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PRESS RELEASE

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Lompoc's Website Provides 8 Steps to do Business with the Government

Lompoc, CA (March 13, 2009) It seems that somewhere in the \$787 billion dollar stimulus package, there should be some dollars for your business. The City of Lompoc has added information on its Tools for Business website on how to conduct business with the government. Included are these eight steps:

1. **Look local.** Contact your city and county public works departments to find out how they publish bid opportunities. Ask what projects they have submitted for federal stimulus money. For more information, visit: <http://www.cityoflompoc.com/departments/pworks/pwbids.htm> and <http://www.countyofsb.org/central.aspx?id=478>.
2. **For state and national bid opportunities, get your business certified.**
 - o Self-certifications: The federal government recognizes small businesses (SBE), women-owned (WBE), and disadvantaged (i.e. minority) businesses (SDB). The SBA has established two widely used size standards for small business:
 1. Fewer than 500 employees for most manufacturing and mining industries, and
 2. Less than \$7 million in average annual receipts for most nonmanufacturing industries.

There is no formal certification process, but on request, you need to provide proof that you satisfy the size and for WBE and SDB's the ownership requirement.

- o HUB zone businesses. If your business is located in a low-income area, you may be eligible for preferential bidding on federal projects. Go to <https://eweb1.sba.gov/hubzone/internet/index.cfm> to see if you are in a HUB zone.
- o SBA 8(a) program for minority businesses. The SBA 8(a) program provides direct help in obtaining federal contracts. Participants must have been in business at least 2 years and have assets less than \$750,000. For more information, visit <http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/8abd/index.html>. To apply, visit <http://www.sba.gov/aboutsba/sbaprograms/8abd/application/index.html>.
- o US Department of Transportation recognizes veteran-owned small businesses. For more information, visit <http://osdbu.dot.gov/about/customers.cfm#VOSB>. California has two certifications: Small Business Enterprise (SBE) and Disabled Veterans (DVBE). Both are eligible for 5% bid preference and contract set-asides. Go to <http://www.pd.dgs.ca.gov/smbus/default.htm> for requirements and to apply online.

- CalTrans uses the state certification for state-funded projects and a separate certification (DBE) for federally funded projects. For DBE certification, go to http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/bep/business_forms.htm.
- 3. **Even if you are not certified, register on CCR.** The federal government uses CCR (Central Contractor Registration). You can register at <http://www.ccr.gov>. You can do a search on existing registered businesses at http://web.sba.gov/pro-net/search/dsp_dsbs.cfm.
- 4. **Look for large opportunities and sign up for email notifications.** Federal opportunities for \$25,000 and more can be found at <https://www.fbo.gov>.

Until March 16th, California's bid opportunities can be found at <https://www.cscr.dgs.ca.gov/cscr/>. After that date, bid opportunities will be found at <http://www.eprocure.dgs.ca.gov>.

California's Subscription Outreach Service (SOS) is an email notification service of upcoming bid opportunities. For information, go to <https://www.cscr.dgs.ca.gov/cscr/sosdesc.asp>.

- 5. **Look for sub-contracting opportunities.** The government bid process can take six months. It is often faster to find sub-contracting opportunities with companies that have already received a government contract. You can find federal sub-contracting opportunities at http://web.sba.gov/subnet/search/dsp_search_option.cfm.

For sub-contracting opportunities for CalTrans projects, look for companies which have been awarded contracts at <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/esc/oe/planholders/awarded.php>.

- 6. **Network and market your business to find opportunities under \$25,000.** All purchases under \$100,000 are supposed to go to small business. Federal agencies use credit cards for purchases of \$2,500 or less. For purchases between \$2,500 and \$25,000, they must obtain quotes from at least three vendors.

In California, contracts under \$100,000 can avoid the bid process if the agency solicits at least two certified SBE (small business) or DVBE (disabled veteran) firms and awards the bid to one of them.

- 7. **Use small business liaisons.** Federal and state agencies have small business liaisons who help small businesses with the procurement process. The California Small Business Advocate maintains a list of department liaisons. Visit <http://www.sba.ca.gov/index.php?a=dvbe/index.html>.
- 8. **Get help through PTAC or SBDC.** PTACs (Procurement Technical Assistance Centers) provide free assistance in marketing products and services to government agencies. Visit <http://www.dla.mil/db/procurem.htm> to find the PTAC nearest you. You can also contact your local SBDC (Small Business Development Center) contractor Tim Harrington at 805-886-7999 for free assistance with government contracting.

You can find more business assistance on Lompoc's Tools for Business website at <http://lompoc.toolsforbusiness.info>. We host the Tools for Business to provide local, state, federal, and Internet resources to start and grow local businesses.

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