

# Government Contracting in Atlanta: Maximizing Your Success

Government contracting can have huge payoff potential for small companies in Atlanta. Local city departments are continuously looking for qualified bidders, and nearly every federal agency has an office in the city. There are also renovations and upgrades planned throughout Atlanta for 2015 and beyond.

American Express OPEN has created this guide to help you maximize revenue from your Atlanta government contracting efforts. OPEN spoke to local government officials, successful small business contractors and other authorities to provide you with information needed to help you to excel.

In this guide, you will find articles, tips, resources and a checklist to help you discover opportunities, make your bid stand out and maximize your sales.

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## Roundtable: Capturing Your Share of Atlanta Government Contracts

Strong support for small business contractors, substantial investments in infrastructure and easy access to government agencies have created a rich environment for government contracting in the Atlanta area.

We wanted to find out how businesses can make the most of this opportunity. To do this, American Express OPEN spoke with two authorities: Adam Smith, chief procurement officer for the City of Atlanta; and Chuck Schadl, senior counselor and group manager of government contracting services at the Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center.

Here's what they shared on how small businesses can position themselves to win government contracts.

**American Express OPEN: What is unique about the current Atlanta business environment?**

**Adam Smith:** One, we have so much work. There are lots of contracting opportunities for businesses of all sizes. Two, we highly encourage smaller businesses as well as minority- and female-owned businesses to participate in our procurement process. In fact, we require some level of minority and female business owner participation for all “eligible” city contracts. We’re very proud in Atlanta of our small, minority-owned and female-owned business program, which is one of the longest running programs in the country.

**Chuck Schadt:** Along with city opportunities, every federal agency has a regional presence in Atlanta. There is a procurement function within each of those offices. All of the state contracting functions are headquartered here as well. Businesses don’t need to stray outside the metro boundaries of Atlanta to find a lot of sources of contracting activity.

### Spotlight on Atlanta

#### KEY AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY:

Construction; architectural, engineering and design services; operations management; security services; janitorial services

#### PROJECT CATEGORIES (ATLANTA CONTRACTS):

Aviation, General Fund, Parks, Public Works, Quality of Life, Watershed

#### FEDERAL AGENCIES:

Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Veterans Affairs, Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Aviation Administration, Federal Highway Administration, General Services Administration

#### WHERE TO FIND HELP:

Small Business Administration District, Georgia District Office; Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center; Atlanta SCORE Chapter (*Find others in the Resources section at the end of this guide.*)

**OPEN: Where is the greatest opportunity in and around Atlanta now?**

**Smith:** Construction is a big-ticket item for us. We have ongoing development and a master plan for developing and expanding more at the Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, which is the busiest in the world. We also have a multibillion-dollar water infrastructure project, with \$4.5 billion to spend between now and 2027. We require participation from small, female-owned and minority-owned businesses on those projects. I would also encourage small businesses to pursue smaller construction contracts with the parks, fire, police, corrections and planning departments.

**Schadt:** There are also many Department of Defense-related contracting opportunities in Georgia, including the Atlanta area. Georgia has 10 military bases — a few of which are very close to Atlanta — and they generate a lot of contracting activity. The General Services Administration (GSA) has a regional office in Atlanta as well. It is that agency’s job to design, construct, manage and maintain all federal buildings, which creates opportunities for security guards, janitorial services and renovation work.

*“The companies I’ve seen do very well are constantly going to our site, attending our vendor expos, meeting with contracting officers and buyers, and asking what opportunities are in the pipeline.”*

—Adam Smith, Chief Procurement Officer, City of Atlanta

**Adam L. Smith, Esq., CPPO, CPPB, CPPM, CPP**

Adam Smith oversees all purchasing for the City of Atlanta. He is responsible for procuring the goods and services for the overhaul of Atlanta's water and sewer projects and the expansion and concessions projects at Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Prior to his appointment in 2003, Smith served as a partner in the business law group of the international law firm Holland & Knight LLP.



**OPEN: What is the best way for small businesses to learn about opportunities?**

**Smith:** It's important to stay in touch with the municipality or local government you're hoping to work with. We advertise all of our projects on the Office of Procurement website. The companies I've seen do very well are constantly going to our site, attending our vendor expos, meeting with contracting officers and buyers and asking what opportunities are in the pipeline. It's very easy to find out about opportunities in Atlanta because we're open about what we're doing. But you have to stay on top of it.

**OPEN: What can businesses in Atlanta do to help their proposals stand out?**

**Smith:** Most important is to follow the instructions on our website and in the request for proposal or invitation to bid. One of the biggest issues we have throughout the procurement process is vendors not doing what we've asked them to do. If we ask for documents A, B and C, you must submit them and they must be prepared according to the way we asked. Otherwise, you will probably be deemed non-responsive. This means you've invested all this time and effort into putting a proposal together, but because you failed to follow the process or didn't read a document properly, it's thrown out.

**OPEN: What is the best way to follow up on a city, state or federal contract proposal?**

**Schadl:** I like to say, "Be appropriately aggressive." Check in with contracting personnel periodically to see what the status of the selection process is. Doing this daily is too aggressive; calling once a week or every couple of weeks is not. If your calls are received well, you might say, "Is there any additional information that I can provide about the proposal that would help you?" or "Is there anything you forgot to ask in the solicitation that you need to know about?" Every once in a while, government officials wish they had asked for certain information. So, asking those questions at the right time can yield amazing results.

**OPEN: Once business owners have secured a contract, how should they position themselves to win future government work?**

**Smith:** You have to do what is expected of you, first and foremost. Often, contractors will not perform to the specifications or the scope that were agreed upon. You also have to be honest about your work. If something fails because you've cut corners, it will come back to haunt you. It might not be caught by the end of a project, but we will discover it eventually. And it will affect your ability to do business with the government in the future.

**Chuck Schadl**

Chuck Schadl is group manager of government contracting services at the Georgia Institute of Technology's Enterprise Innovation Institute. He provides instruction and guidance to government contracting officials and business professionals on behalf of The Contracting Education Academy at Georgia Tech, an official equivalency training provider for the Defense Acquisition University. He also provides procurement counseling to businesses on behalf of the Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center. Chuck has more than 40 years of experience in the government contracting field at both the federal and local government levels, including consulting with state and local governments on acquisition reform.



**Schadl:** While you are working on a contract, ask the agency you are working for how you're doing. Ask if they are satisfied. Your performance will be highly influential in winning your next contract, so do everything you can to perform satisfactorily.

**OPEN: How should businesses find teaming partners?**

**Schadl:** Attending pre-proposal and pre-bid conferences and other government-related events can help you find teaming partners. Large companies often use those conferences to find small women- or minority-owned businesses to work with if their participation is required to win a contract. Tapping into databases such as the federal government's Dynamic Small Business Search can also be a starting point to find teaming partners.

Choose companies that complement and strengthen whatever it is you do. A good teaming partner should fill a gap in your capabilities. Or, if you can do all of the work but don't have strong past performance, a teaming partner with more experience could strengthen your chances of winning a contract.

**OFFICE OF PROCUREMENT,  
CITY OF ATLANTA**

[atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?page=20](http://atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?page=20)

**OFFICE OF CONTRACT COMPLIANCE,  
CITY OF ATLANTA**

[atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?page=130](http://atlantaga.gov/index.aspx?page=130)

**GEORGIA TECH PROCUREMENT  
ASSISTANCE CENTER**

[gtpac.org](http://gtpac.org)

**THE CONTRACTING EDUCATION ACADEMY  
(GEORGIA TECH)**

[ContractingAcademy.gatech.edu](http://ContractingAcademy.gatech.edu)

**DYNAMIC SMALL BUSINESS SEARCH**

[dsbs.sba.gov/dsbs/search/dsp\\_dsbs.cfm](http://dsbs.sba.gov/dsbs/search/dsp_dsbs.cfm)

Logo Design Credit: Graphicmechanic

**OPEN: What should businesses that hope to win contracting work in Atlanta know about certification?**

**Smith:** Our Office of Contract Compliance is responsible for making sure firms are certified as small minority- or female-owned businesses. You have to apply and obtain certification from the city to have those designations for a city contract. It's important to note that city certification is separate from state or county government certification. For example, if a business owner is certified in Fulton County, that is not applicable to us. Atlanta has a distinct certification process that any business pursuing an Atlanta contract needs to go through.

**Schadl:** For other types of contracts, figure out what, if any, competitive advantage third-party certification will give you. You may be able to self-certify as a small business, a woman-owned small business, or so forth to compete for some contracts. For example, federal contracts under \$150,000 are often set aside for small businesses and you can self-certify to compete for them.

For any certification you receive, it's important to think about how you will market it to maximize its competitive advantage. The best way to do that is to thoroughly research the agencies you're interested in working with — find out what they're buying, look at procurement forecasts and meet with their small business specialists. Ask if they will be doing set-asides in the coming year and, if so, for which designations.

*“Thoroughly research the agencies you're interested in working with — find out what they're buying, look at procurement forecasts and meet with their small business specialists.”*

—Chuck Schadl, Senior Counselor and Group Manager of Government Contracting Services, Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center

# Card Member Q&A

## Business Profile: How I Learned to Excel in Atlanta



### THE ELOCEN GROUP

*Necole Parker*

MEMBER SINCE: 2000

Georgia has more than 950,000 small businesses, according to the SBA. One of them, The ELOCEN Group, exemplifies government contracting success.

ELOCEN provides program and project management services to the public sector. Founder Necole Parker started the firm seven years ago and moved into the Atlanta market in 2011. Through her leadership, ELOCEN has set the bar for providing innovative construction management, interior design, information technology, facilities logistics, and healthcare technology.

Parker shares her tips for maximizing revenues and succeeding in government contracting.

### ✓ Make the Most of Atlanta

The Georgia Mentor Protégé Connection recently selected ELOCEN as a participant for 2015. Parker encourages small businesses to take advantage of programs such as these to deepen their relationships in the public sector. She also recommends seeking out free resources and networking opportunities

from organizations such as the Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center and the Georgia District Office of the SBA. "Atlanta is a hub for the southern region. In addition to Georgia, it covers Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee," she says. "It's a great location because it helps our business reach the whole southern region."



### ✓ Get Out and Network

Before founding ELOCEN, Parker worked as an employee for other federal contractors. She had a large network of government contacts, so she was surprised to discover that her company was still treated as a newcomer when it came to bidding on contracts. "Many people knew who I was, but they didn't know about ELOCEN. I spent the first three years getting the business entrenched in the network around me," Parker recalls. To spread the word about ELOCEN, Parker joined organizations like Women Impacting Public Policy and African American Real Estate Professionals. She also attended events hosted by American Express OPEN and local chambers of commerce to make contacts and maintain visibility.

### ✓ Be Selective

Parker learned to only pursue contracts from agencies that would benefit from her firm's services. "There are so many opportunities with the government. My rule of thumb is to pick three promising agencies and market to them consistently," Parker says. "We work very hard to understand their needs and to connect with decision makers at each one. Ideally, we have existing connections with the agencies on our short list. It's much better than being new to the business."



## ✓ Know the Three Cs

Parker's team learns everything they can about the opportunities they pursue. "I'm an advocate of knowing what I call your three Cs — customers, competitors and capabilities. When you start talking to potential government clients, it's critical to uncover their priorities and find out what products and services they need. You also need to know what your competitors and partners are selling so you can set yourself apart," she explains.

## ✓ Find the Right Local Partners

For Parker, strong partnerships are invaluable. "When we decided to open an office in Atlanta, we relied on local partners quite a bit. It has taken us three years in this market to start winning contracts on our own."

Developing successful partnerships requires continual effort. "It is not just a handshake deal," Parker says. "We want long-term relationships in which both parties communicate effectively up front and have agreements in writing."

## ✓ Give Agencies a Reason to Say "Yes"

Parker tries to make it easy for decision makers to recognize ELOCEN's relevant work and solid reputation. "We share our successes by creating one-page case statements that summarize past projects that are similar to the ones we're pursuing. We include information on our background and certifications as well as our NAICS code, DUNS number and other details. Buyers get overloaded with information, so keeping the case statements to one page makes it easy for them to see why they should work with us," says Parker.

## ✓ Never Stop Marketing

Parker is a big believer in consistent marketing. She regularly updates her marketing materials to reflect her company's strengths, and evolves her marketing strategies to take advantage of new tools. For example, she maintains visibility through social media and relies on email for follow up. Seven years ago, ELOCEN only had a single-page website. Today, the company takes advantage of social networks, including Twitter and Instagram.

"One of my mentors gave me a great piece of advice: When you receive a contract, don't wait for it to expire," says Parker. "Keep marketing to the agency and keep looking for the next contract. Because another company is right behind you looking for a way in."

## ✓ Learn From Your Losses

While it's exciting to win a new contract, Parker also makes an effort to learn from unsuccessful bids. "If a proposal is declined, we ask for a debrief from the contracting officer to find out what we can do better next time and if there are better ways to communicate with the agency. We've learned valuable pointers. Our process has improved greatly through this feedback."

**GEORGIA TECH  
PROCUREMENT  
ASSISTANCE CENTER**  
[gtpac.org](http://gtpac.org)



**THE GEORGIA DISTRICT OFFICE OF THE SBA**  
[sba.gov/offices/district/ga/atlanta](https://sba.gov/offices/district/ga/atlanta)

Logo Design Credit: Graphicmechanic

## How to Make Your Atlanta Bid Stand Out From the Crowd

Great opportunity often comes with stiff competition, and government contracting in Atlanta is no exception. To succeed, your bids must clearly communicate why you are the very best choice for a local, state or federal contract.

Use these tips to help make your bid the winner:

### DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Successful bids start with a clear understanding of the products and services your prospects are currently buying. While this may sound obvious, the bidding process can go off track when a business focuses on what it sells, not on what a buyer needs. Spend time on the city's Office of Procurement website to learn about opportunities as they arise and to gain insight into what types of services city agencies purchase.

### FOCUS YOUR EFFORTS

Identify three to five agencies that are a good match for your skills and background. Organizations where you already have contacts should be at the top of your list, as well as those that need support in your areas of strength. Working with a targeted list will reduce distractions from less promising leads and allow you to give extra attention to the most promising bids.

### UNDERSTAND YOUR COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGES

Articulate the reasons your business is uniquely qualified for the project. For example, does your company have technology that speeds implementation and reduces costs? Do your employees have expertise that competitors can't match? Do you have any certifications that can give you an edge in winning a contract? For example, Atlanta requires minority and female business owner participation for nearly every contract it issues.

### PLAY UP YOUR EXPERIENCE

A successful track record is an important consideration for most procurement officers. If your business has experience with government contracting, provide brief case studies with your proposal. Incorporate all pertinent information about your company, such as your NAICS codes, NIGP codes and GSA Schedule number, if you have one.

### BE THOROUGH

Address all required items in your bid and follow formatting guidelines to the letter. Any missing piece of information or missed protocol has the potential to eliminate your bid from consideration. Procurement officers are not responsible for asking for information that is missing from your bid. Remember, you are competing with companies that are submitting complete proposals that meet bid specifications.

### ASK FOR CLARIFICATION

The bidding process may include a period when questions can be submitted to decision makers. Make use of this window to gain additional insight into evaluation criteria and project goals. This will help you to tailor your response to the agency's vetting process and priorities. Pre-bid conferences also offer an opportunity to have project-related questions answered. Conference information for Atlanta projects is posted on the Office of Procurement website.

### GET HELP

There are a number of free resources that can help you refine your proposals. In Atlanta, the Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center offers classes and one-on-one counseling on a wide range of government contracting topics. In addition, events hosted by the Small Business Administration (SBA) and other agencies offer opportunities to meet face-to-face with contracting officers and learn about their needs.

# A Glimpse of the Future: An Interview with Cassius Butts, SBA Regional Administrator

*Cassius Butts oversees the delivery of SBA programs in Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.*

## **WHAT RESOURCES DO THE SBA AND YOUR OFFICE OFFER THAT CAN HELP ATLANTA-BASED BUSINESSES TO COMPETE AND WIN GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS?**

Our SBA team can help Atlanta-based small businesses in many areas, such as the 8(a) Business Development Program. The SBA has amazing resource partners such as the award-winning Small Business Development Center, the Women's Business Centers and the Procurement Technical Assistance Centers. The Georgia SBA District Office has also partnered with organizations such as the Georgia Minority Supplier Development Council to bring more resources to Atlanta and other Georgia-based small businesses looking to increase their contracting footprint.

## **LOOKING AHEAD, WHAT WILL BE THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL BUSINESSES WANTING TO SELL TO THE GOVERNMENT IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS?**

For the first time in eight years, the federal government has met its annual 23 percent goal for small business contracting thanks to the SBA and President Obama's commitment to ensuring that small businesses earn federal contracts. This has produced more than \$83 billion in revenue for small businesses, the engines and innovators of our resilient economy. These numbers show that opportunities are increasing for small businesses and there is a lot to look forward to in the next few years.

### **U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION SUBCONTRACTING NETWORK (SUB-Net)**

[sba.gov/content/sub-net](http://sba.gov/content/sub-net)

### **GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (GSA)**

[gsa.gov/portal/content/101195](http://gsa.gov/portal/content/101195)



## **SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

*Cassius Butts*

*Photo Credit: U.S. Government*

## **WHAT ARE KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF BUSINESSES THAT MAY SUCCEED IN GOVERNMENT CONTRACTING?**

Successful small businesses aren't afraid to ask for assistance and tap into the great resources available right at their fingertips. No business is too big or too small to benefit from business counseling, and the SBA offers this at no cost to business owners. Another characteristic of successful small businesses is partnering with other small businesses to increase opportunities. Businesses can partner with competitors or other businesses that have complementary products and services.



## 6 Ways to Succeed in Teaming

Federal, state and local government agencies in Atlanta are eager to help small businesses prosper in the public sector. Agencies show their support for small businesses by encouraging companies to collaborate on bids and, in some cases, by requiring prime contractors to include small business subcontractors in their project plans. These teaming opportunities are a great way for small companies to gain experience and bring in revenue.

In Atlanta, where contracts typically require participation from small minority- and female-owned businesses, teaming with larger companies can open up lucrative opportunities and help smaller businesses accumulate valuable experience.

Use these best practices to build successful teaming relationships for your business:

### KNOW YOUR GOALS

Outline your reasons for teaming and the qualities an ideal partner would have. Companies new to government contracting may team to gain experience and build credibility. Experienced contractors may partner to fulfill contract obligations, offer additional services or expand geographic reach. Share your goals with prospective partners and discuss their reasons for wanting to join forces.

Create a list of criteria to use to assess prospective partners. It might include items such as years in business, client list, special certifications and reputation.

### NETWORK

Look for potential associates at contracting events, conferences and local government meetings. In Atlanta, attending pre-proposal and pre-bid conferences can help you find potential partners. If possible, identify partners before you're ready to pursue a contract, as this will leave you time to learn about each other's capabilities and work styles, and formalize the terms of your relationship.

### DO YOUR RESEARCH

As soon as you make the decision to team with another business, your company's reputation becomes tied to theirs. This makes performing due diligence a priority. Conduct a background check on potential partners and ask for references. You can also confirm their financial information and credit scores with business information services such as Dun & Bradstreet's PAYDEX® and FICO's Small Business Scoring Service.

### FORMALIZE THE DETAILS

Documentation is critical to successful teaming because it forces both parties to discuss the details of their commitment. Put objectives, tasks, responsibilities, communication channels, timelines and payment schedules in writing, and make each as quantifiable as possible. If a teaming partner is also a competitor, sign confidentiality agreements and outline how potential conflicts of interest will be handled. Each company should also assign a point person to serve as a liaison for the other. Working through a single point of contact will reduce errors and miscommunication.

### TEST THE WATER

When possible, work with new partners on small government bids before going after large contracts. This will help you learn about each other's work habits and will bring to light any details that need to be added to the work agreement. Smaller projects may also be easier to win, giving your partnership a track record that you can promote to other agencies.

### TAP INTO AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Help is available for small businesses interested in collaborating on bids. Learn more about teaming through the Georgia district office of the Small Business Administration. To find federal subcontracting opportunities, visit the U.S. Small Business Administration Subcontracting Network and the General Services Administration (GSA).

# Checklist:

## Using Certifications to Gain an Edge

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Local, state and federal agencies are often required to award bids to businesses with special certifications. These set-asides can be earmarked for businesses that are considered small, women-owned, minority-owned, service-disabled veteran-owned, operating in an economically challenged location or other designations.

Certifications are important since contracts are often awarded to businesses with special designations. Use the following checklist to improve your chances of success.

### ☐ **Certify Your Business as a Small Business**

The federal government requires that you self-certify as a small business through its [System for Award Management](#) (SAM) database if you want to win contracts designated for small companies.

### ☐ **Research City, County and State Certifications**

State and local governments require specific certification for you to be eligible for certain contracts. If you plan to sell to the state of Georgia, certify yourself [here](#). For the city of Atlanta, visit the Office of Contract Compliance [website](#).

Note that Georgia certification does not include Atlanta certification, and vice versa.

### ☐ **Determine If You Qualify for Other Certifications**

Your gender, nationality, location, service record or other characteristics may qualify you for certifications that can provide access to contracts. Research your opportunities by visiting the SBA [site](#).

### ☐ **Identify Opportunities**

Research the procurement forecasts and speak with prospects to identify ways in which your certifications can help you close deals. You can search for Atlanta opportunities on the Office of Procurement [website](#). Often, there will be set-asides and other opportunities for businesses with specific kinds of certifications.

### ☐ **Market Your Certifications**

Integrate your certifications into your marketing materials, pitch, bids and other communications. Keep in mind that your certifications can give you the edge in the bidding process.

## Additional Resources

### OPEN Forum®

[openforum.com/governmentcontracting](https://openforum.com/governmentcontracting)

OPEN Forum has information and resources to help your business research and learn more about securing government contracts.

### Atlanta SCORE Chapter

[atlanta.score.org](https://atlanta.score.org)

The Atlanta SCORE Chapter offers counseling and information on starting, improving and expanding a small business.

### Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

[cdc.gov/contracts](https://cdc.gov/contracts)

Each year, the CDC has an annual budget of approximately \$5 billion to purchase goods and services such as medical supplies, information technology (IT) and equipment. It processes roughly more than 13,000 contracts each year.

### FedBizOpps.gov

[fbo.gov](https://fbo.gov)

This website offers a searchable database of government procurement opportunities over \$25,000.

### Federal Aviation Administration, Southern Regional Office

[faa.gov/about/office\\_org/headquarters\\_offices](https://faa.gov/about/office_org/headquarters_offices)

This regional office of the United States national aviation authority includes Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

### Federal Highway Administration, Georgia Division

[fhwa.dot.gov/gadiv](https://fhwa.dot.gov/gadiv)

This field office provides guidance and direction to State Departments of Transportation in the planning, construction and maintenance of transportation projects.

### Georgia Chambers of Commerce

[gachamber.com](https://gachamber.com)

This website offers a central location for information and publications related to building, managing and expanding Georgia small businesses.

### Georgia Department of Administrative Services, State Purchasing Division

[doas.ga.gov/AboutUs/Pages/AboutSPD.aspx](https://doas.ga.gov/AboutUs/Pages/AboutSPD.aspx)

The DOAS State Purchasing Division (SPD) serves the centralized procurement function for Georgia's local and state government entities.

### Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA)

[dca.state.ga.us](https://dca.state.ga.us)

The Department of Community Affairs promotes community and economic development and serves as an advocate for local governments. The Economic Development Financing Packet available on the site lists local, state and federal programs geared toward small businesses.

### Georgia Mentor Protégé Connection

[georgiamentorprotegeconnection.org](https://georgiamentorprotegeconnection.org)

The Georgia Mentor Protégé Connection links Georgia small businesses with a mentor for a period of one year. The program's goals are to help small businesses develop capacity, enhance skills and become more competitive in government contracting.

### Georgia Procurement Registry

[ssl.doas.state.ga.us/PRsapp/PR\\_index.jsp](https://ssl.doas.state.ga.us/PRsapp/PR_index.jsp)

This searchable database can be used to explore open solicitations for the state as well as counties, municipalities and school districts.

### GSA Vendor Support Center (VSC)

[gsa.gov/vendorsupportcenter](https://gsa.gov/vendorsupportcenter)

The Vendor Support Center is an online source for vendors to research the federal market and find new contracting opportunities. Government agencies can order supplies and services directly from GSA-registered firms.

### IRS Procurement Small Business Program Office

[irs.gov/uac/Procurement-Small-Business-Program-Office](https://irs.gov/uac/Procurement-Small-Business-Program-Office)

The IRS Small Business Program Office helps HUBZone, disadvantaged, women-owned, veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses compete for IRS procurements.

### Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) Business Center

[mbdabusinesscenter-atlanta.org](https://mbdabusinesscenter-atlanta.org)

Operated by the Georgia Tech Enterprise Innovation Institute, the MBDA Business Center is part of a national network of centers whose purpose is to increase the number of minority-owned businesses and strengthen existing ones.

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**System for Award Management (SAM<sup>SM</sup>)**

[sam.gov](https://sam.gov)

SAM is the primary database of companies doing business with the federal government. The Central Contractor Registry transitioned to SAM in 2012. You must be registered in SAM to win a contract from a federal civilian or military agency.

**Team Georgia Directory**

[directory.doas.ga.gov](https://directory.doas.ga.gov)

This website offers a list of business contacts, including email addresses and phone numbers, for Georgia government offices and agencies.

**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Region IV**

[hhs.gov/about/regions/r4contacts.html](https://hhs.gov/about/regions/r4contacts.html)

The Atlanta location of this U.S. government agency oversees federal outlays and administers grant dollars.

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Atlanta Office**

[portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/states/georgia/offices](https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/states/georgia/offices)

The Atlanta office of this U.S. government agency aims to strengthen the housing market and create quality, affordable homes for Georgia residents.

**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU)**

[va.gov/osdbu](https://va.gov/osdbu)

OSDBU helps HUBZone, disadvantaged, women-owned, veteran-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses to compete successfully for Veterans Affairs procurements.

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 4 (Atlanta)**

[epa.gov/aboutepa/about-epa-region-4-southeast](https://epa.gov/aboutepa/about-epa-region-4-southeast)

This regional office of the U.S. government agency serves Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

**U.S. Small Business Administration, Georgia District Office**

[sba.gov/offices/district/ga/atlanta](https://sba.gov/offices/district/ga/atlanta)

The SBA Georgia District Office delivers SBA programs and services throughout the state, including financial assistance programs, free business counseling through SCORE and assistance for socially and economically disadvantaged individuals.

**Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP)**

[wipp.org](https://wipp.org)

Women Impacting Public Policy is a national public policy organization that works to build economic opportunities for women. It provides information and networking events for women-owned businesses interested in government contracting.

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## About OPEN Forum: Government Contracting

Launched in 2009, American Express OPEN Forum: Government Contracting is an advocacy initiative designed to help get small-business owners on the path to securing [the nearly \\$100 billion dollars](#)<sup>1</sup> in government contracts awarded to small businesses each year. Our events are designed to teach business owners what they need to know about government contracting through educational content, interactive workshops and by connecting business owners with government buyers through buyer/seller matchmaking and networking opportunities. Learn more at [openforum.com/governmentcontracting](http://openforum.com/governmentcontracting).

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Small Business Administration, FY2012