

# If being on the GSA schedule is your license to hunt, can you afford not to be on it?

by Jamie Hardin

Get scheduled quickly and start hunting government contracts.



Now that the federal government is required to set aside at least three percent of all contracts for service-disabled, veteran-owned businesses, a GSA Schedule is more attractive than ever for vet entrepreneurs. But be aware: Obtaining an effective Schedule contract calls for significant expenditures in time and personnel. It's tougher than simply writing a proposal. This article will discuss the requirements and prerequisites for being a GSA Schedule holder,

which could be a very profitable investment for small businesses.

GSA (General Services Administration) Schedules are operated by the Federal Supply Service (FSS), a division of GSA. FSS is the only for-profit agency in the government. Its revenue comes in the form of an "industrial funding fee" (a 0.75 percent tax, if you will) on all GSA Schedule transactions.

FSS manages seven regional acquisition centers. Each one is responsible for a number of the approximately 65 Schedules, which

include almost every product or service you can imagine — from engineering services to office furniture to software to auditing. Often, the GSA Schedule is a Multiple Award Schedule because contracts for similar products and services are awarded to more than one vendor. Any agency of the federal government (as well as many state governments) can use Schedule contracts to buy goods and services. Contracting officers use Schedules because they know that GSA has already negotiated a competitive rate.

A Schedule's contract term includes a five-year base period and three five-year renewals, for a maximum of 20 years. The Schedules can be ever-changing documents with items and pricing added, removed or changed. Those are called Indefinite Delivery and Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contracts, meaning there's no limit to how much business can be conducted, nor is there a guaranteed minimum. As a Schedule holder, a business can decline money-losing orders. The government sets a maximum order for products at \$500,000 and for services at \$1,000,000.

To qualify for a GSA Schedule award, a business must have experience, have sold their product or service in the commercial marketplace, have reasonable pricing, and have the financial capacity to maintain a government contract. The business must be free of indictment, convictions, debarments, suspension, tax liens, government fraud, civil judgments or bankruptcies.

Before applying, a company should obtain a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number [www.DNB.com](http://www.DNB.com) and a Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) code [www.CCR.gov](http://www.CCR.gov). It should be able to accept credit card orders. In addition to your veteran or service-disabled-veteran owned business status, you can increase your appeal by being certified as a small, small dis-

advantaged, woman-owned, 8(a) (a socially and economically disadvantaged company that becomes certified as such through a government process) and HUBzone (historically underutilized business zone) business. You can determine which Schedule best fits your products and/or services by visiting the GSA e-library [www.gsaelibrary.gsa.gov](http://www.gsaelibrary.gsa.gov).

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In general, you should budget about 200 employee hours to assemble the proposal. GSA tries to award or reject a Schedule contract within 120 days of receipt. Under GSA’s “Get it Right” program, contracting officers return the proposal almost immediately if they find any mistakes or omissions. Barring such action, expect the award process to take as little as three months or as long as 18 months, depending upon your knowledge of the GSA proposal process, system and how contracting officers from different acquisition centers prefer to work.

You should reflect on many considerations before pursuing a GSA Schedule listing. EZGSA, a company that assists businesses in obtaining GSA Schedules, has an online questionnaire to help you decide if a GSA Schedule is right for you [www.ezgsa.com/sub\\_links/schedquestionnaire.shtml](http://www.ezgsa.com/sub_links/schedquestionnaire.shtml).

A GSA Schedule award opens up the tremendous government marketplace for you. In addition to being the vehicles of choice for most government procurement officers, Schedules can help you compete for other contracting opportunities, such as government-wide acquisition contracts (GWACs).

Yes, it requires a lot of time, but thousands of veteran-owned businesses have taken the GSA Schedule leap. They are reaping the benefits, and so should you. ■



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HAS ACRES OF CONTRACTING  
OPPORTUNITIES FOR VETERANS.

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- Grow your business
- Communicate your ideas to diversity committees of government and corporate partners

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