUs in the procuring federal agencies and their contact information, visit <http://www.osdbu.gov/offices.html>.

The Recovery Act provides entrepreneurs and lenders financial relief from the current economic crisis that will help encourage borrowing and lending to all small businesses, including start-ups.

For small businesses, the Recovery Act temporarily eliminates SBA guaranteed 7(a) and 504 loan fees and offers tax benefits. For lenders, it temporarily eliminates 504 loan fees. The fee eliminations are retroactive to February 17, 2009, the day the Recovery Act was signed. Also under the Act, small businesses that need surety bonds to compete for construction and service contracts can qualify for SBA-backed surety bonds of up to \$5 million (and in some cases, \$10 million), more than double the previous \$2 million maximum. Visit www.sba.gov/recovery for more information on small business and the Recovery Act.

All SBA programs and services are provided to the public on a nondiscriminatory basis.