

# GIB Readiness Guide

Preparing to work as part of the **Government Industrial Base (GIB)** involves an often complex series of tasks to establish and maintain readiness. Even established contractors with contract award experience can lose track of their GIB readiness best practices.

To help businesses become aware and stay focused on many (but not all) of these best practices to develop and maintain “GIB Ready” status, the Florida APEX Accelerator has developed the following checklist:

## **Corporate Compliance**

A government contractor needs to be a registered business in good standing with their state. While registering a business, such as through SunBiz in Florida, is relatively easy, maintaining appropriate compliance can be often overlooked:

- Do you know the corporate compliance requirements for your org structure?
- Do you have proper tax receipts?
- Do you have the licensing required by your state and your industry?
- Do you know how to obtain a ‘Certificate of Status’?

**Ask APEX about:** Resource partners such as SCORE and SBDC

## **Financial Management**

A GIB Ready company is financially healthy.

- Is the business profitable? Or at least is there a formal plan for profitability?
- Are the past 2-3 years of tax returns readily available as needed?
- Are monthly financial statements prepared?
- Does the business use budgets and financial forecasts? Including a strong handle on fixed, variable, and overhead expenses?
- Does the business have a practical ‘Access-to-Capital’ plan?
- Is an adequate insurance and bonding plan in place?

**Ask APEX about:** budgeting templates, 36-month pro-forma templates, and the Florida SBDC “Access-to-Capital” team

## □ **Business Management and Controls**

Government contractors should aim to document processes, moving them ‘out of the owner’s head’ and into repeatable best practices, including policies, SOPs, training procedures, and job descriptions. You can’t wait for perfection, but a GIB Ready business should be on a path to capturing repeatable best practices. Areas to consider include:

- Financial Management and Budgeting
- Human Resources: employee selection, onboarding, training, development
- Operations: SOPs, safety policies, quality control
- Legal: proper IP, copywrites, and other legal protections in place
- Vendor Relations: supply chain resilience
- Strategic Planning: looking ahead 3-5 years, continual improvement
- Do you have a ‘BAIL Team’ in place?

**Ask APEX about:** “Business Fundamentals Checklist” primer, “Before You Hire” primer, and the resources of the Florida SBDC.

## □ **Cybersecurity Plan**

A key control that the government (at all levels) expects is a commitment to cybersecurity. The DoD has officially rolled out CMMC 2.0 but even if you are not targeting the DoD, cybersecurity should be a top priority for a government contractor.

- Do you have a written Cybersecurity Policy and Improvement Plan?
- Have you reviewed CMMC 2.0 Level 1? This is what the DoD considers basic cyber hygiene for any small business so it can be a useful benchmark.
- If you are targeting the DoD – do you have a plan for CMMC compliance?

**Ask APEX about:** “CMMC 2.0 Level 1” primer, cybersecurity-related training resources, CMMC networking contacts

## □ **Commitment to Compliance**

Success in government contracting is rooted in compliance. Compliance requires extensive reading and writing, and the time required can be a barrier to entry and growth for small businesses. A government contractor must have the capacity for compliance.

- Corporate Compliance
- Industry Compliance
- FAR Compliance (do you read ALL the FAR clauses in a solicitation?)
- FOCI Compliance (Foreign Ownership, Control, & Influence)
- SLED-Level Procurement Compliance
- What other compliance issues relate to YOUR business?

**Ask APEX about:** developing a compliance strategy

□ **Commitment to Research**

Government contractors, more so than businesses just serving residential and commercial markets, must have the capacity for research. Popular public research tools include:

- SBA.gov: Includes DSBS (small businesses registered in SAM), SubNet, and a Directory of Prime Contractors required to have Sub-Contracting Plans
- SAM.gov: entity information, contract opportunities, wage information, federal hierarchy, and FPDS (Federal Procurement Data System),
- GSA: Acquisition Gateway, GSA e-library, GSACalc
- USASpending.gov
- VendorLink (and similar portals) (no cost versions!)
- MyFloridaMarketPlace (Florida Vendor database, open procurements)
- Agency-Specific Websites (procurement pages, small business pages)

**Ask APEX about:** 1:1 coaching, training resources available, access to research tools available through APEX and the State University hosts.

□ **Commitment to Continuing Learning**

Government contracting is a dynamic and ever-changing field. A GIB Ready business embraces ongoing learning and professional development related to government contracting and business best practice. Does your business have an ongoing professional development strategy that includes government contracting?

No cost training resources include:

- FAI (Federal Acquisition Institute)
- SBA Learning Center
- GSA Training
- GovCon Chamber of Commerce
- Defense Acquisition University (DAU) (some no cost training available)
- SLED Agency Specific Training (visit targeted websites)

**Ask APEX about:** Statewide Florida APEX Accelerator training webinars and seminars, Govology.com, and the Florida APEX *Readiness Academy*.

□ **Register as a Vendor**

A GIB Ready business should be registered as a vendor for at least its targeted levels of government. Consider your registration status:

- SAM.gov (must be updated annually)
- MyFloridaMarketPlace
- Each targeted city, county, school district, state university
- VendorLink (and similar portals)
- Prime Contractor Supplier Diversity program registration

**Ask APEX about:** SAM.gov Registration Primers, scheduling a 1:1 session to work with you through any of these registrations.

□ **Certifications** (as applicable)

Once a business is registered as a vendor, several certifications are available to eligible businesses. Some of the most utilized certifications include:

- Federal: SDB, ED/WOSB, SD/VOSB, HubZone, 8(a) Business Development
- State (FL): VBE, MBE, WBE
- Local: varies (visit the website of your targeted agencies)

**Ask APEX about:** “Certifications” primer, 1:1 session to develop a certification plan, exploring TPC (third party certifier) options, and the Native American APEX

□ **Government Contracting Marketing Plan**

The Department of Defense Office of Small Business Programs considers a **written** government contracting marketing plan a component of being “GIB Ready”. A marketing plan could include:

- Research Plan
- Clearly defined messaging including differentiators and value propositions
- Target Markets - What combination of the seven (7) government contracting strategic markets are you targeting: Department of Defense (DoD), Federal (non-DoD), State (including government agencies and state universities), County (including government, schools, aviation), City, Large Prime Contractors (targeting sub-contracting opportunities), and other small businesses (for teaming relationships and direct selling opportunities).
- Target Accounts: What particular agencies and/or prime contractors are you targeting and what specific individuals/positions?
- Competitor Analysis and Positioning Strategy
- Marketing Tool Kit (what collateral are you going to use?)
- Marketing Budget

**Ask APEX about:** scheduling a planning session to develop/review your government contracting marketing plan

□ **Baseline Capability Statement**

The cornerstone of a government contracting marketing plan is a baseline ‘Capability Statement’. Key aspects of a strong capability statement could include:

- Overview Paragraph: focused on your client, not your business.
- Point of Contact Information
- Core Competencies: What you Do
- Differentiators: Why you are Different

- Past Performance (or Founder’s Experience): Why you can be Trusted
- Company Information: CAGE, UEI, NAICS, PSC Codes, certifications, etc.
- Branding Elements: logo, branding colors, branding fonts
- REMEMBER: it’s considered a best practice to customize your capability statement for each opportunity.

**Ask APEX about:** “Capability Statement” primer and the monthly “Capability Statement Boot Camp” online seminar

#### □ **Baseline Marketing and Visibility Tools**

‘Marketing’ refers to a human audience, while ‘visibility’ refers to an AI audience (making your marketing tools visible to the growing number of AI scraping tools that are being used). In addition to the Capability Statement, here are some basic marketing and visibility best practices:

- List of at least 25 keywords and phrases to use in your marketing.  
*NOTE: these are keywords and phrases that your target would use to search for solutions to their problems, not just 25 keywords that you can think of top-of-mind. You need to research!*
- Dedicated government contracting pages on your website
- Complete LinkedIn profiles that reference government contracting
- Keywords included in your SAM profile (ex. ‘notes’ section of POC profiles)
- Business cards and email signature block reference government contracting
- DSBS profile includes:
  - Link to your Capability Statement
  - Link to your website
  - Strong Capability Narrative (keyword intensive)
  - Strong Use of “Special” section (keyword intensive)
  - at least one (1) past performance example represented
  - Maxed-out keyword section (properly formatted)
  - all other section completed (as applicable)

**Ask APEX about:** 1:1 reviews of your marketing materials, and the “Visibility Checklist” and “Updating Your DSBS Profile” primers

#### □ **Reactive Business Development Plan**

‘Reactive’ business development in government contracting refers to finding and efficiently using various electronic bulletin boards used to communicate solicitations, RFPs, RFIs, Sources Sought, industry days, and other announcements. Every level of government uses bulletin boards so there are hundreds in use throughout the country. If you are learning about an opportunity from its posting on a bulletin board, you are late to the game but there is still value that can be mined. A robust reactive business development strategic could include:

- Target Accounts: what bulletin boards are of most interest to you?
- Market Research: who is buying what you are selling? What keywords, NAICS/PSC codes are they using?
- Opportunity Filters: what will trigger your interest in responding?
- POC Capture: perhaps you don't bid but you do capture the POC
- Calendar: what events are your target accounts posting?

**Ask APEX about:** Developing an opportunity filtering strategy and The Florida APEX Accelerator "Bid-Match" system

#### □ **Proactive Business Development Plan**

Successful small business government contractors find ways to connect with their targeted agencies and prime contractors long before opportunities are posted on bulletin boards. These connections can help the small business better understand the mission, history, problems, concerns and nuance related to an agency or opportunity.

A proactive business development plan can include:

- Master Call List: who (specifically) are you targeting?
- Weekly Call Plan: Who are you reaching out THIS week?
- Networking Strategy: what events are you going to attend?
- Collateral Materials: in addition to the Capability Statement
- APV Messaging: Always Provide Value! (It's not about you!)

**Ask APEX about:** networking training resources, 1:1 sessions including role play practice opportunities with an APEX consultant, RTS 2025! *a reverse trade show event* (March), SBDC Success Summit with Reverse Trade Show (August), and other regional networking events on their radar.

#### □ **Teaming Strategy in Place**

Small businesses new to government contracting can often gain early traction through teaming relationships with other small businesses or large prime contractors. This doesn't happen by accident, a small business needs to develop a proactive, intentional plan to target and develop these relationships. Teaming can take several forms including:

- Sub-Contracting: Large and small businesses in the prime contractor role will often need to develop a sub-contracting strategy.
- Mentor-Protégé Programs: MPP programs exist to help businesses gain experience and resources through partnering with more established companies. However, there needs to be value for the protégé company as well. The SBA and the DoD have MPP programs, but they don't 'match' companies, MPP applicants need to go to them with a relationship in place.
- Joint-Ventures (JV): it can sometimes be a strategy for two businesses to formally agree to form a third business to support government contracts. JV's must follow certain structure and operational rules and limitations.

- Contractor Team Agreement (CTA): Two GSA MAS schedule holders can sometimes benefit from a CTA to bid on larger more complex opportunities.

**Ask APEX about:** Using DSBS to develop a target list for potential MPP and other teaming partners.

#### □ **Understand Government Innovation Programs**

It is widely accepted in government contracting that ‘small businesses drive innovation’. Large businesses drive investment and productivity, but small businesses are the primary driver of new ideas, new approaches, and ‘outside-the-box’ thinking. The government at all levels tries to encourage innovation through formal programs including:

- SBIR (Small Business Innovation and Research): 11 federal agencies have a formal SBIR program designed to encourage small business investment in particular areas of technology.
- STTR (Small Business Technology Transfer): STTR projects require that the small business formally collaborate with a non-profit research entity such as a university or federal laboratory.
- SLED Level: State and local government can support innovation with grant programs, tax credits, innovation hubs/districts, and other resources.

**Ask APEX about:** Innovation resource partners such as Florida High Tech Corridor, UCF’s Florida Tech Grove, UF Innovate, USF Connect, and FIU Research. The Florida APEX Accelerator also has a dedicated statewide Technology Transfer manager.

#### □ **Written GIB Readiness (or GIB Growth) Plan**

A GIB ready business has a written plan to achieve, support, and improve its GIB readiness. Success isn’t an accident, it requires an intentional strategic commitment to research, planning, and a written plan of action. A GIB Readiness plan could include:

- SWOTT Analysis: As you review the 16 areas above and the other aspects of your government contracting activities, what do you consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of your current efforts. As you look at the aspects of government and economy that you can’t control – what opportunities and threats do you see. The second ‘T’? ...What internal and external TRENDS can you identify that could become strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and/or threats. Analyzing the current state isn’t good enough anymore. You need to see what’s coming and plan for it before it arrives.
- Action Plans: What are you going to do to address your weakness and build on your strengths? What are you going to do to prepare for opportunities and threats.

- Marketing Plan: Regardless of whether you consider marketing a strength or weakness, you always need to have a written GovCon marketing plan. Always have an updated plan for target markets, target accounts, and messaging.
- 90 Day Plan: Create a sub-plan that is always focused on what you plan to accomplish in the next 90 days. Develop a discipline to ask yourself (and your team) – What are we going to do THIS WEEK to move us closer to our 90 Day goals?

**Ask APEX about:** strategic planning training resources and 1:1 strategic planning sessions.

GIB Readiness is not a destination, it's an ongoing journey. A business must be committed to understanding and staying on top of the dynamic, changing landscape that makes up the government contracting marketplace. The Florida APEX Accelerator is here to help. Use the checklist above to benchmark your current efforts and reach out to your APEX Consultant to help you build on your strengths and address your weaknesses.

If you don't have a Florida APEX Consultant, the first step is to register as a client. You can register online at [www.flapex.org](http://www.flapex.org) and get connected to your closest APEX Consultant.

# GIB Readiness Guide

## Useful Links

*updated: 2-21-25*

This page is to support the Florida APEX *GIB Readiness Guide*. The following is not a complete list of all links related to government contracting but it does include many of the websites that can be helpful in your GIB Readiness planning:

### Florida APEX Accelerator

- [Florida APEX Accelerator website](#)
- [Florida APEX Accelerators by County](#)
- [Request a Consultant](#)

### Supporting Resources

- [National APEX Alliance \(NAPEX\)](#)
- [Florida SBDC](#)
- [SCORE](#)
- [SBA](#)
- [SBA NFDO \(North Florida\)](#)
- [SBA SFDO \(South Florida\)](#)
- [DoD Office of Small Business Programs \(OSBP\)](#)
- [CF Bizlink.com](#)

### Compliance Related

- [Sunbiz.com](#)
- [Register as a Foreign Business in Florida](#)
- [Florida Bureau of Licensing](#)
- [Obtain a Certificate of Status](#)
- [Beneficial Ownership Information \(BOI\)](#)
- [Federal Acquisition Regulation \(FAR\)](#)

### Cybersecurity Planning

- [SBA \*Strengthen Your Cybersecurity\*](#)
- [SBDC \*Cybersecurity Guide\*](#)
- [CISA \*Cyber Security Best Practices\*](#)
- [FCC \*Small Biz Cyber Planner\*](#)
- [DoD OSBP Project Spectrum \(CMMC 2.0\)](#)

## **Commitment to Research**

- SBA.gov
  - Dynamic Small Business Search (DSBS)
  - SubNet
  - Directory of Prime Contractors requiring Sub-Contracting Plans
  - SBA Size Standards
  - SBA Open Data
- SAM.gov (federal entities, opportunities, more)
- Census Bureau (NAICS)
- Federal Procurement Data System
- GSA eLibrary
- GSA Contractors A-Z
- USASpending
- VendorLink.com
- MyFloridaMarketPlace
- PublicSpendForum
- Freedom of Information Act
- NIGP Dictionary of Procurement Terms

## **Learning Resources**

- Florida APEX Training Calendar
- Florida APEX Procurement Readiness Academy
- Florida SBDC Training Calendar
- SBA Learning Center
- GSA Vendor Toolbox
- GovCon Chamber of Commerce
- Govology (APEX clients get no-cost access to most courses!)

## **Register as a Vendor**

- SAM.gov (federal vendor registration)
- MyFloridaMarketPlace (state vendor registration)
- Select Florida Counties (6 largest):
  - Miami-Dade County
  - Broward County
  - Hillsborough County
  - Palm Beach County
  - Orange County
  - Duval County
- Select Florida Cities (6 largest)
  - Jacksonville
  - Miami

- Tampa
- Orlando
- St. Petersburg
- Port St. Lucie
- Select Florida School Districts (6 largest)
  - Miami-Dade County Public Schools
  - Broward County Public Schools
  - Hillsborough County Public Schools
  - Orange County Public Schools
  - Palm Beach County Public Schools
  - Duval County Public Schools
- Select Florida State Universities (the Florida APEX host partners)
  - University of Central Florida (UCF) Procurement
  - Florida International University (FIU) Procurement
  - University of South Florida (USF) Procurement
  - Florida Atlantic University (FAU) Procurement
  - Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) Procurement
  - University of North Florida (UNF) Procurement
  - University of West Florida (UWF) Procurement
  - Indian River State College (IRSC) Procurement
  - Florida A&M University (FAMU) Procurement

#### Vendor Registration Suggestions

- Start by registering as a vendor with your targeted agencies
- The large prime contractors often have a vendor registration process
- Some federal agencies have a secondary vendor database – so read the small business and procurement sites of your targeted agencies!

#### Get Certified

- Federal Certifications
  - [MySBACertifications Portal](#)
  - Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB)
  - 8(a) Business Development Program
  - Economically Disadvantaged/Woman-Owned Small Business (ED/WOSB)
  - Service Disabled/Veteran-Owned Small Business (SD/VOSB)
  - HubZone Program
- [Florida Office of Supplier Development \(FL OSD\)\(WBE/MBE/VBE\)](#)
- County and City-Level Certifications: Visit individual agency websites to see what programs they may have available.

## **Reactive Business Development (Select Solicitation Bulletin Boards)**

*note: some of these sites are provided as a service by for-profit companies but our suggestion is to use whatever you can for free - don't pay for anything yet.*

- [SAM Contract Opportunities](#)
- [DLA DIBBS](#)
- [MyFloridaMarketPlace Vendor Information Panel](#)
- [VendorLink](#)
- [Demand Star](#)

## **Proactive Business Development**

### Associations/Networking Groups

- [Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association \(AFCEA\)](#)
- [Florida Association of Public Procurement Officials \(FAPPO\)](#)
- [Florida Association of Veteran Owned Businesses \(FAVOB\)](#)
- [National Contract Management Association \(NCMA\)](#)
- [National Defense Industrial Association \(NDIA\)](#)
- [The Institute for Public Procurement \(NIGP\)](#)
- [Society of American Military Engineers \(SAME\)](#)
- [Veteran Entrepreneurship Initiative \(VEI\)](#)
- [Women in Defense \(WID\)](#)

### Select Regularly Scheduled Networking Events (with estimated month)

*note: these are not hyperlinked, but you should be able to find the current sites using the keywords below*

- [UCF Contractors Fair \(February\)](#)
- [Tampa Federal Government Contracting Forum \(March\)](#)
- [Florida SBDC/APEX at UCF Annual Reverse Trade Show \(March\)](#)
- [NIGP South Florida Government Contracting Reverse Trade Show \(April\)](#)
- [NOAA Small Business Industry Day \(April\)](#)
- [NIGP Tampa Bay Reverse Trade Show \(June\)](#)
- [Florida SBDC Success Summit & Reverse Trade Show \(August\)](#)
- [NIGP Central Florida Reverse Trade Show \(November\)](#)
- [Interservice/Industry Training, Simulation and Education Conference \(I/ITSEC\)\(Dec\)](#)
- [Central Florida PALT \(monthly\)](#)
- [How to do Business with Orange County \(monthly\)](#)

### Select Small Business Office Websites

- [Abbott Laboratories](#)
- [Boeing](#)
- [L3 Harris](#)
- [Lockheed Martin](#)

- Northrup Grumman
- Raytheon Technologies
- Army Corps of Engineers
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of the Air Force
- Department of the Navy
- Department of Veteran Affairs
- FEMA
- NASA
- USSOCOM

## **Exploring Teaming Strategies**

- Prime and Sub-Contracting Overview ([sba.gov](https://www.sba.gov))
- Directory of federal government prime contractors with subcontracting plans
- DoD Subcontracting Overview
- DoD Mentor-Protégé Program
- SBA Mentor-Protégé Program | Active SBA MPP Agreements
- DHS Mentor-Protégé Program
- DOE Mentor-Protégé Program
- FAA Mentor Protégé Program

## **GSA Schedules**

- GSA Schedules Home
- How to Get on a Schedule
- GSA Advantage!
- GSA e-Library
- GSA CALC
- GSA Vendor ToolBox
- GSA Upcoming Events and Training
- Training Resources for Vendors

## **Government Innovation Program Resources**

- SBIR.gov (Program Homepage)
- grants.gov SBIR/STTR Tutorials
- SBIR and STTR Agencies (5): DoD, NIH, DOE, NSF, NASA
- SBIR-Only Agencies (6): USDA, DHS, NIST, DOT, DOED, EPA
- iEdison.gov (database of gov't funded inventions and patents)
- Sample Applications (NIH)
- SBIR Proposal Writing Basics (Articles by Jim Greenwood)
- Florida Commerce Office of Small Business Innovation