How to Identify Defense Contractors in a Region

PROMOTING INNOVATION,
DIVERSIFICATION AND COOPERATION IN
THE MISSISSIPPI DEFENSE COMMUNITY

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI.

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Mississippi Defense Initiative

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This document is a step-by-step process of how states or communities can capture the number and type of US Government contracts in their area. The example below is centered around manufacturing or technical US Department of Defense (DoD) contracts within the state of Mississippi.

1. Collect List of All-Defense Contractors in the Focus Region

    a. There are several websites that contain governmental contracting information that can be used for this purpose:

www.governmentcontractswon.com
www.fpds.gov
www.usaspending.gov
www.sam.gov

    b. All these sites have different search criteria such as location, governmental department, contracting agency or vendor name. In this example, www.governmentcontractswon.com was utilized for DoD contracts in the state of Mississippi. The results showed a list of **3,140** defense contractors dating back to 2000 and most with multiple awards. However, only primary contract awardees were included; sub-awardees were not included in this list.

2. Narrow the List to Include Only Contractors Who Received a Contract within the Previous 8 Years

    a. Most sites have data that reports at least ten years. Choose the timeframe for your report.

    b. A filter was added to the spreadsheet to eliminate all companies that did not receive a defense contract within the last eight years (2008-2015). The year 2008 was used in this example because it represented a high-water mark in defense spending as a result of the surge of combat operations in Iraq and continued through high-tempo operations in Afghanistan. However, the 2008 information introduced a slew of miss-information in the contractor list. Numerous contractors went out of business during the 2008-2015 timeframe, and there was difficulty connecting with some of the contractors, which made verification of the list a lengthy process.

3. Filter Contractors by Industry

    a. The original list showed 3,140 defense contractors in Mississippi. Research was conducted on the types of businesses and the dollar amounts reported. This revealed that most of the businesses were either construction companies or personal service companies (landscaping, plumbing, etc.) and many of the dollar amounts were under $1,000. These companies were filtered out of the companies that were not manufacturing or technology related and only 220 companies remained from the original list.

    b. The websites (identified on page in 1) contain information on all federal contracts. Small purchases are considered contracts as far as the website is

concerned. For this reason, you will have to decide what types of contracts or businesses to focus on and what dollar value of singular contracts to filter out.

c. For this example, the given "industry classification," "type of business," and NAICS codes were used to filter out all non-manufacturing and technology focused companies. Examples of the eliminated industries include landscaping services, construction, flooring contractors, consumer electronics and appliances rentals, ice manufacturing, casino hotels, janitorial services, catering services, supermarkets and grocery, educational support services, dry cleaning and laundry services, security guards, and patrol services.

d. After filtering the list down to 220 companies, we began contacting and building relationships with the companies. It quickly became apparent that the list contained many companies that either no longer existed or the contact information had changed. Also, subsidiaries of national or international companies were sometimes listed as the parent company, and the contact information of the local company had to be attained. Team members of the MDI project contacted economic developers in the local communities where firms were located. The local economic development organizations (EDO) were able to provide points of contacts within the company, helped to make introductions for the MDI team members with contacts in the firms, and in many cases utilized those relationships to schedule meetings. By using local EDOs and through trial and error (several months of effort) the list was able to be further reduced to under 100 companies.

e. The number of companies on the list continues to expand and contract on a weekly basis. As trade shows or other events are attended by a MDI team members, new companies are added because they are interested in being included in our effort. Additionally, those companies have recommended other companies not listed on the original list pull.

4. Filter Remaining Contractors as Needed

a. Contractors may be filtered by total contract dollar amount or yearly contract dollar amount. For example, many of the South Mississippi Defense Corridor contractors were narrowed down to those who had contract dollar amounts exceeding $1 million. However, it depends on your region, lines of business, etc. This is at least a good starting point. These filters will be based on the goal of how contractors will be analyzed.

5. Lessons Learned

a. Information can easily be gathered from the websites (www.governmentcontractswon.com, www.fpds.gov, www.usaspending.gov, and www.sam.gov). You do not have to pay someone to gather this information for you.

b. The information gathered from the website is incomplete and inaccurate, but it is a good starting point. Some of the companies listed will have gone out of business, merged with other companies or just changed contact info. Also, the websites will never be completely up to date. You may have to use the data from the latest year available. This means that local economic developers and

government entities may need to get involved to verify, refine and add to the list of companies.

c. Not all websites list contract sub-awardees. For sub-awardee and supply chain information you will have to survey the primary awardee companies.

d. If the company is a subsidiary of a national or international corporation, the parent company's information may be listed on the website, and you may have to contact the parent to get the local company information. Some local subsidiary companies did not appear on internet searches.

e. A wide variety of industries included in defense spending makes the process of sorting contractors by industry subjective. Defense spending in each region tends to have a particular industrial focus area. Example: The South Mississippi Defense Corridor contains the Port of Gulfport, Camp Shelby, and Stennis Space Center; the Meridian defense spending focuses on aerospace projects; and Vicksburg is home to the headquarters of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that performs environmental research and construction.

f. The screening process revealed that NACIS codes were not precise on categorizing defense contractor firms; therefore, NACIS codes should not be the only criteria used for filtering defense contractor firms.