

GovCon BD Upskilling Program

Contracting Language Glossary

Essential GovCon Terminology

Reference | Version 1.0

30-DAY FOUNDATION PROGRAM

Employer-Sponsored Training for GovCon Business Development

GovConGiants

Professional Training for Government Contractors

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Purpose

This glossary provides definitions for essential government contracting terminology used throughout the GovCon BD Upskilling Program. Terms are organized by category and referenced in all modules.

Source: Definitions align with FAR (Federal Acquisition Regulation), SBA regulations, and industry-standard usage.

Procurement Basics

NAICS Code: North American Industry Classification System Code. A 6-digit code that classifies business establishments by type of economic activity. Used to determine small business size standards and identify relevant opportunities. *Example:* NAICS 541512 = Computer Systems Design Services

Size Standard: The maximum size (revenue or employees) a business can have and still be considered “small” for a specific NAICS code. Set by SBA. *Example:* NAICS 541512 has a size standard of \$34 million in average annual receipts

SAM.gov: System for Award Management. The official government database where contractors must register to do business with the federal government. Also the primary site for searching contract opportunities.

UEI: Unique Entity Identifier. A 12-character alphanumeric ID assigned to entities registered in SAM.gov. Replaced the DUNS number in 2022. *Example:* UEI format: ABC123DEF456

Contracting Officer (CO/KO): The government official with authority to enter into, administer, and/or terminate contracts and make related determinations and findings. The only person who can legally bind the government.

Contracting Officer's Representative (COR): A government employee designated by the Contracting Officer to assist in managing a contract. Has limited authority; cannot modify contracts.

Period of Performance (PoP): The timeframe during which contract work must be completed. Includes base period and any option periods. *Example:* Base period: 12 months; Option 1: 12 months; Option 2: 12 months

Place of Performance: The location(s) where contract work will be performed. Can be contractor site, government site, or both.

Contract Types

FFP - Firm Fixed Price: A contract type where the price is not subject to adjustment based on the contractor's cost experience. Contractor bears full cost risk. *When Used:* Well-defined requirements with low risk

T&M - Time and Materials: A contract providing for acquiring supplies or services on the basis of direct labor hours at specified hourly rates and actual cost of materials. *When Used:* Undefined or evolving requirements

CPFF - Cost Plus Fixed Fee: A cost-reimbursement contract where the government reimburses allowable costs plus a fixed fee (profit). Government bears cost risk. *When Used:* Research, development, or uncertain scope

IDIQ - Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity: A contract that provides for an indefinite quantity of supplies or services during a fixed period. Work is ordered via task orders. *Key Point:* Minimum and maximum quantities established; specific work ordered as needed

BPA - Blanket Purchase Agreement: A simplified acquisition method for filling anticipated repetitive needs for supplies or services. Establishes pricing and terms for future orders. *Example:* Office supplies BPA with established pricing

MAC - Multiple Award Contract: A contract awarded to more than one contractor for the same or similar requirements. Creates a "contract pool" for competition. *Example:* GSA Schedule, agency-specific MACs

GSA Schedule (FSS): Federal Supply Schedule. Pre-negotiated contracts with commercial firms that provide federal agencies a simplified process for acquiring goods and services. *Key Point:* Already competed; agencies can order directly

Task Order (TO): An order placed against an IDIQ or MAC contract for specific work. Each task order has its own scope, period, and funding.

Delivery Order (DO): An order placed against a contract for supplies or products (vs. services).

Option Period: A pre-negotiated contract provision allowing the government to extend the contract for additional periods. Not guaranteed. *Example:* “1 base year + 4 option years”

Solicitation Types

RFP - Request for Proposal: A solicitation requesting a formal proposal with technical approach, management plan, past performance, and pricing. Used for competitive negotiated procurements. *Evaluation:* Best value (technical + price) or lowest price technically acceptable

RFQ - Request for Quotation: A solicitation requesting pricing for commercial items or well-defined services. Simpler than RFP. *Evaluation:* Typically lowest price for items meeting specifications

RFI - Request for Information: A market research tool used by the government to gather information about capabilities, industry practices, or potential approaches. NOT a solicitation for contract award. *Key Point:* Responding helps shape the requirement; no contract results directly

Sources Sought: A notice requesting information about interested and capable contractors. Used to determine competition strategy and set-aside decisions. *Key Point:* Similar to RFI; helps government decide if small business set-aside is appropriate

Pre-Solicitation Notice: A notice that a solicitation is coming soon. Provides early awareness of upcoming opportunity.

Synopsis: A public announcement of a proposed contract action. Required for contracts over \$25,000 (with exceptions).

Full and Open Competition: Competition where all responsible sources are permitted to compete. No restrictions based on business size or status.

Sole Source: A contract awarded to a single contractor without competition. Requires justification and is limited to specific circumstances.

Small Business Programs

Small Business: A business concern that meets the size standard for its primary NAICS code. Size standards are set by SBA.

SDB - Small Disadvantaged Business: A small business that is at least 51% owned and controlled by one or more disadvantaged individuals. Eligible for preferences in federal contracting.

8(a) Program: SBA's business development program for small disadvantaged businesses. Provides access to sole-source contracts, mentorship, and other benefits. 9-year program. *Key Point:* Competitive advantage; can receive sole-source awards up to certain thresholds

HUBZone: Historically Underutilized Business Zone. Certification for small businesses in designated economically distressed areas. 3% government-wide goal.

WOSB - Women-Owned Small Business: A small business that is at least 51% owned and controlled by one or more women. Eligible for set-asides.

EDWOSB - Economically Disadvantaged Women-Owned Small Business: A WOSB owned by women who meet economic disadvantage criteria. Eligible for additional set-asides.

SDVOSB - Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business: A small business at least 51% owned by one or more service-disabled veterans. 3% government-wide goal.

VOSB - Veteran-Owned Small Business: A small business at least 51% owned by one or more veterans.

Mentor-Protégé Program: A program allowing large businesses (mentors) to provide assistance to small businesses (protégés). Creates teaming advantages.

Joint Venture (JV): A legal arrangement where two or more businesses combine resources for a specific project. Can allow small business to perform larger contracts.

Set-Aside: A contract reserved for competition among a specific category of businesses (e.g., small business, 8(a), HUBZone). **Total Set-Aside:** 100% reserved. **Partial Set-Aside:** Portion reserved.

Intelligence & Research

SAM.gov Contract Data (formerly FPDS): The official government database containing federal contract award data. Primary source for historical award research. Requires free SAM.gov account to access. *URL:* sam.gov/content/contract-data. *Note:* FPDS.gov was retired in February 2026.

USAspending.gov: The official source for federal spending information. Provides agency spending data, recipient information, and award details.

Agency Forecast: A published list of anticipated contracting opportunities from an agency. Helps with long-range planning.

DSBS - Dynamic Small Business Search: SBA's database of small businesses seeking federal contracts. Used to find potential teaming partners. *URL:* dsbs.sba.gov

OSDBU - Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization: An agency office dedicated to helping small businesses access contracting opportunities. Every major agency has one.

Incumbent: The current contractor performing work on a contract. Has advantages in re-compete situations.

Recompete: A follow-on competition when a contract is ending. Incumbent has performance history but must compete again.

Market Research: The process of gathering information about capabilities, pricing, and market practices. Required by FAR before acquisitions.

Capture & Proposal

Capture: The process of positioning to win a specific opportunity. Includes customer engagement, teaming, solution development, and competitive analysis.

Capture Plan: A documented strategy for winning a specific opportunity. Includes win themes, competitive analysis, and action items.

Win Theme: A message that highlights your differentiators and resonates with the customer's priorities. Appears throughout the proposal. *Example:* "Proven VA Healthcare Experience: 15 years supporting VA hospitals with 98% patient satisfaction"

Discriminator: A specific capability, experience, or approach that sets you apart from competitors.

Ghosting: Subtly highlighting a competitor's weakness while emphasizing your strength. Done without directly naming the competitor. *Example:* "Unlike solutions that require extensive customization, our proven COTS platform deploys in 30 days"

Competitive Intelligence: Information about competitors' capabilities, wins, strategies, and weaknesses. Used to position your solution.

Solutioning: The process of developing your technical approach to meet customer requirements. Involves SMEs and pricing.

Price to Win (PTW): An estimate of the price needed to win the competition, based on competitor analysis and customer budget.

Color Team Reviews: Formal reviews of proposal drafts at different stages. **Pink Team:** Storyboard/outline review. **Red Team:** Full draft review (most critical). **Gold Team:** Final review before submission.

Compliance Matrix: A document mapping proposal sections to solicitation requirements. Ensures no requirements are missed.

Evaluation Factors: The criteria the government uses to evaluate proposals. Stated in the solicitation. *Common Factors:* Technical Approach, Past Performance, Price, Management Approach

LPTA - Lowest Price Technically Acceptable: An evaluation method where the lowest-priced proposal that meets all requirements wins.

Best Value Trade-Off: An evaluation method where the government can select a higher-priced proposal if it provides better value.

Past Performance: A contractor's record on previous contracts. Key evaluation factor in most proposals.

PPIRS - Past Performance Information Retrieval System: Government database containing contractor performance evaluations. Agencies check before award.

Teaming: Forming a partnership with other companies to pursue an opportunity. Can be prime-sub or joint venture. **Prime Contractor:** Holds the contract; responsible to the government. **Subcontractor:** Performs work under the prime; no direct government relationship.

Teaming Agreement (TA): A pre-award agreement between potential prime and subcontractor outlining roles, workshare, and terms.

Letter of Commitment: A written statement from a teaming partner confirming their intent to participate if the proposal is successful.

Compliance & Risk

FAR - Federal Acquisition Regulation: The primary regulation governing federal procurement. Codified in Title 48 of the CFR. *Key Point:* Everything flows from FAR; agency supplements add specific rules

DFARS - Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement: DoD-specific additions to FAR. Required for defense contracts.

Organizational Conflict of Interest (OCI): A situation where a contractor's other activities or relationships may bias their work or provide unfair competitive advantage.

Protest: A formal challenge to a contract award or solicitation. Can be filed with GAO, agency, or Court of Federal Claims. *Timing:* Generally within 10 days of learning the basis for protest

Responsibility Determination: The government's assessment of whether a contractor is capable of performing the contract (financial resources, performance record, etc.).

Debarment/Suspension: Actions that exclude contractors from receiving federal contracts due to misconduct or poor performance.

Representations and Certifications: Statements made in SAM.gov about business status, ownership, and compliance. Updated annually.

Termination for Convenience (T4C): Government's right to end a contract at any time for its convenience. Contractor is compensated for work performed.

Termination for Default (T4D): Government's right to end a contract due to contractor failure. Can result in financial penalties and past performance impacts.

Business Development Process

BD Lifecycle: The stages of business development: 1. Market Research, 2. Opportunity Identification, 3. Qualification (Go/No-Go), 4. Capture, 5. Proposal, 6. Award/Debrief

Pipeline: The collection of opportunities being tracked and pursued. Organized by stage and probability.

Pipeline Review: Regular meetings to assess opportunity status, resource allocation, and strategy.

Gate Review: A formal decision point in the capture process. Determines whether to continue investing. **Gate 1:** Pursue the opportunity? **Gate 2:** Continue capture? **Gate 3:** Submit proposal?

Pwin (Probability of Win): An estimate of the likelihood of winning a specific opportunity. Used for pipeline forecasting. *Scale:* Often 10-90% based on competitive position, customer relationship, and solution fit

Bid/No-Bid Decision: A formal decision about whether to pursue an opportunity. Based on evaluation criteria including strategic fit, competitive position, and resource availability.

Debrief: A post-award meeting where the government explains why a contractor did or didn't win. Required for negotiated procurements.

Lessons Learned: A post-award review of what worked and what didn't. Used to improve future capture efforts.

Acronym Quick Reference

Reference: Action Plan Journal, pages 4-9

8(a)	SBA Business Development Program for disadvantaged businesses
ACO	Administrative Contracting Officer
BAFO	Best and Final Offer
BD	Business Development
BOA	Basic Ordering Agreement
BPA	Blanket Purchase Agreement
B&P	Bid and Proposal (costs)
CAGE	Commercial and Government Entity (code)
CAS	Cost Accounting Standards
CDRL	Contract Data Requirements List
CLIN	Contract Line-Item Number
CO/KO	Contracting Officer
COR/COTR	Contracting Officer's (Technical) Representative
COTS	Commercial Off-The-Shelf
CPARS	Contractor Performance Assessment Reporting System
CPFF	Cost Plus Fixed Fee
DCAA	Defense Contract Audit Agency
DCMA	Defense Contract Management Agency
DFARS	Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement
DO	Delivery Order
DOD	Department of Defense
DSBS	Dynamic Small Business Search

EDWOSB	Economically Disadvantaged Women-Owned Small Business
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
FFP	Firm Fixed Price
FPDS	Federal Procurement Data System (now SAM.gov Contract Data)
FSS	Federal Supply Schedule
GSA	General Services Administration
GWAC	Government-Wide Acquisition Contract
HUBZone	Historically Underutilized Business Zone
IDIQ	Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity
LPTA	Lowest Price Technically Acceptable
MAC	Multiple Award Contract
MAS	Multiple Award Schedule
NAICS	North American Industry Classification System
OCI	Organizational Conflict of Interest
OSDBU	Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
PoP	Period of Performance
PPIRS	Past Performance Information Retrieval System
PSC	Product and Service Codes
PTW	Price to Win
Pwin	Probability of Win
PWS	Performance Work Statement
RFI	Request for Information
RFP	Request for Proposal
RFQ	Request for Quotation
SAM	System for Award Management
SAT	Simplified Acquisition Threshold
SBA	Small Business Administration

SDB	Small Disadvantaged Business
SDVOSB	Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business
SOW	Statement of Work
T&M	Time and Materials
T4C	Termination for Convenience
T4D	Termination for Default
TA	Teaming Agreement
TO	Task Order
UEI	Unique Entity Identifier
VOSB	Veteran-Owned Small Business
WOSB	Women-Owned Small Business