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What's happening with Women-Owned businesses in Federal Contracting?

That is the question that everyone would like to know. It seems that the Small Business Women's Procurement Program is taking another twist. On January 11th, the Small Business Administration (SBA) announced that it was again reopening the comment period for 60 days for public input.

At this time, the SBA has deemed 31 industry areas to be under represented by women's participation in federal contracting. SBA has for a number of years established a goal of 5% of federal contacts to women. Although the exact number is debated, the goal has yet to be reached.

So what can you, as a woman-owned business, do in the meantime to improve your position to obtain a federal prime or subcontract? First, understand your business strengths and capitalize on your past experience as a supplier in the commercial sector. Second, put together a Capability Statement for your business. (see page 4 for information on Maine PTAC's online Capability Statement Workshop) Third, make sure all your registrations are up to date.

I am often asked, "Do I need to be certified as a women business?" The answer is No...but.

The federal government does not require a woman-owned small business to go through a certification process. Small businesses that are controlled by women, 'self-declare' that they are woman-owned businesses as part of the SBA portion of the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) and the On-line Representations and Certifications (ORCA).



Erica Libby & Michelle Atherton
Owners-New Form Building Supply
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Now, here is the "but" portion. Some of the larger Federal Prime Contractors want to have an independent third party certify that your business is indeed a woman-owned business. Again, this is not required by every Prime contractor but there are a number of primes out there that might require such certification as a condition of subcontracting with your business. If you do want to have a third party "certify" your business as woman-owned, expect to pay around \$350. This expense is a business choice for you to make but you may want to wait until it is required by a prime contractor. Meanwhile, stay tuned for more changes to come for woman-owned businesses in procurement.

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