

CCC : U.S. Government business opportunities

From a presentation by Judy Bradt, Director of Business Development (Aerospace, Defence and Information Technology), Canadian Embassy, Washington, D.C. at a special Canadian Commercial Corporation seminar on Doing Business with the U.S. Government held in Montreal last November.

The United States federal government is the world's largest customer, with an annual budget for acquisition contracts alone of US\$200 billion — larger than the total spending of some countries.

Three key factors combine to create an ideal environment for conducting business with the U.S. federal government: Canadian supply and capability; U.S. government demand; and coverage by trade agreements, which means that Canadian goods and services can compete on an equal basis with those of American competitors.

Follow the money

One of the good things about selling to the government is that public funds are involved and buyers must therefore make purchasing information available to the public. Through the Federal Procurement Data Center (www.fpdc.gov), you can find data on past contracts, free of charge, including who spent the money, what they spent it on, who they are, when is the contract going to be let, and so on.

Strategies for buyers

It is important for buyers to understand the range of business options available to the public. Invitations for bid are becoming less common and relate to situations with strict binding requirements for commercial items. On the other hand, requests for proposal are more elaborate and involve a special kind of negotiated contract called the General Services Administration (GSA) schedule contract, similar to a Master Standing Offer, which sets the central

terms and conditions under which vendors are able to offer their goods and services.

On-line and front line

It is important to research opportunities thoroughly through Web sites and other methods. But once you have done your homework the most effective method of marketing your products and services is still face to face.

Key points of contact

FirstGov.gov is your starting point and will bring you to the front door of the U.S. federal government. This site includes links to all federal departments and independent agencies. It tells you what they are, what they do, how they are organized, where to find potential customers and what their needs are.

FedBizOpps.gov is the mandatory site for all federal agency solicitations. As of January 1, 2002, this site will replace the *Commerce Business Daily* and is where every U.S. government department and agency must post its bid notices for every opportunity over US\$25,000. FedBizOpps also allows you to set up a profile so you can choose the goods and services about which you would like to be notified when there is a solicitation offer.

The Canadian Commercial Corporation's (CCC) U.S. Bid Matching Service (www.ccc.ca) surveys all of the solicitations posted on FedBizOpps and removes everything that is not covered under the NAFTA so you can access only those opportunities without restrictions.

DoDBizOpps.com is an example of an individual agency site that not

SHAPING TRADE SOLUTIONS FOR OUR EXPORTERS



Canadian Commercial Corporation

The Canadian Commercial Corporation (CCC) is an export sales agency of the Government of Canada providing special access to the U.S. defence and aerospace markets and specializing in sales to foreign governments.

Canadian exporters can gain greater access to government and other markets, as well as a competitive advantage, through CCC's contracting expertise and unique government-backed guarantee of contract performance.

CCC can facilitate export sales that often result in the waiving of performance bonds, advanced payment arrangements and generally better project terms.

When requested, CCC acts as prime contractor for government-to-government transactions and provides access to pre-shipment export financing from commercial sources.

For more information, contact CCC, tel: (613) 996-0034, toll-free in Canada: (800) 748-8191, fax: (613) 947-3903, e-mail: info@ccc.ca Web site: www.ccc.ca

only posts opportunities but provides information about doing business with that specific agency.

ARNet.gov (Acquisition Reform Network) is your acquisition library. It has links to the FPDC and information about acquisition regulations and details you will need to know at all stages of the bidding process.

Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) are structured in 53 parts, a number of which are very important to guide you through the various stages of selling to the U.S. federal government. Part 25 deals with foreign acquisition and provides information about products and services covered under the NAFTA or that fall under certain requirements of the Buy American Act.

The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service and Team Canada Inc (www.infoexport.gc.ca and www.exportsource.gc.ca) provide information about export services and programs available to you.

Other links on doing business with the U.S. federal government are posted on the CCC Web site, www.ccc.ca ✦