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THE FIRST ENTRY

The Government Contracting Readiness Blueprint

The Intersection of Government Contracting

The strongest organizations do not simply manage government contracts. They orchestrate an ecosystem.

A practical guide and self-assessment for companies entering, growing, or strengthening their position in the SLED and Federal government market.

EXPERIENCE. DISCRETION. IMPACT.

Before You Read Another FAR Clause...

Most organizations do not lose opportunities because they lack technical expertise. They lose because critical business functions operate independently.

Government contracting is not only a Contracts problem. It is not only a Compliance problem, a Cybersecurity problem, a Finance problem, or a Program Management problem.

Government contracting is an organizational capability.

Winning contracts and successfully performing them requires every discipline to understand how its decisions influence every other discipline.

Business Development cannot pursue effectively without capture intelligence. Proposal teams cannot succeed without accurate pricing and clear compliance ownership. Contracts cannot negotiate risk in isolation from Finance, Legal, Operations, Cybersecurity, or Program Management. Delivery cannot remain profitable unless performance, invoicing, staffing, supply chain, and customer commitments stay aligned.

The strongest companies understand and integrate the entire ecosystem. They do not optimize one department at the expense of another. They connect strategy, decisions, systems, people, and performance across the full lifecycle.

That is what readiness truly means.

Readiness is the ability to pursue, win, perform, protect, and grow - consistently.

The Government Contracting Ecosystem

Every stage depends on connected business disciplines.

1 Identify	2 Capture	3 Propose	4 Award	5 Perform	6 Close	7 Improve
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Strategy & Market Intelligence Select the right agencies, opportunities, partners, and investments.	Business Development & Capture Position early, understand the customer, and build a credible win strategy.
Proposal Management Translate strategy into a compliant, compelling, and executable offer.	Pricing & Cost Estimating Balance competitiveness, realism, compliance, and profitability.
Contracts & Legal Negotiate obligations, allocate risk, and manage changes throughout performance.	Program Execution Deliver scope, schedule, quality, staffing, and customer outcomes.
Finance & Accounting Track costs, rates, billing, cash flow, and contract financial health.	Compliance & Ethics Convert requirements into repeatable, owned, and monitored business processes.
Cybersecurity & Information Technology Protection Protect government information and meet contractual security obligations.	Procurement & Supply Chain Select, flow down to, and oversee suppliers and subcontractors.
People, Quality & Security Maintain the workforce, systems, clearances, and controls required to perform.	Performance & Continuous Improvement Use data, past performance, audits, and lessons learned to improve the next pursuit.

No one discipline wins a contract. No one discipline delivers it. The best outcomes happen when the entire lifecycle works together.

The Diaries Readiness Score

Measure organizational capability - not perfection.

Use the same 1-5 scale for each readiness area. Select the description that most closely reflects how your organization operates today - not how you intend to operate.

Readiness Level	What It Looks Like
1 - Not Started	Little or no capability exists. Activities are reactive, informal, or absent.
2 - Developing	Some activities occur, but execution is inconsistent and dependent on specific individuals.
3 - Established	Processes are documented and generally followed, but cross-functional integration and measurement are limited.
4 - Integrated	Processes are consistent, owned, measured, and coordinated across departments.
5 - Optimized	The capability is continuously improved, resilient, and used as a competitive advantage.

How to Score Each Area

1. Review the five capability questions for the readiness area.
2. Consider the evidence: documented processes, assigned ownership, consistent execution, measurable results, and cross-functional skills and coordination.
3. Choose one overall score from 1-5. Do not average individual questions; select the level that best describes the capability as a whole.
4. Record one strength and one priority action. The goal is to identify the next chapter, not to produce a perfect score.

Readiness Scorecard: Pursue & Win

1. Strategy, Business Development & Capture

- ☐ We have defined target agencies, customers, contract vehicles, and opportunity criteria.
- ☐ Our pipeline is qualified, current, and connected to realistic resource decisions.
- ☐ Capture begins early enough to shape positioning, teaming, solution, and customer understanding.
- ☐ Leadership makes deliberate bid/no-bid decisions using evidence rather than optimism alone.
- ☐ Lessons from wins, losses, and customer feedback improve future pursuits.

Overall score: 1 2 3 4 5 Evidence / notes: _____

2. Proposal Management

- ☐ We can interpret solicitation requirements and build a complete compliance structure.
- ☐ Technical, management, past performance, contracts, and pricing contributors work from one plan.
- ☐ Roles, deadlines, reviews, assumptions, and approvals are clearly assigned.
- ☐ Proposed commitments are validated as executable before submission.
- ☐ We capture reusable content and lessons without recycling stale or inaccurate responses.

Overall score: 1 2 3 4 5 Evidence / notes: _____

3. Pricing & Financial Readiness

- ☐ We understand direct costs, indirect rates, fee, cash flow, and profitability by opportunity and contract type.
- ☐ Our accounting practices can support the contract types and reporting requirements we pursue.
- ☐ Pricing decisions are coordinated with solution, staffing, contracts, and risk assumptions.
- ☐ We can produce clear, supportable, and internally approved cost or price proposals.
- ☐ Leadership understands the financial consequences of discounts, ceilings, payment terms, and growth.

Overall score: 1 2 3 4 5 Evidence / notes: _____

Readiness Scorecard: Perform & Protect

4. Contract Management & Risk

- ☐ We identify, communicate, and assign ownership for contractual negotiations and obligations to skilled and experienced contract management professionals.
- ☐ Contract terms, modifications, deliverables, notices, and approvals are communicated and centrally controlled.
- ☐ We evaluate risk with input from finance, legal, operations, cybersecurity, and leadership.
- ☐ Changes, delays, disputes, and potential claims are documented and addressed promptly.
- ☐ Contract closeout and lessons learned are treated as part of performance, not an afterthought.

Overall score: 1 2 3 4 5 Notes: _____

5. Program Execution & Customer Performance

- ☐ Program teams understand contract type, scope, schedule, deliverables, acceptance criteria, and funding limits.
- ☐ Cost, staffing, quality, schedule, and risks are reviewed together at a consistent cadence.
- ☐ Customer communications and commitments are documented and coordinated internally.
- ☐ Problems are escalated early enough for corrective action rather than managed as surprises.
- ☐ Performance data supports performance evaluations, CPARS, renewals, recompetes, and future growth.

Overall score: 1 2 3 4 5 Notes: _____

6. Compliance, Cybersecurity & Information Protection

- ☐ We can identify the laws, clauses, standards, and policies applicable to each contract.
- ☐ Every recurring compliance obligation has an owner, frequency, evidence, and escalation path.
- ☐ Government information is identified, handled, shared, stored, and protected appropriately in accordance with laws and regulations.
- ☐ Suppliers and subcontractors receive required flowdowns and are monitored for compliance.
- ☐ We can respond to audits, assessments, incidents, and government inquiries with current evidence.

Overall score: 1 2 3 4 5 Notes: _____

7. Procurement, Supply Chain & Workforce

- ☐ We select vendors, partners, and subcontractors using documented business and compliance criteria.
- ☐ Purchasing and subcontract actions are aligned with contract terms, budget, schedule, and risk.
- ☐ Required clauses, representations, data, security, and performance expectations are flowed down.
- ☐ Workforce planning supports proposed labor, credentials, clearances, and delivery commitments.
- ☐ Quality, ethics, and performance concerns are detected and corrected across the delivery chain.

Overall score: 1 2 3 4 5 Notes: _____

Readiness Scorecard: Integrate & Grow

8. Finance, Accounting & Contract Controls

- ☐ We can track cost, funding, billing, collections, and profitability at the contract level.
- ☐ Indirect rates, timekeeping, cost allocation, and billing practices are consistently applied.
- ☐ Finance and program teams reconcile operational performance with financial results.
- ☐ Leadership receives timely information to act before a contract becomes financially distressed.
- ☐ Records can support customer questions, audits, incurred cost reviews, and contract closeout.

Overall score: 1 2 3 4 5 Notes: _____

9. Leadership, Governance & Continuous Improvement

- ☐ Leadership understands the risks and obligations associated with the government market.
- ☐ Authority, escalation paths, and decision rights are clear across the organization.
- ☐ Departments share information and resolve tradeoffs rather than operating in silos.
- ☐ Metrics, reviews, and lessons learned lead to visible process improvements.
- ☐ Growth decisions consider the organization's capacity to perform; not only its ability to win.

Overall score: 1 2 3 4 5 Notes: _____

Your Readiness Profile

Readiness Area	Score	Priority Action
Strategy, BD & Capture	___ / 5	_____
Proposal Management	___ / 5	_____
Pricing & Financial Readiness	___ / 5	_____
Contracts & Risk	___ / 5	_____
Program Execution	___ / 5	_____
Compliance & Cybersecurity	___ / 5	_____
Procurement, Supply Chain & Workforce	___ / 5	_____
Finance & Contract Controls	___ / 5	_____
Leadership & Continuous Improvement	___ / 5	_____

TOTAL: _____ / 45

What Your Score Means

40-45 | Ecosystem Leader

Strong integration. Focus on resilience, scale, and knowledge transfer.

30-39 | Operationally Ready

Core capabilities are in place. Strengthen consistency and cross-functional connections.

20-29 | Building Capability

Foundations exist, but gaps may increase risk or limit growth. Prioritize the weakest connections.

10-19 | Early Readiness

Build the operating foundation before aggressively pursuing or scaling government work.

9 or below | Starting the Journey

Begin with market fit, leadership alignment, basic controls, and a readiness roadmap.

Your score does not measure where you stand against others. It identifies the next chapter your organization needs to write.

Your Next Chapter

Our strongest capability is: _____

The connection creating the most risk is: _____

The first action we will take is: _____

The people who need to be part of the conversation are: _____

Welcome to Diaries.

The hardest professional decisions should not be made alone.

Government contracting is built by professionals who learn, collaborate, and grow together. Diaries exists at the intersection - where experience becomes insight, insight becomes readiness, and readiness becomes stronger outcomes.

JOIN THE DIARIES READINESS COLLECTIVE