

Subcontractor Search Cheat Sheet

How to find, evaluate, and select subcontractors for government contracts. Step-by-step search strategies and due diligence.

Part of the GovCon Advanced Toolkit from AmerifusionGovCon.com | Updated March 2026

1 Where to Search for Subcontractors

Source	URL	What You Find
SAM.gov Entity Search	sam.gov	All registered contractors. Filter by NAICS, size, certs, location.
SBA Dynamic Search	dsbs.sba.gov	Small businesses by certification and NAICS.
SBA SUBNet	eweb1.sba.gov/subnet	Subcontracting opportunities posted by prime contractors.
USAspending.gov	usaspending.gov	Past contract awards. Who won, contract values.
FPDS.gov	fpds.gov	Detailed federal procurement award data and history.
APEX Accelerators	aptac-us.org	Local GovCon counselors, networking, matchmaking.
Agency OSDBU Pages	(varies by agency)	Agency small business office, vendor outreach events.
State MBE/WBE Dirs	(varies by state)	Minority/Women-owned certified businesses.

START WITH SAM.GOV

Every legitimate government contractor must be registered in SAM.gov. If a company is not in SAM.gov, they cannot receive federal contract payments. SAM.gov search is free and does not require a login.

2 SAM.gov Search: Step-by-Step

- 1 Go to sam.gov and click 'Search' in the top navigation (no login required)
- 2 Select 'Entity Information' under Domain to search registered businesses
- 3 Enter NAICS code(s) for the work you need performed
- 4 Filter by Entity Type: small business, 8(a), HUBZone, SDVOSB, WOSB, etc.
- 5 Filter by State or ZIP code if you need local presence or proximity

- 6 Filter by Socioeconomic categories to meet subcontracting plan goals
- 7 Review results: click each entity for capability narrative, POC, and details
- 8 Export results to spreadsheet for tracking and side-by-side comparison
- 9 Contact businesses directly using the POC information in their profile

3 Minimum Qualifications Checklist

- Active SAM.gov registration (not expired, not excluded)
Check the registration expiration date. Expired registration = cannot be paid.
- NAICS codes match the work scope you need performed
- Business size status matches your subcontracting plan needs
Small business, 8(a), SDVOSB, WOSB, HUBZone: verify the specific cert you need.
- Physical location meets any contract proximity requirements
- Capability narrative demonstrates relevant experience
Read the SAM.gov entity description. Does it describe the work you need?
- Has performed similar federal work (check USAspending.gov)
Search USAspending.gov by company name to see past award history.
- Key personnel have required qualifications or certifications
- Security clearances match contract requirements (if applicable)
Facility clearance and individual clearances are separate. Verify both.

4 Evaluation Scorecard (Score 1-5)

Company A:

Company B:

Company C:

Criteria	Co. A	Co. B	Co. C
Relevant experience			
Technical capability			
Past performance quality			
Financial stability			
Pricing competitiveness			

Small business certifications			
Geographic location			
Key personnel qualifications			
Responsiveness / communication			
References from other primes			
TOTAL SCORE			

5 Due Diligence Before Selection

- SAM.gov registration verified (active, check expiration)
- SAM.gov Exclusions list checked (debarment/suspension search)
Search separately at sam.gov under Exclusions. Active registration does not mean no exclusions.
- Requested and reviewed capability statement
- Contacted 2-3 references from other primes they have worked with
Ask about quality, timeliness, communication, and payment disputes.
- Verified insurance coverage (general liability, workers comp, professional)
- Confirmed bonding capacity (if contract requires it)
- Checked for organizational conflicts of interest
- Verified security clearance status (facility and personnel)
- Reviewed financial stability (D&B report or credit references)
- Confirmed key personnel availability for your period of performance
Good people get committed to other projects. Verify availability in writing.
- Discussed and agreed on pricing approach (T&M, FFP, cost-type)
- Verified compliance with flow-down clause requirements
FAR, DFARS, and agency-specific clauses must flow down to subcontractors.

6 Small Business Subcontracting Goals

WHEN IS A SUBCONTRACTING PLAN REQUIRED?

If your prime contract exceeds \$750,000 (\$1.5M for construction) and you are not a small business under the contract's NAICS code, you must submit a small business subcontracting plan (FAR 19.702). Set goals for each category below.

Category	Abbreviation	Govt-Wide Goal	Your Goal
Small Business	SB	23%	_____%
Small Disadvantaged Business	SDB	5%	_____%
Women-Owned Small Business	WOSB	5%	_____%
Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned	SDVOSB	3%	_____%
HUBZone Small Business	HUBZone	3%	_____%

7 Quick Search Workflow

- 1 Define the work scope and required NAICS codes for your subcontractor need
- 2 Search SAM.gov by NAICS code + business type + location
- 3 Cross-reference candidates on USAspending.gov for past award history
- 4 Create a shortlist of 5-8 candidates based on qualifications
- 5 Request capability statements from your shortlist
- 6 Score candidates using the evaluation scorecard (Section 4)
- 7 Conduct full due diligence on your top 2-3 candidates (Section 5)
- 8 Negotiate terms and execute subcontract agreement

PRO TIP: BUILD YOUR BENCH BEFORE YOU NEED IT

Do not wait until you win a contract to find subcontractors. Build relationships now. Attend APEX Accelerator matchmaking events. Go to agency industry days. The best teaming partners are found before the solicitation drops, not after.

Your GovCon Advanced Toolkit:

- 6. DCAA Pre-Audit Readiness Checklist
- 7. Proposal Compliance Matrix
- 8. Teaming Agreement Checklist
- >>> 9. **Subcontractor Search Cheat Sheet (you are here)**

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