

Begging for Bids: These Government Agencies Want to Do Business with You – Right Now

Over the years, several companies have told us that it is challenging to find public sector bids that are a clear-cut match with their business capabilities. Especially small-to-medium businesses and those that offer very niche goods or services. But, despite the perception of there being a shortage of solicitations in some categories – particularly in certain regions of North America – many state and local government agencies are actually complaining of vendor shortages across nearly every category. In fact, some agencies are practically begging for vendors from near and far to bid on their projects. They don't want to keep awarding contracts to the same sole bidder year after year. And in some cases, they just want to find a single bidder for their solicitation.

How could this be possible, you ask? Especially given that you have trouble finding bids that are well-suited for your business and/or seem to face fierce competition on the bids you do submit. Well, there are a number of possible reasons. Many of which explain why agencies are struggling to find qualified vendors.

1. You, Like Many Other Companies, May Be Thinking Too “Big” – And Not Looking Far Enough Out

What we've experienced in speaking with many BidSync customers is that nearly every company with a government-centric sales strategy will hone in on federal opportunities first and foremost. They register in SAMS and then spend their days combing through FBO or researching ways to get on a GSA schedule that is very specific to their business. Which is understandable. Federal government contracts are often big revenue generators and a key component of the potential target market. But, the sheer volume of proposals submitted for federal opportunities makes the competition stiff, even for certified small and disadvantaged business entities (DBE) eligible for set-aside contracts. And, honestly, state and local contracts can be just as financially lucrative. Especially if you expand your geographical search radius and look for opportunities beyond your immediate operating regions where there may be little to no competition.



Not every city, county or state has qualified vendors submitting bids for the categories in which you're expertly qualified to compete due to local industry demographics or agency requirements (more on that below). For example, many of the population centers across the desert Southwest do not experience frequent winter snowstorms. However, the upper mountain elevations do. That leaves public sector agencies that have infrastructure in those higher elevations desperately searching for someone who can provide a snow plowing service for employees that need to access assets such as communications towers.

It's not likely there are a lot of local vendors vying for those contracts, so there may be a very winnable opportunity (or ten) lingering out there for a snow-plowing company based in the Northeast, let's say, that are willing to expand their search parameters and operations.

2. You May Be Too Targeted in Your Bid Search – And Your Scope of Capabilities

Many companies will restrict their bid category search to a select few keywords that align with their core competencies. However, not all public sector agencies use the same category coding structure, much less the same product or service descriptions when posting solicitations. In our BidSync system, we've seen food-related bids from a single city be referred to as everything from "groceries" to "food service" to "cupcakes" and "meat, poultry, dairy and frozen foods." In fact, the scope of keyword utilization is quite extensive when it comes to broad categories such as construction, technology, maintenance, cleaning/janitorial and other services. Don't miss out on opportunities simply because you are limiting your search terms to those that fit your company's marketing description of your own goods or services. Think about how others may refer to your business offerings. At the same time, don't restrict your growth potential by self-limiting the scope of the goods or services you offer. While it is good to find your niche and play up your specialized expertise when competing for government contracts, it can also benefit companies to look for "fringe" opportunities. These are bids that could easily be supported by their business using either existing resources or relationships – or both.

For example, if you are a produce supplier, could you also muster up the resources – or team up with an industry partner – to pursue produce market organizer or food service provider opportunities? As a general contractor, could you tap into your materials suppliers to source lumber for a materials-only solicitation or secure the lowest price on a few A/C units from one of your dealers to win a smaller one-time sale that offers a fast payoff? As a landscaper whose business is often seasonal, could you buy a few pieces of equipment that would enable you to expand your offerings to include snow plowing service? (An opportunity that could also keep your crew improved through the winter months, by the way.) The point is that companies willing to think outside the box a bit may find that there are tens, hundreds, or even thousands of new winnable bid opportunities out there that could generate new revenue streams without burdening resources.

3. You May Think It's "Too Difficult" To Do Business with Certain Agencies Due to Vendor Qualification, Resource or Reporting Requirements

It may seem overwhelming to comply with each public sector agency's individual vendor registration requirements, much less the many insurance, workforce, accounting system and reporting mandates. In fact, government contracting's "rules of engagement" is often a barrier-to-entry for many companies. However, those willing to commit the time and resources to fulfill these mandates will find that they often gain a golden ticket to years of government contracting opportunities – many of which are currently seeing very little competition due to the lack of eligible (i.e. compliant) vendors.





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- There are extensive opportunities out there for companies of all sizes, and in all industries, willing to “sell local” – even outside their own local region – or think beyond a large agency-only government sales strategy.
- Look closer at smaller jurisdictions – or areas where your goods/services may not be needed year-round or by the general population – and you’ll probably find that competition is slim to non-existent, while revenue-generating contract opportunities are abundant.
- Consider “fringe” categories. Opportunities that, while outside your core business model, could be easily fulfilled by your company through either a slight operational expansion or through teaming agreements with other companies that can provide either the technical expertise, financial resources or actual goods/services that your company needs to win – and profit from – more niche government contracts.
- It can payoff to “go where others won’t go” when it comes to meeting the public sector’s strict vendor requirements. If you are willing to put in the extra legwork to secure the proper certifications and insurance minimums; comply with workforce, financial and security mandates; and complete the often paperwork-laden processes associated with bidding, negotiating, and executing contracts with each individual agency, then you will likely find the resource investment pays dividends in the long run.



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