



GLOBAL ECONOMIC
RESEARCH CONSULTING

FREE READINESS GUIDE

The Government Contract **Readiness** Checklist

Ten things your business must have in place before it can bid on a federal, state, county, city, school district or airport contract — and the exact thresholds, portals and deadlines for each one.

Global Economic Research Consulting

San Bernardino, California · Serving the Inland Empire & nationwide

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Most businesses lose contracts they never had a chance to bid on.

Not because their pricing was wrong. Not because a bigger company beat them. Because on the day the solicitation dropped, their paperwork wasn't finished — an expired registration, a name that didn't match IRS records, a certification still sitting in review.

Government buyers cannot bend on this. If your registration isn't active, the system will not let them award you the work. The good news is that every item on this list is fixable, most of them are free, and the whole sequence has a predictable order.

23%

of all federal contracting dollars are targeted to small businesses each year

5%

bid preference on California state contracts for certified small businesses

\$0

what it costs to register in SAM.gov and to certify with California

How to use this checklist

Work top to bottom — the items are in dependency order, so item 4 genuinely cannot be done before item 3. Check off what you already have. Then score yourself on the last page.

Expect the full sequence to take 30–90 days if you're starting from zero. Federal registration can move in under two weeks when the data is clean; certifications are what take the time.

The four reasons registrations get rejected or stall

- The legal business name doesn't match IRS records *exactly* — punctuation counts.
- A P.O. box was used instead of a physical address.
- The TIN/EIN hasn't propagated yet, which is common for brand-new entities.
- Details disagree across the IRS, the Secretary of State and the registration record.

Before you can register anywhere

01 ☐ A registered legal entity and an EIN ALL BUYERS

An LLC, corporation or nonprofit in good standing with the Secretary of State, plus an EIN from the IRS.

Why it blocks you: Every downstream system validates your legal name against IRS and state records. Write your name down exactly as it appears on your IRS letter and use that spelling everywhere, forever.

02 ☐ A physical business address and a business bank account ALL BUYERS

A street address, not a P.O. box. A business checking account in the legal entity's name, with routing and account numbers on hand.

Why it blocks you: Federal registration requires electronic funds transfer details before it will activate. No account, no registration, no payment.

03 ☐ Your NAICS codes, chosen deliberately ALL BUYERS

One primary code and a short list of secondary codes that describe what you actually sell.

Why it blocks you: Buyers search by NAICS, and size standards are set per code. The wrong primary code makes you invisible to the agencies buying what you do — or too "large" to qualify as a small business.

04 ☐ A Unique Entity ID (UEI) FEDERAL

Requested inside SAM.gov. It replaced the old DUNS number, it is free, and it requires entity validation against your legal records.

Why it blocks you: The UEI is your identity across the entire federal system. Nothing federal happens without it.

05 ☐ An active SAM.gov registration FEDERAL

Free. Includes your representations and certifications, and generates a CAGE code.

Why it blocks you: It expires. **Renew every 12 months** or your registration goes inactive and you become unawardable overnight — the single most common way established businesses lose eligibility. CAGE codes renew on a five-year cycle. Put both dates in your calendar the day you activate.

What makes you competitive

06 ☐ A Cal eProcure account CALIFORNIA

California's procurement portal at caleprocure.ca.gov. It is where state bids are posted and where state certifications are filed.

Why it blocks you: Federal registration does nothing for state work. These are separate systems with separate accounts.

07 ☐ California Small Business certification CALIFORNIA

Free, filed through Cal eProcure, and worth a **5% bid preference** on state contracts. Current thresholds:

Small Business: 100 or fewer employees and roughly \$19M or less in average annual gross receipts over three years · **Microbusiness:** about \$6M or less · **SB-PW (public works):** up to about \$46M and 200 employees. Your principal place of business must be in California. Expect **30–45 days** to process a complete application, and a **24-month** certification term. Have three years of tax returns ready.

08 ☐ Any federal set-aside certification you qualify for FEDERAL

Applied for at certifications.sba.gov. These reserve entire contracts for businesses like yours:

8(a): 51% owned by socially and economically disadvantaged citizens; personal net worth under \$850K, adjusted gross income \$400K or less, assets under \$6.5M; two years in business; a nine-year program term. **HUBZone:** principal office in a HUBZone with at least 35% of employees living in one. **WOSB / EDWOSB:** 51% owned *and* actively managed by women. **VetCert / SDVOSB:** for veteran and service-disabled veteran owners.

09 ☐ A one-page capability statement ALL BUYERS

Core competencies, differentiators, past performance, and your company data block: UEI, CAGE, NAICS codes, certifications, contact.

Why it blocks you: This is the document a contracting officer asks for when they're deciding whether to shortlist you. Showing up without one ends the conversation.

10 ☐ Local vendor portal registrations LOCAL

Your city, county, school district, community college, water district, transit agency and airport each run their own vendor list.

Why it blocks you: Local agencies buy constantly and competition is thinner than federal. Many businesses win their first contract here — but only if they're already on the list when the bid posts.

Count your checkmarks.

Where you land tells you what to do in the next 30 days.

0–3

Not yet eligible

You cannot currently be awarded a government contract. Start at item 1 and work in order — don't chase certifications yet.

4–7

Registered, not competitive

You can technically receive an award, but you're bidding without preferences or set-asides. Certifications are the highest-value next move.

8–10

Contract ready

Your paperwork is not the bottleneck. Your problem is pipeline and proposals — finding the right solicitations and writing to win them.

Three dates to put in your calendar today

- **SAM.gov renewal** — every 12 months, with a reminder 60 days out.
- **State certification renewal** — 24-month term; start the renewal at month 21.
- **CAGE code renewal** — every 5 years.

Not sure which items you actually qualify for?

That's the part most business owners get wrong — and the part that costs the most time. We take businesses from unregistered to under contract: SAM.gov, Cal eProcure, UEI, SBA and DSBS profiles, certification assistance, and vendor registration for city, county, school district, airport and public agencies. Handled end to end.

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Thresholds, program rules and processing times are current as of September 2026 and are set by the issuing agencies (GSA/SAM.gov, the U.S. Small Business Administration, and the California Department of General Services). They change. Verify current figures with the agency before relying on them, or ask us to check for you. This guide is general information, not legal or financial advice.