

# Alaska Procurement Connection

A Monthly Newsletter From Your Procurement Technical Assistance Centers

## WOSB Study Released to Little Fanfare

Contributed by K. Anderson (anksa@uaa.alaska.edu)

The long-awaited woman-owned small business (WOSB) disparity study being conducted by the RAND Corporation on behalf of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has finally been released. This study, based on National Academy of Sciences guidance, was conducted by the RAND Corporation at the request of the SBA to determine areas in which a gender-based preferential contracting program could be applied as required by Congressional mandate contained in the Small Business Reauthorization Act of 2000.

Unfortunately, the study does not offer a definitive answer to the question of whether or not disparity exists for WOSBs within the federal contracting arena. According to the study, it depends on how you measure it. “Depending on the measure used, underrepresentation of WOSBs in government contracting occurs either in no industries or in up to 87 percent of industries.” The study does not recommend a measurement to follow, but rather submits “which measure is appropriate depends on the policy it is intended to support.”

The RAND Corporation gathered the data for their findings from a number of elements, one of which is the Federal Procurement Data System, a contract tracking system rife with data inaccuracies. The RAND Corporation also used the two-digit groupings for the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to establish industry categories and did not make any adjustments to the official industry groupings. This means, at times, dissimilar industries fall into the same code—for example, cosmetology and flight-training schools.

How this study is interpreted greatly impacts whether or not WOSBs will be able to take advantage of the contracting incentives this program offers.

In a response through a press release the SBA comments they look “forward to reviewing the findings so that we can identify how to improve government contracting opportunities for WOSBs,” said Dr. Paul Hsu, SBA’s Associate Administrator for Government Contracting and Business Development. “It is a priority for the agency to advocate on behalf of America’s female entrepreneurs and increase its outreach to them, especially on government contracting issues.”

In addition to commissioning the study, SBA has moved to publish a final rule implementing the set-aside program by the 3rd quarter of 2007 (April – June 2007). According to SBA, WOSBs have won a greater share of the federal procurement pie over the last few years; however, they still fall short of receiving the mandated 5 percent of contracting dollars.

“Women are playing an increasingly significant role in strengthening the nation’s economic growth through entrepreneurial ventures and small business development,” said Dr. Hsu. “SBA is proud to have helped thousands of female small business owners get their start, obtain advice or participate in one of our educational programs. We are committed to providing them with the assistance they need to help their business succeed.”

To view the study, visit <http://www.ptacalaska.org> under “What’s New.”

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## NIST May Have a Patent for You

Contributed by Carolyn Pratt (ancap1@uaa.alaska.edu)

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) is testing a pilot program that is based around NIST-held patents that businesses may want to further research and commercialize.

The NIST Program is asking small business owners to examine NIST patents at <http://www.nist.gov> as well as other NIST-developed technology for commercial viability, and to identify technological gaps that impede the patent's transition to the marketplace. NIST intends to incorporate technologies of special interest to industry in its 2008 SBIR research and development solicitation for proposals. The deadline for public input is August 31, 2007; the formal solicitation is expected to be issued in November 2007, and proposals due in January 2008.

If a potential opportunity is found, contact the researcher who generated the patent to initiate a conversation about the commercial applications. Next, contact the NIST SBIR program office to indicate your interest in pursuing. Be prepared to explain why that patent should be included in the special solicitation.

NIST's pilot effort to secure small business participation in formulating the SBIR solicitation is aimed at increasing private-sector commercialization of innovations derived from federal research and development.

The NIST SBIR Program is also inviting small, American-owned companies to scan NIST patents and technologies and offer research suggestions in advance of the 2008 SBIR solicitation. NIST will offer awardees a non-exclusive research license and the option to a non-exclusive commercialization license. Those selected for award, with access to NIST technology and personnel knowledgeable about the NIST patent, will be expected to add research to the NIST innovation and develop a commercial product based on the NIST patent.

To search for specific technologies go to <http://patapsco.nit.gov/TS/220/sharedpatent/index.cfm>

For a listing of patents go to: [http://patapsco.nist.gov/TS/220/sharedpatent/patents\\_keyword.cfm](http://patapsco.nist.gov/TS/220/sharedpatent/patents_keyword.cfm)

To browse through NIST'S Tech Beat [http://www.nist.gov/public\\_affairs/techbeat/archive.htm](http://www.nist.gov/public_affairs/techbeat/archive.htm)

If you wish to explore or conduct research to further the technology to transition to the commercial market, call Clara Asmail, NIST SBIR Program Manager at: 301-975-2339 or email at: [asmal@nist.gov](mailto:asmal@nist.gov); or contact Carolyn Pratt, TREND Director at 907-274-7232.

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## NEWS FLASH

Contributed by Megan Luna (anmcl1@uaa.alaska.edu)

### Federal Acquisition Professionals Increase

The Office of Management and Budget stated in a June 4, 2007 news release that the government continues to increase the total number of contracting professionals in the acquisition workforce.

The Office of Federal Procurement Policy's Annual Report on the Federal Acquisition Workforce shows that the federal government hired more than 2,600 new employees in contracting-related positions in fiscal year 2006, a net increase of 1,200 since FY2000. The government currently employs 28,000 contracting professionals in the GS-1102 series. The full report can be viewed at <http://www.fai.gov/policies/sturep.asp>.

### Free WAWF Trainings Offered Nationally

The *Vendor Wide Area Workflow Newsletter*, published by the DFAS Army WAWF Implementation Team, highlights a collaborative effort by The Department of Army, the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Procurement Technical Assistant Centers, and Defense Finance and Accounting Service to facilitate the implementation of the WAWF system to support electronic invoice and receiving report processing by providing free WAWF training classes. As of June 1, 2007, 38 trainings have taken place. Recent trainings in Anchorage involved 144 participants, making it the fourth most attended class nationally. If you are interested in training, visit <https://ca.dtic.mil/dfas/dfas4dod/wawfarmyvendortraining.htm>

### CCR vs ORCA—What's the Difference?

CCR is the central registry that enables the government to easily find information on vendors seeking to do business with the government. CCR collects overall company information to include who the registrant is, the market area they perform in, and the financial data that is used to facilitate the electronic payment process via Electronic Funds Transfer. On the other hand, ORCA or the Online Representations and Certifications, collects only the legal business representations and certifications that certify it for all FAR-based contracts at the time of solicitation. ORCA is used by the government to determine, among other things, that a company is eligible for a small business set-aside, if they follow the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission rules and if they provide products that contain material from countries outside the United States.

—<http://www.acquisition.gov/newsletters.cfm>

(May 2007 newsletter)

## Finding Your NAICS Codes

Contributed by A. Brunstetter (anamb1@uaa.alaska.edu)

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) was adopted approximately ten years ago to establish a numbering system to classify and group businesses according to the goods and services they sell.

For many businesses, identifying NAICS codes seems like a daunting task. The U.S. Census Bureau, while not an official arbiter for the NAICS classification system, provides 6-digit codes for companies to select based on their activity. It is required for government contracting purposes to have at least one primary NAICS code (defined as the activity that brings the most revenue). However, it is also important to identify and list as many codes (up to 20) that apply to your firm in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR). Listing all applicable codes allows you to better “advertise” your business since many government agencies will use these codes to identify potential vendors and buy goods and services.

To identify NAICS codes, go to <http://www.census.gov/naics> to search and view NAICS codes that correspond to your products or services. At this website, you can type in a keyword that best describes your business effort. A list of business activities containing that keyword and their corresponding NAICS codes will be displayed. Select the code that most closely corresponds to your business activity.

Another way to find the right NAICS codes is to view the 2002 NAICS structure with codes and titles. To do this, go to <http://www.census.gov/epcd/naics02/naicod02.htm>. Click on the codes to see the definition, cross-reference, and index item. You can then select the category that applies to your business, and then dig deeper through the more detailed descriptions until you find the appropriate 6-digit code.

Knowing your old SIC code is also a great way to determine NAICS codes. Enter the SIC code in the form ‘SIC 1234’ in the NAICS search box, and click on the NAICS search button. The corresponding NAICS codes will appear. Another option for defining NAICS codes is to look at the NAICS codes your competitors have defined in their CCR registration at <http://www.ccr.gov>.

Identifying your industry codes does not have to be tedious, and knowing where to start can make all the difference. If you would like more information or assistance defining your NAICS codes, please contact Alison Brunstetter, PTAC Program Specialist, at 274-7232 or [anamb1@uaa.alaska.edu](mailto:anamb1@uaa.alaska.edu).

## Questions for Pursuing an RFP

Contributed by Robert Brunett (anreb2@uaa.alaska.edu)

Any business should weigh its options when pursuing government projects—especially when responding to Request for Proposals (RFPs). The following are a list of possible questions to consider before beginning your response.

### ***1. Is the RFP requesting work that your firm has done before?***

A common strategy for writing a response to an RFP is to concentrate on work that is a good fit for your firm. Passing up an opportunity that “sort of” fits your company’s business focus will free up your time to pursue other opportunities. If your firm is not capable of providing all of the services requested another possibility is to consider teaming arrangements or subcontracting to another firm.

### ***2. Have you worked with this agency before?***

What is your current business relationship with the entity issuing the RFP? Is it good or sustained? Oftentimes having an established and good working relationship with an agency will give your firm an edge to obtaining work. Also, showing a history of good performance and understanding agency requirements is critical for RFP success. If for some reason, you’ve decided not to pursue the project but you’ve already been having discussions with the contracting agency, it’s a good idea to let them know that you’re not responding to the RFP and the reasons why.

### ***3. Do you have the personnel to support this effort?***

Many times key personnel and project management staff are considerations during the evaluations process. Do you have the personnel to perform the tasks required for the work? Does your personnel have the experience and training? Is your project management team in place and ready?

### ***4. Does your company have the capacity to support this effort?***

All government work has certain contractual requirements that must be met. Sometimes this may include project controls and accessibility to the project office; tracking, recording, and reporting procedures; and even insurance and bonding. Do you currently have the required elements in place, or can they easily be put in place to ensure contract compliance?

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***5. Does this project fit into your marketing mix?***

Pursuing and performing government work is a fundamental component of a firm's marketing mix. If you are awarded this contract, how does it fit into your long-term marketing strategy for your firm? Will it allow you to expand into a new area of operation? Will it open the door for additional work with this agency?

***6. What is the potential for this work moving forward?***

Although an RFP is a sign that the government is looking to issue a contract, it doesn't guarantee the work will move forward. At times, project funding, permitting, and public input all play a role in whether or not a project will ultimately move forward. It's important to evaluate all factors when considering whether or not to pursue a specific contract. Many times you can gather this information from the government's designated project manager. It's also important to be engaged in the industry to find out what the "word on the street" is before pursuing work.

Because so many factors come into play when an agency puts out an RFP, it's important to evaluate and analyze every opportunity. This will help your firm determine whether or not it is in your best interest to move forward. Passing on an RFP may be the smartest business decision you can make.

Remember, your proposal becomes a part of the actual contract documents. You must be able to provide every element and task you represent in your proposal. Your Alaska PTAC can help you in your review of an RFP and deciding if it's right for your company.

"There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure."

— Colin Powell