Veterans first!

If you are a veteran with a business, do you have veteran certification from the state of Missouri and U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA)?

Both give service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSB) priority for some contracts. The VA also gives priority to some veteran-owned small businesses (VOSB) contracts, and has special authority to do so for service-disabled veteran-owned small business/veteran-owned small business (SDVOSB/VOSB) set-aside and sole source contracts. These programs result in a large number of Missouri SDVOSB and VOSB companies receiving federal contracts.

Recent federal laws and a sympathetic new VA procurement hierarchy also place the highest priority on SDVOB contracts, followed by VOSB contracts. This procurement authority is a logical extension of VA’s mission, to care for our nation’s veterans. VA refers to this program as the Veterans First Contracting Program.

Veterans First Contracting Program

To qualify for this program, you must first have your veteran status verified. Find step-by-step instructions on completing an application (PDF). This document provides an overview of the process, screen shots for submitting an application and a detailed explanation. Go to vetbiz.gov for more details.

MO PTAC counselors statewide have been trained by VA in a Verification Assistance Program which helps veterans understand the often complex verification policies and processes. The goal of the program is simple: To reduce denials due to lack of understanding and misinterpretation. To accomplish this, VA established partnerships with PTACs around the country to provide hands-on assistance to veterans considering applying for the program.
Here are some of the issues PTAC counselors have noticed:

- Not checking the appropriate box for “status” on VA Form 0877.
- Not indicating percentage of ownership for each individual owner.
- Ownership total not equaling 100 percent.
- Not listing all owners.
- Business name in Name of Company on VA Form 0877 doesn't match the business name listed in the Vendor Information Pages profile.
- Veteran’s name doesn’t match Veterans Benefit Administration (VBA) records. For example, a record hasn’t been updated with VBA after a name change due to marriage.
- Incomplete, incorrect documentation.
- Unusual ownership or management structure.
- Affiliation issues.
- Veteran is unavailable or unresponsive to requests for further information.

State of Missouri Division of Purchasing and Materials Management Program

The state of Missouri’s Division of Purchasing and Materials Management (DPMM) also has a set-aside program for service-disabled veteran enterprises. DPMM’s goal is to award 3 percent of all contracts for jobs or services to qualified service-disabled veteran business enterprises (SDVEs). The program also has a bonus point system for bidders who meet the requirements of a SDVE on bids or proposals for any job or service, except for certain no-cost contracts and other exceptions.

A qualified SDVE vendor can obtain DPMM contracts and bonus points by using qualified subcontractors or suppliers that provide at least 3 percent of the total contract’s value. Here's a current list (July 2015) of qualified subcontractors (PDF).
Any individual, business or organization that meets the definition of a service-disabled veteran and service-disabled veteran business enterprise may submit an application form with copies of discharge papers and other documentation to DPMM. DPMM will then review the completed application form and documentation to determine if the individual, business or organization qualifies as a SDVE.

These processes may sound complex. But MO PTAC counselors around the state routinely assist veteran-owned businesses with registrations and certification for these and many other programs. Find a PTAC counselor near you.
– By Bill Stuby, procurement specialist, University of Missouri PTAC