

The Government Buying Process

The government buying process mirrors any other buying process, but there is a twist. Once an opportunity is announced to the public – your access to the decision makers is very limited. This is because the process is designed to be fair and impartial. The government procurement system is designed based on the belief that all responsible organizations should have the same shot at winning federal contracts – a level playing field if you will.

The government buying process contains innumerable steps, but the following steps are the ones that prospective contractors must be familiar with:

1. A need is identified in an agency by an End User
2. Funds are requested, approved and set aside
3. End user and procurement personnel meet to determine best way to fill the need, i.e. sealed bid or negotiated procurement (proposal)
4. Sources are identified using a combination of methods
5. Notice that the requirement is going to be procured is posted on FedBizzOps and other agency specific announcement sites as applicable.
6. Solicitation/request for bids/proposals is posted on FedBizzOps (www.fbo.gov) and other agency specific announcement sites as applicable with a FIRM due date and time
7. Answers to questions submitted by interested providers are answered – may necessitate an extension to the due date and time
8. Proposals are submitted and evaluated
9. The government asks questions/negotiates with the offerors that have the best solutions and highest scores using a combination of technical evaluation criteria and cost/price considerations
10. Revised proposals may be submitted – referred to by some as the auctioning off of a contract
11. Contract award is made.

As mentioned earlier, once notice of the impending contract is announced, access to the decision makers is very limited. On particularly large and complex projects, the government may convene an offeror's conference/site visit that allows interested parties and government officials to interact with each other in a public and open forum. The minutes of the types of meetings are published and distributed online – remember the entire process is designed to be fair and open.