

THE WORK STARTS BEFORE THE SOLICITATION

Why small defense suppliers hear about the work last — and how the public record shows which contracts end next

FARaudit Inc. · October 2026

The short version

- **The official notice is short — and for a commercial buy it is the solicitation itself.** Over \$350,000, the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) requires 15 days' notice before a noncommercial solicitation, and has a commercial purchase post the notice and the solicitation together.
 - **The shaping happens in market research, before the solicitation.** The FAR requires market research before an agency develops a new requirement, and that research informs the set-aside and the scope.
 - **Work that follows on from today's contracts already has a date on public record.** On 7 Oct 2026, USAspending showed 257 companies whose Department of Defense contracts for aircraft parts end within eighteen months — 51 of them on contracts set aside for small business.
 - **Sometimes the door closes before the notice.** In November 2025 a Navy center announced a five-year contract for a machined part, open only to the three shops already certified to make it (Section 4).
 - **The record is public; reading what it means is the work.** Done early, it is one of the few ways a company without a capture team — staff whose job is finding and winning government work — can get ahead of a solicitation.
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1 · The notice is fifteen days — or none of its own

The FAR is being rewritten under Executive Order 14275 (April 2025), and the Department of Defense has put the parts cited here into force. The rewrite kept the 15-day notice; it did not lengthen it. For a purchase over the simplified acquisition threshold — the line above which simplified procedures no longer apply, \$350,000 since 1 Oct 2025:

- **Noncommercial:** the presolicitation notice must go up at least **15 days** before the solicitation, and offerors then get at least **30 days** to respond (FAR 5.101; Tables 5-2 and 5-3).
- **Commercial:** the notice is **combined with the solicitation** (FAR 12.202(b)). Under the old FAR this was optional (FAR 12.603); the rewritten text says to combine them. Unless a trade agreement applies, there is no minimum response time — only "a reasonable opportunity to respond" (Table 5-3).

At or below \$350,000, no separate notice is required when the solicitation is posted on SAM.gov and accepts offers electronically, and orders under existing task- and delivery-order contracts need none (FAR 5.101(b)(1)).

For a part with drawings, testing or source approval, thirty days is time to write a proposal, not to shape the requirement — most of that happened earlier. Sources sought notices, information requests and forecasts often come earlier, but none is required.

2 · The shaping happens in market research

The rewritten FAR Part 10 requires market research **before an agency develops a new requirements document** and before it solicits offers over the simplified acquisition threshold (FAR 10.001(b)). Market research informs what the government buys and who it expects could supply it. The parts a small supplier can see in public include:

- **Sources sought notices** — the agency asking whether capable sources exist. The answers are one input to whether the work is set aside for small business.
- **Requests for information** — the agency asking industry about approach, feasibility and cost.
- **Industry days** — sometimes the first public description of a requirement.

Draft solicitations and questions can still change a requirement later, but by then it has a shape. The rewrite also tells agencies to keep information requests to a minimum (FAR 10.001(d)) — so answer the ones that appear.

Two offices, not one. The *requiring activity* is the office with the need — a program office, a depot, a laboratory. The *contracting office* runs the purchase. Market research is the time to reach the requiring activity, while the requirement is still being shaped.

3 · Contracts have end dates, and the end dates are public

Federal contract actions are published on USAspending.gov — who holds the contract, what it is worth, which office bought it, whether it was set aside, and when it ends. A contract that ends in the next eighteen months is a lead, not a promise: the need may be competed again (a *recompete*), extended, moved to another contract or dropped. But it gives you a name, an office and a date to work back from.

What the record shows. We read USAspending on 7 Oct 2026 for Department of Defense contracts whose current end date falls between 7 Oct 2026 and 7 Apr 2028. For aircraft parts (NAICS 336413, the industry code the agency assigns to the purchase), **257** companies hold contracts ending in that window — **51** of them on contracts set aside for small business.

One caution for machine shops: code 332710 (machine shops) shows only **9** companies in the same window, each with one contract ending — so search the codes your customers buy under, not only your own.

The limits. Options and modifications move end dates. Department of Defense procurement data appears on USAspending about 90 days after the department reports it (GAO-20-75), so an end date may already have been extended by a change not yet published. A first-time requirement has no predecessor contract and appears in none of this. What the record covers is the buying that follows on from work already under contract.

4 · One part, followed through the record

The Naval Surface Warfare Center at Crane, Indiana, buys a machined part again and again: the TR-333 hydrophone housing, used in hydrophones for the Navy's Trident program (NAICS 332710). Each step below is public:

- **2014 – 2025 · the pattern.** USAspending lists 14 Defense contracts and orders for hydrophone housings, nearly one a year.
- **15 Mar 2018 · the early signal.** A sources sought notice on SAM.gov names one certified source. Qualifying another means inspection, certification, first article and operational testing, and the drawings need Joint Certification Program access.

- **24 Nov 2025 · the notice.** Crane announces a five-year contract, limited to "one of the current certified sources" — three named shops. It restricts competition under FAR 6.302-1 (the exception for when only one or a few sources can meet the need), citing roughly \$4 million and up to two years to qualify anyone else.
- **29 Sep 2026 · the award.** One of the three wins a contract the SAM.gov award notice values at \$6.5 million.

What it shows. In 2018 the notice named one certified source and the steps to become another. By 2025 there were three, and the five-year buy was limited to them. For any other shop, the 2025 notice was the end of that process, not the start.

5 · How to read an expiring contract

Five fields decide what you do first: **the incumbent's UEI** (Unique Entity Identifier — not a name that may change); **the buying office** (who bought it, not who needed it — finding the requiring activity is your work); **the end dates** (USAspending shows the current one and the potential one if every option is exercised — work back from the earlier); **the value**; and **the set-aside** — a clue to how the next buy may be competed, though new market research decides it.

Compete or team — a starting point, not a rule. Where the current award was set aside for small business, competing directly for the follow-on is a real possibility. Where it was not, check the holder's size before choosing: teaming with a larger firm may be the better first move, and a small business can also win unrestricted work in its own name. Either way, a prior set-aside does not decide the next buy.

6 · A 30-day plan for a company without a capture team

- **1 · List the contracts ending in your codes.** Pull the DoD contracts in your NAICS codes — and the codes your customers buy under — that ends in the next 12 to 24 months, and sort it by set-aside.
- **2 · Pick five.** Choose the five you could genuinely perform, and find each one's buying office.
- **3 · Answer the sources sought notices for work you could perform.** A response puts your capability on record with an office that is still deciding how to buy.
- **4 · Clear the gates before a deadline does it for you.** Some take weeks to months.
- *SAM.gov* — registration must be active when you submit an offer and at award (FAR 52.204-7).
- *Joint Certification Program (DD Form 2345)* — certifies you to receive unclassified DoD technical data that discloses militarily critical technology, such as controlled drawings.
- *SPRS (Supplier Performance Risk System)* — holds your NIST SP 800-171 assessment score (the federal standard for protecting controlled unclassified information); DFARS 252.204-7019 requires a current one, no more than three years old, to be considered for award.
- *DIBBS* — the Defense Logistics Agency's bid board, separate from SAM.gov.
- **5 · Have a one-page capability statement ready** — UEI, CAGE code (the five-character identifier DoD assigns to your facility), NAICS codes, certifications, past performance and a point of contact.
- **6 · Write to the mission, not your catalog.** The office does not have a gap in your product line. It has a mission it needs to carry out.

Making the part is one skill. Writing an offer the government can evaluate is another — and it takes time a company arriving last does not have.

7 · The plan, applied to one example shop

Of 233 contracts ending in its codes, 22 were last awarded under a set-aside it qualifies for – and this week, 13 open bids were set aside for its own certification.

We ran Section 6's plan for an example profile – a service-disabled veteran-owned machine shop on FARaudit's demonstration account, not a customer – on 7 Oct 2026, using FARaudit to pull the public records.

- **The contracts ending in its codes (step 1).** 233 contracts in its codes end over the next two years. Sorting them by set-aside leaves 22 last awarded under a set-aside its own registration and certifications qualify it for. That is a first filter on eligibility, not a judgment that the shop can make the part: the drawings, the qualification steps and the gates in step 4 still decide that.
- **Its five (step 2).** The record names the office that bought each contract – the contracting office, not the requiring activity. Finding the office with the need behind it is the work Section 2 describes.
- **This week's open bids.** 13 open bids in its codes were set aside for service-disabled veteran-owned businesses – its own certification – and 8 were due within the week. One: 222 wheel hubs for the Defense Logistics Agency, last bought at \$515.10 each. A last price is a starting point for costing your own quote – check the quantity, date and specification behind it – not a target.

What the owner still decides: which of the 22 are worth a call, which of the 13 are worth a quote once costed, and where teaming is the better first move. No record makes that call.

8 · About FARaudit

FARaudit does the first part of a capture team's work – finding the work and screening it against your registration and certifications. For a company without a capture team, it does the reading the owner has no time for; for a company with one, it frees the team for the work software cannot do.

Founded in 2026 by **Jose Rodriguez**, who spent eight years in program finance at Lockheed Martin – on the F-35 Lightning II's Electro-Optical Targeting System (EOTS) and Sikorsky's BLACK HAWK® and MH-60R SEAHAWK® helicopters – where supplier packages crossed his desk at a prime contractor.

See which contracts end in your codes: request access at faraudit.com/access

hello@faraudit.com. Access is by application. Once approved, you find your company in SAM.gov's public register by name or UEI and pick it – no SAM.gov login, and nothing in SAM changes. FARaudit reads your codes and certifications from that public record and shows what this paper describes for your own company: the contracts ending in your codes, the ones last set aside for a business like yours, and the open bids you can enter.

Not ready to apply? Email your NAICS codes to hello@faraudit.com and get back a one-page read: what's open, what's ending, and what gates it. No account, no call.

FARaudit is not a law firm, and this is not legal advice.

Glossary

- **Simplified acquisition threshold** – the dollar line, \$350,000 since 1 Oct 2025, at or below which an agency may use simpler, faster buying procedures.
- **Presolicitation notice** – a public notice that a solicitation is coming, posted before the solicitation itself.
- **Sources sought notice** – an agency asking capable companies to identify themselves, as part of market research. It is not a solicitation.
- **Request for information (RFI)** – an agency asking industry about approach, feasibility or cost.
- **Requiring activity** – the office with the need: a program office, a depot, a laboratory.
- **Contracting office** – the office that runs the purchase and signs the contract.

- **Set-aside** — a purchase reserved for small businesses, or for one small-business program such as service-disabled veteran-owned (SDVOSB), HUBZone, women-owned (WOSB) or 8(a).
 - **Recompete** — a new competition for work an existing contract covers, when that contract ends.
 - **UEI** — Unique Entity Identifier: the 12-character ID SAM.gov gives every registered company.
 - **CAGE code** — the five-character code that identifies a company's facility to the Department of Defense.
 - **FAR 6.302-1** — the exception that lets an agency limit competition when only one or a limited number of responsible sources can meet the need.
 - **First article** — a first production unit tested and approved before the rest are made.
 - **Joint Certification Program (DD Form 2345)** — certifies a U.S. or Canadian company to receive unclassified technical data that discloses militarily critical technology, such as controlled drawings.
 - **SPRS** — the Supplier Performance Risk System, where the Department of Defense holds a company's NIST SP 800-171 assessment score.
 - **NIST SP 800-171** — the federal standard for protecting controlled unclassified information on a company's systems.
 - **DIBBS** — the Defense Logistics Agency's Internet Bid Board System, where DLA posts requests for quotation and takes quotes.
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Sources

- Executive Order 14275 (15 Apr 2025). FAR 5.101 and Tables 5-2 and 5-3; 10.001(b) and (d); 12.202(b) — Revolutionary FAR Overhaul text, acquisition.gov, read 7 Oct 2026; DoD class deviations for Parts 5 and 10 (16 Mar 2026) and Part 12 (20 Apr 2026); FAR 12.603 before the overhaul.
- Simplified acquisition threshold \$350,000 — FAC 2025-06, 1 Oct 2025. FAR 52.204-7; DFARS 252.204-7019. GAO-20-75 (Nov 2019), on the 90-day delay before DoD procurement data appears on USAspending.gov.
- SAM.gov notices N00164-18-S-NB61 (15 Mar 2018) and N0016426RGP89 (24 Nov 2025; award notice posted 2 Oct 2026).
- USAspending.gov DoD prime awards, read 7 Oct 2026: NAICS 336413 and 332710 ending by 7 Apr 2028 (companies counted by UEI); awards matching "hydrophone housing".