

GovConcepts

GACO APEX ACCELERATOR QUARTERLY INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

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GACO's New Spotlight

The GACO APEX Accelerator is helping to improve the visibility of select clients who have developed a strong record of performance with the government agencies and prime contractors they serve. Our "Spotlight on Our Clients" section, of our website, highlights the success stories of select clients so that agency partners and industry professionals can get a glimpse of your companies' successful integration of government sales into your businesses. Clients interested in being featured in our "Spotlight on Our Clients" page can email GACOAPEXAccelerator@pennwest.edu to learn more.

CMMC PHASE 2 SUSPENSION

As of July 13th, 2026, the DoD has temporarily suspended CMMC Phase 2 third-party certification implementation. This pause is seen as temporary relief for small businesses that cannot financially justify the extra burden to sell to the Department of Defense. Bear in mind: the CMMC **Phase 2** referenced in

in DoD's announcement is not CMMC **Level 2**. Phase 2 refers to the second phase of the department's progressive implementation of DIB-wide CMMC requirements. Level 2 is the 110 controls your company must comply with. The CMMC Level 2 self-assessment has not changed. If your current DoD contract contains DFARS 252.204-7012 or the solicitations you engage with contain sensitive or technical data, you will still need to comply with CMMC Level 2 requirements.

The suspension of the start of Phase 2 means that Phase 1 will remain in place. That means that whatever expectations were in place on July 12 prior to the announcement still apply. This pause simply delays and potentially modifies Phase 2 third-party certification and how the process of that rollout will look. Companies that have already started on their Level 2 compliance should continue toward that goal.

The Department's task force assigned with the review will accept responses until Friday, August 14th. If you or your company can provide constructive insight or feedback on how Phase 2 can be most effectively implemented, you can respond to the RFI posted to sam.gov.

Do You Know the Difference?

Types of Notices and Contracts

When reviewing contracting opportunities, a company hoping to provide products or services to a government agency may encounter a variety of contract and notice types. Here is a quick reference guide to some of the most common:

Market Research Notices:

Request for Information (RFI): This type of notice is used to solicit input from companies prior to an actual solicitation being released. It is a great way to communicate your company's name and capabilities to agencies that need what you sell.

Sources Sought Notices (SSN): Like a RFI, a Sources Sought notice is published in the market research stage. Government agencies post Sources Sought Notices to evaluate whether companies exist that can perform certain types of work. SSNs are also an opportunity to market yourself by demonstrating that your company can perform on certain types of work.

Contract Types:

Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ): This type of contract may be issued when an agency is unsure of the quantity needed of a product or service. Task orders for specific work may then be assigned to awardees.

Multiple Award Contracts (MACs): In this case, more than one vendor may be awarded on the same contract and can then compete for individual task orders.

Task Orders: A work assignment issued under an IDIQ or MAC.

GSA Schedules: GSA schedules are long-term contract awards that deem a supplier a pre-approved source. Agencies can then purchase goods or services directly from these vendors under a negotiated schedule price.

Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPAs): As with a GSA schedule, BPAs enable agencies to quickly purchase goods or services from pre-approved vendors.

Firm Fixed Price Contracts: In this type of contract, the price is agreed upon in advance and is therefore "fixed". Contract risk is placed on the vendor.

Time and Materials Contracts (T&Ms): In a Time and Materials Contract, the contractor is paid based on the labor hours and materials used to complete the project.

Set Aside Contracts: In this type of contract, the award is "set aside" for certain socioeconomic groups, such as small businesses, woman-owned small businesses, veteran-owned small businesses, etc.

Want to learn more about these notices and contract types? Contact your GACO counselor for more details.

KEY PLAYERS IN GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING

Navigating the Government contracting landscape is its own maze of difficulty. Each role within the federal government procurement process serves a unique purpose. Gaining an understanding of the key players and their positions in the procurement hierarchy will save small business owners time and angst. There are eight government players that may serve a crucial role at some phase of your procurement and contracting journey. They are: Small Business Liaison Officer (SBLO), Small Business Specialists (SBS), Contracting Officer (CO/KO), Contract Specialist (CS), Contracting Officer Representative (COR), Acquisition Program Manager (APM/PM), Procurement Center Representative (PCR) and Office of Small/Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU).

Government Representative	Business Benefits	Area of Control
SBLO	-Advocate and Ally -Outreach Efforts -Aid in Market Research	-Oversee contracting programs -Monitor subcontractor certifications
SBS	-Small Business Act Compliance -Guidance on Acquisition Plans -Vital contact to improve thriving	-Oversee contracting programs -Monitor subcontractor certifications -Has full attention of stakeholders
CO/KO (DoD)	Contact for: -Acquisition Forecasting -RFI Questions and requirements -Specific contracting matters	-Bind Federal Government to contracts -Sole spending authority -Can change the contract
CS	-Small business research -Market research -Industry outreach -Respond to inquiries	-Act as SBLO representative -Act as SBS representative -Assist CO's with Pre-awards -Assist CO's with Post-awards
COR	-Ensure contractor compliance -Contract performance advocate -Awardee primary contact	-Develop and manage contracts -Facilitate development of requirements -No authority to change contract
APM/PM	Use marketplace data for: -Business knowledge/Developing -Identifying APM/PM pain points -Collaborate on set-aside work	Technically focused on: -Achieving program objectives -Assisting with strategic planning -Providing procurement insights
PCR	-Support small businesses -Enhance contracting opportunity -Ensure contract compliance	-Liaison between agency and businesses -Review acquisitions for compliance -Identify potential offerors
OSDBU Director	-Assess acquisition opportunities -Facilitate contract participation -Promote inclusion in contracting	-Ensure Small Business Act compliance -Collaborate with PCRs -Report small business participation

MUNICIPAL PURCHASING THRESHOLDS INCREASED IN 2026

Companies selling products or services to Pennsylvania boroughs and townships saw more flexibility given to buyers when the new purchasing thresholds for competition went into effect in January 2026. Purchases under \$13,200 can now be made with no formal bidding required. Purchases between \$13,200 and \$24,500 must have at least three written or telephonic bids, and purchases above \$24,500 must be posted for public bids. Knowing the rules governing these requirements helps businesses understand how agencies must buy, but those thresholds also act as an indicator of projected spending without the buyer needing to announce it.

How businesses hear about the procurement matters. That's why building a relationship with these buyers is important. If the purchase is small enough that they can just pick up the phone, you want them to call you, and that only happens if the relationship already exists before the need. How companies hear about it also means they can assume how much the buyer is allowed to spend. If an agency reaches out and mentions they are only receiving bids from a handful of other businesses, it is an indicator that they expect the purchase to fall within that \$13,200-\$24,500 range. Anything above that must be publicly announced to allow for maximum visibility to as many potential bidders as possible. If the procurement is above \$24,500, seeing it in a newspaper or on a bidding site might be your only notice, but you can assume it will have a minimum dollar value.

This is important because you know your industry. The smaller the dollar value of the procurements you can execute, the closer your relationship with those buyers should be. Being able to place these thresholds alongside your industry's average purchase size can tell you how much of your time should be spent building relationships and how much should be spent watching for notices.

FROM C-FOLDERS TO TDMT

For DLA DIBBS vendors needing access to technical data, there has been a recent change in data management with the discontinuation of C- Folders. Now, the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) has begun using the Technical Data Management Transformation (TDMT). As of June 21, 2026, TDMT has replaced C- Folders as vendors' technical data management tool. Users who need access to this new system will first need to register in the DLA's Account Management and Provisioning System (AMPS). For guidance on navigating this shift, access DLA's instructions at

<https://www.dibbs.bsm.dla.mil//notices/msgdspl.aspx?msgid=1311>.

FUNDING YOUR BUSINESS

In 2024, 61% of Pennsylvania small businesses reported poor or fair financial conditions, but Pennsylvania offers a multitude of incentive programs for small businesses to help combat that problem. The PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) administers grant and loan assistance programs. Here is a list of loan and grant resources from state, regional, and federal agencies:

Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development's (DCED) PA Business One-Stop Shop: <https://business.pa.gov/grow/small-business-funding/>

- DCED is a good first step for researching expansion funding in Pennsylvania.

PA CDFI Network Small Business Microgrants: <https://pacdfinetwork.org/basc-microgrants-program/>

- Small Disadvantaged businesses can qualify for up to \$20,000 in grant funding for growth-related expenses.

Small Business Grants in Pennsylvania:

<https://startupowl.com/fund/grants/pennsylvania>

- StartupOwl is a free training and financial resource guide for businesses seeking to learn business basics, growth strategies and locate grants or loans.

SBA-guaranteed business loan programs <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/loans>

- The Federal SBA sets guidelines for loans and reducing lender risk. These SBA-backed loans make it easier for small businesses to get the funding they need.

SCORE Resource: SMB Funding <https://www.score.org/resources/>

- SCORE is the nation's largest nonprofit network of volunteer business mentors, dedicated to helping entrepreneurs start, grow, and sustain their businesses.

What You Missed - GACO Training Events Recap

Practical AI for Growing Businesses: Turning Organizational Knowledge into Competitive Advantage Hybrid Event:

In this hybrid event, businesses learned best practices and new strategies for implementing AI into their existing workflows to improve their internal productivity.

Project Spectrum Webinar:

In this training, our speaker outlined the importance of determining the scope, or people and technology using CUI, when preparing for CMMC Level 1.

ERDCWERX and the DoD's/DoW's Critical Technology Areas Webinar:

This webinar discussed ERDCWERX's innovation efforts and how companies, specifically those aligned with the DoD/W's Critical Technology Areas can participate.

Local Procurement Webinar - City of Pittsburgh and the Sports and Exhibition Authority:

This webinar acted as an introduction to Pittsburgh's Sports and Exhibition Authority and guided participants through the process of working with the City of Pittsburgh.

Upcoming Events

August

Dept. of the Navy Gold Coast Small Business Expo

San Diego Convention Center | San Diego, CA

August 17-20, 2026

[**Register**](#)

September

DLA Industry Collider Day

Hilton Alexandria Mark Center | Alexandria, VA

September 9, 2026

[**Register**](#)

SBIR/STTR Innovation Conference

Gaylord National Hotel & Convention Center |

National Harbor, MD

September 22-24, 2026

[**Register**](#)

October

AUSA National Convention & Expo

Houston Space Center | Houston, TX

October 12-14, 2026

[**Register**](#)

November

GACO Procurement Opportunities Fair

Monroeville Convention Center | Monroeville, PA

November 12, 2026

[**Save the Date**](#)

Society for American Military Engineers Small Business Conference 2026

Charlotte Convention Center | Charlotte, NC

November 4-6, 2026

[**Register**](#)

Suggested Govology Trainings

**Winning Strategies and Proven Best Practices for Government Prospecting
(2026 Update)**

How to Write Customer-Focused Proposals (2026 Update)

**How to Build a Strong Government Sales Strategy – 8 Core Activities (2026
Update)**

(Contact GACO for the discount code.)

Further Reading

Five NAICS Code Myths That Refuse to Die

SBA Releases FY25 Scorecard for Small Business Contracting

SBA, NASA Sign Memorandum of Agreement to Strengthen Investment
in America's Space Exploration Supply Chain

SBA Proposes Major Changes to 8(a) Social Disadvantage Requirements

Forging the Arsenal of Freedom: Department of War Suspends CMMC
Phase II Requirements

Pittsburgh Trivia Challenge

Q: Pittsburgh became home to the first _____ in 1920.

A: (commercial radio station (KDKA))



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