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| Carla: | Good morning. Welcome to today's live SBA web conference. With that, I'll turn the call over to Jan Kaiser. Jan, please go ahead. |
| Janis: | Thank you, Carla. Hello everyone. We're glad you can join us today. The SBA First Wednesday Virtual Learning series is aimed at providing small business program, training to government personnel with an interest in procurement both contracting and [inaudible 00:00:57] personnel, as well as SBA staff, and our valuable resource partners like Procurement Technical Assistance Centers or PTAC and Small Business Development Center or SBDC. |
|  | The Small Business Act states that it's the declared policy of the Congress that the government should aid, counsel, assist and protect the interest of small business concerns in order to preserve free competitive enterprise, and to insure that a fair proportion of the total purchases on contract or subcontract for property and services, including construction, for government be placed with small business concerns. |
|  | To that end, today's topic, empowered market research through FPDS and DSBS, is useful material for anyone tasked with developing acquisition plans, researching trends, locating sources, awarding federal contracts, or assisting small business concerns. |
|  | FAR part 10 addresses market research and many agencies FAR supplements contain some but not much additional information about market research and available resources. The SBA hopes this session provides useful information you can use in the performance of your job in the federal procurement process or your job assisting small business concerns. |
|  | Next slide please. |
|  | My name is Jan Kaiser and I'm a procurement center representative in Chicago, Illinois. |
|  | Next slide. Slide 3. |
|  | Today's topical reminders have to do with the Women on Small Business Repository. Pursuant to FAR part 19.1503 under the Women on Small Business program, contracting officers must check whether the apparent successful offeror provided all the required eligibility documents. Contracting officers must access the Women on Small Business Repository through Max.gov, M-A-X dot gov, using their PIV or CAC cards and request to be granted access to the eligibility document submitted by the successful offeror. |
|  | Links and instructional downloads for contracting officers and Women on Small Business concerns can be found at the website provided on this slide, www.sba.gov/wosb, and then click on the phrase "What you need to know if you are a contracting officer" for more information. |
|  | Our speaker on the 3rd of May, that's on the First Wednesday program, on May 3rd, is going to be speaking about the women on small business program. We'll be getting amplifying guidelines regarding that program. |
|  | Also, a special note, we will be conduction and three-month trial and changing the session times for the First Wednesday program for the months of December, January, and February to be held from 1:00 to 2:00 Central to accommodate requests for later training sessions to enable folks in the far-west time zones to participate in live sessions of these webinars. |
|  | Right now, it's about 4:30 am in Hawaii and 6:30 am in Alaska. Hawaii and Alaska can participate at a much more reasonable hour if we hold these sessions later in the day. |
|  | Next slide please. This is Slide 4. |
|  | We're just going to talk a little bit about how the webinar works. We're planning on having questions answered during the final 10 minutes so you'll want to input your questions as you come up with them. You can put them into the note to the presenters and then we'll go over those. Any technical problems, call the number on your screen or on Slide 4, the 888-796-6118 telephone number. |
|  | We'll try to state the page numbers because we realize that some of you are phoning in and unable to participate in the AT&T Connect webinar format. Those of you that are phoning in and just following along on your PowerPoint or your printed slides, we'll try to state the telephone numbers- sorry, not the telephone number, but the page number periodically. |
|  | Then, we cover the last slide at the very end of the PowerPoint, which is called the "SBA Quick Reference" only as time allows and it's there for your reference only if you find that you want to peruse those slides later on. |
|  | Another thing you might need to know is that the SBA training or SBA Learning Center website is located on Slide 4 so that you can get additional SBA or small business program training. |
|  | Next slide please, Slide 5. |
|  | The Association of Procurement Technical Assistance Center posts a website where they post past First Wednesday programming. Their website is provided here. In addition to that, there's a link to how PTACs partner with federal agencies. Partnering with PTAC for an industry day or referring small business concerns to a PTAC are just a couple of reasons why this information is useful to acquisition personnel. |
|  | Slide 6, next slide. Okay. |
|  | This slide shows, again, I'm kind of elbow you in the rib and give you a big foot stump that a trial for December, January, and February is to change the times to the afternoon or later in the day for December, January, and February and these topics where we'll be starting at a later time to accommodate folks in western time zones. |
|  | Also, this program is scheduled, the title or topics that we have listed on this slide are subject to change, but we're providing them to you for information only. Although we do try to stick with what were publicized but sometimes something happens and then we need to change that, but we'll try to keep those things at a minimum. |
|  | Next slide. |
|  | This is one continuous learning point. Today's training is one continuous learning point. Not to change the slide yet, but the next slide is going to be where you get a blank certificate of training and then you're going to fill in your name and then submit that through your agency policy to FAITAS or however you received your training credit. You will want to do that. |
|  | If you go to the next slide, you'll see the blank certificate of training, where it says "This certificate is awarded to," you go to the slide deck and just go to this slide, in the PowerPoint you won't be able to do it now because we're in the AT&T Connect application, but when you go to the slide deck and then enter your name and then print off just that slide to create your certificate. We don't track your CLPs at SBA, you create this slide yourself. It's kind of self-service program. |
|  | Next slide please. |
|  | Our speaker for today is Randall Johnston from Area 2. Randall, we're really interested to hear about FPDS and DSBS and how we can use them in our market research. |
| Randall: | Thanks, Jan, appreciate that. Welcome everybody to the second series of the First Wednesday Virtual series. My name is Randall Johnston and I'm the Deputy Area Director for Area 2 under the Office of Government Contracting. That includes the Mid-Atlantic states of West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, DC, and Delaware. |
|  | Okay. We're going to go ahead and start the presentation. It's going to be an exciting time. Next slide please. |
|  | Market research, we've done many different ways, as indicated in FAR part 10, but we want to take it to the next level. We want to be able to harness existing databases. |
|  | Today's market research needs to use current and valid sources when assessing the supply chain. There are no better sources than the Federal Procurement Data System and SBA's Dynamic Small Business Search tool when trying to find sources of supply for the federal government in your procurements. Although SBO is a major tool or technique in market research, it's not the only one and it shouldn't be the only one. |
|  | FPDS and DSBS importance, it's very important, it's supported by OMD, OFPP and all federal agencies that analyze buying trends, obtain needed contracting data for strategic analysis, and small business goaling. |
|  | FPDS is a very important tool for the federal government. It helps establish all the goals, small business goals, for all the federal agencies. It uses analysis tool for anomalies, for any inputs to the CAR that has been incorrectly done. It also is a tool for OMB to establish a budget, and so on and so forth. FPDS is a very authoritative database and it's current. That value in itself should be harnessed by contract specialists and contracting officers for the purposes of market research. |
|  | Also, the other aspect of another database is DSBS, which is simply a link to SAM, but instead what it does is it source out all the small business firms to include the socio economic programs. |
|  | Let's go ahead by starting to address the first database of these two that I just mentioned. Next slide please. |
|  | Market research is something that is always used in any acquisition. When we're talking about market research we want to focus, not only on the efforts that you're using, but also the use of FPDS. FPDS, it gives you a website, it's located here. It can use a database ... Well, I'm going to provide two demos in this presentation so that you can see how FPDS can be used. |
|  | Remember FPDS or Federal Procurement Data System is a tactical and strategic market research tool, which means strategically you can plan a lot of different procurements at the highest level early on in the process. You can also use FPDS during your investigation in your fact finding, so that's more of a tactical tool. That's why I mentioned that it's both tactical and strategic. |
|  | You can use FPDS early on in the process and, of course, you can use it in your ongoing market research that you should be doing on an ongoing basis that's strategic in effect. Of course, the other part is tactical, right? Moving on here, you can either register as a user to query live procurement data or simply use the "ezSearch" tool. |
|  | We're going to go ahead into the next slide. Okay. I want to continue on with this market research, the points. |
|  | The FPDS data provides contract history for the acquisition team, contracting officers, and small business office. It's very important to understand that not only are tap into the market, the current market, and see what's going on out there, but also the history, what was the history. Each party has ability to search the whole database for contract awards for the same or similar requirement. In our example we're going to use a specific NAICS code and a keyword to try to define that similar or same requirement. |
|  | It also helps establish acquisition strategy or plan. Early on in acquisition strategy as we're seeing strategically FPDS can help the acquisition team make that small business decision early on in the AT or acquisition strategy. |
|  | Also FPDS helps determine small business capability without the use of FBO. That simply means that you can actually use FPDS before you move onto the FBO and say, "Hey, I have 10, 15 contracts out here that's been awarded by other agencies that have the same or similar requirement and gosh there's enough evidence here that I can make my satisfied decision. I'm going to go ahead and ... 100% small business satisfied based upon the contract history that's already out there." That will save you a ton of time instead of having to use FBO. |
|  | Next slide please. |
|  | FPDS data is value added. It provides buying trends, just as Jan said. What's the government buying? How often? It answers the who, what, where, and when questions. It's the best known source for contract history with the federal government. There is no better source. As a matter of fact, Dun & Bradstreet buys a GSA data dump on this FPDS data and sells it in their own package. You can rest assured that this data is very valuable, and of course it's free to us. |
|  | Also, it provides small business representation data. Who, what, and how many small businesses are doing business with the federal government. |
|  | Next slide please. |
|  | I'm going to go ahead and start the demo of FPDS using the ezSearch tool, which means you don't have to register, you just go into ezSearch box and start typing certain important data points. Okay. What I've done is I've tried to simplify this. You can actually go online now if you like, if you want to create another screen and type in the website that I have here and then you can actually see it live and how it's done if you choose or just follow the slide. Either way you can understand how it works. |
|  | With respect to searching in FPDS using the ezSearch tool, you simply would start by typing in NAICS code, the North American Industrial Code, right? That was in this case our example is going to be 541330. You type that into the ezSearch box and press enter. |
|  | Next slide please. |
|  | Once you do that, you will see that you get a whole bunch of contract actions. These contract actions could be awards or they could be modifications, or a combination of both. That's what FPDS captures. It captures every contract action that's out there. What you want to do is, once you get this, you want to start filtering it. The way you do that is you want to get the most recent data to look at. Over to the right, you'll see a "sort by" box and you'll hit the "date signed" option and then a list of the most recent contracts from the most current all the way down. |
|  | Next slide. Okay. It's really important to get the5 most recent data, right? Because that's most valid data, it's the most recent data. That's why we clicked on "date signed." |
|  | Moving on, we're going to scroll to the top of the screen and click on "Advanced Search". "Advanced Search" is one of the key factors in making this data relevant. Once you click on "Advanced Search", you will then click the "Add" button. That Add button will allow you to look at a drop down menu and so what we want to do in this case is select the "Description of Requirement". There's a whole list of options underneath the drop down list. We're picking "Description of Requirement" because we're trying to filter this data. |
|  | As an example I have here I've selected "fiber optic." In the "Like" box, that's next to the "Description of Requirement", once you select it, you type in the "fiber optic" keyword and then press the "Search" button. |
|  | Next slide please. Okay. A little delay there, that's okay. |
|  | After you start filtering more, now what we've done, you can start seeing over to the right in the search criteria that you selected 541330, which is the NAICS code, and also selected "Description of Requirement" which is "fiber optic", you can see all your filtering while you're doing this. That's kind of nice to see that. |
|  | Right now we're showing a list of contract actions that have to do with 541330 and related to fiber optic. That filters it down. We want to go slowly on the filtering process. You don't want to go right to small right away. You want to try to filter down incrementally and that's what we're doing here. |
|  | Next slide please. |
|  | The next thing you do is, in the "Advanced Search" button, you want to keep adding criteria. You hit the "Add" button and then you scroll down the drop down list and you look for "Socio Economic Indicators". It's all in alphabetical order so you just click the drop down list, you go down to "Socio Economic Indicators", select it. Then in the "Like" box next to it, you'll type in "small". That's important because that's how FPDS thinks. You want to capture all small businesses, not just HUBZone, SEB, AA, you don't want to just pinpoint, specific to "Socio Economic Indicators", you just want to capture all small businesses. That's the reason for it. |
|  | Next slide. Next slide again. |
|  | After you do that, you'll now have your three big criteria to help you create a pool of contract history: that is related to 541330, that has a description of fiber optic, and is all awarded to small business. In this case, we can see that we have 63 items, 63 contract actions awarded to small business under fiber optic. |
|  | There's a lot of different interesting things that you can look at in this screen. Over to the left, you have the top 10, by department, by contracting agencies, and so on and so forth. You'll see that. In the middle of the screen, that's where your contract actions are listed, which includes the number of hits. When you see results one of 30 of 63, you have 63 contract actions, and of course, over to your right as we've been looking at, the search criteria in your "sort by". Right now we're focusing strictly on "date signed". |
|  | Next slide please. |
|  | What do we do next, Randy? Okay. Now that I've filtered down, I want to save this data into a spreadsheet. Over to the right of the screen, you can see there's two buttons: one says "PDF"; and one says "CSV", and that's the Excel spreadsheet we want to focus on. You hit that and then of course it will ask you to save that spreadsheet. Then from that point, you can actually filter. |
|  | Filtering is something that's done in Excel. That's something that, for those who have already taken advanced Excel spreadsheet analysis, you know that filtering allows you filter every column so that way you can actually make sense of the data more and more. That's one way to do that and that's the reason why FPDS gives you that option. |
|  | Next slide. |
|  | Contract history analysis involves sorting the data and making sense of it by either contacting the list of firms based on the data you sort and utilizing your analysis or taking the data at face value. When you save that file that you've just filtered down, you now have potential small business sources that you can contact. Right? |
|  | "Randy, I just want to get a sample. I don't want to hit all the 63." Okay. Well, you can do a sampling too, but remember, the more you utilize the better off you are in your market research analysis." Like anything else, if you're trying to get the capability of small business, you want to get the biggest sampling you can try to reach out to. |
|  | Next slide please. |
| Carla: | Slide 22. |
| Randall: | Slide 22. Okay. Now we're at the market research decision step. If contract history analysis cannot produce the market research to support your acquisition decision for either an unrestricted or a small business set-aside procurement, then the next step would involve using DSBS. The DSBS, again, is the Dynamic Small Business Search tool that the SBA has provided to contracting officers and contract specialists and small business specialists in the small business offices. DSBS can provide you a list of potential small business firms that are affiliated with a NAICS code and keywords related to the procurement. |
|  | Next slide. |
|  | Let's say I didn't find anything in 541330 related to fiber optic, so okay, what do I do next? Okay. I'm going to go in DSBS and see if there's any potential firms in there. What I would do is, we have ... SBA has a dedicated website that you click on, as you can see here. You can also follow me on this screenshot and see if you like on a live piece here. This is the screen you would get. |
|  | Next slide. |
| Carla: | Slide 24. |
| Randall: | Slide 24. Okay, thank you. Sorry. For this particular demonstration, we're looking again at the same NAICS code 541330 and we're going to also use "fiber optic". We're trying to look for sources, that's the whole point of it. We are trying to find sources in the supply chain, right? You would scroll down to the specific nature of business, which ... DSBS has all these sections and one of them is specific nature of business. That's where you will put the NAICS code, you type that in and of course the keyword "fiber optic". |
|  | Next slide. |
|  | Now what's going to happen is that it's going to generate, before you press the search function in DSBS, you have to look at what type of format I want to put this in. You want to scroll down to the "Search Results Display Options" section and look at what formatting options are available to you. You have table format, HTML import, mail merge, and vertical format. If you know the capability of the small business market and want to provide lists to government officials, use options, you can a table, HTML, or vertical formats. If you want to solicit the small business industry with that list, within SAM, you can use option three or the mail merge format. |
|  | Next slide please. |
|  | What we're doing here is we're actually creating a mail list that's going to be able to allow you to go out to all these small businesses and ask them to see if they can do the work. Normally, that takes a simple email to do that with an attached Statement of Work. In the case of this step, when you do the mail merge format, this is what it's going to look like. It will list, as you can see, a list of all of the 63 small business vendors that are involved with fiber optics. Then the other option you want to look at on here is, I believe you want to limit the emails by "semi-colon and space". That's normally what we do in Microsoft Office. |
|  | Next slide please. |
|  | This will provide you the capability of saving all email addresses and formatting them into an email message by simply picking the "semi-colon and space" option. Use this option, just like I was saying, when you're using Microsoft Office, this is the option you want to use. |
|  | Next slide please. |
|  | All the emails generated can simply be copied and pasted into an Outlook email and sent to all the small businesses. Note: when you send email out to all these small businesses, you must use the blank copy line to protect the identity of the business firms. You don't want to send it to everybody because you want to protect their identity. That's just the way it is. It's a courtesy and it always should be maintained and used that way. That's very important note to consider while you're in the market research phase now. |
|  | Remember, you can solicit anyone during the market research phrase. "Randy, how can I do this? I'm just about three weeks in RFP?" Well, before RFP list, what are you doing? You're fact finding, you're doing market research, you're allowed to ask questions and request for information from the industry at any time. |
|  | This is one of the methods and can be very beneficial to your organization because, number one, it allows you to focus in the small business community that's already registered with the federal government. Number two, this is filtered data that allows, "Hey, I've got 63-plus firms here that have to do with 541330 and fiber optic." Then, of course, submission of capability statements can then let your acquisition team know whether the small business is capable. |
|  | Next slide. |
|  | Okay. We're done with the demos for both FDPS and DSBS. You see how simple that was. It wasn't a lot of hard actions. |
| Carla: | We're right on slide 29. Right, Randy? |
| Randall: | Slide 29, right. |
| Janis: | Great. |
| Randall: | Thank you, Janice. Basically, you have to look at this as a very simplified process. Don't complicate it. Try to keep it as simple as possible. The most important thing is, FPDS is not going to do the work for you, you have to analyze that data in the spreadsheet. The same with DSBS. DSBS is going to identify the firms that you solicit. Now you need to go solicit and then do the capability analysis. That's the second part of it, right? |
|  | I can list some guidelines for soliciting small business firms. Number one, you should use the blind copy line when sending out your email in order to protect the identity of all small business firms you are soliciting. Number two, your email should provide the purpose of the email and attach a copy of the instructions on submitting capability statements. Number three, the email should also have an attached draft Statement of Work or Performance-based Statement of Work for the firms to reference and to be able to respond to. The next point is, capability statements should be no more than five to 10 pages in length, depending upon the complexity and size of the procurement. |
|  | Your email must outline how you will be assessing each capability statement. Be very specific on how you will assess small business capability. Be specific on what information you are asking for, much like in Section L and M of an RFP, but of course, remember, you're not in the RFP stage, you are in the fact finding market research stage so you can develop it in any way you like, just be detailed enough so that small business can understand. |
|  | Lastly, do not use the words "RFP" or the words "evaluation" or "qualified" when assessing capability statements. Those are terms used when you've actually released the RFP, right? In that case, you can no longer talk and discuss things with industry because now you're in the official acquisition phase of non-disclosure. |
|  | Next slide. |
|  | Of course, right now, I'm done with my presentation. I will turn it over to Janice. I thank you very much for allowing me to introduce these simple tools from 15,000 foot level. Obviously, there's awful lot to learn out of this. As I stated before, in FPDS, you can actually register as a government user and then state all your queries too, if you choose to do so. If not, you can just simply use ezSearch within FPDS and of course get the same results. Of course, with SDBS, most people know about it but they don't really use that mail merge cart, right? They don't use that part that allows them to solicit and get quick results. |
|  | Thank you very much for having me. I'm really excited about the future of small business and how we've been able to meet small business goals for the four years consecutively. We continue to try to find new ways to tap into the market and there's just so many exciting things that are happening, such as unmanned aerial vehicles or drones, that technology is pretty exciting, or battery technology, whatever it is, and of course, small businesses are very much involved in that technology. |
|  | With that said, I'm going to turn it over back to Janice and thank you very much for having me. |
| Carla: | Jan? |
| Janis: | Yes, thank you. I said a whole bunch of really good stuff that you'll never hear again because I was on mute. I wanted to just turn this over to you, Carla. I know we started receiving some questions from some of our participants. The first one was that the DSBS has some issues. Do you want to start with that one? |
| Carla: | Sorry, I was on mute. The question is, "The DSBS has some issues. It shows companies that have been terminated from 8a, decertified from HUBZone, suspended, et cetera. Can you give us an update on when DSBS will be fixed?" |
| Randall: | I can basically comment on that and that is we can take the person's email address and provide a date or an estimated date that some point this will be fixed. Remember, anytime you're sorting data, you have to take out information that's not relevant, right? This might be information that's not relevant and that you don't utilize in your data analysis. Filtering your spreadsheet may include deleting risks that small businesses that are no longer small and that DSBS might be indicating that. With that said, filtering is very important and, of course, we can take the person's email address and provide them that update on when it will be fixed. |
| Carla: | All right. We do have another question, "How often is FPDS data updated? I have notice that it is not real-time. It lags behind by about 60 days. Do all of the agencies update FPDS on a regular basis?" |
| Randall: | Okay. I'm not an FPDS administrator. You may want to ask your FPDS administrator that's assigned to your agency. But I will say this, if you query contract data, I see contract actions that are dated the same day that I am querying. Data is getting updated on a daily basis. What I think this person might be referring is that Department of Defense delays their data and purposefully for national security reasons. I think Department of Defense data would be delayed for a period of time. Other than that, data is real-time. |
| Carla: | All right. We do have another question, "Since all of the advanced search fields require free text entry, where do you find the format used for each of those field? For example, for POP state name, I'd want to know if I should enter MT or Montana." |
| Randall: | That kind of question can be answered if you go to the FPDS website and there's a training manual on adhoc reporting. What I would suggest that participant do is go to the FPDS website and in some area of the website there is training aid and one of them is adhoc reporting, it will tell you how to do that. |
|  | The other part of FPDS, of course, is learn by doing. You have to figure this out, what kind of keywords work to make that data work. That's one of the reasons why we had FPDS experts out there that get hired on the spot, right? A lot of it is learned by doing, the other aspect is review that adhoc reporting training module that is available at the FPDS website. |
| Carla: | All right. Our next question, "Has concurrence been obtained from the FPDS-NG system administrator so all contract specialists can obtain accounts? Jan Kaiser was the only person in our previous command allowed to have an account." |
| Randall: | FPDS accounts are managed by each designated agency official. For the SBA, there's a designated person for obtaining the FPDS account and each agency to have their own. Janis is a PCR, she belongs to the SBA, so she wouldn't be able to provide any kind of access rights because she only works for the SBA. Then, we have our own FPDS administrator that provides the access, so for people who are in different agencies will have to contact their FPDS administrator to request an account. |
| Carla: | All right. Our next question, "PTAC works with small businesses, would you recommend an SB use FPDS to see who they should market their product or services to." |
| Randall: | Okay. Jan, I'll let you answer that. |
| Janis: | Okay. Yeah. Our Procurement Technical Assistance Center does work with small businesses and some Procurement Technical Assistance Centers are very good at using FPDS to assist small businesses in doing some market research to find out which agencies procure what types of supplies or services under specific NAICS codes by place of performance, by agencies. They can do all kinds of different sorts. |
|  | Let's see, let me go back to PTAC works with small business, would you recommend a small business use FPDS? A small business can utilize a PTAC or, like Randy was saying earlier, you kind of learn as you do. If you can go into FPDS and do some general sorts and learn about using FPDS, I recommend a small business doing the same kind of searches and just kind of learning as you go. Like I said, PTACs, a lot of them are good at FPDS searches and using them. |
| Randall: | I will add to what Janis said and that is, your baseline for querying FPDS is: your NAICS code, followed by your keyword, followed by small or followed by socio economic indicator. Those are the three top place of filtering down to find out what small businesses have contracts in whatever specific industrial area and of course the keyword. By doing those three, you can also filter even more, right? PFC code, PFC description can also be a filter, but I just want to concentrate on the top three because that can get a lot of results. |
|  | If you want to take it further, you're going to have to experiment and see what your results are. NAICS code is number one; number two, keyword; number three, small under socio economic indicators. |
|  | If you just want to see what the market is doing overall, you would just use NAICS code, keyword, and then you get all, everybody, including large business. In the case of doing market research for small business that's the focus, not on the whole industry, what is small business doing out there? By hitting those top three, NAICS code, followed by keyword, and then followed by the other one ... |
| Janis: | PFC. |
| Randall: | That's basically ... Yeah. Following those top three that I just mentioned allows you to drill down even further by getting into lower echelons that FPDS can query on. I recommend those top three. Then if you want to take it further that's up to you, it's a matter of knowing whether or not how specific your requirement is. If it's really detailed and you're not getting enough information you have to drill down even further. Again, the top three that I just mentioned to you: the NAICS code, the keyword, the socio economic indicator. Those three top choices are the first way to start on FPDS. |
| Janis: | I just had someone comment, provide us some comments about FPDS stating that FPDS is updated once a day. If a person is obtaining only 90-day old data, it maybe because he or she is a public user, which we didn't really address earlier because we were thinking about government users because government users can access the data on daily basis. You're right, Randy, DOD does ... For other agencies, they're not going to be able to see the updates that DOD makes, but the public users, if you're going in on a public account, it's going to be 90-day old data. There will be a lag in their reporting. |
| Randall: | Right. There's another thing to note. It's not just DOD, it's any agency that has classified information, NSA, any of the intelligence agencies [inaudible 00:45:13]. It includes Department of Energy and the National Nuclear Security Agency. In any case, there's going to be a delay on certain types of agencies that have national security ahead. |
| Carla: | All right. We do have another question. "How often do you see capability statements five to 10 pages in length? In the PTAC world, we advise clients that their capability statements should be no longer than one page. Is that antiquated advice? Do you want to see longer capability statements?" |
| Randall: | Yes. Given a one pager on their capability is just not sufficient enough to justify ... We have scientist engineers, physicists, we have top level folks who want to do an analysis on this firm and we're talking about complex requirements now, multimillion dollar requirements that require a little bit more discussion about their capability. Normally, depending upon how complex the requirement is, three to five pages is the norm, but I go three to 10, depending upon how complex the requirement is. |
|  | If we're talking about states vehicle for NASA, obviously, it's going to have a lot more explanation on how they're going to do that, right? If we're talking about web services, obviously, that doesn't require as much. It's up to the contracting officer and small business specialists working constantly together to figure out how long should this capability statement be. Because we don't want to put undue burden on our acquisition team at the same time you want to get sufficient amount of information back to the acquisition team so they can make a bonafide assessment, one that is adequate for acceptance by SEB team. |
|  | Keep that in mind. I would not recommend one pagers unless it's a very simple acquisition. If it's a simple commercial service then maybe one page is enough. If we're talking about more complex requirements, making titanium parts for the FA team for making, whatever it might be, it could be nuclear, the handling of the nuclear wastes, that is not a one-page discussion. |
| Carla: | That might be dependent on the type of procurement. A one-pager might be if they're just introducing themselves going to an outreach events, a one-pager might be appropriate at that point. |
| Randall: | Right. I mean, if you're just introducing your company, fine. I'm talking about responding to a specific procurement or RFP. It's complex, it's state-of-the-art and it requires it a little bit of discussion on how you're going to do this and how you're going to manage your workforce. That will require three to five pages of discussion. The more complex it gets you could go as high as 10 pages. I'm just saying that that decision on the number of pages is dependent upon complexity of the requirement, the RFP or the [inaudible 00:49:03]. |
| Carla: | Our next question, "Is there a way to search on FPDS by total dollar amount? For example, all actions under a certain NAICS that are over 50 million. I've been able to sort in the past by obligation, but not by total award amount." |
| Randall: | I believe if you register as a user in FPDS, you might have. I think you have that option to actually sort by dollar range. You have to register, which means you have to get an account to your agency point of contact. Just like in APC, it's just the same thing, you have a centralized administrator of FPDS, and normally that's somebody within the contracts competency or contracts office department that has been designated as your FPDS administrator. |
| Carla: | All right. "How current is the FPDS-NG data pulled." |
| Randall: | Yeah. I think we kind of answered that. |
| Janis: | Yeah. Yeah, we're good. |
| Carla: | All right. The next one, "FPDS-NG is updated every night. If you log in as a government person, you'll see it real-time. The public log in is 90 days delayed." |
| Janis: | Yeah. That kind of answered that question. Just go ahead, Carla. |
| Carla: | Okay. The next one, "Who was Midlant representative to obtain an account?" |
| Janis: | Midlant has a Naval Facilities Engineering Command or NAVFAC. I would speak to someone in the office of small business program there and they would be able to assist you. |
| Carla: | We have a comment. "YouTube has some very simple and complete videos on how to use FPDS. I have watched them and recommend them to any client for follow up after we get through the first steps of why to use them." |
| Janis: | Great comment. |
| Randall: | Yeah. We'll have to check that out. Thank you for that comment. It's fantastic. Thank you. |
| Carla: | Then we do have another question. "Is there a commercial database similar to FPDS that can be used to find additional qualified SB vendors?" |
| Randall: | We're not allowed to promote commercial products. This is a government-owned database inputted by contract specialists, right? This data is exclusive to government and it's originated by the government. If you wanted to get data beyond FPDS, then you will have to research and find out what firms out there provide that. That would be on your own. We're taking the system on that in respect to you're not allowed to promote any commercialized versions of this. |
| Carla: | Right. The next question, "The CS will be based on the SOW, that is input forth in the inquiry. Correct?" |
| Janis: | Right. The capability statement will be based on those Statement of Work that has been put forth in the inquiry. Yeah, if there was an RFP that put out the capability statement, it might be tailored to that specific Statement of Work. |
| Carla: | All right. We have another comment. "FPDS has a wonderful helpdesk. You don't have to learn by trial and error." |
| Janis: | Excellent comment. |
| Carla: | Another comment, "Go to YouTube and on the homepage look up FPDS. There are other similar video vignette on SAM, SBO and other subjects that PTACs counsel clients on and they are free." |
| Janis: | We like free. Right, Randy? |
| Randall: | I think we all love YouTube because it's free and we seem to find everything on there from changing out a tire, to breaks, and finding out how our own government system works, so that's great. |
| Carla: | "Where is the information in DSBS populated from?" |
| Randall: | Can you repeat that again? |
| Carla: | "Where is the information in the DSBS populated from?" |
| Randall: | It's taken from SAM. All the data that's populated in SAM, DSBS will filter that and make it easy for you to find small businesses. That's the purpose of the DSBS. It's provide a link from SAM and then allow you to filter down to whatever small business that you're seeking to look into as a potential capable small business, including all the socio economic categories. |
| Janis: | Those small businesses can go in and add additional information like capabilities, narratives, specific equipment, their bonding. They can go in and tailor DSBS profile that SAM creates for them. |
| Randall: | Yeah. That's a very good point, Janis. That is, DSBS also provides capability statements. When you generate a list, a lot of times a small business will provide a capability statement on what they can do and sometimes that can answer somebody's question right away when they're looking for sources. Again, DSBS is not perfect because not every small business has a time nor is unaware that they can provide a very detailed statements in there either. |
| Janis: | Hey, Randy. I just wanted to bring up something that was brought up by one of the folks that, before we have to get offline here. It was a really good point that really bears mention, and that is a comment that I am going to read. It says, "I encourage high quality descriptions in the FPDS reports, otherwise it's difficult to search effectively." |
|  | That's why it's so important when contracting folks, contract specialists, contracting officers enter their awards in FPDS, that good description for that specific contract actions are provided so that when we want to go back and search later on, we've got those bread crumbs through the descriptions that are provided to try to find the trail to good contractors and develop data on any of the usage in FPDS. Good descriptions when recording contract actions in FPDS is imperative. |
| Carla: | All right. We do have another question. "Is the capability statement's length an SBA opinion or is it coming from the contracting officers? I get just the opposite when I talk to contracting officers. We encourage our clients to link their websites to their one-pager, but I am not getting a longer capability statements from them." |
| Randall: | It's SBA recommendation. |
| Carla: | All right. Our next question, "There are several options under the "Advanced Search" drop down menu that I am unfamiliar with. Is there somewhere to look to find their definitions within the FPDS website?" |
| Randall: | Yes. FPDS has a pretty good tutorial, teaching tutorials that are available for you to review. We recommend you go to them and it will cover all those particular drop down sections. |
| Carla: | All right. "Do you know about FPDS-NG bypass when it comes to GSA's easy interface? Want to know how to un-bypass an FPDS-NG report to a contract." |
| Randall: | Yeah. We don't get into that level of administration and change. We simply are focused on how to query FPDS and how to harness that data. That's about it. You'd have to contact your FPDS administrator on that type of question. |
| Carla: | "Where does the bonding capacities in DSBS come from?" |
| Randall: | Janis, can you take that one? |
| Janis: | Contractors fill that in. That's part of what they go in to create, amplifying information about their companies when they go in and add more information in DSBS using their SPAM account. They can go in and add, like I said, capabilities information, special equipment, information, bonding information, some of that extra information as what contractors do when they go in and add extra info themselves into their DSBS profiles. |
|  | Carla, I think we're coming to the end of the program. I wanted to be sure to remind people that your certificates for this training come from the PowerPoint that went with the invitation for the training today. You'll go to the slide that has your certificate on it. Let's see, two, four, six, I think it's Slide number 8. You're going to input your name and then print that off, and that's your certificate of training for today. Carla? |
| Carla: | Yes. We do have one more question. I don't know if you want to answer it. |
| Janis: | Okay, sure, if we got time. |
| Carla: | Okay. "Is the FPDS description limited to the information it can disclose? For example, line items, part numbers, or general products, service description." |
| Randall: | Yeah. The description of the requirement, which we were referring to is limited on what the contract specialist inputs into that description. If the contract specialist puts nothing in there, you're not going to get anything else. If the contract specialist or contracting officer puts in a more detailed description of the requirement, then that becomes more valuable data. All the time about Janis said, the value of the FPDS is directly correlated to the contract specialist and the contracting officer inputting detailed information into that CAR. If that's not done, then FPDS is not as valuable. |
| Janis: | Right. The same person had mentioned that, they said for example, grader and spelling out the word G-R-A-D-E-R as opposed to using an acronym GRDR when they're describing a John Deer grader. Use the whole description and don't abbreviate because someone else ... to do a search may not use that same abbreviation. |
| Randall: | Right. If you want to simplify your description, you can just put keywords in. You don't have to sit there and write out a whole synopsis of what it's about. You can simply put keywords in that would trigger future research. That's important. |
| Carla: | Great. We have no more question in the queue. |
| Janis: | Thank you, Carla. You've done an awesome job with us today. Again, I would like to remind everyone that the program will change for December, January, and February to a session that will be held later in the day. You'll get an email notifying you of this new change for those days in addition to another email with the login information for the December program. December's program is going to be regarding the new all small business mentor-protégé programs. We look forward to hearing about that. |
| Carla: | Thank you all for joining us today. This concludes our event. You may now disconnect. |