

Sources of Data on Federal Small Business Contracts: In Brief

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Introduction

This report describes and discusses sources of data on federal contracts made to small businesses. It aims to serve as a road map of what data is collected, where it is made available, and ways it may be used to analyze federal spending with small businesses. The report also offers guidance on several potential uses of available data (see “Summary Guidance for Sources of Data”). Readers seeking quantitative information on contracts awarded to small businesses will find assistance in the form of a “directory” of available data sources. While the report does not seek to draw conclusions about data quality or assess how well agencies fulfill reporting requirements, it may assist with locating appropriate datasets and alerting readers to the ease-of-use for various data sources.

This report may also assist with the development of legislative proposals that include requirements for small business contracting data collection and reporting. Congress pursues small business contracting data in various ways, including through ad hoc requests to agencies, directives to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), and legislatively mandated reporting. Congressional hearings and policy debates typically highlight the most accessible or available data, and Congress may also be interested in the full spectrum of contracting data sources. In some cases, legislation has mandated the reporting of data that agencies are unable to provide, resulting in reports that are partially complete (and include notes about data unavailability rather than some of the required data itself).

For information on federal small business contracting policy, including contracting preference programs (e.g., contract set-asides for small businesses), see CRS Report R45576, *An Overview of Small Business Contracting*, by R. Corinne Blackford.¹

Static Reports on Dollars Awarded to Small Businesses

Federal agencies, including the Small Business Administration (SBA) and General Services Administration (GSA), produce a number of “static” reports with point-in-time data on small business contracts, typically tied to a particular fiscal year. SBA also maintains certain data on federal contracting with small businesses on its website. Meanwhile, GAO annually publishes data on federal contracts, including some related to small business contracts (see “Static Webpages Hosting Small Business Contracting Data” for further information).

Each of the static reports discussed here presents contract spending data, in terms of the dollars awarded to small business vendors. The data are usually aggregated and presented for the entire category of “small business contractors,” and in some cases broken down into smaller categories and presented for certain types of small businesses—e.g., women-owned small businesses, or service-disabled veteran-owned small business.

¹ Additional resources on federal small business contracting policy include CRS Insight IN12018, *Federal Small Business Contracting Goals*, by R. Corinne Blackford; CRS In Focus IF12476, *SBA’s Women-Owned Small Business Contracting Program*, by R. Corinne Blackford; CRS In Focus IF12458, *The SBA’s 8(a) Business Development Program*, by R. Corinne Blackford; CRS In Focus IF12428, *The SBA’s Historically Underutilized Business Zone (HUBZone) Program*, by R. Corinne Blackford; CRS Report R47226, *Federal Contracting by Veteran-Owned Small Businesses: An Overview and Analysis of Contemporary Issues*, by R. Corinne Blackford; and CRS Report R47585, *An Overview of Small Business Subcontracting: In Brief*, by R. Corinne Blackford.

These reports are visible and downloadable online. They offer quantitative snapshots of federal contracts that have been vetted by agency staff with knowledge of the government database from which the data was extracted (the Federal Procurement Data System). However, they are limited to the point-in-time at which the data were extracted and, due to their formatting, may require manual data manipulation and/or aggregation with various versions of reports published at different times.

A select number of the most popular reports are described below.

Small Business Procurement Scorecards

Since 2007, the SBA has issued a Small Business Procurement Scorecard for the 24 agencies subject to the Chief Financial Officers Act (CFO Act; P.L. 101-576) every fiscal year.² SBA uses the Scorecards to evaluate agencies' performance against their annual, negotiated small business contracting goals.³

The government-wide or agency-specific Scorecards for a given fiscal year provides a starting point for many inquiries related to federal spending with small businesses. The major data points available include:

- amount of total (eligible)⁴ dollars awarded small businesses, service-disabled veteran-owned small business, HUBZone small business, small disadvantaged business, and women-owned small business; and
- number of contractors that were small businesses, service-disabled veteran-owned small business, HUBZone small business, small disadvantaged business, and women-owned small business.

Because the Scorecards are focused on evaluating contracting goal attainment for the types of vendors for which there are goals, they do not provide data on:

- veteran-owned small businesses that are not service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses (SDVOSB);
- economically disadvantaged women-owned small businesses (a subcategory of women-owned small businesses (WOSB) that is important to the WOSB program); nor
- 8(a) program participants (a subcategory of small disadvantaged businesses).

² The Scorecard is statutorily required by Section 15(y) of the Small Business Act, codified at 15 U.S.C. §644(y). For more information about small business procurement goals and goal attainment, see CRS In Focus IF12018, *International Food Assistance and Agricultural Cargo Preference*, by Amber D. Nair, and CRS Report R45576, *An Overview of Small Business Contracting*, by R. Corinne Blackford. A list of CFO Act agencies is available at <https://www.cio.gov/handbook/it-laws/cfo-act/>.

³ Scorecards for individual agencies and government-wide are available for various fiscal years on the SBA's website, at <https://www.sba.gov/document/support-small-business-procurement-scorecard-overview>.

⁴ SBA excludes certain contracts in its Scorecard calculations when procurement data is unavailable or because the work cannot realistically be performed by small businesses. The value of contracts with these exclusions is referred to as the "small business eligible" value. According to the SBA's FY2024 Goaling Guidelines, excluded contracts include acquisitions on behalf of foreign governments; contracts awarded to mandatory sources (which include Federal Prison Industries contracts and those with nonprofit agencies employing persons who are blind or have other significant disabilities); contracts funded with non-appropriated, agency-generated funds; Tricare health care program contracts; and Department of Veterans Affairs Community Care Network contracts. Purchases valued at less than \$10,000 are also excluded because they are not tracked in the Federal Procurement Data System. SBA, *FY2024 Goaling Guidelines*, at <https://www.sba.gov/document/report-sba-goaling-guidelines>.

In their Scorecards, the SBA gives agencies small business contracting credit in every category applicable to a contract recipient. For example, a contract with a small business that is both women-owned and service-disabled veteran-owned would count toward an agency's small business goal, WOSB goal, and SDVOSB goal.

Small Business Goaling Reports⁵

In addition to Procurement Scorecards, GSA's annual Goaling Reports, available through the SAM.gov data bank, provide data on agency small business contract spending with small businesses, the four categories of small businesses for which there are annual contracting goals, and other categories relevant to contracting policy.⁶ Major data points available in the Goaling Reports include:

- amount of total (eligible)⁷ dollars obligated to small businesses, veteran-owned small business, service-disabled veteran-owned small business, HUBZone small business, small disadvantaged business, 8(a) program participants, and women-owned small business; and
- number of contract actions affecting small businesses, veteran-owned small business, service-disabled veteran-owned small business, HUBZone small business, small disadvantaged business, 8(a) program participants, and women-owned small business.

Among the differences between the Goaling Reports and the Procurement Scorecards described above are that the Goaling Reports include data on 8(a) program participants (a subcategory of small disadvantaged businesses) and veteran-owned small businesses (inclusive of service-disabled veteran-owned small businesses), while the Scorecards do not. Goaling Reports also show data on the number of "contract actions,"⁸ in addition to contract spending (dollars), while Procurement Scorecards do not.

GSA "Federal Procurement Data System Report"

The Small Business Act (P.L. 85-536)⁹ also requires GSA to provide a report on all prime contract procurements made each fiscal year. The report must be provided to the President and Congress and made available on a public website. Per Section 15(h)(3)(A)(ii) of the act, it must include "all

⁵ For information about statutory goals, the goal-making process, and goal attainment, see CRS In Focus IF12018, *International Food Assistance and Agricultural Cargo Preference*, by Amber D. Nair, and CRS Report R45576, *An Overview of Small Business Contracting*, by R. Corinne Blackford.

⁶ Goaling Reports are available from the list of Static Reports in the SAM.gov data bank, at <https://sam.gov/reports/awards/static>.

⁷ Like the Procurement Scorecards, the Goaling Reports also reflect some data exclusions, such as data on contracts awarded to mandatory sources or on contracts funded with non-appropriated, agency-generated funds. Purchases valued at less than \$10,000 are also excluded because they are not tracked in the Federal Procurement Data System.

⁸ Contract actions are actions that result in a contract, but may also be actions that result in a contract modification. Per 48 C.F.R. §4.601, "Contract action means any oral or written action that results in the purchase, rent, or lease of supplies or equipment, services, or construction using appropriated dollars over the micro-purchase threshold, or modifications to these actions regardless of dollar value. Contract action does not include grants, cooperative agreements, other transactions, real property leases, requisitions from Federal stock, training authorizations, or other non-FAR based transactions."

⁹ The Small Business Act is available at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/COMPS-1834/pdf/COMPS-1834.pdf>.

procurements made for the period covered by the report and may not exclude any contract awarded.”¹⁰

Report requirements also include data on contract actions that are not currently tracked or available through the Federal Procurement Data System (FPDS) and are thus not reported—in those instances, the report offers the following response: “Not captured in FPDS-NG. Therefore, unable to provide.”¹¹

In contrast with the Small Business Goaling Report and Procurement Scorecard, the GSA “Federal Procurement Data System Report” shows whether certain contracting preferences were used. For example, it can provide a dollar value for the amount of contract awards obligated to SDVOSBs using an SDVOSB set-aside, whereas Goaling Report and Scorecard data includes dollars awarded regardless of contracting preference used/not-used. This report feature may be useful for readers interested in the extent to which contracting preferences are used by agencies.

GSA “Subcontracting Report by North American Industry Classification System”

Combined with the SBA’s Procurement Scorecard data on subcontracts to small businesses, the GSA’s statutorily required “Subcontracting Report by North American Industry Classification System” offers the most comprehensive report on the flow of *subcontract* dollars.¹² The GSA report is provided each fiscal year and aggregates subcontract awards by industry (using North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes), as well as by small business goal category (i.e., small business, veteran-owned small business, service-disabled veteran-owned small business, HUBZone small business, small disadvantaged business, and women-owned small business). Report requirements also include data on contract actions that are not currently tracked or available. The report summary therefore includes a disclosure that some “information is not captured in the Electronic Subcontracting Reporting System (eSRS) and, therefore, is not included.”¹³

SBA Bundled and Consolidated Contract Report

The statutorily required “bundling report” is provided by the SBA each fiscal year, and provides data on each agency’s “bundled” contracts (contracts that potentially could have been performed by a small business but were not because they became larger, consolidated contracts not suitable

¹⁰ This report is available on GSA’s website, at <https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/acquisition-policy/small-business-reports>.

¹¹ For example, report requirements include data on small businesses “that were awarded using a procurement method that restricted competition to small business concerns owned and controlled by service-disabled veterans, qualified HUBZone small business concerns, small business concerns owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, small business concerns owned and controlled by women, *or a subset of any such concerns* [emphasis added].” In other words, the report is required to present data on contracts made with any of the available socioeconomic small business set-asides, of which there are several possibilities. But such a multi-faceted selection of preferences and all possible combinations is not currently recorded. GSA, “Final Data Report: FY2023 Federal Procurement Data System GSA Report,” at <https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/acquisition-policy/small-business-reports>.

¹² This report is available on GSA’s website, on the same page as the Federal Procurement Data System Report, at <https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/acquisition-policy/small-business-reports>.

¹³ GSA, “Executive Summary: FY2023 Federal Procurement Data System GSA Report,” at <https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/acquisition-policy/small-business-reports>.

for small businesses).¹⁴ This annual report discusses bundling actions for the current fiscal year, as well as changes over time in bundling activities. Data in this report includes the number of bundled actions and the total dollar value for those bundled actions, both government-wide and for each agency with bundling activity.

Attached to the SBA's report are reports submitted by each bundling agency that describe bundled contracts, their industry classifications, and the numbers of small businesses impacted or "displaced" by the bundling action. Agency reports also include justifications for why a contract became unsuitable for small businesses. While some bundling data trends can be analyzed by aggregating the data from the reports and manually "crunching the numbers," multi-year analysis of contract bundling data requires careful parsing of the report documents.

For bundling reports through FY2022, agencies were required to report to SBA information "collected through existing agency data collection sources." The James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (P.L. 117-263) required agencies to provide SBA with all the data and information described in Section 15(p)(4) of the Small Business Act, so that beginning in FY2023, "agencies must provide SBA with all the data and information required by the bundling and consolidation report statute."¹⁵

Static Webpages Hosting Small Business Contracting Data

In addition to the above-described static reports, which are provided in document format, certain webpages feature static but regularly updated contracting data. An SBA webpage called "Contracting data"¹⁶ is available through SBA's main website while GAO maintains a "Procurement Snapshot" series¹⁷ that features a breakdown of contract-related spending every fiscal year, including some small business information. The SBA page draws on FPDS entries available via SAM.gov and shows the proportions of a fiscal year's contract spending by race and business size (small or not small). The GAO page shows various infographics and allows for the data behind them to be downloaded.

Online Tools and Interfaces

The federal online tools that allow for extraction and manipulation of dynamic contracting data draw from the same source: the Federal Procurement Data System. The SAM.gov report tools and USAspending.gov¹⁸ (a Treasury website) are the major interfaces, which are publicly accessible. USAspending.gov is designed to be more user friendly than SAM.gov for exploring contract award data, and offers an Advanced Search page that allows for extensive filtering to obtain

¹⁴ This report is available on the SBA's website, at <https://www.sba.gov/document/report-bundled-consolidated-contract-report>.

¹⁵ SBA, *Fiscal Year 2022 Contract Bundling Report to Congress*, October 17, 2023, p. 6, at <https://www.sba.gov/document/report-bundled-consolidated-contract-report>.

¹⁶ This page is available at <https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-data/fy-2023-disaggregated-data>.

¹⁷ This data is available at https://files.gao.gov/multimedia/Federal_Government_Contracting/index.html. While the snapshot was once formatted as an infographic document, it is now an interactive interface. Data underlying the charts and graphs can be downloaded as Excel files.

¹⁸ For more information about this tool, see CRS Report R44027, *Tracking Federal Awards: USAspending.gov and Other Data Sources*, by Jennifer Teefy; and CRS In Focus IF10231, *Tracking Federal Awards in States and Congressional Districts Using USAspending.gov*, by Jennifer Teefy.

charts and graphs of contract data in various aggregations, including by geographic location and North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) code.¹⁹ USAspending.gov’s contract award recipient data search offers a way to view individual contractor profiles, which include data on a firm’s federal contracting award history.²⁰



SAM.gov offers a list of “standard reports” under its Data Bank page.²¹ Through standard report generators, a user can specify report parameters such as a date range and awarding agency, and produce current data that can be downloaded. In some cases, a geographic filter can also be added. For example, the “Geographical Report by Vendor Location” provides state-level data.

For contract spending information on federal dollars awarded to small businesses, SBA Procurement Scorecard(s) are in an interactive format on the SBA website, which allows users to switch between the government-wide scorecard and various agency scorecards, as well as to view graphs and tables.²² SBA has also created a Small Business Data HUB, focused on small business contract spending and small business “vendors,” the small business entities contracted by agencies.²³ It features graphs and tables of the data, which can be filtered to show information for individual agencies, industries (by NAICS code), and geographies (such as state, and, in some cases, congressional district). Tables are downloadable. This tool draws on the same data as SAM.gov and USAspending.gov.²⁴

Summary Guidance for Sources of Data

The following “directory” table shows two major categories of data sources: (1) contract awardee/vendor data, or contract recipient data and (2) contract award spending data. The first category includes information on the numbers of small businesses that receive contracts and contractor profiles while the second category includes data on the dollars flowing to small business contractors. The table is meant to provide data sources that may be most suitable or easiest to use; it does not provide an exhaustive list of all possible data sources. Data sources are typically either published by fiscal year or, in the case of online tools, require the entry of some timeframe, such as fiscal year(s), for data extraction.

Table 1. Directory of Small Business Contracting Data Sources

Awardee/Vendor Data		
Counts of small business contract awardees		SBA’s Small Business Data HUB website (includes counts by socioeconomic type): https://datahub.certify.sba.gov/
		SAM.gov standard report, “Unique Vendors”: https://sam.gov/reports/awards/standard

¹⁹ The USAspending.gov Advanced Search page is available at <https://www.usaspending.gov/search>.

















²⁰ The recipient data search tool is available at <https://www.usaspending.gov/recipient>.

²¹ These are available under the “Standard Reports” selection in the SAM.gov data bank, at <https://sam.gov/reports/awards/standard>. Although publicly accessible, a login is required.

²² The interactive scorecard for FY2023 page is available at <https://www.sba.gov/agency-scorecards/scorecard.html?agency=GW&year=2023>. Other interactive scorecards are available for FY2022 and FY2021 at <https://www.sba.gov/document/support-small-business-procurement-scorecard-overview>. Scorecards for earlier fiscal years are in document format, available at <https://www.sba.gov/document/support-small-business-procurement-scorecard-overview>.

²³ The Small Business Data HUB is available at <https://datahub.certify.sba.gov/>.

²⁴ Articles that provide SAM.gov search assistance are available at <https://sam.gov/content/help>; USAspending.gov provides a Federal Spending Guide at <https://www.usaspending.gov/federal-spending-guide>.

Awardee/Vendor Data		
Counts of small business contract awardees by industry		SBA's Small Business Data HUB website: https://datahub.certify.sba.gov/
Individual small business federal contracting history		USAspending.gov contract award recipient data search: https://www.usaspending.gov/recipient
Other small business owner information		USAspending.gov contract award recipient data search: https://www.usaspending.gov/recipient
		SAM.gov standard report, "Geographical Report by Vendor Location" (for vendor location): https://sam.gov/reports/awards/standard
Award Spending Data		
Dollars awarded (obligated) by agency and government-wide		SBA Procurement Scorecard(s): https://www.sba.gov/agency-scorecards/scorecard.html?agency=GW&year=2023
		GSA "Goaling Report" in SAM.gov data bank: https://sam.gov/reports/awards/static
		SBA's Small Business Data HUB website: https://datahub.certify.sba.gov/
Dollars awarded by small business socioeconomic type and owner demographic ^a		SBA Procurement Scorecard(s): https://www.sba.gov/agency-scorecards/scorecard.html?agency=GW&year=2023
		SBA contracting data webpage (for owner demographics): https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-data/fy-2023-disaggregated-data
		GSA "Goaling Report" in SAM.gov data bank: https://sam.gov/reports/awards/static
		SBA's Small Business Data HUB website: https://datahub.certify.sba.gov/
Dollars awarded by location (including by congressional district)		SAM.gov standard report, "Geographical Report by Place of Performance" (for contract job location): https://sam.gov/reports/awards/standard
		USAspending.gov Advanced Search: https://www.usaspending.gov/search
Dollars awarded by small business contracting preference		GSA "Federal Procurement Data System Report": https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/acquisition-policy/small-business-reports
		SBA's Small Business Data HUB website: https://datahub.certify.sba.gov/
		USAspending.gov Advanced Search: https://www.usaspending.gov/search

Dollars awarded by
contract type (including
Indefinite Delivery Vehicle
(IDV) types)^b



USAspending.gov Advanced Search: <https://www.usaspending.gov/search>

Source: Prepared by CRS on September 4, 2024.

- a. Socioeconomic type refers to the type of business for which there is a socioeconomic contracting goal and preference (Small Disadvantaged Business, Women-Owned Small Business, Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business, and HUBZone Small Business); owner demographic refers to owner background such as minority racial/ethnic identity.
- b. Additional filters are available under the IDV category, such as Government-Wide Acquisition Contract (GWAC), and Federal Supply Schedule (FSS).

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