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[START OF TRANSCRIPT]

Carla: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome and thank you for joining today's live SBA web conference. Please note that all participant lines will be muted for the duration of this event.

You're welcome to submit written questions during the presentation and these will be addressed during Q&A. To submit a written question, please use the chat panel on the right-hand side of your screen, choose "all panelists" from the send-to dropdown menu.

If you require technical assistance, please send a private note to the event producer.

I would now like to formally begin today's conference and introduce Chris Ishan. Chris, please go ahead.

Chris: Thank you, Carla. Hello everyone and welcome to the sixth session of SBA's first Wednesday webinar series for fiscal year 2019.

On to slide two; for today's session, we will be focusing on market research as well as a bonus topic of SBA points of contact. By the end of the program, you should have a better understanding of this topic as well as the resources available to you.

If you are new to our event, this is a webinar series that focuses on getting subject matter experts on specific small business programs and having them provide you with valuable information you can use in the performance of your job as an SBA employee, a member of the **[0:01:16 inaudible]** or PTAC employee. We appreciate you taking the time to participate in the FY '19 program, and we hope you benefit from today's session.

Now, for a little background on the first Wednesday program, the program was initially created for contracting staff which is why the training was called "11-02 First Wednesday." The 11-02-designated government series for contracting personnel was later dropped to be more inclusive of other GS series as special agencies increased their requirements for non-11-02s obtained **[0:01:49 inaudible]** certifications.

Additionally, other federal buying activities, SBA staff, PTAC and SPDC personnel, who after hearing about this training, requested access and were added to the list of participants, so that is why SBA's first Wednesday program is aimed at federal government employees and our resource partners like PTACs and SPDCs. Thank you to those of you who are repeat attendees and welcome to those of you who are new to the program.

On to slide three; as Carla mentioned, I am Chris Ishan and I work as a procurement center representative or better known as PCR, and I'm located in Kansas City, Missouri. Additionally, Ms. Gwen Davis, who is located in Minneapolis, Minnesota, is a PCR there and she will be reading your questions submitted during the program for our speaker to address at the end of today's session. We both work in government contracting area IV, and slide three includes our information.

On to slide four; please note that all lines are on mute; however, you may submit questions or technical issues in the chat box on your screen. Your questions may be submitted anytime during today's session by entering them into the chat box and these questions will be addressed at the end of the speaker's presentation.

As most of you know, we have transitioned to WebEx and informed that some users may experience issues to the blocked website or other error messages when attempting to access the conference login from their computer. If you're affected by this issue, please make sure you dial in and follow along with the slides provided in the email. We will ensure the page numbers are clearly stated, so you can follow along. We're hopeful this issue will be resolved, and we apologize for any inconvenience.

Now, if you are having any other technical issues, please call the AT&T support desk at the following number: 1888-796-6118. This telephone number is also included in the email invitation for today's program and on slide four of the PowerPoint presentation. Otherwise, just keep listening in and follow along with the PowerPoint presentation for today's session. As I mentioned earlier, we will continually announce the page number so you can follow along. For more SBA small business program training, please visit the SBA Learning Center at www.sba.gov.

Now, on to slide five; did you know that the Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Centers or APTAC host a website where they post the first Wednesday programs. Since these sessions are already recorded, you can re-listen to this program as well as previous sessions by visiting their website, which is provided here on slide five.

Additionally, Procurement Technical Assistance Centers or PTACs are a great resource and partnering with your local PTAC for **[0:04:33 inaudible]** sharing an RFI notice, or other sources **[0:04:37 inaudible]** announcements, or referring small business concerns to a PTAC are just a few reasons why they are such a useful resource for acquisition personnel, so please contact your local PTAC for additional information.

On to slide six; slide six is the program schedule for fiscal year 2019, and today's session on market research is the sixth topic in this series. Unfortunately, mentioned earlier, topics three and four were cancelled due to the National Day of Mourning and the government shutdown. We have included a couple new topics to our program and approved other topics that have been presented in the past. Once again, the participate, excuse me, the participation continues to grow each month and the positive word-of-mouth is greatly appreciated, so thank you very much for that.

On to slide seven; I'm sure many of you will want to receive credit for today's training, so you'll be glad to know that today's session is **[0:05:33 inaudible].** On the following slide, which is slide eight, you'll find the training certificate. First, you'll manually fill in your name and then print the certificate from the PowerPoint to request credit for today's session. The PowerPoint presentation was part of the SBA email invitation that you received for today's session. SBA does not track your CLPs or communicate with your training program regarding your CLP achievements.

Now, several of you may have received the information for the training from a friend or colleague; but if you want to receive an email directly from us, notifying you of upcoming first Wednesday webinar events, just send us an email at sbalearning@sba.gov, that is sbal-e-a-r-n-i-n-g@sba.gov. In the subject line, please enter the words "add to list" and we'll ensure you're added to the distribution list.

Slide eight; slide eight is the actual certificate. First, you will need to access the PowerPoint presentation that was emailed to you, then you'll manually fill in your name where it states, "Insert your name here." Next, within the print settings, you will select, "Print current slide," which will allow for only the certificate to be printed. Also, another reminder, SBA does not track your CLPs or communicate with your training program regarding your CLP achievements.

Slide nine; today's training has been assembled to address market research as well as provide you with additional resources available for your use. Our speaker has graciously accepted our invitation and she will be directing me to continue on to the next slide.

As mentioned earlier, if you're unable to access WebEx, please follow along with a PowerPoint presentation that was inputted in the email for today's training. We will identify the page number, so you can follow along. Also, please note that due to connectivity issues, some viewers may experience a delay as the slide changes on your screen.

Now, I'm pleased to introduce today's speaker to you, Ms. Valerie Coleman, who is the prime contracts program manager for SBA's Office of Government Contracting. Val, we appreciate that you could meet with us today, and I'll turn the program over to you know.

Val: All right. Thank you, Chris. Well, good morning and good afternoon to everyone. I'm very pleased to present market research and then the bonus topic of SBA points of contact, and so we will go ahead and begin. Next slide, please.

One of the things we want to make sure no matter in what field you're in, whether you're a contracting officer, a contract specialist, a small business specialist, a PCR, we want to make sure you CYA which in our terms we call that cover your acquisition.

One of the things that we highly encourage is that every acquisition should start off as a small business action and then by doing the right thing, we determine whether it can be a set aside of some type or whether it needs to go full enough.

We're going to be discussing market research, what PCRs do as far as helping you with that, and then getting to the final outcome of how an acquisition should be put out. Next slide please.

Who conducts market research? It's basically everyone - of course, you're contracting officers and your specialists, project managers, technical personnel.

A lot of agencies, unfortunately, forget about your small business specialist. You need to get them involved early just as you do your procurement center representatives because they can assist you in finding small businesses and give you other resources.

The SBA procurement center rep, or PCR, works with your small business specialists to review proposed acquisition strategies and strategy alternatives as needed to comply with all of the small business laws and regulations. As you can see, basically, everyone involved in an acquisition is also involved in the market research. Next slide.

Giving your some **[0:09:37 inaudible]**. I don't need to read those, but you guys can, but just some definitions of market research in **[0:09:43 FAR]** part two, and also how you should be performing market research and that's FAR part 7102. Next slide please.

Of course, we have one more which is FAR part ten that talks about when you should conduct market research. A lot of times… and you can read all of this. A lot of times, I get agencies that would call me up as… I was a former PCR that would say, “Well, we did market research six months ago and it’s the same project,” and when I start to ask questions, I find out it’s in different locations, the dollar amount maybe double or triple, so it’s not really the same acquisition. You want to make sure that your market research goes along with the acquisition that you have in front of you. Next slide.

What’s the role of a PCR? You basically have two types of PCRs that you may be dealing with. One, maybe a resident PCR and that’s a PCR that actually sits at your location or you could be having a liaison PCR and that’s one who covers your agency, but doesn’t physically sit with you.

Just as a little bit of background, PCRs are all level three **[0:11:01 inaudible]** certified - we’re all 1102s. We speak the same language that you do and so that makes it a lot easier when we’re working together. You can find out more about PCRs in FAR part 19.402.

One of the things that a PCR does is we review all these acquisitions. We look at them to see if they could be set aside for small business or one of the socioeconomic categories. We normally have access to everything that we need to help make a decision, and we have the ability to appeal a contracting officer’s rejection of the recommendation and that gets in to what we call our “form 70” where we can actually stop the solicitation until a decision is reached.

I do want to say one thing: If you do not know who your PCR is, you can go to sba.gov under federal contracting and look for the listing of PCRs. If your agency is not covered by one, you can always contact the SBA government contracting office and that’s something that we’ll be talking about later on in the presentation, and we can tell you which PCR covers the buying activities where you’re located. Next slide.

Chris: Slide 15.

Val: One of the things that you need to be aware of, we get this question all the time, is do I make an 8 (a) award before I make a HUBZone or do I make a woman award before service disabled that? As you can see from FAR 19.203, there’s no order. Everything is set up where there is an equal opportunity for any of these socioeconomic groups to get a set-aside a lot of time. It depends on where your procurement center maybe in your goals. If it’s towards the end of the fiscal year and you've met your STB goals and your women goals, but you haven't met your veteran or HUBZone, you may be looking specifically at those areas to help you reach those goals.

If you've got sufficient number of responsible contractors in each category, it's the contracting officer's decision which way you want to go; but we want you to, first, under FAR 19.203A, you first consider HUBZone 8A service disabled vet or EDWSB first. If you cannot go that way, then you need to look at small business set-asides and then, finally, full and open competition. Next slide.

What's the Rule of Two? I was teaching this class one day and I had a small business that says, "Well, there's two small businesses here. We could bid on this **[0:13:59 inaudible]**." Well, that's normally what you might think; however, we have a definition of Rule of Two because if it's a construction contract and one of you is the staffing company and one of you is a restaurant, that's not a responsible contractor. We give a better definition of Rule of Two in 19.502, and it's basically that we'll get the offers from two responsible small business concerns, and the definition for responsibility is in FAR part nine, and that the award will be made at a fair market price.

Normally, if we have a Rule of Two, then we can do a set-aside. If we've got two HUBZones, two service disabled vets, two women, it could go one of those set-asides. If we have one HUBZone, one service disabled vet, one small business, we don't have the Rule Of Two, and then we may just go ahead and do a general small business set-aside without setting aside for one of the socioeconomic categories. Next slide please.

Here's some questions you need to ask: Look at your history. When did you do it the last time? Even if it's been three or four months ago, are you looking at the same type of acquisition that you had before? That's very, very important.

You can also look at other agencies that you may work with - other departments that may have done some market research that's similar to what you need. Do you need to go to a different agency? A lot of times there may be an agency that says, "Well, we didn't do it, but I know department of **[0:15:39 inaudible]** did it." Maybe you can get their market research to help you on who they used and specially the small businesses.

Have you done a Source Sought? That's a valuable tool for you to use, one of the things I want to caution you against; we see this a lot with Sources Sought. It shouldn't be the entire statement of work that you're putting out there.

FAR 10.001B says that when you're conducting market research, agency should not request potential sources to submit more than the minimum information necessary. Again, you're not looking for someone that can do everything. If you have, let's say, ten line items and four are the most important to you, then those are the four that should be in the Sources Sought. Those are who you're trying to find contractors for.

Have you used the dynamic small business research? This is a database that belongs to SBA. It does not belong to SAM, even though you can hotlink from SAM over to DSBS; and we're going to be talking about that in the next couple of slides because sometimes DSBS is not used in the correct way and it gives out faulty… what we think is faulty market research.

Then, have you been in touch with your small business community? They know more about our project. If that's their industry, then we do. They keep up-to-date, so it's good to talk to them.

Then, on your market research, is there documentation? Have we done enough to document because this should be a narrative? When you do your market research, anybody should be able to pick up the file, read the file and determine that the decision that you made on which way this acquisition is going is the correct and proper way for it to go. Next slide.

Chris: Slide 18.

Val: This is a screenshot of the dynamic small business search, and one of the things that you can do when you go in to the system, of course, you've got all these categories that you can pick from. One of the things I want to question you about is a lot of people will set there, and just start checking boxes like crazy, and then when they come back and say, "Well, there's no small businesses that can do it," my first question is, "How did you search," and I'll go to the top, and look, and every box they checked is up there. Well, you have to remember that DSBS is an "end" database, not an "or." If you're looking for women and veterans, and you checked both, you're only going to get women veterans, not women and/or veterans.

I'm going to show you a way where you can look for all of those socioeconomic categories at once, but I wanted to show you where DSBS can be an invaluable tool to you to help you like when you do a Sources Sought or an RFI if you're putting that out. You can actually go in there, and do your search, and then you can use next coach, you can use… keywords are very important. Once that listing comes up, you can go to the bottom of the page, and you can do a save email addresses for all and that comes in whether it's 200 firms or whether it's two firms. It will save the email addresses for everyone that came up in your search. Next slide, please.

Then, what you're going to do, as you can see from the bottom… all of these email addresses are in here, you're going to do a cut-and-paste, you're going to highlight all those email addresses and do a cut-and-paste, and you can put it in the two box… sorry, in the blind carbon copy box of your email because you don't want everyone to know all of the emails that you used and you can attach the Sources Sought or you can attach questions, whatever you want to do.

If you come up with 300 firms in one email after you do the cut-and-paste into the blind carbon copy, one email out of 300 small businesses to ask for their response to Sources Sought if they're interested. This is a great way when you're having…

Let's say it can't go small business for whatever reason, if you show this that you've at least done a search of DSBS and you've done this, it shows that you've made a good effort to try to go out and find small businesses. It's just another way of doing documentation with one single email, so that should help a whole lot. Next slide please.

Chris: Slide 20.

Val: The next thing I want to show you - a lot of people are not familiar with this - if you see at the very top, on the blue banner at the top, there's something called the "quick market search." What the "quick market search" does is it helps take care of the problem that I was referring to before by checking all of these boxes. I want to know if we've got HUBZone, and women, and 8(a), etcetera to see if we can do a set-aside. Well, this helps you find the socioeconomic categories and they separate them out, so you can do one search and get a whole listing. In this case, what I did was I put in the next code of 541330, which is engineering services, and I just highlighted the State of Alabama, and then I hit enter. Next slide please. What it did in one search, it came up and told me in each of the socioeconomic categories how many small businesses had that next code that were located in Alabama. You would handle this then the same way. You would go in, let's say the top one says, "Currently 8(a) certified," you would click on that economic group and then all of the profiles would come up like you would normally do a search. You then could down to HUBZone and do that search.

Now, what will happen is you'll get a lot of firms that haven't filled in their capability statements, things of that nature. They may be able to do engineering, but they haven't filled in all the basic information - they may not show up.

You will also be going to get crossover. You could have an 8(a) firm that's also HUBZone and also woman-owned. They would be in each category; but at least, what this does is if you were to pull this up and everything came up zeros, then as long as you were doing your research correctly, you could very easily put this into a file and say there are no small businesses that do this type of work in Alabama. In this case, you can see that there are.

Everytime you do a search, if you got out of this and did another search, these economic group categories are going to switch. They're never going to be in the same order as you're seeing them now.

By the same token, when you do a search in dynamic small business search - if you did a search and came up with 50 firms, and you got out of it, and then went back in a day or two later and did the same search - they're not going to be in the same order. They will never be in ABC order and the reason for that is people have tendency to just use firms in the A, and B and C category without getting down to the XYZ. The system, the dynamic small business search, automatically jumbles them up so you're never going to get the firms in the same order.

However, if you went in and looked at someone's profile, it does change the color of that profile. When you go back in and do your search, that color will still be different, so you know that you've already looked at that firm.

One of the things also that you can do is after you get the list… as I said, you can do the same thing as you did before - do the cut-and-paste - and then you can send a Sources Sought out to everyone that's on that listing. Next slide.

Here's the thing: We want everyone to think small business first. Your market research, and I used to tell my agency, is you don't have to tell me why something's going full and open. You have to tell me in your market research why small business can't do it because everybody can tell me why it should be going full and open, but you tell me why small business can't.

Use your market research to craft a strategy for that particular solicitation. You're not validating something that was already done because your economic environment, it changes all the time. You don't know what's going on out there. If you skip with the same pre-existing market research and pre-existing strategy, you're not going to find possibly a new small business out there that could do a great job for you and make it small business friendly.

Now, that doesn't mean that you don't put the stuff in a Sources Sought that you would not do for large business. What I'm saying when we're saying "small business friendly" is, again, go with that FAR part ten that you're asking for the minimum amount of information necessary to make a decision on how this solicitation or acquisition should go. Next slide.

Chris: Slide 23.

Val: We have some exchanges with industry, and the purpose of this, basically, is to improve the understanding of government requirements and what's out there in the industry, they're capabilities, and this is going to allow a small business to determine if they can satisfy whatever agency needs that you have.

These are some of the ways that you can look at things: We mentioned the Sources Sought, a draft RFP, one-on-one meetings, industry days, pre-solicitation notices - all of these is stuff that you can use that will help your market research, so that we can make sure that we've got the companies that we need.

You do your market research, you may want to do it, like I said then, a draft RFP or pre-solicitation notice - anything like that that's going to help you to make sure that the decision you made is the right one and that we're getting out to the small business community or just the industry in general to make sure that we've got the right strategy for that solicitation. Next.

All of those numbers at the top, those are all the different small business coordination forms that are out there. It would be absolutely wonderful if we had one small business coordination form for the entire federal government, but we don't.

The biggest one we have, of course, is the 25-79 for Department of Defense, but then we have the 22-68 for the VA and the 17-87 for NASA, the 653 for Health and Human Services, the 2689 for GSA. They're basically all the same. They ask the same type of information; but I just want you to see that when a PCR is dealing with multiple agencies, we have to become familiar with multiple forms.

One of the things to help a PCR when you've made a decision that it should go full and open, and you know that anything that's not going small business has to go to the PCR after it's been to your small business specialist. We are the last signature on that small business coordination form. You want to make sure that it tells a story. I know a lot.

The 25-79, within the last several years, has been redesigned, and a couple of the other agencies have redesigned their formal, so what you want to do is make sure it's totally filled out, you attach the information that helps support the decision that your agency has made on this.

A lot of times, when I sat at NASA I would read their 17-87, and I'd start to ask questions, and I go back to the small business specialist, and I said, "I have questions about this, and this and this," and he called the contracting officer and they'd say, "Oh, I didn't know if that was important enough to attach." Yes, attach everything so that we don't have to go back and ask the questions, everything is right there.

Don't do a lot of editorializing, things like 8(a) costs too much. Well, how do you know that because of a past experience? Not everything is the same. There are different small businesses out there.

We don't want small business to lose money. Well, how do you know they're going to lose money?

All of these things that are listed on the slide, we have seen on market research. My favorite market research that I ever got was from an agency. When I looked at their small business coordination form, they had one sentence which was, "Could not find any firms in the yellow pages," that was their market research. Of course, I went back to the small business specialist immediately and said, "This is not going to work." Your market research should show to the PCR on whether a small business can or cannot perform on this particular solicitation. Next slide.

You can read this. We want all solicitations to become successful acquisitions in the end, but the bottom line is your market research should give the reader a picture of the current marketplace, who's doing business successfully within it, and with whom or how can industry support the specific requirements.

Don't ignore your past performance and information because this can make or break an acquisition strategy decision and be sure the documentation supports the strategy to be appropriate for the procurement. Basically, tell your story to anyone who's able to read it and we want maximum practicable opportunity to go to small business. Your market research helps us make that decision on whether a PCR can sign off on it or not; but also, if you happen to have a surveillance review, for example, from SBA and we see something full and open, your market research should be able to tell us the story on why it didn't go small business. You want to cover your acquisition the best way that you can. Next slide.

Chris: Slide 26.

Val: I get a lot of calls all the time. I sit in the district office a couple of days a week, and it's amazing how much stuff comes in to the district office that shouldn't be coming in to the district office because a lot of people out there look at everybody belongs to SBA, and we have an SBA district office, so everything should go there.

I wanted to do some slides that, basically, will help you know where to send stuff because, like I said, not everything goes to a district office and it can be a little confusing with SBA because of the different types of offices that we have. We're going to go ahead and start, and kind of… hopefully, this is going to help you on when you have something where you should send it. Next slide.

This is the Office of Government Contracting. We are set up into six area offices and the area offices headquarters are in Boston, Washington DC, Atlanta, Chicago, Fort Worth and San Francisco. These are our different offices.

Now, you see the different colors that are on there. The different colors represent the regions of SBA. We have 10 regions and each area, except for two area offices, each region covers, I'm sorry, each area office covers two regions. If you look on the PowerPoint area five, this is region six which is Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana; but it also covers region eight which is North and South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Utah and Colorado. Region six and eight, together, make up area five.

I know it can be confusing because we have regions, we have districts, we have branches, but we wanted to show you the map so you can see where your state is that will tell you what region you're in and what area office covers your procurement center. Next slide.

We have another program within SBA that a lot of people don't know about, which is our natural resources program, and it's mainly focused on sales of several timber. We want to make sure that the small business saw mills get their fair share of timber; but we also deal with oil royalties and mineral rights, and so we have our natural resources program. Next slide.

If you're dealing with anything like that, and we have quite a few federal agencies that do, I want to give you this slide that shows you that David Loines, who is our acting director of government contracting, is also the program director over the Timber Program. We officially call it the Timber Program. We have three industrial specialists throughout the country that cover all of the national forest that we have.

I wanted to give you this slide. If you deal with any of the four service or timber products, these are the three gentlemen that would be able to help you. Next slide.

Chris: Slide 30.

Val: All right. Here's that slide again so you can kind of see it together, the difference between a regional, district and an area office.

A regional office is… they cover multiple states and… they went back. Go ahead and go forward again. Let's get back to that one. Go back. Go back one more. It **[0:34:26 inaudible].**

Chris: Slide 30, Carla.

Val: Yes, there we go. Thank you. If you look on the slide on the left, that's overall SBA that gives you all of the regional offices. The regional office, we have a regional administrator and they're over the district offices that are in their region.

The area offices over on your right, which is government contracting, are not under the region, are not under the district we have area directors for that and area offices covering multiple regions.

I know it can be confusing. I've given you the link right there and shown you where they're set up.

Every state has, at least, one district office. Texas, where I'm located, in Houston, we have seven. I believe seven different district offices, in the State of Texas. When I moved down here from Arkansas, there's just one in Little Rock. Oklahoma City just has one. You may have a state where it's just one district office, they cover the entire state, or you might have like in Texas where you have multiple district offices and they cover different counties in that state. Next slide please.

Let's talk about the area offices, which is what we're in, in government contracting. On the left, I put what we do and, on the right,, who we are so you kind of know who heads up everything. As the program manager for the prime contracts program, I don't manage any people; but I do have oversight over programs and so I have oversight of the COC program, the size program, the non-manufacture rule and surveillance reviews, along with the PCRs.

Certificate of competency programs are handled by our area office staff. Every area office, and remember we have six, has a COC specialist or an industrial specialist. They handle COCs. Our natural resources program, again you saw that slide, is handled by David Loines, the director out of Washington, and our three specialists. The Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business program is handled out of headquarters.

Size is handled out of the area offices, not the district offices. We're going to show the slide coming up on where you send all of this stuff, but each area office also has a size specialist that handles the size determinations for that area.

We have a subcontracting program. Those are your commercial market representatives: CMRs. Those are the people that handle the post award when they're subcontracting plans or working with your other than small businesses that cement their ISRs and SSRs into the **[0:37:34 inaudible]** program.

Waivers of non-manufacture rule are handled out of SBA headquarters. The women-owned small business program is also.

Surveillance reviews are handled by myself. Since I work for headquarters, they would be handled out of Washington; but then the area offices get involved in doing those surveillance reviews.

You see on the right that we have COC specialist and size specialist, commercial market reps, procurement center reps, and field and SBA headquarters staff.

I've given you the website again. I've mentioned it numerous times, but I wanted to make sure you all saw it on every slide that I could. I've given you the link to find an area office where you can find those individuals that are located above this website - your PCR, CMRs, COCs, size specialist and industrial specialist. Next slide please.

Chris: Slide 32.

Val: Again, just a little bigger picture, those are the area offices. I can't emphasize enough the area offices as oppose to the region and district offices. Next slide.

All right. Here's a biggie: Where do I send stuff to? Everything involving the 8(a) programs, offering letters, awards modifications, eligibility, go to your local SBA district office. They have what's called BOSs' (business opportunity specialists) that handle the 8(a) program. 8(a) offerings, 8(a) questions, 8(a) eligibility, anything like that, goes to your district office.

If you have a COC or you have a size issue that goes to a government contract area office where the headquarters of the small business is located. I've given you an example here. You've got a small business located in Oklahoma City, needs a COC done it's going to the Dallas Fort Worth area. It doesn't matter where the work is being done. It doesn't matter where your agency is located. We have to send it to where the headquarters of the small business is located.

By the same token, when we're talking about a size determination, it's the same thing. You've got a small business located in Seattle, you need a size determination, it's going to the size specialist in the San Francisco area office and I've given you a link there that will help you with that. Next slide please.

All right, so where do you send COC referrals? I've given you the area office and each of the states that the area covers with the point of contact on where you send the COC, along with their email and their phone number. If you have a COC, remember if it's in Maryland, it's going to area two, which is Adrian **[0:40:39 inaudible]**. If you've got one in Minnesota, it's going to David Gordon. This is a good slide for you to keep if you're going to send a COC where it goes. Next slide.

Chris: Slide 35.

Val: Here's the one on size; again, area one, two, three, four, five and six. Down the line, it shows you the person where you send a size protest to. Again, remember, it goes to where the headquarters of the protested concern is located; not where the work is, not where you're located. Hopefully, you guys keep these two slides for size and COCs. Next slide please.

Subcontracting plans; we, actually, got one in the Houston district office the other day, and they came back and said, "I just got this from a federal agency. What am I supposed to do with it?" It goes to the government contracting area office where the administrator is named in the plan.

What happens a lot of times is that agencies will send they'll say, "Well, the work is in Houston, so I'm going to send to the Houston district," or the office that covers Houston, which would be Fort Worth. If you look in to your subcontracting plan, each plan has an administrator of the plan; that person could be in California, that's where the plan goes - not where the work is, not where the company is that's doing the work. Look in the plan to see who is the administrator of the plan and you send it to that person.

As I said, I'm in Houston. Lockheed Martin was here. They had quite a few contracts in Houston with NASA, but all of their plans were administered out of their headquarters in Connecticut. All of their plans went up to Connecticut.

I've kind of given you an example here, and then I've given you the web link on who your commercial market reps are for each of the area offices of SBA. Next slide, please.

Non-manufacturer rule; they all go up to Carol up in Washington DC, to nmrwaivers@sba.gov that is her email address and her phone number. But if you have a non-manufacturer question, if you have a waiver that you want whether it be by itself or a class waiver, everything goes to NMR waivers, and Carol is in charge of that program for the whole country. Next slide.

I have a small business coordination record, who do I send it to? You send it to the assigned PCR, and I've given you the link to find who your PCR is. When you look on that link, you will see that they have agencies that are listed underneath it that they cover.

If you do not see your agency covered, you can call the area director and there is a link right with the PCR that say 'area directors.' You can send a link or an email to them and ask them who would cover your procurement center if you don't see it listed but small business coordination records go to the assigned PCR. Next slide.

I hope that this helps you as far as the market research part of it, but also with who do you send stuff to because I know, like I said, it can be very confusing for districts, and for area offices and regional offices, and where am I supposed to send all this stuff? I think if you keep these slides, it should help you so that you will feel more comfortable on where you should send your information to.

That's the end, and Chris, I guess we will open up for questions if we have any.

Chris: Sounds good. Gwen, are you ready for some questions?

Gwen: Yes, I sure am.

Chris: Perfect.

Gwen: The first question is, what is the difference between a PCR and a BOS?

Val: All right, great question. Well, a procurement center rep works for the Office of Government Contracting and can sit at a district office, but a lot of times, they sit at a federal agency and a PCR is the one that looks the small business coordination forms to determine whether something should actually go small business when an agency wants it to go full-and-open.

A BOS (business opportunity specialist) is in the district office and they are the ones that handle the 8(a) program. They would be the ones that have a portfolio of certified 8(a) firms and you would talk to them about any contracts, modifications, eligibility, things of that nature. A PCR is in an area office. A BOS is in a district office.

Gwen: The next question they're asking is, you mentioned the website with the PCRs, which areas and which agencies they cover. Is that also listed by state?

Val: Well, what it does is it will say on the top, if you go to area one, it will say, area one covers the following states. If you're not sure what area your state is located in, you can either go through and read that. You can go and use the map that's in this PowerPoint, and you can say, "Well, I'm in Montana," okay, that's area five. Then, you can go to the PCR directory and once you go to the PCR directory, under each area, the states are listed in alphabetical order. Then, under area five, you could go to Montana, and see who covers that and what agencies that person covers.

Gwen: Okay. Next question, they have several requirements that are needed each year and for whatever reason, the vendors choose to want a new contract each year. If it's the same requirement, same location, is fresh and current market research needed every year?

Val: Well, yes. Other things could change. You don't know about the economic conditions. You don't know if the small businesses that maybe you had a Rule of Two or even more. Maybe some of them have merged. Maybe they were bought out. Maybe they're no longer in business. Maybe new small businesses have come up. Yes, market research should be done every year on that just to make sure that you have the most up-to-date information because you want to make sure when you're doing any kind of set-aside or acquisitions strategy that you have the most up-to-date information.

Gwen: Okay. Next question is what is the process for working with DSBS participants to ensure that they have completed entries?

Val: One of the things that we do, a lot of PCRs do, and I know I did this, is everytime a small business called me up and wanted information, the first thing I did was I went into SAM to make sure they had registered, but then I went over to DSBS.

A lot of small businesses are so happy that they're in SAM when they finally get that notification that they forget to scroll down and hotlink over to DSBS to fill in keywords, and capabilities, and references and things of that nature which SAM doesn't have.

One of the things that you can do if you're a small business specialist or maybe even a contracting officer, and you're talking to a small business, go into SAM and see if they're in there to begin with. You can cut and paste their **[0:48:38 inaudible]** street number or their cage code, go over to dynamic small business search, and put in that number and look at their profile, help them, they should be a client of the PTAC. Refer them over to the PTAC and let the PTAC assist them with making sure that their profile is filled out.

I will tell you that if they're not a client of the PTAC, 99% of the time when I talk to someone their SAM profile maybe okay, but their DSBS has not been filled out and they don't understand that if we're searching by keywords and they're in system, but they haven't filled in keywords, they're not going to show up when we do a search. We have to be very proactive and that's what we try to do everytime we talk with a small business because the more complete a small business's profile form is, the better it's going to be for market research and to make sure that the small business community that can do that solicitation, actually, has an opportunity to do it.

Gwen: Okay. Next question why is veteran-owned small business counted when we don't do this on the agency side?

Val: Well, we do it on the subcontracting plan side. There has to be separate veteran and service disabled that goes on a subcontracting plan. We do need that on the subcontracting side.

You are correct that we don't have veteran set-aside, except for the VA - they have them and so they're allowed to do that. The set-asides that we have: Just service-disabled vet on a prime level, but we have the goals for veterans on the subcontracting level.

Gwen: Do you consider SSJ/LSJ part of market research?

Val: You will have to tell me what that acronym is.

Gwen: I'm not sure either, Val.

Val: Maybe if you want to send that question to sbalearning@sba.gov and spell out that acronym for me, we can answer that question if you would not mind.

Gwen: Okay. Next one, how does the Rule of Two relate to the mandatory sources requirements, particularly the federal supply schedules? For example, some agencies prioritize FSS to other small business vehicles.

Val: Well, I think the way the **[0:51:22 inaudible]** is that a contracting officer may do a set-aside. It's not a mandatory thing. All rules and stuff are different on how your agency interprets that and looks at it. Of course, SBA is saying, "We would like to see set-asides done on schedule."

Basically, when GSA puts someone on the schedule, they've almost done the responsibility area. They've looked over the firm. They've made sure that they have financial capacity that they can provide it. They've, in a way, done the responsibility issue for you if they're on schedule.

Gwen: Okay. Back to the SSJ/LSJ sole source justification or limited source justification or part of market research?

Val: They want to do a justification for going sole source?

Gwen: Yes, do we consider that part of market research?

Val: Definitely. You've got to tell us why they're the only one. You've got to show why they're the only ones that can do it.

There are different things that are out there where they have to be sole source because there's only one company that can do it.

Like I said, at Johnson Space Center, we had quite a few sole source because of parts that were needed for at that time, the shuttle, or the International Space Station or whatever, there was only one company that could do it. You've got to justify why you're going sole source on this. If it comes to a PCR, and we look it up and say, "Well, we found five," and you haven't told us why this company is the only one that can do it, we're going to go back and ask you to justify it.

Gwen: Okay. Next question who do we contact with questions about claiming arrangements like JVs or mentor protégés?

Val: Okay. One of the things that we're trying to get away from is the term claiming arrangements because you can only have two different types which were just mentioned. You're either a prime sub-relationship or you're a joint venture. If you're wanting information on joint ventures in two months, we are doing a webinar on joint ventures that we'll explain a little bit more along with the affiliation and size issues with joint ventures.

You can go on to SBA's website under **[0:53:45 inaudible]** mentor protégé program. You can look at a template that we require them to use if they're going to do a joint venture on it, but joint ventures, outside of that, are approved by the contracting officer.

If you feel like that there's an affiliation issue or something, and they are the apparent awardee, then of course you can turn it over to SBA for us to do size determination.

Gwen: Next question who trains the agency small business staff? Do the PCRs or BOSs participate in that?

Val: It can be a combination. If you're just talking SBA issues to the contracting staff, then it would be the BOSs can come in and talk about the 8(a) program, and how it works and what it does.

The PCR interfaces with the federal agencies. The PCR can come in and do COC, can do size, non-manufacturer rule. They can do all of that type of training for you. Also help with some subcontracting issues like what should be in plans and things of that nature.

Of course, your small business specialist at each of your centers should be actively involved in training you on small business issues also.

Gwen: Okay. Next one is, we've been sending a small business plan to our local **[0:55:11 inaudible]** who then reviews it with the PCR in Washington DC district office. Have we been doing this wrong?

Val: No. A PCR--

Gwen: **[0:55:19 inaudible]**

Val: Okay. A PCR, actually, reviews plans according to the FAR prior to award. When you give a plan to a PCR, it doesn't matter who was administering the plan or where it goes. If that PCR covers Homeland Security and it's a Homeland Security subcontracting plan, it's prior to award, then that PCR reviews it.

I always give the best examples, is when I was a PCR, so I can explain a little bit better. It didn't matter who JSC (Johnson Space Center) was awarding the contract to, where they were located, where the administrator of the plan was located.

I covered JSC, so I looked at all plans JSC had. After it's awarded, then it goes to where the administrator of the plan is. It goes to that area office. It's kind of two-fold whether it's pre-award or post-award.

Gwen: Okay. If I get large results from that DSBS, am I required to consider all contractors from the search? For example, if they get result of 200, does an **[0:56:30 inaudible]** 200?

Val: Well, you can actually if you've got 200 on there, you can do a cut-and-paste of all 200 and do one email. I mean, I don't know how easy… I mean, that's just about as easy as you can get - one email to all 200.

Now, there are some ways where you can go in and do an Excel spreadsheet, and if they haven't filled in their capabilities and things of that nature, you can actually highlight them and delete them, and just send them to the ones who filled out the form.

I don't really recommend that, though I've seen contracting officers do it because maybe they just did hotlink over and filled it out. I don't want to penalize the firm because they didn't know about hotlink over to DSBS. But 200/250, I've done it up to 500 firms in one email.

Gwen: Okay. Next question, can SAM or FPDS also be used for market research?

Val: Yes, of course, it can. Highly recommend it that you use them.

Gwen: All right. Let's see. This one says, right now, we see about half of the 22-68 in VA PCR sign off. Some are very active. Some are unknown. Is the entire VA covered even our larger activities? If so, can we get a spreadsheet for all of the VA?

Val: You can go to the PCR directory, and you can go through to each state and find out which PCR covers the VA. For the most part, all VAs are covered via PCR.

Gwen: Okay. What advice would you give an 8(a) firm that wants to be considered for an 8(a) sole source award when there are clearly other 8(a) firms that could be considered responsible contractors or proposed contract action?

Val: It depends. Is it over the four million or the seven million, depending on the type of industry where it has to be competitive? If its sole source, 8(a) firms go in there and market themselves, and it's up to that federal agency. Let's say, they could have talked to five 8(a) firms and they found one they really, really like. Then, they can offer that to the district office, on the firm that they like. It's up to the 8(a) firm to go in there and sell themselves also.

Some of the federal agencies they have an acquisition. They want to make it 8(a). They're not sure who they want. They'll even invite firms in with appointments and sit and talk about their firm for a couple of days, and then they make a determination, "Well, out of the 10 or 11 we talked to, this is the one we really like." Under that dollar amount, they can go sole source.

Gwen: Okay. The next question is who is received subcontracting plans and how can SBA BOS staff get a hold of those and are they on SubNet?

Val: Okay. Well, BOSs have nothing to do with plans those go to the commercial market reps. An agency would send a subcontracting plan to the area office where the program administrator of that plan is located and the CMR would be the one that would deal with that federal agency - interact with the federal agency or the large prime. The CMR is also the one that goes in to check, to see if that large prime has submitted the ISR and SSRs. Did I answer that whole question already? Was there another part to that, Gwen?

Gwen: No. Well, they asked about using SubNet, but I don't think that doesn't apply **[1:00:16 inaudible].**

Val: SubNet doesn't apply to the subcontracting plans. What SubNet is, is a directory where the large primes can post opportunities for small businesses to go in and find possible sub-contracting with the large primes.

Gwen: Okay. If you find a vendor with an established contract like GSA or **[1:00:41 inaudible]** but their DMV reports appear to have financial trouble, should the government **[1:00:46 inaudible]** request the COC from SBA even if the CO of the previous established contracts state the vendor was vetted and confirmed not a risk?

Val: All right. If you have an apparent awardee who's a small business and you, for any reason, feel that they are not a responsible contractor which can include financial, management, technical, not going to do the required percentage of work as far as the limitations of subcontracting, tenacity and integrity, you can request a COC. If they are not the apparent awardee, then the answer's no.

Gwen: Okay. Last one that I have is, if a vendor has an active SAM profile, but no DSBS profile, but we know they're fully capable, can we add the vendor to our market research results, or should we exclude it?

Val: No, you should always include them, and then I would go and look at their profile to see if they checked the box where it says, "Do you want your profile to be shown," and a lot of them checked "no" because they think that their financial information or their routing formation for their bank that's been into SAM is going to be shown to the public, which it's not, but they checked "no," and of course, then it doesn't hotlink over.

If they're not in DSBS, it could be that when you go in there, you'd see the basic information in SAM, but they haven't filled out the rest, then I would highly encourage them to get with the PTAC or tell them to go back into SAM and do an added update. They have to resubmit each page of SAM. They can just scroll through each page and resubmit until they get to the end. Hotlink on the DSBS, and go ahead, and fill out the remainder of the information and then they have a full profile.

Gwen: Okay, that's the last one that I have.

Val: All right.

Chris: Okay, great. Val, thank you so much for sharing all of your wealth of knowledge with us in the group. Appreciate that and we look forward to working with everyone in the future.

Once again, also want to remind everybody, next month's training, we'll send those slides out, and the training reminder here in a couple weeks, so be prepared for that.

Thank you, again, for all your participation. If you have any questions that weren't answered in today's session or want additional information or added to the distribution list, please send all emails to sbalearning@sba.gov. Thank you very much and everyone have a great day.

Carla: Thank you all for joining today's conference. The session has now concluded, and you may disconnect.

[END OF TRANSCRIPT]