

## **Win Government Contracts with your Council Certification**

Congratulations on your certification by the American Council for Accredited Certification (ACAC). This prestigious designation sets you apart from competitors in your field. It can also help you attract an important type of new business: government projects awarded through a bidding process.

Schools, hospitals, office buildings and military facilities continually face problems related to your certification. As a result, the federal, state and municipal governments that operate these facilities often call for bids and award contracts for such projects. Participating in the bidding process as a Council-certified professional can help you win these contracts.

In order to compete for and win a government contract, you or someone from your firm should take each of the following steps:

1. Identify and locate RFPs (Request for Proposals) as they are announced.
2. Participate in pre-bid conferences with the agency's procurement office.
3. Submit relevant and timely information to the procurement office about what qualifications, including ACAC certifications, should be written into RFP.
4. Submit your proposal **on time**, including **all** information in the **exact** form and manner requested.
5. Respond quickly to any amendments to the bid that may be published before it is awarded.
6. Prepare for future bids by finding out the reasons your proposal was not accepted, if in fact you are not awarded the contract.

### **Identify and Locate RFPs**

Most government buying processes follow a general pattern. A government entity will approve an project for one of its buildings (school, office building, military facility, etc.). This approval is generally sent to the procurement office that handles purchases for the entity. The procurement office will then put the project "out for bid" by announcing an RFP, and will also publish information about pre-bid conferences and other relevant information pertaining to the bid.

So, how do you become aware of these RFPs? You can always contact the individuals at the government entity who are responsible for issues related to the project. This is an excellent opportunity to introduce yourself and your firm's capabilities. This is also the time to make sure these individuals know about your ACAC certification and what it means since these same people may be responsible for establishing requirements and specifications for future RFPs. They can likely direct you to the procurement office that handles their requisitions.

The procurement office may require your firm to pre-register, and provide them with information about your company and the services it offers. Typically, this registration is straightforward: you will be asked things like services offered, size of company, whether you are woman- or minority-owned, etc. Pre-registration is usually free, but a few procurement offices require a small fee to handle paperwork processing. Always

**register if possible:** you can then be notified by letter or email of future RFPs that fit your company's profile.

You may also want to subscribe to one of the many online firms that track government RFPs and notify subscribers of good matches for their companies. Fees for these subscriptions typically range from several hundred dollars to a thousand dollars annually, but the awarding of one government contract can easily cover this cost. Such online services include:

[www.bidnet.com](http://www.bidnet.com)

[www.bidmain.com](http://www.bidmain.com)

[www.governmentbids.com](http://www.governmentbids.com)

### **Participate in Pre-bid Activities**

Once you become aware of an RFP offering, contact the procurement office to be sure you have all the latest information about requirements, pre-bid conferences and other important details.

Plan to attend all pre-bid conferences: meeting procurement officers in person gives you the chance to voice your suggestions regarding the scope and specifications of the RFP. Always mention your ACAC certification and suggest that it be included as a requirement in the RFP. Be prepared to support your suggestion by explaining the high standards and nationwide credibility of Council certifications. You may be permitted to distribute handouts during pre-bid conferences, and they should stress the following points:

- **Independence:** The ACAC has no financial ties with industry trainers.
- **Integrity:** Qualifications for ACAC certification include verified field experience and board-awarding by unanimous vote.
- **Credibility:** ACAC programs are compliant with ASTM standards and third party accreditation guidelines.

### **Submit Your Proposal**

Be sure to read the RFP carefully and to supply everything requested in the exact order and format required. Failure to follow such simple instructions as font size in your proposal may cause the procurement office to reject it. Also, be sure to submit your proposal on time. If your bid arrives 5 minutes late, it will likely be discarded.

### **Prepare for Future Bids**

If you have done all your homework and submitted your materials as requested in a timely manner, you have a good chance of being awarded the contract. If a bid award meeting takes place, be sure to attend. If you are not awarded the contract, ask questions of the procurement officers to find out about the deficiencies in your proposal. Learning from the process, even if you were unsuccessful, can make all the difference the second time around.

Please accept our congratulations on your ACAC certification, and our best wishes for success in your business endeavors.