

DO YOU SPEAK GOVERNESE?

By Abraham Xiong, CCM

Uncle Sam speaks governese, but do you? Like Venus and Mars, the private and public sectors are different planets. Uncle Sam, for example, comes from a different culture, where he speaks a bizarre language, full of strange words (acronyms), rules, regulations and red tape. I call this language, “*governese*.”

Here’s a linguistic test for you. Read this next section and see how much you understand. It is written in governese or govsppeak, with instructions on what you should do to be successful in the government market.

For your business to be successful, you should start by researching federal procurement regulations. Read the FAR, DFARS, UCC, CFR and Federal Register. Next, attend a PTAC and SBA training session. As a small business, check out MBDA, SBDC, NDIA, NAGC, GCA, and NCMA for help. If you’re a Native American, go to NCAIED. Next, use FPDS and USASpending to do research on past performance and contract awards. Find the incumbents and benchmark after them.

After you’ve learned the basics, you will need to register your company. First, identify your SIC, PSC, NIGP and NAICS codes; then obtain a DUNS number through D&B. Next, register in SAM and DSBS. Make sure you have your primary and secondary POCs, banking info, references, and corporate data, including your TIN.

To keep a competitive edge, learn what certifications you’re qualified for. Check into the HUBzone, 8a, ED/WOSB, SDVOSB, VOSB, Section 3, MP and various other programs. If you’re seeking local and state projects, consider DBE, SWUC, HUB, LSBE, FBE, VBE, APABE, HABE and MP. If you prefer a large commercial project, check into the MBE, AABE, WBE and LGBTBE certification programs. Take advantage of the supplier diversity programs.

Based on your business size standard, consider using a JV or teaming strategy, when pursuing a solicitation. Sometimes, the opportunity may come out as a pre-sol, sources sought, rfp, rfi, rfq, ifb, or other contracting methods. One strategy is to start as a subcontractor so you don’t have to take on the responsibilities of being a prime. Another idea is to form a MP relationship with a prime. The prime is required to have a small business plan which can be an advantage to your company. Better yet, start by pursuing micro-purchases and utilizing government p-cards or smart-cards.

To find solicitations to bid on, use FBO, iSearch, eBuy, eMall and Fedbid. Also, use these contracting vehicles to help: IDIQ, MATOC, GWAC, BPA, STARS II, SATOC, GSA Schedules, ITES II, FSSI, Sole Source Contracts, and SAP. Start promoting your company by meeting with the OSDBU, OSBP, SADB, SBS, SBLO, and SBA BOS. By now, your Capability Statements should be complete, so send them to a few agencies. Make sure you send the short version.

Oh, and make sure you’re DCAA compliant because GAO, OFCCP and OMB have stricter compliance measures now. If you want to get paid make sure you’re not listed on EPLS. And finally, register with e-verify, WAWF and ESRS, as needed.

If you understood 70% of what you’ve read, congratulations, you’re fluent in governese! But if you couldn’t grasp the governese above and had to “google” the acronyms for meaning, then, doing business with Uncle Sam will be hard. It would be equivalent to you trying to do business in Japan, but you don’t speak Japanese, or have a translator. If you don’t speak governese or you’re struggling to understand it, then you should get help.... You need an interpreter.

You can find interpreters here at: www.GovAssociation.org