

Before you pay for federal contracting help: what's free

A one-page checklist for small contractors. Every "free" line links to the government page that says so.

General information only, not legal advice. Price ranges come from sellers' own pages (checked Oct 18, 2026) and, where noted, buyer reports. They're examples, not quotes, and we don't name or rate any seller.

What you might be sold	What sellers charge (reported range)	The free route	Official source
SAM.gov registration or renewal	\$399 to \$3,500 (top is a buyer report, 2023)	Register, renew and update yourself at SAM.gov. GSA says the government will never ask you to pay to register, update or renew. Free help desk at FSD.gov.	GSA notice , FSD.gov
Unique Entity ID (UEI) and CAGE code	Included in SAM packages at \$899 to \$1,298	Both come free with SAM.gov registration. The CAGE code is assigned automatically for US businesses.	SAM.gov entity checklist , FAR 52.204-16
SBA certifications (8(a), WOSB, HUBZone, VOSB)	\$250 to \$6,700 (\$250 is a do-it-yourself kit)	Apply yourself. SBA: "SBA does not charge any costs for applying to our programs."	SBA Certify , MySBA Certifications
SBA Small Business Search profile	\$299 to \$1,000	Edit it yourself. SBA charges nothing for profile management, and most fields fill from SAM.gov.	SBA Certify , Small Business Search
Capability statement	\$49 to \$350 on sellers' own pages	Optional. SBA: "Capability statements are not required to apply for our programs." An APEX Accelerator will review yours at no cost.	SBA Certify , APEX Accelerators
GSA Schedule (MAS) offer	\$1,499 to \$16,000 (top is a quote a buyer received, not paid)	GSA's roadmap walks you through the offer, and GSA lists no submission fee. Free help from GSA's Vendor Support Center.	GSA MAS roadmap , GSA Vendor Support Center
Bid-finding subscriptions	\$129/month to \$8,000/year (top is a demo quote, not paid, 2020)	Search and save alerts free on SAM.gov. Past awards are free on USAspending.gov. APEX does free bid matching.	SAM.gov opportunities , USAspending.gov
Proposal writing	\$19.99 to \$30,000 (top is a buyer-reported first payment, 2023)	APEX Accelerators review proposals at no cost (they advise; they don't write it for you).	APEX Accelerators
"Win contracts" coaching packages	\$500 to \$24,995 (low is a sale price; top is a buyer report)	APEX Accelerators and Small Business Development Centers give free counseling.	APEX Accelerators , America's SBDC

Claims that aren't in the rules

Each comes from GSA's or SBA's own warnings.

- You must pay to register, renew, update or "fix errors" in SAM.gov. ([GSA](#))
- An "agency" asks for payment by gift card, crypto or wire. (GSA, same notice)
- A "SAM.gov" call or email asks you to call or text someone, or links somewhere that isn't SAM.gov. (GSA, same notice)
- An "SBA" email that isn't from @sba.gov, or anyone saying a capability statement is required for SBA programs. ([SBA](#))

Already paid for something on this list?

You can report it free at [ReportFraud.ftc.gov](#). For refund or contract questions, talk to a lawyer or your local APEX counselor.

Want a capability statement anyway? Optional: SBA doesn't require one to apply for its programs. It's useful when a buyer or prime asks for it. We'll write a one-page statement from your answers for \$29 flat, delivered within 48 hours of your answers. [Get the \\$29 capability statement](#)

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