

**BEST PRACTICE
DEVELOPED BY THE
EXTERNAL LIAISON COMMITTEE OF THE
FEDERAL OSDBU DIRECTORS INTERAGENCY COUNCIL
AUGUST 2003**

**MODEL CODE OF EXPECTATIONS
BETWEEN
FEDERAL OFFICES OF SMALL AND DISADVANTAGED
BUSINESS UTILIZATION (OSDBU'S)
AND
SMALL BUSINESSES**

Small Businesses can expect that the OSDBU will:

- Make very clear up front the depth and breadth of the services that can be expected from the OSDBU;
- Be exceptionally candid as to whether the capabilities of the small business match the agency's needs, and, if not, direct them to the appropriate OSDBU or prime contractor Small Business Liaison Officer (SBLO), preferably with a personal introduction;
- Explain the relevant laws enacted for their benefit, i.e., small business set-asides, 8(a) set-asides, HUBZone set-asides, subcontracting goals, and illustrate how the small business can use them to maximize contract and subcontract opportunities;
- Put them in contact with the appropriate project/technical managers, end users, or any other relevant personnel, assuming the small business is selling what the OSDBU's agency is buying;
- Inform small businesses with all up- to- date information in light of the ever-changing procurement legislation and implementing regulations that impact small business;
- Be a "marketing consultant," "information broker," and facilitator to the small business, e.g., inform it of any special unwritten and cultural nuances or procedures at the OSDBU's agency and its buying activities that will improve the small business' chances of winning a contract;

- Make very clear that certification as an 8(a), small disadvantaged business, HUBZone contractor, service disabled veteran does not create an *entitlement* to a contract or a guarantee for one in the future;
- Stress that understanding the agency's procurement process, engaging in strong marketing, and competing for work, even sole source work, is critical to enhancing one's prospects of obtaining a contract;
- Ensure a professionally conducted meeting with time parameters and expectations set in advance;
- Summarize the agency's contracting opportunities at its various contracting activities and field installations for the small business' specific area of business or make referrals to those places where the small business can go to obtain such knowledge;
- Demonstrate, if necessary, how to navigate within the agency's host website and highlight the most useful sites and links;
- Offer follow-up due date for responding to questions for which the OSDBU counselor does not have an immediate answer;
- Impart knowledge about the "market" (what the OSDBU's agency buys), the decision makers (agency key players) and the competitive environment at the agency (who the incumbents are, what service needs are growing, which are declining, where the future strategic, long term opportunities are, etc.);
- Not give false hope, vague or generic information, such as stating how many millions or billions of dollars the agency spends on goods and services with no explanation as to how the small business can reasonably expect to fit into the agency's procurement structure or system;
- Treat all small businesses the same under like circumstances when providing pertinent procurement information and not show special preference to a network of friends or acquaintances;
- Provide information on the agency's latest acquisition-related initiatives and agency-unique programs that will, or were designed to, increase the chances of a small business to obtain a contract or subcontract, e.g. discuss agency's mentor protégé program, if applicable.

The OSDBU can expect that the small business will:

- Have done preliminary research on the agency's website and other sources of information to determine what their mission is and whether it buys what the small business sells
- Be focused in developing discussion in its area of expertise based on requirements
- Be cognizant of time and schedule and does not prolong the discussion past the time set for the meeting
- Make a case as to why an agency should use its firm over other small businesses that perform the same type of work or provide the same products
- Not develop unrealistic expectations based upon the meeting
- Be aware that the OSDBU is not the end user and does not need to hear the entire *technical* marketing presentation
- Follow the recommended avenues of opportunity outlined by the OSDBU that the firm determines are consistent with its best interests
- Understand that various small business certifications, i.e., 8(a), SDB, HUBZone, women owned small businesses, service disabled veterans, **are secondary** to a small business' ability to emphasize its high quality products or services, on time delivery, and best value
- Understand that from an ethical and legal standpoint that an OSDBU **CANNOT**:
 - Promise anyone a contract
 - Provide government-proprietary information
 - Share third party proprietary information provided to him/her by other small businesses
 - *Direct* large contractors to provide jobs (employment or subcontracting) to a particular small business
 - Help small businesses write/review proposals to be submitted to the OSDBU's agency or any other government agency
 - Act in a manner that is tantamount to acting as an agent of the small business

- Aid or abet the small business in preparation of a protest against the OSDBU's agency
- Lobby source selection officials to select a specific small business
- Advocate purchase of goods and services that the government does not need or want
- Help to create false expectations on the part of small businesses of nonexistent contracting opportunities
- Supersede the authority of the contracting officer
- Show improper favoritism to some small businesses at the expense of others
- Encourage or accept gratuities