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# ***Capturing Federal Business***

FOR  
**DUMMIES®**

## ***Learn to:***

- Size up the market
- Assess opportunities
- Create detailed proposals

**Rachel Duggins Miller  
Chris Gildea**



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DELTEK SPECIAL EDITION

**by Rachel Duggins Miller  
and Chris Gildea**



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# Introduction



**T**he federal government marketplace is huge and enticing. Hundreds of billions of dollars are spent every year on practically everything you can imagine. Those goods or services that your organization provides may be just what the government is looking for.

But because the marketplace is huge and complicated, tackling it effectively and successfully takes careful planning and meticulous execution. That's *capture management* for you. You can't just venture blindly into the forest of government purchasing without planning where you're going, knowing where to look, understanding your organization's strategic objectives, carefully evaluating and qualifying each potential opportunity, gathering reams of information, getting to know your customers and competitors, and understanding and preparing for risks. Each of these things defines parts of capture management. If you don't use the information you gather from your sources, you'll be left guessing when you need to decide whether or not to continue going after this business. If you don't follow the path and use the knowledge you're building, you'll not only be wasting time and resources, you'll be making bad decisions.

Solid capture management can make the difference between frustration and victory. If you knew that the client loved your work, but was facing steep budget cuts by the time the next RFP was going to be released, would you change your pricing structure? How would knowing that your biggest competitor just purchased your most reliable small business partner change how you approach your response? It takes time and effort to build a well-oiled capture organization, but your company won't thrive in the business of government contracting without it. Because without really knowing your customer, you'll just be flying blind.

## About This Book

*Capturing Federal Business For Dummies, Deltek Special Edition*, spells out the concepts of capture management in a way we hope you'll find accessible and easy to understand. We explore all the different stages of the opportunity pursuit process, from understanding the strategic plan to identifying pursuits to writing proposals to debriefing after it's all done.

Whether you're an executive, a program manager, a proposal writer, or a capture management professional, our book provides insights that will help you hone your capture and opportunity pursuit efforts and prepare for success. They say winning isn't everything, but if you're not winning the business you're pursuing, you won't be in business for long.

## Icons Used in This Book

If you've read a *For Dummies* book, such as others in our Deltek series, you'll expect to see icons that help you spot specific types of information.



You'll find this icon next to paragraphs containing helpful tips for planning and executing your capture effort or proposal writing.



This icon goes next to the truths about capture management that you won't want to miss even if you're just scanning through that particular chapter.



There are always dangers and pitfalls tied to any valuable endeavor, and going after government opportunities is no different. Please consider words next to this icon carefully.

# Chapter 1

## Sizing Up the Market

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Defining your market strategy
- ▶ Deciding whether to go prime or sub
- ▶ Gauging your organization's readiness

No one needs to tell you that selling in the federal government marketplace is a complicated business. It's not something you dive into without a lot of forethought and planning, and even if you're already doing federal business, any decision to expand beyond what you're doing now also requires a lot of careful thinking. That thinking and planning is what capture management is all about.

For starters, you need to really know your organization and have a clear vision for what you're doing. You need to discern which agencies are likely to have the best opportunities for your organization. You need to think about the best approach — will you pursue the opportunities as a prime contractor or as a subcontractor? What traits will make your organization stand out to the ultimate customer, whether it's a government agency (if you're going to bid as a prime contractor) or a fellow government contractor (if you're approaching this as a sub)?

You'll find a lot of insights about pursuing government business in *Capturing Federal Business For Dummies*, Deltek Special Edition. In this chapter, we focus more narrowly on opportunity life cycle management — both the strategies and the tactics — along with the internal and external resources that will be critical to growth and opportunity.

## What Is Capture Management

The government seeks goods and services through a specific process that ultimately produces a request for proposal or RFP that must be responded to in order to compete for and win business. *Capture management* describes how you put all the pieces in place to respond with a compelling plan that explains why your solution is the best choice. It focuses on taking an identified opportunity and building relationships, gathering information, and marshaling internal and external resources to meet the customer requirements (whether the customer is the government or another contractor). After all the data is gathered and alliances formed, your organization should be well positioned to provide the customer with the best solution.

How you go about pulling all the information and documentation together is pretty straightforward, and we walk you through the major focus areas throughout the book.

## What's Your Strategy?

What are the basic building blocks of a strategy? Simply put, a *strategic plan* spells out what approach you'll be taking in order to succeed, how you'll define success (preferably in a way that's measureable), and then how you'll quantify your results over some period of time in order to determine whether the approach has been effective.



For capture organizations, an ideal jumping-off point is a simply stated, five-year plan for targeted growth and sustainment activities. This plan will guide your company in determining where to focus your efforts.

Your strategic plan will ask and then answer a lot of important questions. First of all, are you pursuing the commercial sector or the government marketplace? As a prime contractor or a subcontractor? Through an indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity (IDIQ) arrangement or through single-award contracts? And what are your core capabilities? Lots of tough

questions, for sure, but the answers will help your company structure its resources and focus its tactical efforts.

It's not uncommon for companies to view the strategic plan as an annual exercise for filling up the business development pipeline. That's not a bad approach for pursuing some markets, but if you're seeking work as a government contractor, you've got to realize it can take years for the effort to bear fruit.



Because of that, taking an annual approach can leave you out of step with managing the opportunity life cycle. It means you're trying to evaluate the success or progress of your efforts without having tangible results, and you might wind up changing course prematurely. You don't want to introduce unnecessary instability by changing focus and direction before you've really had a chance to test the greater vision.

That's not to say you should just give your initiatives a five-year pass without checking in. Of course you need to review and adjust the strategic plan from time to time, validating or adapting as opportunities are won or lost, and also factoring in any significant changes in government policy. Later in the book, we spend more time discussing how to effectively review opportunities as they move through their maturity cycle.



Ultimately, how your organization approaches the federal marketplace is a highly customized thing — you need to consider all the opportunities available and refine your company's pursuit targets to match the core capabilities you bring to the market. Look back over your history in the federal market and ask yourself some key questions: What's working well now? What areas have been less successful? Are you doing business in any commercial market segments that might help you expand capabilities within your government contracting practice? Making an internal assessment of your organization's capabilities is just the first half of the equation. It's just as important to evaluate the larger universe of contracts available. Then your capture organization can start to connect the dots.

Start sizing the market by spending time searching such websites as FedBizOpps or GovWin IQ and government agency procurement sites to find possible opportunities to pursue.

Smart capture organizations also rely on virtual force multipliers such as GovWin IQ to provide a richer research environment offering analysis of opportunities, agency profiles, market spending trends, and projections. It's a great call, because you'll be leveraging the output of hundreds of analysts to refine your market targets and gain deeper insight into specific programs.



Doing opportunity research that helps you define your target market can also help you identify competitors or potential partners. Whichever is the case, you'll gain by learning what they're doing and where they may have gaps. Within your strategic plan, address the agencies and types of contract vehicles you'll be pursuing, and spell out how your offerings fit. The mix of vehicles you include in your strategy can affect staffing requirements across the organization. Here are some examples of contract vehicles you'll want to consider:

- ✓ **GSA Schedule:** These unfunded five-year contracts administered by the U.S. General Services Administration, or GSA, cover around 62 categories of goods and services to be supplied to the government at set prices. Unlike other vehicles, you must apply for a spot on a GSA Schedule to become an approved vendor.
- ✓ **VA Schedule:** Similar to the GSA schedules, but administered by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.
- ✓ **Sole Source:** This type of contract kicks in when an agency wants to do business with just one company for a particular need. However, these cases are very rare, and the requesting agency *must* have a solid justification or else risk destroying the integrity of government contracting.
- ✓ **Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ):** IDIQs are contracts that state limits so supplies and services will be authorized during a fixed period of time, without setting a specific quantity as an end result.
- ✓ **Multi-Agency Contract (MAC):** Some agencies operate contracts with a prequalified set of vendors and make those contracts available to other government agencies. Sometimes an agency Contract Officer (CO) may decide that there's another agency that has a contract they'd like to use to get their Program Officers need fulfilled.

**✓ Government Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC):**

GWACs are a type of MA IDIQ that can be used by all agencies. Most GWACs are operated by GSA to help COs across the government fulfill complex needs.

**✓ Multiple Award Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (MA IDIQ):**

Sometimes a CO will expect a lot of demand for a certain set of products and services. In those cases, the CO can get a better deal for the agency by leveraging its buying power. It can establish a contract with a selected group of vendors. Although there may be multiple awardees on these contracts, they are a closed community, and competition for task or delivery orders on these vehicles may only occur among members of that community. Because there are limited competitors that are qualified to perform, the cost of services is less.



How does your vehicle choice affect your staffing needs?

Consider, for example, the level of capture, proposal, and program staff you would need if you choose to pursue more IDIQ work, which is marked by a repetitive cycle of task order competition. By contrast, a single award might require less staffing in those areas but a deeper contract execution capability.

Meanwhile, be sure to think and talk about the qualities that would make a good partner, considering the type of work that you'll pursue as both prime and sub. Consider what your organization will look for to indicate that working relationships are continuing to benefit your business objectives.

## *To Prime or to Sub?*



There's a lot to consider as your capture organization decides which position to take on a pursuit, and it's not just a matter of the strengths or weaknesses of your organization. The climate of the market plays a key role, as does your overall growth strategy. As your capture organization builds tactical plans to drive business, it needs to know the expectations for when to lead a pursuit effort, as well as when supporting another contractor better fits your strategic approach to the market.

You'll find all kinds of clues to the right approach if you know where to look. For example, keep an eye out for recent changes to prime awards; are contracts being structured to promote small businesses as the prime contractor? If so, does that help or hinder your chances for success? Is an agency with which you have a strong relationship moving to a Multi-Agency Contract situation? If that's so, the CO there may be less familiar with your past performance. It could be that someone within your network of partner organizations has an advantage when it comes to size, status, or relationships, and your organization will be better off trying to leverage that advantage as a sub.



If you think the only organizations with strong strategic plans are large firms with dedicated strategy staffs, think again. Smaller organizations can navigate their way forward by coupling their planning resources with services such as GovWin IQ, GovWin Consulting, and WMG in order to gain the right analysis for a better understanding of trends and drivers.

## *When Are You Ready?*

Deciding on the right time to enter the market can feel like trying to hit a moving target, and you may start to feel worried that opportunities are passing you by. But just diving in without planning isn't the wisest approach.



Companies that don't take the time to develop a strategic overview often find themselves overwhelmed when a key pursuit is awarded, and that can jeopardize the relationships — as well as the potential revenue — that they invested so much time and effort to build. An organization is likely to ultimately fail if it too often misjudges the market and its own ability to perform. That's why the strategic plan is such a critical part of the tactical pursuit effort. If you're going to thrive, you must know what your organization can offer customers and partners, what you want to deliver, and how you want to work with partner organizations.

Strategic planning is what provides the framework for the capture organization to move forward with activities that will generate leads, build partner and agency relationships, and create market awareness. Play your cards right and you can even begin to influence the shape of the eventual request for proposal (RFP) that the government issues.

## Chapter 2

# Assessing Opportunities

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Defining the opportunity life cycle
- ▶ Building an effective capture organization
- ▶ Targeting the best opportunities
- ▶ Starting your pursuit
- ▶ Moving opportunities into the pipeline

**T**here's more than one way to skin a cat, and more than one way to approach opportunity life cycle management. If you've done some reading on the subject, or Internet searching, you may have come across thoughts from such voices as Shipley Associates and Lohfeld Consulting Group. You'll find that there are more similarities than differences when it comes to theories and practices for managing opportunity life cycles. In this chapter, we spell out the similarities, explain what makes a good capture organization, and start to work our way through the process.

## *The Road Map for Managing Opportunity*

Despite the nuances of day-to-day execution — which can differ based on the methodology perspective or the individual organizational culture — most government contractors will boil an opportunity's life cycle down to six stages:

- ✓ **Organizational strategy:** Here's where you define the characteristics of the contracts your organization will pursue. These may, in fact, be outlined in the strategic plan.
- ✓ **Assessment:** If you didn't already pull out the strategic plan for the last stage, do so now, and evaluate potential opportunities against the organization's strategic goals to be sure everything's in alignment.
- ✓ **Pursuit:** Now you must reach a deeper understanding of the requirements of the specific opportunity, using intelligence that your business development and capture organizations have gathered.
- ✓ **Preproposal preparation:** You're almost ready for the proposal, but first get started by crafting key elements of the RFP response and building the proposal response team, which may include people both inside and outside the organization.
- ✓ **Proposal development:** Pull together the proposal response team and get to work on the actual RFP response; your team must craft a compelling document that will give your organization the best possible chance of winning.
- ✓ **Postsubmittal:** Now you wait, as patiently as possible, and prepare for final disposition of the contract, win or lose.



These are the six basic stages, but if your organization is large and complex, your capture process may have additional milestones. For example, as opportunities multiply across agencies and pipelines expand, you'll probably need to build in more formalized executive *decision gates*, where the higher-ups decide whether or not to continue with the bid process, as well as color team reviews, which are additional internal reviews.

Also, the more complicated the organizational structure, the more you'll need mechanisms for reporting progress and outcomes both up and down the line. Throughout the book, we explore how technology can be your friend in this regard.

## Elements of an Effective Capture Organization

Whether your organization is small or large, you need to cover some basic functions to effectively pursue opportunities. The functions themselves are fairly straightforward and consistent, though the size of your execution team will vary depending on the size of the pursuit as well as the limitations of your resources. Here are the building blocks of an effective capture organization:

- ✓ **Business developer:** Here's the smart one who supplies the intelligence, builds relationships, and collects opportunity knowledge.
- ✓ **Capture manager:** Those who fill these shoes develop the capture plan and strategy, and take responsibility for managing the opportunity life cycle. The capture manager often has reporting responsibility to management.
- ✓ **Proposal manager:** This person pulls the pieces together to produce the final proposal for submission to the potential customer. The proposal manager builds whatever team is necessary to create a prize-winning proposal and manages the content requirement and development schedules.
- ✓ **Program manager:** If all goes well and your organization lands the contract, the program manager takes over and executes the solution. This team member often is a contributor to the proposal process and should be able to augment customer or program solution information with direct experience.

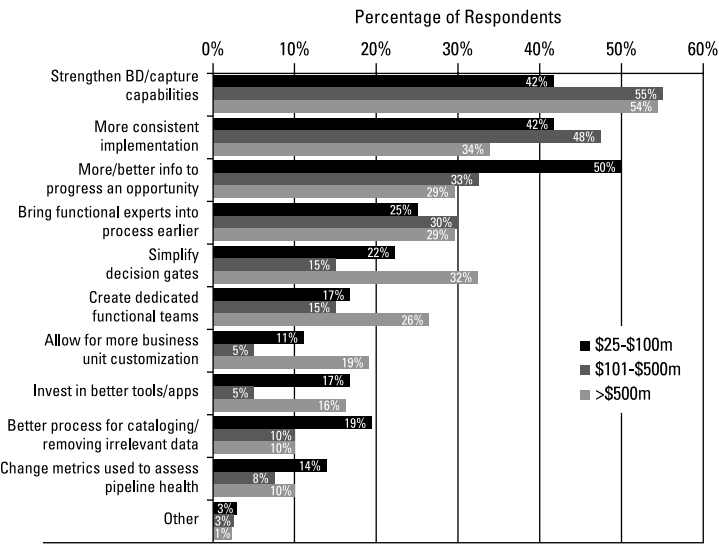


Now that we've carefully spelled out these functions in easy-to-follow bullet points, we'll muddy the water by noting that many organizations (large and small alike) choose to combine two or more of these functions. For example, you may see capture managers who also have business development responsibilities; they'll aggregate information they've discerned through building client relationships. You might also see experienced program managers taking the lead with capture efforts, which is an excellent approach if you're trying to keep a customer's business when recompeting for a contract.

What’s the best combination of roles for successful opportunity pursuit? That’s up to you to decide, based on the details of your organization, the kinds of opportunities you plan to pursue, and the players you may already have on your team. New and even established government contractors should recognize that an established business development and capture process is key to success. In a recent Deltek survey (see Figure 2-1), improving BD and capture was a top priority. The study notes that improving BD and capture skill sets is important to all contractors, but small businesses appear more concerned with business and process consistency. Although large contractors are confident in the phases they use to advance opportunities, over 30 percent of them would simplify the decision gates.



During the initial phases of an opportunity’s life cycle, you may not have a role for some of the other key elements of your organization, such as finance, contracts, or engineering. But don’t discount them, because in the end they’ll all contribute to creating the solution you present to the customer. You need to pick their brains in the preproposal and proposal development stages, and of course, once you win the work, they’ll be key players in executing the contract for the long haul.



Source: Deltek

**Figure 2-1:** Self-assessment of pipeline management: What companies need to improve.

## Targeting Likely Opportunities

Your capture organization is now ready to begin the second stage of managing the opportunity life cycle — building a tactical approach that identifies and assesses those opportunities that will feed and build the pipeline. You need to turn to your organization's strategic plan for guidance. It should spell out three key details you need to begin:

- ✓ Core specialty areas
- ✓ Key agencies
- ✓ Contract type mix

With these parameters in mind, your business developers can leverage the power of tools that will help to inform and automate opportunity life cycle management. For example, we mention in Chapter 1 how valuable research services such as GovWin IQ can be during strategy development. It turns out that these tools are also an essential element of your organization's tactical approach to the market.

**TIP**

Use your research tool's search capability to look across the universe of contract opportunities. By applying refinements to the search criteria and thus narrowing the results, you establish a baseline of opportunities for potential pursuit. And the job takes much less staff time than the days or weeks it would take to search a combination of FedBizOpps and agency websites, and then meticulously analyze the results. Services such as GovWin IQ typically provide you with the initial contract requirements, historical information, funding data, and potential competitors — that's all critical intelligence as you begin assessing the viability of the opportunity.

**REMEMBER**

At the assessment stage, aggregate the results of initial searches into an easy-to-reference, reportable format. That may feel overly formal at first, and indeed, young organizations often follow a rather casual process when discussing opportunities, deciding whether to pursue them, and tracking their progress. They may not see the point of formal reporting repository building. But as the pursuit pool grows, activity tracking becomes a whole lot more complex, and it gets a lot more difficult to keep everything you learn about an opportunity together and available to the capture effort. You'll thank

yourself if you go ahead and identify tools that work together to support your organization's goals and processes now and as they evolve. Documented, repeatable processes are the foundation of effective opportunity life cycle management.

If you incorporate such tools as GovWin Capture Management in the early growth stages of your organization, you'll find yourself in a great position to make effective, quick evaluations of opportunities in the qualification queue. Some research tools, like GovWin IQ, can feed the key details and analysis of any identified record directly into the capture management tool — talk about a workforce multiplier!

Whether or not you link directly with your research source, it's standard practice to use a capture management tool to consistently record the same key data elements of each new opportunity. You'll be managing data at a deeper level than the overarching parameters laid out in the strategic plan, which makes this practice essential. From this point forward in the opportunity pursuit, the amount of data you must gather and organize to write an effective response to the customer just grows and grows.



TIP

One more thing: It's critical to maintain detailed communication at each stage of the process. You must ensure that everyone in the capture organization understands the objectives of the company, and has a good grasp of why you're choosing to pursue specific types of contracts, specialties, and agencies. Most organizations don't include the assessment stage as a part of their pipeline reporting.

## Starting Pursuit

You may still be at the early stages of gathering information on an opportunity, but this is where you get to roughly measure factors that are important to your organization — such things as potential revenue, likelihood of win, and strategic fit. As the cycle advances, you'll be collecting more information about the customer, your potential competitors, and the solution itself.



WARNING!

The reason it's so critical to weigh these factors this early in an opportunity's development is that you don't want to be far into the pursuit of an opportunity and find that it just isn't the right fit. That's why you must capture and present key data

elements in a consistent way and why you need a top-notch system for tracking the information. Too many organizations look back in bewilderment at the time and effort they spent chasing the wrong opportunities. They wonder how they so badly misjudged the pipeline, and most important, they find that they've left themselves vulnerable to revenue shortfall.

By using your capture tool as the sole reference for an opportunity's development, you'll begin building a baseline of well-qualified potential for your organization. That means you'll spend less time reviewing opportunities without all the information you need to make wise pursuit decisions.

Now that you've established the strategic direction your capture efforts should take, and your team is starting to identify opportunities that have solid potential, you can decide whether to invest more resources to continue gathering even more information. This is also the point when you begin speculating on the elements that will go into a more defined solution response.



Most organizations consider this the first decision milestone, where a decision is made regarding whether or not to go through the door — though the most common metaphor isn't a door, but a gate. This is sometimes called the *go/no go* decision or *Gate 1*.

If an opportunity makes it past the assessment stage, it typically then moves into the pipeline and appears in forecast reports. This is when those at the higher levels of the organization begin to notice. Note that we used the term Gate 1 — as you might have guessed, that means there are more gates to follow. You'll need to make the *go/no go* decision several more times throughout the process.

These gate reviews take place at critical transition points in the opportunity life cycle:

- ✓ Assessment to pursuit
- ✓ Pursuit to preproposal
- ✓ Preproposal to proposal
- ✓ Proposal to submission

The best way to get to a well-positioned proposal, and to avoid having to scrap your proposal at the 11th hour, is to

follow good review principles that ensure your pursuits are in alignment with your organization's strategic goals.



Here's another good reason to establish decision gates: To ensure that the left hand knows what the right hand is up to. This may not be an issue in small firms, but in larger organizations it's possible that one part of the company is pursuing the same work in the same capacity as another part of the company.

Do these "D'oh!" moments really happen? Indeed, it happens more often than you might imagine. Many organizations have at least a few opportunities that are unintentional parallel pursuits. Some of these make it all the way to proposal submission before they're discovered — if they're discovered in time. At the very least, this means a lot of wasted time, effort, and money. At worst, it can mean being disqualified from consideration for an award.



The earlier you can identify parallel pursuit efforts and decide who will be responsible for the opportunity, the better. That's why the Gate 1 milestone is an ideal place to establish what's known as an Organizational Conflict of Interest (OCI) review point.

Sounds simple enough, but it's not always so straightforward. In some cases, different divisions of a large organization pursue subcontractor work as aspects of distinct external teams, led by different primes. That would be rather difficult to discover. To prevent these kinds of issues, you'll need internal restrictions to ensure that the pursuits are kept separate. A good capture management tool will give you the ability to document and manage the OCI process based on whatever parameters you dictate.

## *Moving into the Pipeline*



Now that you've made the first decision to continue pursuit of an opportunity, you need to establish expectations for continued knowledge growth. Spelling out the ways that your knowledge needs to deepen on any opportunity pursuit over time is really the essential definition of a capture plan. So, build these elements into your capture management tool. Much of your time from this point on will be spent gathering information and analyzing what you've learned.

## Chapter 3

# In Pursuit of Opportunity

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Building the capture plan
- ▶ Making sure you understand the customer's requirements
- ▶ Getting to know your competition
- ▶ Deepening the customer relationship
- ▶ Walking through the second pursuit decision gate

**Y**ou can't make a good decision without good information. Your first round of information gathering leaves you with a pipeline of potential opportunities to pursue. But for any given opportunity, you need even more information before deciding whether it's worth pursuing.

In this chapter, we explore what happens between the first and second decision gates. This is where you really start to fill out the capture plan, and that involves learning a lot more about your customer, what your customer wants, and what your competitors can deliver. Then we walk you through that second gate.

## *Time to Make Plans*

Moving through the opportunity life cycle, you've developed your strategic plan and assessed the market. And there in the pipeline, you have opportunities that make sense for your organization. What more could you want?



Try a little more knowledge, from the customer's perspective. Filling in knowledge gaps is part of building the capture plan. For one thing, you need to know how the program you want to pursue can be affected by external factors. With that in mind, start looking at such things as the following:

- ✓ Your history with the customer
- ✓ The potential for agency or program budget cuts
- ✓ The likelihood that the award will be based on the *lowest price, technically acceptable* (LPTA) evaluation method
- ✓ The performance of the incumbent (and this could mean you, if you're the incumbent)

Capture organizations that are the most effective tend to use a consistent capture plan format. Such a plan can be tracked on spreadsheets, in document form, or within an automated capture management tool like GovWin Capture Management. As your capture organization collects information, be sure to keep your knowledge repository up to date.

Don't forget that capture plans are meant to grow and change over time. Whether or not you're using a purpose-built capture tool, the continuity of the pursuit effort depends on recording the information as it's collected. This information will stand as a reference in the future when you prepare to pursue similar opportunities within the same specialty area, with the same agency, or with the same partners or competitors.

So the focus of the plan is to begin filling in the knowledge gaps on the opportunity pursuit, but it should also track internal team assignments and responsibilities. There needs to be a clear understanding of who does what, as well as when.

As you develop the capture plan, you'll also begin to look at budgets. Build a budget that's aligned with the cost of pursuit as well as the ultimate cost of the proposed solution.

After the market assessment phase (which we discuss in Chapter 2), the other parts of the organization will need to weigh in. Now's the time to get input from the finance department regarding the cost of similar pursuits in the past; their input can give you a good starting point for developing cost projections for your latest pursuit.



TIP

Even if your organization doesn't officially track bid and proposal (B&P) spending, you'll still want a rough idea of where you are in terms of pursuit costs. That will help to inform later decisions about whether to continue to pursue the opportunity.



REMEMBER

Here are some of the ways that an automated capture tool will offer distinct advantages during the capture management phase:

- ✓ It makes internal collaboration a whole lot easier.
- ✓ It's a great way to collect and organize customer data.
- ✓ It supports document decisions.
- ✓ You can compare and contrast analysis results.
- ✓ Tracking internal team roles and tasks is far easier.
- ✓ It helps you target preliminary teaming prospects.



TIP

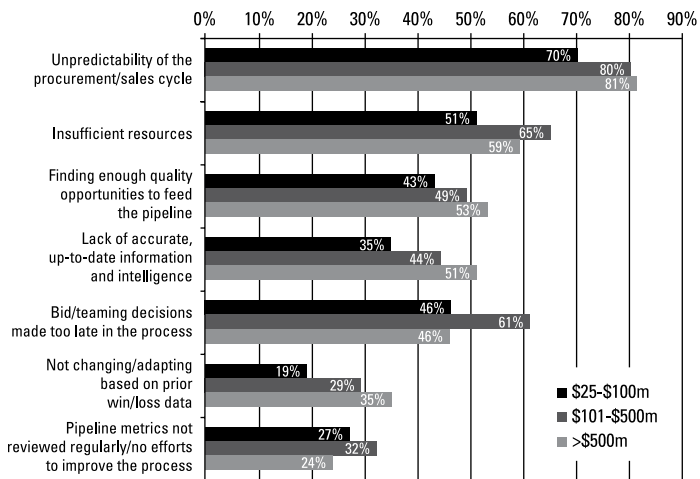
And if you integrate it with your ERP, your automated capture tool can also provide easy access to contract data. Not a bad deal, unless you particularly enjoy digging through file folders, scanning through multiple network hard drives, and sending out multiple e-mails to request information from your colleagues.

The capture plan you develop and evolve during this phase of opportunity pursuit will become the foundation for the proposal plan. As you move closer to preproposal preparation, it's time to bring your proposal manager into the process. Share the capture plan with this person and get feedback about any gaps he or she sees in the information.



REMEMBER

Communication is key during this critical development phase, but it doesn't happen automatically. In fact, as organizations grow and pipelines become more complex, it gets more difficult to maintain regular progress checks. You need to consciously make time to ensure that your team knows what's going on with the pursuits in your area of responsibility and to be certain that management is satisfied with the progress you're making. Many businesses today consider business development and pipeline challenges to be major (see Figure 3-1). Decision-making and balancing resources within the unpredictability of the current market are struggles shared by all contractors. However, midsized companies indicated more difficulty with ensuring that bid and teaming decisions are made in a timely manner.



Source: Deltek

**Figure 3-1:** Business development and pipeline challenges.

## Know What Your Customer Needs

“Give the customers what they want.” It’s a rather cliché thing to say, but you would be surprised how many organizations submit proposals that don’t address what the customer really needs, but rather reflect only what the seller has to sell. Not only is that a losing strategy when it comes to that particular pursuit, but if you do it often enough you lose credibility with the customer. In the end, that credibility is worth a lot, because when a decision comes down to two equally qualified proposals, a positive relationship is often the unofficial deciding factor.



With this in mind, you must focus your business development and capture efforts on understanding the customer’s requirements — from the customer’s perspective. Government agencies, like any customer, want the best solutions for their needs. They compare what you propose with their budget and desired outcome, and they consider carefully the complexity and the time their project will take to complete.

Government customers want to ensure that the work can get done, so they size up the market using a few different research methods above and beyond one-on-one interaction with company contacts:

- ✓ Industry day events, which are informational events involving potential contractors
- ✓ Requests for information (RFI), which seek to find out more about the capabilities of potential suppliers
- ✓ A sources-sought notice, which aims to discover possible sources for completing a project
- ✓ A market survey



Using such research resources as GovWin IQ, you can get access to documents, reports, and analysis of industry day events that have happened during the past few years. Incorporate this information into your approach to help you find out more about customer needs, and check in with your agency contacts to make sure you're on the right track.

## Get to Know the Competition

You're far from done with the information gathering. You need to create a solid list of companies against which you'll be competing for the work. Your organization needs to get a handle on what you know about these organizations as well as the solutions they may propose, compared with what you have to offer.

These competitive reviews are sometimes called *black hat* reviews. They involve capture team members or other internal subject matter experts (or SMEs for short) who have deep knowledge of the potential competing organizations. The reviewers evaluate your planned solution against what they think your competitors will be offering to the client. For more about the review process, see Chapter 5.



What happens if you get to this part of the capture cycle and you have no idea what your competitors may be formulating? That means one of two things: Either your capture resources need to refocus effort on research, so they can find out more, or your

organization may be unprepared to pursue the opportunity. Without insight into the competition, you run the risk of losing key teammates to the competition, pricing yourself out of the running, or missing opportunities to highlight your strengths in light of known gaps in the competition's capabilities.

At your disposal are many tools that capture organizations use to assess the competitive profiles of other companies; these range from SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity, threat) profiles to market studies to direct experience. You'll gather information in a lot of different ways, and how you gather it is less important than ensuring that you diligently and consistently collect this kind of information over time and make it accessible across your organization.

It's worth repeating that last bit for emphasis: The information needs to be accessible across the organization. Any competitive knowledge you collect will be useless if it remains undocumented, stored only in the minds of individual capture team members. A knowledge repository is an industry best practice, and it's never too late to create one. Having a ready resource can enable SMEs and new team members to contribute to the capture effort much more quickly. Use your capture management tool to store the data, documents, and competitor analyses you perform both within their records and as aspects of the opportunity pursuit record.



Black hat reviewers divide up into teams aligning with the anticipated competitors. Each team uses the competitor's most plausible offering to map to the customer's needs as you've identified them. Doing this will guide you through improving your own offering in the following ways:

- ✔ You may be able to identify teaming partners that can strengthen your position, while conveniently eliminating them as competitors.
- ✔ You can *ghost* the competition, by coming up with indirect responses to what you expect will be competitors' offerings.
- ✔ Sharpening your pencil will get your technical solution in alignment.
- ✔ You'll be forced to analyze current contract performance; if you're the incumbent, you have to make sure competitors can't ghost *you* by taking advantage of outstanding issues.

If you have people from finance who can help you out, this is a great time to leverage them. Any available help can play a role in your effort to build a price-to-win model in the early stages of opportunity pursuit. You'll establish the final price-to-win during the final stages of proposal writing. Whether or not you engage finance in developing a preliminary price-to-win, they'll need to sign off on the final pricing at the proposal development stage.

By the end of the black hat review, the capture team should have a number of action items. Review these items in subsequent capture team meetings and update the progress.



The result of the final cycles of the black hat review process should be a targeted and refined win strategy. The *win strategy* is a set of conditions and supporting actions critical to a successful pursuit. Write the strategy concisely and include it as an aspect of the opportunity record. Win strategies should come under the microscope at every major opportunity review.

## A Deeper Customer Relationship

You've gone to great pains to learn about your customer, and it's just as important for your customer to know you. But you can't count on the customer to spend as much time and effort researching you. Building the relationship is your responsibility, and part of building relationships is influencing your perception in the market.



The government itself often has a slightly negative perception of government contractors, even though contractors perform a significant portion of the work supporting agency missions and directives (this is discussed in more detail in *Government Contracting For Dummies*, Deltek Special Edition). Good capture management practices can help you neutralize some of the factors that might drive a negative perception. Here are some of the possible strikes you're hoping to avoid:

- ✓ Government contractors don't do their homework.
- ✓ Vendors are self-serving and will sell what they have, not what the agency needs.
- ✓ Vendor contracts can be risky.

It helps to maintain the agency contacts you cultivate during the initial discovery phases of the opportunity. Good relationship builders think about interactions before they take place, defining in advance a desired outcome for each conversation. Listen carefully during meetings to gain perspective on the agency's desired solution, what challenges the agency faces today, and whether the players there feel that the current contract is being executed well.



Bring your marketing resources in on the process of boosting your organization's reputation. Think about how you can begin to influence perception, not just with customer agencies but in the market as a whole. The idea is to present your capabilities in ways that positively distinguish you from your competitors. Successful marketing campaigns can indirectly shape the outcome of all potential awards — some campaigns have a specific sales aim, but others focus more generally on image. If you've established a publicly facing positive "personality," it can help to insulate your organization during market downturns or the discovery of competitors' gaffes.

Focus your marketing efforts on what you're good at, and use them to demonstrate your knowledge of the customer and build relationships across agencies. Track these campaigns, associations, and relationships in your capture management tool, because your marketing team may desire to look at which campaigns lead directly to contract awards. When campaigns are associated with opportunities right there in your capture management tool, it's easier to measure their effectiveness.



Gate 1 is sometimes known as the go/no go decision (flip to Chapter 2 for more information on this). The second pursuit decision gate is sometimes referred to as the bid/no bid recommendation.

## *Behind Gate Number 2*



Every gate presents a big decision, but the work you've done and knowledge you've collected should help to answer the questions you need to contemplate before moving forward. Gate 2 queries are generally focused on five knowledge areas:

**✓ Customer assessment**

- Does the customer like us?
- Which competitors do they like better?
- Can we influence that perception?
- Do we like the customer?

**✓ Capabilities assessment**

- Do we need to add resources to do this work?
- Would winning this work advance our strategic vision?
- Have we successfully performed this type of work in the past?
- What would cause us to lose?
- Did we influence the project requirements?

**✓ Competitive assessment**

- Do our proposed teaming arrangements eliminate competition?
- Where are the incumbent's vulnerabilities?
- How can we overcome our competitors' strengths?
- Are there any "political" factors that might influence the award outcome?
- Where can we focus our marketing efforts to influence perception?

**✓ Financial assessment**

- Is the preliminary price-to-win profitable? If not, are there other compelling supporting arguments for our organization to make this investment?
- How will this procurement be structured?
- Does customer funding exist?
- Are bid and proposal dollars allocated?
- What is our chance of winning?

### ✓ Opportunity assessment

- Do we have a preliminary requirements document from the customer?
- Will the scope of the project change over time?
- What's the period of performance?
- How long will it take from final proposal submission to award notification?
- How likely is an award delay? What's the agency's history in making awards in a timely fashion?
- Can we perform the contract today? If not, how significant are any shortfalls?
- Are there any potential organizational conflicts of interest? If so, can they be mitigated? How?

At this point, senior managers with a stake in the effort will come in to review the opportunity. They'll base their review on what they contribute, be it resource oversight, customer or market experience, or technical expertise. It's their responsibility to review the capture activities and assess whether those activities have improved the company's position, justifying the effort of preparing and pursuing a response to the customer.

If the decision is made to move forward through Gate 2, your capture team will expand to include the proposal manager and the program manager.



The proposal manager focuses solely on developing the proposal and overseeing all the moving parts associated with that effort, such as:

- ✓ Identifying SMEs
- ✓ Assigning volume leads
- ✓ Preparing writers' packages
- ✓ Maintaining schedules
- ✓ Resolving internal conflicts
- ✓ Ensuring proposal compliance



This job requires dedicated effort and a lot of time, so don't assign the proposal manager role to a business developer or capture manager. Proposal management is all consuming. It's possible for proposal managers to work on more than one proposal simultaneously, but expecting them to perform other duties inside the capture team may jeopardize the proposal effort entirely.

Some organizations choose a capture manager whom they know will transition to the program manager role if the process moves forward. That provides continuity to the effort and gives a single face to the customer. Other organizations choose to keep these roles distinct and bring in a program manager only after passing through the second pursuit decision gate.



The program manager is responsible for delivering a successful program to the customer and must be involved in the solution development from this point forward. Choosing not to assign a program manager until you're in the throes of proposal preparation weakens your ability to focus the program delivery team as well as coordinate teaming agreements between you and your subcontractors, and it may delay solution development and pricing.

With the green light from management, and with an expanded capture team in place, it's time to move into the preproposal preparation.



## Chapter 4

# Before the Proposal, the Preproposal Work

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Building a solid foundation
- ▶ Assembling the proposal team
- ▶ Solidifying the win strategy
- ▶ Validating the proposal approach
- ▶ Approaching the third pursuit decision gate

**Y**ou're on your way toward creating a proposal for a lucrative government contract. But no putting the cart before the horse — there's still more preproposal work to take care of first. In this chapter, we introduce the proposal team and find out who does what, then dig deeper into the strategy needed to win the business.

And you won't be surprised to learn that there's another gate to pass through. The third decision gate provides yet another chance to decide for sure whether this opportunity is worth the trouble of pursuing; we discuss that in this chapter, too.

## *The Foundation for a Winning Proposal*

The preproposal preparation phase offers you the chance to further refine all the effort that you've expended over the past months to create a strategy, assess the market, and build your capture plan. You can leverage the information you've

collected in your capture management tool to build the plan. Here's what your proposal plan will accomplish:

- ✓ It moves data gathered in the capture plan to the proposal management plan.
- ✓ It translates the capture strategy into the proposal strategy.
- ✓ It refines the solution and locks in teaming partners.
- ✓ It continues to refine the capture strategy and moves closer toward a final price-to-win.



Given how much work you've put into the process so far, it almost goes without saying that companies entering the competition at this point in the cycle are really behind the curve. If they don't already have a strategic vision, a capture strategy, and megabytes of knowledge accumulated in a capture management tool like GovWin Capture Management, they'll face an overwhelming amount of preparation and a very narrow deadline before the RFP is released. Fortunately, you know better than to get caught in that unenviable position, right?

Another benefit of doing the strategic thinking well in advance is that it prevents your organization from being forced to change strategic focus too quickly, which can cause instability (for more on this, see Chapter 1). What's more, bidding on proposals without the proper foundation in place creates an extraordinary amount of stress — and on top of that, the odds of winning go down.



Low win rates trigger management scrutiny, which can in turn trigger more reporting requirements — and your capture teams may wind up having less time to pursue opportunities effectively. It's a domino effect of sorts, and the downfall starts when you dive into the capture process without a good starting foundation.

## *Who's on the Proposal Team?*

The proposal manager is very important to your process. This person focuses on shepherding proposals from concept to reality (we talk about this a little in Chapter 3). But the proposal manager isn't a one-person show. He or she coordinates

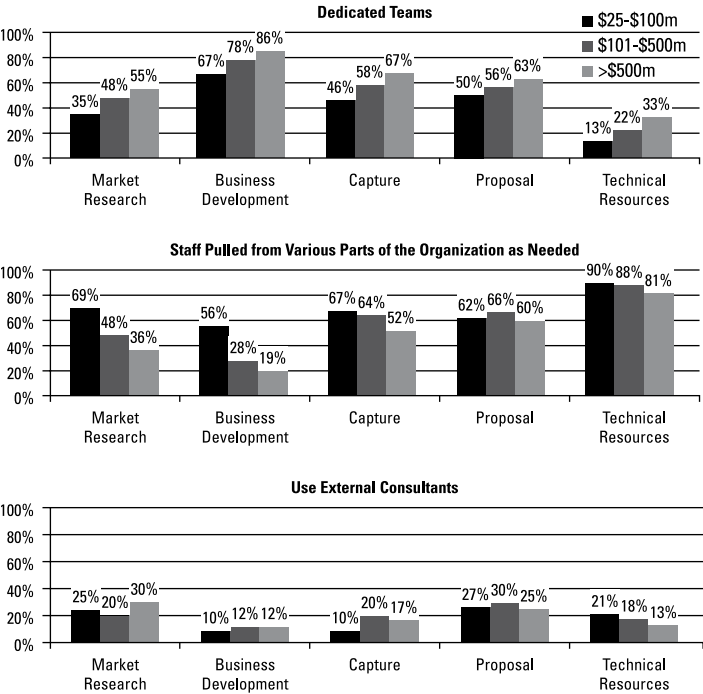
and relies on a whole team of individuals to ensure that the proposal is compliant with the customer's instructions, that it fully satisfies the customer's needs, and that it will be evaluated with flying colors. A proposal team typically includes at least the following roles:

- ✓ **Proposal manager:** This leader directs the day-to-day tasks of the proposal writing effort and collaborates with the capture manager to ensure that the solution remains consistent with the capture plan.
- ✓ **Proposal coordinator:** This is a more nuts-and-bolts role, responsible for the tactical aspects of proposal preparation and development. The proposal coordinator manages proposal-related reports and resources.
- ✓ **Volume manager/leader:** This is another hands-on leader, who oversees the work of section writers and SMEs, ensuring that the completed volume meets the RFP requirements as well as internal quality control expectations.
- ✓ **Technical/proposal writer:** The person filling this role works with section writers and SMEs individually, and also researches existing proposals to find persuasive boilerplate language that can be repurposed for the current proposal (no need to reinvent the wheel). This writer ensures the continuity of the proposal.
- ✓ **Subject matter expert (SME):** As the title implies, the SME typically has practical experience in the industry, either with the solution or with the specific customer. The SME often works closely with the proposal writer to put thoughts into words and may be part of proposal review teams.
- ✓ **Proposal editor:** You don't want typos and gaffes marring an otherwise super proposal, so you'll need an editor to ensure the proposal text is error-free and complies with syntax, grammar, and consistency standards. The proposal editor will rewrite sections as needed and may suggest additional supporting graphics.
- ✓ **Cost strategist:** This financial expert develops the proposal's cost volume based on price-to-win and constructs a compliant, competitive, and compatible response.

✓ **Contracts administrator:** This team member is responsible for reviewing the RFP and response for contracts-related issues. He or she prepares any required forms, clauses, representations, and certifications for inclusion in the cost volume.



As with the capture team, it may turn out that one individual holds many of these roles, or each role may have a dedicated resource. It all depends on the size of the organization and the skill sets of the players involved. Many organizations rely on outside consultants to fill one or more of these roles, especially if many proposal responses are being prepared simultaneously. For the most part, all contractors showed an equal likelihood to outsource market research and proposal writing, but business development is the area most likely to have dedicated resources (see Figure 4-1).



Source: Deltek

**Figure 4-1:** How companies staff to capture opportunities.

## *Solidifying the Win Strategy*

The closer you get to preparing a proposal response, the more closely the proposal manager and capture manager will collaborate. We recommend bringing in the proposal manager during the latter stages of capture management for some early collaboration to allow a smoother transition from concept into concrete solution (see Chapter 3 for more on this topic).



Clearly, the proposal manager's greatest responsibility is writing a winning document, and to do so he or she needs the information collected during capture. That's why the proposal manager's perspective is highly valuable to the capture effort and another way that your capture management tool supports your efforts.

Speaking of the capture, don't think the capture organization has gone off to Disneyland now that the proposal team is taking over. That group still can make important contributions toward solidifying the win strategy. Close communication with the customer will continue to be a key capture tactic — important conversation topics include potential solutions or requirements.



Sometimes the relationship between you and your customer can even help shape the program requirements before the final RFP is released. Work with your marketing resources to produce technical papers, secure speaking engagements, or conduct trade studies — such work can pay valuable dividends. You'll position your organization and staff as subject matter experts, and that will give support to their contributions in the final proposal.

Then there's the matter of partnering. If that's part of the particular win strategy for a project, you should have identified a short list of best-fit partners for review and possible inclusion in the proposal through known relationships documented in your capture management tool, or through new alliances identified within GovWin IQ or the GovWin Network. The earlier you sign up partners, the better, because doing so both locks out potential competition and helps you more accurately factor in the pricing of subcontractors or teaming partners as you develop your proposal.

Once the outcomes of your final capture efforts become clear, the capture plan should be complete enough for the proposal manager to move the capture strategy statements into proposal statements, and those statements will map to one or more proposal sections.

## Is Your Proposal Approach Still Valid and On-Target?



When you receive the RFP, the proposal manager should compare the capture plan, the draft RFP (if there was one), and the final RFP to ensure that the customer's requirements haven't changed and that the assumptions you made during the capture and preproposal preparation stages remain on-target. If there have been changes to the RFP requirements, the proposal manager will have the capture manager refine the capture plan based on the new information (one good reason the capture organization should not be celebrating in Disneyland yet). The record of your capture team's accumulated knowledge about customer habits and history will be critical here, because there may not be time to validate with the customer now that the RFP is in hand. Having all the information needed in one central resource is key.



The RFP's submission deadline will dictate the proposal writing schedule, budget, and task assignments. Use your scheduling resources to help allocate resources effectively and identify any conflicts before they arise. No matter the size of your organization, it can be a challenge to effectively schedule resources. Those with responsibilities on the capture and proposal sides of the effort can easily get overcommitted, which is why it's always a best practice to evaluate your resources before committing them.

The proposal team will periodically review the progress on the proposal. You'll start to see colors at this point — blue, black, pink, red. No, no one hit you over the head; these colors you're seeing refer to *color teams*, and each color team meeting has a specific purpose, which we address in more detail in Chapter 5. The final color team meeting is known as the Red Team meeting; that's when team members reviewing the proposal act as if they're working for the customer.



It's easy to say, "Get this job done ASAP!" But that's not a particularly realistic way to plan your proposal work, because some kinds of work take longer than others to complete, and task-estimating standards can vary from one organization to the next. As you get a feel for your proposal cadence, you can adjust expectations. In the meantime, most proposal management professionals suggest you use the info in Table 4-1 as a starting point.

**Table 4-1****Task Estimating Standards**

<i><b>Task</b></i>	<i><b>Time Standard</b></i>
Write new material	4 pages per day
Revise text or edit for content	8 to 10 pages per day
Proofreading	20 to 25 pages per day
Create simple graphic	1 to 2 hours
Create complex graphic	2 to 6 hours
Retouch photograph	1 to 2 hours
Red Team review	40 pages per day
Desktop publishing	30 to 60 pages per day

Based on what tasks are required and the time each will need, the proposal manager will develop a proposal schedule. The schedule starts when the RFP is released and outlines the tasks to be accomplished each day. The schedule also includes such milestones as bid decision confirmation, proposal kickoff meeting, and color team reviews.

The bottom line is that there's not a lot of time and an awful lot of work to do. You used to have 30 days from the receipt of the RFP until the final proposal submission deadline. These days, however, that's seen as generous; it's becoming more and more common to see RFPs with response times of ten or even five days. Such short turnarounds are usually in response to a task order coming from an IDIQ or MA IDIQ (see Chapter 1 for more on these). Needless to say, you'll be able to respond to these task orders most effectively if you've been diligent in recording your capture management efforts.

Your capture manager and proposal manager can use the capture plan information that you've collected in your capture tool to draft and monitor responses that anticipate task orders, just as you would any other opportunity. Your knowledge of the customer will be essential. Fortunately, there's no guesswork when it comes to refining competitive positioning, because all the companies you'll be competing against for the task order work are included in the IDIQ contract award announcement.



The lesson here is that you can't skip any of the data collection and still expect to have a successful proposal. Instead, consider your review and approval process as one way to shorten the proposal development cycle. There are other ways, too. For example, are there any meetings that you can combine or eliminate? Would your management agree to only one senior level review if it would help achieve a quick turnaround?

Whether you have 30 days to respond or only a week, your proposal manager will provide a coordinated proposal response that follows a consistent structure, as required by the RFP.

## *The Third Decision Review Gate*

The RFP triggers another important milestone in addition to the submission deadline. It's Gate 3, the third decision gate, and you'll cross that gate before you get to the hard work of actually creating the proposal.



After you and your teams have done the work of aligning the capture plan and proposal plan, executives review the proposed solution and award expectations and consider them against other opportunities in the pipeline. They must ensure that the time and resources required for developing the proposal really do align with strategic and tactical goals. After you have the go-ahead, you can begin the work of proposal preparation.

## Chapter 5

# What Are You Proposing?

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Kicking off the proposal process
- ▶ Looking into the past
- ▶ Writing the proposal
- ▶ Coloring the reviews
- ▶ Approaching the final gate

Consulting organizations offer many resources packed with details on structuring and preparing the most effective proposal. What's best in your situation depends a lot on your organization, the opportunity, and the sphere in which you operate. In this chapter, we stick with the general best practices and approaches, starting with the kickoff meeting, moving on through the writing process, navigating the many reviews and, finally, reaching the last decision gate.

## *Lining Up for the Kickoff*

With the capture and preproposal work successfully completed, your first step in actual proposal preparation is to set up a proposal kickoff meeting involving the capture manager and proposal manager. Each uses the proposal management plan that emerged during preproposal preparations to explain their contributions.



Others who should be at the kickoff meeting include members of the core team, management decision-makers, and key members of the larger proposal team such as engineers, SMEs, or external partners. These stakeholders all need to be around the table because they all need to understand and agree with the direction and the structure slated for the proposal.

The kickoff meeting is also a good time to familiarize your proposal team with any virtual or web-based tools you plan to use and provide an overview of the collaboration site. It makes sense to explain at a high level what the roles and permissions will be, but save the smaller details for a follow-up meeting with just the proposal team.

The capture manager should use the kickoff meeting to discuss the customer and the competitors and outline what distinguishes you from your competition through the lens of the capture strategy. Then comes a brief overview of the solution, including any teaming arrangements you have in place. Finally, by outlining the win themes you can transition the meeting to a proposal focus.

At that point, the proposal manager should describe how the capture strategy would inform the proposal. He or she will address proposal logistics, including the preparation process, roles, the schedule, and standards for quality. It also makes sense to set aside some time for details about the solution, courtesy of the technical lead or program manager.



You'll be sharing lots of details about the capture and the proposal, but this meeting is more than just informational. An equally important goal is building a cohesive team that shares one vision of the proposed solution and an accepted course of action.

If partner companies are part of the plan, don't forget to send them invitations. They may not play a big role in the technical writing, but they're part of the solution. For one thing, the government often requires at least one past performance reference from subcontractors. And it also requires a cost proposal, which is often provided in a sealed proposal from the subcontractor to the government. Given that, you can see why it's critical to include your partners and subs in the kickoff and proposal development process.

## *Window into the Past*

Your capture strategy should include identification of past performance contracts that support the proposal — both for your organization and any relevant work involving your subcontractors. And if you're in this pursuit as a subcontractor, be ready for this request when the company leading the pursuit asks.

One window into your company's history of delivering is the past performance volume. But the government also requires the collection of questionnaires from your past customers, discussing the work you've done. These questionnaires are usually provided in the final RFP, and your customers must submit them directly to the government by the proposal deadline.

As you can imagine, there's a lot of coordination that goes into this important step, and it's something that's not completely within your control. While the proposal development process is going on, you also need to ask customers to complete the questionnaires on your behalf and submit them to the government.



Of course, you've got to follow up with these customers to be sure they've turned in their questionnaires by the deadline. You'll be in a world of hurt if you don't maintain favorable relationships with your previous customers and thus ensure that there aren't adverse ratings on the questionnaires they submit.

## Writing the Proposal

You'll cover a lot of ground in the kickoff meeting, and by the end of it the core proposal team will have a good understanding of the ideal direction that the proposal should take. But team members will need some help to stay on track.



One of the most effective solutions, especially if you're dealing with inexperienced or infrequent proposal writers, is to develop a writer's package. Traditionally, this has been a collection of documents that the section or volume leads distribute to their writers. But that's so yesterday — these days most of the resources are likely to be housed in electronic team collaboration tools.

Some of the common elements you'll find in these repositories include:

- ✓ The compliance matrix
- ✓ Individual section assignments
- ✓ Rough section page counts
- ✓ Features and benefits statements

- ✓ The proposal strategy document
- ✓ The proposal development schedule
- ✓ The baseline solution overview

However the resources are distributed or stored, count on the volume lead or proposal manager to provide more specific direction for each section.

Color team meetings are another important way to measure and ensure progress on the proposal. (We touch on the concept of color team reviews in Chapter 4 and promise more detail in this chapter. You can count on us!)

Organizations can assign any color to their periodic formal reviews, but it’s an industry best practice to move from cool to warm colors as the proposal gets closer to the submission date.

Each color team meeting serves to validate specific aspects of the proposal as it develops, so you’ll want to learn your colors and pay close attention to the form and function of these meetings. Be ready to provide assertive guidance, because otherwise the color team meetings can quickly lose focus.

Your organization may schedule a whole rainbow’s worth of color team meetings — the number of color teams and even the colors assigned to specific meetings can certainly vary from one organization to another. Still, there are four color team meetings that every organization should hold, which we outline in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1                      Color Teams	
Meeting	Goal
Blue Team	This meeting validates the capture strategy, and a second Blue Team may be scheduled later to validate the proposal strategy.
Black Hat	This is a review of probable solutions from competitors; you’ll need to adjust your capture plan as indicated through this meeting.

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Goal</b>
Pink Team	This meeting ensures proposal compliance, volume consistency, and proposal strategy implementation. Also use the Pink Team meeting to validate pricing and teaming agreements.
Red Team	Here's the last chance to improve the proposal before submission. Review the document as if you were the customer.

Once all the issues that the Red Team discovers have been addressed, it's time to format the proposal and publish it for submission. Do a thorough editorial scrub of the submission before you submit it to be sure there are no errors, and if you're required to produce multiple physical copies of the proposal, check every copy to ensure there are no collation problems.

Also check any electronic format submissions. You may be submitting CDs or files formatted as PDFs — whatever the format and delivery medium, you must make certain everything can be read on multiple computers and that your entire submission complies with the customer's operating system and file size restrictions. And for heaven's sake, be sure everything is virus-free!



**TIP** You need to validate your delivery method as well. If you must make physical delivery, put a fallback plan in place just in case the original shipment fails to arrive. These days it's more common that you'll be submitting electronically; just be sure you have the proper access to the FTP site for uploading.

But wait! Don't hit the Send button or call the courier just yet. Your proposal may have passed all the production checks, it's been duplicated, and the copies are all packaged and ready to be delivered to the customer; but before they go, the proposal must pass the fourth and final decision gate. Gate 4 consists of one last management review.

## ***You've Reached the Final Gate!***

Now's the time to submit the final document to a core management team for review. This is not another proofreading

review, though, nor a time for reviewers to rethink bits of the presentation. The final decision gate should not be used for last minute changes to the text or revisions to graphic elements. This review opportunity is entirely focused on ensuring that the effort is still in alignment with strategic goals and for reducing future risk.

With that last bit in mind, make sure that legal and finance experts also review the proposal one last time, both to certify that there are no outstanding issues and to familiarize them with the solution that's being proposed.



It's becoming more and more common for large award contracts to be protested after award, which is a good reason to have the experts check it twice (or in this case, for the fourth time). Don't put your company at risk for the sake of expediency; get input before the document goes out the door.

In rare cases, management may decide to *no bid* the effort at this point. You may want to scream and rip your hair out, but try to resist the urge. Calling it all off now is a tough call to make, considering all the time, effort, and investment your company has made in this pursuit. Just remember that if there are any reservations, it's better to withdraw from the competition rather than waste the customer's time evaluating your submission, or even worse, winning the contract and then being unable to perform the work.

## Submit the Proposal



Once you get that final green light, you have one more critical task: Submit the proposal on time. Check and recheck all your delivery contingency plans. Have an IT expert on standby during submission of any electronic files in case you need to address glitches, and be sure that there's a time stamp recorded, which proves a successful upload.

If you're delivering a physical copy of the proposal, request a delivery receipt with a time stamp. Delivery services will provide this if you ask. Be sure to prepare a delivery receipt for in-person submissions, with a spot for the signature of the receiving individual at the customer site.

## Chapter 6

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# Whew! The Proposal Is Finished

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Answering questions
  - ▶ Learning lessons
  - ▶ Filing things away
  - ▶ Protesting and rebidding
- 

**I**t's a relief to have the work of proposal writing behind you, but your team's work still isn't done. Most proposals are evaluated by the client and awarded in a straightforward manner, but sometimes the customer has questions. And even if the customer doesn't, you should be asking questions about what went right and what didn't. In this chapter, we explain how to answer queries from the government, how best to learn from the experience, what to file away and how, and what happens if someone has a problem with the government's decision.

## *They've Got Questions*

When customers don't fully understand a proposal, they can reach out with questions. These queries come in several formats:

- ✓ Errors, omissions, and clarifications
- ✓ Clarification requests
- ✓ Deficiency reports

- ✓ Contractor inquiries
- ✓ Evaluation notices



Regardless of which of these names the customer calls the query, the bottom line is the same: Portions of your proposal need some clarification. Perhaps the customer feels confused, doesn't understand, or needs more information about a particular detail. Answers to these questions can be delivered orally or in writing.

However they're asked and however you answer, take these questions seriously. They're usually being asked by the evaluators, so give proper attention and weight to the responses. You need the best information right at your fingertips when you prepare your reply, which is why your proposal team should be ready to respond.



If the questions are complicated, it may help to treat them the same way you did the original RFP, using a compliance matrix or checklist while also tracking responses. Log all questions in your capture management or proposal development tool and record which team members have been assigned to respond. If the questions focus on technical aspects of the proposal, loop in the cost volume leader so he or she may determine whether the response will affect the original costing model.

It may feel like a hassle, but keep in mind as you develop your responses that this is all about enhancing your position with the customer. Be professional and helpful, and don't overwork the customer by referring back to the proposal itself for pertinent details. Instead, answer the questions fully, right there, and in the response format requested. Typically, the government will only deal with one point of contact at your company, usually the person identified in the beginning of the proposal and frequently the company's contracting representative. To ensure compliance and consistency, submit all responses through this person.

## Lessons Learned

At this point, you should conduct two *lessons learned* sessions. Your first session gives you the chance to review the process of capture and proposal development for the specific pursuit, including staffing.



Hold this meeting soon after submitting the proposal, while the details are fresh in the minds of the team. Keep a record of the meeting discussion and include it both in the capture tool and also with the proposal itself in any hard-copy or electronic archive you create (more on that in a flash).

Schedule the second session after the contract award is announced and you've met with your contacts within the government. Notice that we didn't write "Schedule the second session after you win the contract award...." That's because you should always request one of these formal debrief sessions, whether or not you're awarded the contract.



In fact, the government is required to provide all bidders with a formal debrief upon request. Successful or not, this meeting is where you learn how well you responded to the request and gain clues as to how you might do even better next time. It also provides additional insight into the government customers' decision-making process, which will be useful in subsequent captures.

## *Archive the Final Proposal*

The materials you generated during the capture and proposal preparation process are critical references during the post-submittal phase as well as during execution of the program, but that's not all. They're also exceedingly handy references for pursuits in the future. You may be able to reuse or adapt management and technical approaches in other proposals, and there's a good chance you can repurpose or recycle some of the graphics, charts, and other visual elements.



Establish a common, standard file folder configuration for your capture and proposal archive, and be sure it's accessible to all future capture and proposal teams. It's ideal to have your archive library built right into your capture management tool, or at least connected.

## *"1 Object!"*

When you hear the announcement of a contract award, you or your competitors may feel that the award was granted in error. If you got the award and your competitor is miffed, you may

be thinking, “Get over it!” Or thinking an award to a competitor was granted in error may be how you console yourself! Either way, that award announcement may not be the last word.



Part of your proposal strategy is being ready to have the proposal manager file a protest or respond to a protest that a competitor files. The U.S. Government Accounting Office (GAO) defines a protest as “A challenge to the award or proposed award of a contract for procurement of goods and services or a challenge to the terms of a solicitation for such a contract.” Any competitor can file a protest. You’ll find full Bid Protest information at [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov).

Whichever competing organization files the protest, the government agency must respond in a specific way, though the response plan can vary from agency to agency. All agencies strive to minimize the risk of protest when they make their award decisions, but if a protest is filed, they must give it great weight and consideration. It can take time to examine and rule on the protest, and the agency will provide a timeline. There are four potential outcomes:

- ✓ **Withdrawn** by the protester.
- ✓ **Dismissed** because the protest had a technical or procedural flaw (filed too late or in the wrong jurisdiction) or because the agency has taken corrective action that addresses the protest.
- ✓ **Denied** because the protest was found to have no merit.
- ✓ **Sustained** because the protest’s arguments were valid.



If the protest is sustained, the agency may revise the RFP and release it again. That gives you another chance to win the contract award if you didn’t the first time around. But if you did, your organization must be prepared to respond to the rebid with a modified proposal if you decide to continue pursuit.

Whether or not the award is protested, it’s time to develop an internal plan to transition the effort from pursuit to performance.

# Chapter 7

## After the Award

### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Assessing executive risk
- ▶ Getting the debrief from the government
- ▶ Reviewing the analysis of capture effort
- ▶ Continuing to analyze contract performance

**A**fter the award announcement, your preaward and postaward teams will begin to implement the transition process. The plan for that should already be in place. After all, your program manager was included in the proposal preparation and submission, so he or she will be able to act as the intermediary here, working with contracts, legal, HR, and finance to set up the program and its components.

But the job isn't done for those involved in the capture and proposal stages. For one thing, delays, protests, or even cancellations can send you back to the drawing board. And even as the program is ramping up, you'll be debriefing and analyzing the capture effort, and you should still be keeping tabs on contract performance. We discuss those ongoing after-award activities in this chapter.

## *Assess the Executive Risk*



In the current market climate, there's a growing risk that an award will be protested or contract funding delayed. Agency budget funds are increasingly uncertain, which directly affects the allocation of contract dollars. In some cases, agencies may choose to cancel a program completely if funding is up in the air.

It's expensive and risky to protest an award, but it happens, and it could certainly happen on a contract where you're the incumbent. In that situation, of course, you'll continue to perform until the protest outcome is determined and the final contract is awarded. On the other hand, what if you've displaced the incumbent, but now your award has been protested and is being delayed? For starters, work with finance to determine how a delayed award would impact the organization. Then, work with your capture organization to identify any mitigation targets within the opportunity pipeline. For example, you may be able to increase the number of task order responses you'll submit on a contract.



TIP

When you're dealing with this kind of setback, you can really streamline your decision-making by using a dynamic data aggregation tool, like Deltek's Capture Analytics, to analyze risk within your pipeline. Use data visualization to quickly look at performance within a specific customer agency, an internal business unit, or even a key program offering so you can target areas for performance or process improvement.

## The Government Debrief

As we mention in Chapter 6, you and all the other bidders are entitled to a debrief from the client agency. You can request a debrief either preaward or postaward, but you're not allowed to ask for both. So, which do you want? Really, the only time you'd want to request a preaward debrief is if you have strong reservations about the evaluation process and are planning to file a protest.



REMEMBER

In any case, regardless of whether or not you were awarded the contract, getting feedback from your customer is invaluable. Yes, you probably had an internal meeting about the proposal process and content, but you can learn a lot more by attending a debrief meeting with your customer.

The most obvious reason for going through the debrief process is that the meeting and resulting documents can help you and your team find ways to improve future proposals. And if you didn't land the contract award, you really need to understand why. After all, the most beautifully written proposal can still lose out to overriding factors such as cost or the technical viability of the solution.



Listen to the feedback with an open mind, and tell yourself going in that you probably won't agree with all of it — but you nevertheless still need to hear it. If you did win, you can understand better what really made the difference and find areas of success you can incorporate into your proposal process moving forward. Think about the ways you can change your strategic or tactical approach to this customer based on what you're hearing, and document your observations in your capture management tool as a part of the postsubmission process.

Beyond understanding why you won or missed out on this particular contract, a debrief meeting gives you another valuable opportunity to build a relationship with the customer. You'll leave the meeting with new insights into the agency and the individuals involved in scoring the proposal.

## *Review Analysis of the Capture Effort*

The postaward phase is a good time for the capture team to review and assess the capture effort and seek feedback from management. Take a close look at the comments from the postaward debrief meeting. Because the proposal strategy is informed by the capture strategy, there may be proposal strengths and weaknesses highlighted by the client that can help the capture organization refine its approach in the future. And that future is now — take a look at your current opportunity pursuits and you will likely be able to immediately apply what you've learned to influence strategies in development.



Your experience in this pursuit is also a great opportunity to look at your efforts as a whole, and you might even walk away with a better understanding of what happened in a past pursuit. If you have a tool like Deltek Capture Analytics or some other business intelligence tool, you can quickly look at past pursuits of a similar type, scope, or agency, or even across internal factors such as division or department.

“But that’s going to take a lot of valuable time,” you may be saying. True, sometimes the pace of business doesn’t allow for immediate capture reviews. But it’s time well spent that will impact your success in the future, so you should strive to have at least quarterly meetings to go over recent pursuits that were won or lost.

## Ongoing Contract Performance Analysis

It's certainly tempting for capture organizations to think that their involvement with an opportunity ends once the transition to operations is completed. They can stay totally focused on the current pursuit pipeline, they think — but in doing so, they miss the active business cadence. Capture teams that operate this way lose a valuable opportunity to proactively address surge capacity proposal staffing requirements, and they blow a chance to refine their approach to a market and gain insight into client agencies.



If you're in the capture organization, you're much better off staying in touch with your colleagues down the line. Your program manager and contracts office are excellent resources for insight into ongoing contract performance. You need to keep tabs on this because schedule delays, cost overruns, and any lack of key resources *does* affect you and jeopardize your ability to perform as required. By identifying these potential risks early enough and putting mitigation plans in place, you can avoid a confrontation with your customer that can be costly and damaging to your organization.

Not only can you avert disaster, you can use the information you gain to help build customer relationships and drive capture strategy for future pursuits. By knowing where your internal risk and mitigation factors are, you're better able to create capture and proposal management approaches that are in tune with current contract execution practices.

Program managers have many tools and methods for creating a project schedule in alignment with the scope of the effort. Learn more about project management principles from the Project Management Institute at [www.pmi.org](http://www.pmi.org).

Also think about your approach to Integrated Program Management (IPM). IPM processes and tools can help reduce surprises by designing an integrated monitoring system. You can learn more about IPM in *Government Contracting For Dummies*, Deltek Special Edition.

The analysis performed by contracts and finance is focused on several common key performance indicators. From the contracts administration side, your data visualization tool should be able to display the following:

- ✓ Revenue
- ✓ Profit
- ✓ Backlog
- ✓ Labor utilization
- ✓ Indirect rates



Some of these metrics are quite useful to a capture and proposal organization. Backlog, for example, helps gauge your pipeline health and revenue, and helps to validate that your strategy and tactical execution are focused correctly. But to fully evaluate the effectiveness of your capture organization, you need more.

For an analytics tool to truly support your mission, it must give you exactly the kind of views you need into the information. The most helpful views would be a series of dashboards, each tied to key fields from your capture management tool, and they would combine that information with data from finance and contracts to maximize the level of operational insight. What your management needs to see can be different from what a business unit lead requires, so the tool should be able to create roles that will deliver the appropriate views.

You'll want to use an associative data model, combined with key data from your capture management tool such as:

- ✓ Stage
- ✓ Amount range
- ✓ Probability range
- ✓ Project estimated start date
- ✓ Owning organization
- ✓ Business developer

An effective analytics tool should measure four key capture program areas:

- ✓ **Current pipeline:** By looking at an aggregated view of all active pursuits in the pipeline, you can quickly identify trends inside areas such as customers and opportunity types. Use the tool to review pipeline amount and count and look at pipeline detail data from your capture management tool.
- ✓ **Pipeline revenue forecast:** Use the analytics tool to take a deep dive into the underlying structure of your pipeline in months, years, or quarters.
- ✓ **Historical pipeline:** The tool must be able to review the maturity progression of opportunities over time.
- ✓ **Bid and win rate:** It's important to analyze how your strategic plan is performing based on the opportunities won, lost, or no-bid.



When you use a dynamic data aggregation and visualization tool, you'll have the data you need to make business-critical decisions in line with your strategic plan. You'll also reduce surprises in proposal and contract execution and lay the foundation for supporting strategic refocus in the coming years.

## Chapter 8

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# Ten Ways Solid Capture Management Helps You

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### *In This Chapter*

- ▶ Qualifying your opportunities
  - ▶ Knowing yourself and your customer
  - ▶ Sizing up the competition
  - ▶ Setting up for the win
  - ▶ Learning from the past
  - ▶ Keeping your organization organized
- .....

**T**here's a reason why you look up a new destination online well in advance of your trip (you need to know how early to leave and whether you have enough gas) and a reason why you plug that address into your GPS before you head out (so you'll stay on the right path). There's a reason you apply for a job at some companies but steer clear of others (you want to focus your efforts on the leads most likely to bear fruit). There's a reason you tackle some home repairs yourself, ask your brother-in-law to help with others, and call in an outside firm on occasion (sometimes the job is right up your alley, but sometimes you'll be more successful with an additional pair of hands).

That's capture management in a nutshell. It's planning ahead, being prepared, dressing for success, going where the action is, looking before you leap. Adopt solid and prudent capture management practices, and it'll pay off handsomely in the long run.

## ***You'll Be Barking Up the Right Tree***

Solid capture management begins with the organization's strategic plan. By aligning your efforts with the strategic plan, you're ensuring that you're going after business that represents a core strength and priority, and that will take the organization in a positive direction from a long-term perspective. You'll be picking not just the lowest-hanging fruit, but the fruit that's healthiest.

## ***You'll Be Setting Yourself Up for Success***

By doing its homework well, your capture organization will qualify each opportunity before heading too far down the path. Opportunity pursuit takes a lot of energy and effort, and you'll do yourself no favors by chasing a car you're not likely to catch.

## ***You'll Know Your Customer***

Your capture efforts will yield volumes of valuable information about current and potential customers. You'll get to know people and preferences and pet peeves, and those insights will help not only qualify solid leads, but also help the proposal team draft a prize-winning document.

## ***You'll Know Your Competition***

You're an intelligent person, but you also need solid intelligence on the competitors you'll be facing in your pursuit of opportunities. Your capture work will educate you about their strengths, their weaknesses, and the arguments they're likely to make in their proposals, so your proposal team can counter those arguments successfully and preemptively.

## *You'll Know Your Friends*

Competitors, friends — what's the difference? Truth is, for some opportunities it'll become clear to you that another organization will be able to make the stronger case for the contract, or may be in a better position due to demographic or relationship reasons. But maybe you can still get a piece of that pie as a subcontractor. In that case, your one-time competitor becomes your ally. Similarly, you may be able to knock strong competitors out of the running by persuading them to sign on as subs for your proposal. Either way, such options will be guided by your capture organization's work and intelligence gathering.

## *You'll Set Yourself Up for a Win*

The work of your capture organization will inform the work of the proposal team later on. In fact, the proposal manager should be collaborating with the capture team to soak up all the insights possible and fully understand the potential customer's needs. Close connections between the program and proposal and capture teams and the customer itself could even allow your organization to influence program requirements before the customer ever releases the RFP.

## *Price-to-Win Is Easier to Figure*

Price isn't everything, but it's a huge part of the picture, which is why we talk so much about *price-to-win*. Setting the final price-to-win in the proposal involves your finance and operational experts, of course, but it's the capture organization that will really have a good feel for whether your price-to-win is going to be a winning price.

## *The Past Can Be Your Guide*

Part of your capture effort is examination of past performance contracts that have something to do with the current opportunity — they may involve your organization's history with

this customer, or with this kind of work, or they may involve your competitors. This kind of intelligence will help you prepare a stronger proposal, and in many cases you'll need to connect with past customers and have them fill out government reference questionnaires.

## ***You'll Learn and Grow***

Your organization's relationship with the customer is a major focus of the capture team, and through that relationship you'll learn a lot about how to succeed in the future. For one thing, whether you win a contract or not, you'll want to have a debrief meeting with the customer to find out what was compelling about your proposal, as well as what wasn't. Learning why you didn't win is obviously important, but you also need to learn why you *did* win so you can win even more tomorrow.

## ***You'll Get Organized***

At least we hope that you'll get organized. As we've said many times in this book, you need to be using a capture management tool to document all your data and insights. All the information you gather about a specific opportunity should be recorded there, along with info about each potential customer and competitor. Your organizational tools will keep track of who is doing what task and when it needs to be done; they allow proposal writers to dig into the details they need to succeed, and they allow the organization to analyze and track capture efforts as a whole, as well as contract performance.

## Appendix A

# Glossary of Terms and Acronyms



### **Administrative Contracting**

**Officer (ACO):** This is a person you'll need to know, under certain circumstances. If the contract is particularly large, an ACO may be assigned to administer the contract and ensure that the contractor is keeping its end of the bargain, following the contract's specified terms, including price, schedule, and quality.

**award:** Otherwise known as “good news,” an award is the release of a fully executed contract to an offeror. The good news typically comes from the contracting officer, who drops the contract in the mail or calls some other courier, drops by and hands it to you, picks up the phone, or uses some other means of communicating acceptance of the offer by the purchaser.

**BAFO (best and final offer):** This is one acronym your texting teen won't know. It's short for best and final offer, and it's typically made upon completion of negotiated procurement discussions. The BAFO gives contractors a chance to submit a revised proposal addressing any issues raised in the discussions.

**best value:** The purchaser wants the best value when acquiring goods and services. Notice that we did not say “best price.” Yes, price must always be one of the criteria evaluated, but the purchaser may consider other factors as well, such as environmental considerations, quality, and vendor performance, to name a few.

**bid:** An offer to furnish goods, services, or construction that meets all the specifications, delivery terms and conditions, and other requirements that were spelled out in the invitation for bids. This can also refer to an offer to purchase.

**bidder's list:** Once upon a time this might have been someone's Rolodex. It's a current file of vendors and suppliers covering various categories of goods, services, or construction needs.

**B&P:** The bid and proposal refers to the costs incurred in preparing bids and proposals seeking potential government contracts.

**CCR:** This is short for Central Contractor Registration, which is a registry of commercial contractors

and governmental jurisdictions that plan to enter into contracts or receive grants from the federal government. It's online at [www.ccr.gov](http://www.ccr.gov).

**CLIN (contract line item number):**

Think of the contract line item number like one of the tasks on a “honey-do list.” It's a specific unit of work to be performed by the contractor.

**competition:** It's the process the purchaser uses to get offers from more than one valid supply source for goods, services, or construction. Those offers are compared and evaluated to select the one or more source that best meets the needs of the purchaser.

**contract:** Don't do business without one of these documented agreements or orders covering the procurement or disposal of goods, services, construction, or anything else. The contract is binding on both the contractor and the purchaser. There are lots of different kinds of contracts, though not all of them are allowed in every case — they include fixed-price, cost, cost-plus-a-fixed-fee, cost reimbursement or incentive (look further in this appendix for more details on these). Contracts may provide for the issuance of job orders, task orders, or task letters, and contracts also include letter contracts, grants, purchase orders, and contract modifications. All contracts must be in writing unless regulations authorize otherwise, and there are mandatory clauses that all contracts must include.

**Contracting Officer (CO):** The CO is the person who has the authority to enter into, administer, and/or terminate a contract, and the CO can make any related determinations and findings. The CO ensures that the contractor is meeting the terms of the contract, including price, schedule, and quality.

**Contracting Officer**

**Representative:** Sometimes called a COR, this is someone the CO may choose to oversee and manage the project. The COR is the administrative liaison between the contractor and the contracting officer.

**Contracting Officer Technical**

**Representative (COTR):** The COTR is another person the CO may choose in order to delegate some of the oversight and management of the project. The COTR is the technical liaison between the contractor and the contracting officer.

**contractor:** This can be any individual or organization doing business with the purchaser, doing construction, providing services, or selling goods or services pursuant to a contract.

**CPFF:** This stands for Cost-Plus-Fixed-Fee, and it's a type of contract that reimburses the contractor for costs and then adds a negotiated fee.

**CPIF:** The Cost-Plus-Incentive-Fee contract reimburses the contractor for costs and adds a negotiated fee, but instead of being fixed, the fee is adjusted according to a formula based on target costs. It's an incentive to keep costs low.

**CPAF:** This contract type is Cost-Plus-Award-Fee, and it reimburses the contractor for allowable costs and adds a fee consisting of a base fee (which may be zero) plus an award fee, which is determined at periodic milestones set forth in the contract.

**DCAA:** The Defense Contract Audit Agency is responsible for auditing Department of Defense contracts and can be brought in by other agencies to assist with audits.

**DCMA:** The Defense Contract Management Agency ensures that contractors deliver goods and services to the Department of Defense on time, at cost, and in a sufficient manner.

**DFARS:** This acronym is part of the rules governing Department of Defense deals. It stands for Defense Federal Acquisition Regulation Supplement, and as the name implies, it's a Federal Acquisition Regulation supplement issued by the Department of Defense. Also see *FAR*.

**end user:** These are the front-line people in the government, the people who generally know the requirements and specifications for a particular product and communicate the requirements to official buyers. End users may even express a preference for a particular model or brand, or a specific vendor. And in the smallest purchases, or micropurchases, the end user may actually be the buyer.

**FAR:** The Federal Acquisition Regulations are the primary set of rules that agencies use when purchasing goods and services. Look them up at [www.acquisition.gov/far](http://www.acquisition.gov/far).

**FFP:** The Firm-Fixed Price contract sets and fixes the price by unit of product or measure. FFP contracts ease the administrative burden on the customer and also happen to impose the maximum risk on the contractor, because the contractor must deliver at the fixed price even if the actual costs end up being higher than expected.

**fixed price contract:** This contract provides for a firm price under which a contractor bears the full responsibility for profit or loss.

**GSA:** The General Services Administration is the major supply arm of government, and it does most of the government's buying.

**GWAC (Government Wide Acquisition Contract):** It sounds like a duck when you speak the acronym. It's a multiple-award, indefinite quantity contract that helps agencies meet their technology requirements through a customizable solution, without having to negotiate one contract after another for the same thing.

**IDIQ (Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity):** The government uses the procurement vehicle to allot a certain amount of money for purchases it will make from specified vendors. It leaves open

the dates the purchases will be made and the exact quantity of each item that will be bought. It's another way to make purchasing easier and eliminate the need to execute multiple smaller deals.

**multiple award:** This refers to the award of separate contracts to two or more offerors for the same commodities or services. It's used in situations where the award of a single contract would be impractical or would not meet the total purchaser requirements.

**NAICS (North American Industry Classification System):** You may recall the old days of SIC codes; that was short for Standard Industrial Classification. It's a means of classifying business by the type of activity to make it easier to collect, tabulate, analyze, and present data. NAICS codes are used by various agencies of the United States government, state agencies, trade associations, and private research organizations, and they promote uniformity and comparability when presenting statistical data.

**no bid:** This is a response to a solicitation for bids, and it means that the respondent doesn't wish to submit an offer. If you're a contractor, it's important that you don't totally ignore a solicitation for bids, because even if this one holds no interest, the next one might. The no bid usually operates as a procedure consideration to prevent suspension from the list,

which could happen if you fail to submit a response.

**PO (Program Office):** Don't get this acronym mixed up with "purchase order." In this context, it refers to the Program Office within the awarding agency that has primary interest in, and responsibility for, the contract.

**prebid/preproposal conference:** This optional meeting invites prospective offerors to discuss matters related to a solicitation, and takes place prior to the submittal of bids or proposals.

**prime contract:** This is a contract awarded directly by the government.

**proposal:** If it's in response to an RFP, it's an offer binding on the offeror, or it may be a nonbinding response to an REOI. See below for more on those two acronyms.

**protest:** If an offeror feels there's some sort of irregularity or impropriety with a solicitation process, or that something is awry regarding solicitation responses received and the administrative action taken on those responses, the offeror may file a protest. The complaint must be made in a timely manner and must be filed in writing with the Director.

**Request For Expressions Of Interest (REOI):** The REOI is a solicitation to prospective offerors, and is used to develop a shortlist of prospective offerors who will then be eligible to receive a

subsequent solicitation, such as an RFP or an Invitation for Bid. An REOI is generally made in cases where specifications can't yet be prepared or there's some uncertainty regarding the availability of vendors for the goods, services, or construction. Responses are analyzed in accordance with selection criteria set forth in the solicitation.

**Request For Proposal (RFP):** The RFP is used in negotiated procurements to solicit proposals for products and services and to communicate requirements to prospective contractors. The proposals that result from the RFP are evaluated according to various selection criteria, including price but often many other factors, too.

**Request For Quote (RFQ):** An RFQ is a solicitation document used to obtain price, delivery, and other information from prospective contractors.

**solicitation:** A solicitation is any request to submit offers or quotations to the government for the purpose of acquiring products and services. Once the government agency has acquisition authority, the agency prepares a solicitation that fully describes and specifies what it wants to purchase, along with the terms and conditions of the purchase, the delivery schedules, and the support needed for the product or service. It is generally during this preparation time that the government determines if this will be a sole source or an open competition acquisition.

**SOW:** The Statement of Work captures the activities and deliverables to be performed by the contractor.

**sole source:** This kind of procurement is used when the purchaser's required goods, services, or construction are available from only one person or firm, which may be an entity having the exclusive right to manufacture, sell, or otherwise market certain goods or services.

**subcontract:** A contractor who has a contract with the purchaser (known as a prime contractor) enters into this kind of agreement with a third party (known as a subcontractor). Although the purchaser isn't a party to the subcontract, and the prime contractor is fully responsible for the subcontractor, the purchaser may have certain control over the subcontract and the subcontractor through the provisions of the prime contract.

**teaming:** As the term suggests, this is a cooperative agreement involving a potential prime contractor and one or more other companies in an attempt to win a contract.

**T&M:** This acronym refers to time and materials payments that are based on hourly rates and the costs of materials used.

**TINA:** The Truth in Negotiations Act was enacted to ensure full and fair disclosure by contractors when they conduct negotiations with the government.

**WAWF:** This is short for Wide Area Workflow, which is an electronic invoicing and receipt system that routes documents to appropriate officials.

**WBS:** The Work Breakdown Structure provides a hierarchy of program elements supporting the measurement of a contract's cost and schedule performance.

## Appendix B

# Resources and Educational Opportunities

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## *Resources*

### *Deltek Capture Management Solutions*

**T**here's fierce competition among government contractors, and Deltek Capture Management Solutions helps you respond with faster and more efficient business development efforts. That can mean higher win rates, more lucrative contracts, and more powerful growth for your business.

It's built specifically to help government contractors of any size to do the following:

- ✓ Streamline business development efforts.
- ✓ Gain a better understanding of the sales pipeline.
- ✓ Improve forecast accuracy.
- ✓ Find teaming partners.
- ✓ Accelerate the bid and proposal process.
- ✓ Understand contract details.
- ✓ Turn opportunities into awards.

Deltek Capture Management Solutions is an integrated suite of solutions enabling you to make smart, information-based decisions so that you have the best chance to win the most lucrative contracts. Find out more at [www.deltek.com/solutions/governmentcontracting](http://www.deltek.com/solutions/governmentcontracting).

## ***GovWin Network***

Who doesn't want to gain the competitive edge and win more government business? Deltek's innovative GovWin network combines INPUT and FedSources into a market intelligence database containing thousands of opportunities worth over a trillion dollars. GovWin is also the place contractors go to win business, and you'll find it can help jumpstart your sales efforts, identify the right opportunities, assemble the right teams, and capture the right contracts. Find out more at [www.govwin.com](http://www.govwin.com).

## ***Washington Management Group***

Owned by Deltek, The Washington Management Group (WMG) is the nation's leading GSA and VA Schedule contract consulting firm. WMG helps companies increase revenue, maximize resources and enhance contract conformance. Find out more at [www.washmg.com](http://www.washmg.com).

## ***Central Contractor Registration***

Also known as CCR, this is the official, online registrant database for the U.S. Federal Government. CCR collects, validates, stores, and disseminates data in support of agency acquisitions and awards. Find out more at [www.ccr.gov](http://www.ccr.gov).

## ***Defense Contract Audit Agency***

The DCAA performs all necessary contract audits for the Department of Defense and provides accounting and financial advisory services regarding contracts and subcontracts to all parts of the Department of Defense responsible for procurement and contract administration. Find out more at [www.dcaa.mil](http://www.dcaa.mil).

## ***Defense Contract Management Agency***

The DCMA works directly with Department of Defense suppliers to help ensure that government supplies and services are delivered on time and on budget, and that they meet all performance requirements. Find out more at [www.dcma.mil](http://www.dcma.mil).

## ***Federal Acquisition Regulation***

You'll see it abbreviated FAR, and it's the official list of rules and regulations governing the acquisition of goods and services by agencies of the Department of Defense, the General Services Administration, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. Find out more at [www.acquisition.gov/far](http://www.acquisition.gov/far).

# ***Sources of Continuing Education***

## ***GovCon Insights***

Deltek University teams up with the Public Contracting Institute, Lohfeld Consulting, and KM Systems to provide GovCon Insights. The partners are all respected providers of training for government contractors, and together they deliver relevant and timely courses at a state-of-the-art learning facility in Herndon, Virginia. These courses have been developed to empower government contractors with the knowledge and expertise they need to win more federal business and achieve greater success. Find out more at [www.deltek.com/education/govcon-courses.aspx](http://www.deltek.com/education/govcon-courses.aspx).

## ***Deltek University***

Stay up-to-date through the "Contracting with the Federal Government" educational series offered through a partnership of Deltek University and George Mason University's Office of Continuing Professional Education. The series helps government contracting professionals ensure that their

business operations remain compliant with current federal standards. Content focuses on recent government contracting trends, including the current regulatory environment, as well as proposed changes to the Federal Acquisition Regulation and the government's Cost Accounting Standards. Find out more at [www.deltek.com/education.aspx](http://www.deltek.com/education.aspx).

## ***Shipley Associates Seminars***

Shipley Associates offers a comprehensive curriculum of public workshops providing your proposal teams with the skills, tools, and hands-on training needed to improve your win rate. Find out more at [www.shipleywins.com/training-workshops.php](http://www.shipleywins.com/training-workshops.php).

## ***Mastering Business Development, Inc.***

MBDi partners with organizations to provide tailored training and curriculum development services to meet specific business development training needs and grow a proactive BD culture. Find out more at <http://training.mbdicom/>.

# Learn how to capture the Federal business that's out there and thrive as a government contractor!

The Federal market opportunity is huge, with over a trillion dollars of business available. You can't just venture blindly into the world of Federal business without planning where you're going, knowing where to look for opportunities, understanding your organization's strategic objectives, carefully evaluating and qualifying each potential opportunity, and understanding and preparing for risks. All these things are critical to successfully capturing Federal business.

- **Get to know the market** — *examine your organization's strategic plan, learn where to look for leads, choose whether to lead a pursuit or tag along with another company, and decide when it's time to dive in*
- **Opportunities are knocking** — *assess and pursue opportunities by building your capture organization, creating a capture plan, and getting to know both your customers and competitors*
- **The right proposal** — *build a solid foundation, assemble your proposal team, kick off the proposal writing process with a meeting, and then write a great proposal*
- **What happens after the proposal is entered** — *answer questions from the potential customer, begin to learn lessons from the experience, organize your information, and prepare to protest or rebid the award*

Learn more at [www.delttek.com/dummies](http://www.delttek.com/dummies)



**Open the book and find:**

- The do's and don'ts of pursuing Federal business
- How to understand your competition and develop your win strategy
- Tips on kicking off your proposal process
- How to create different review teams
- Ways to learn from your failures and successes

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