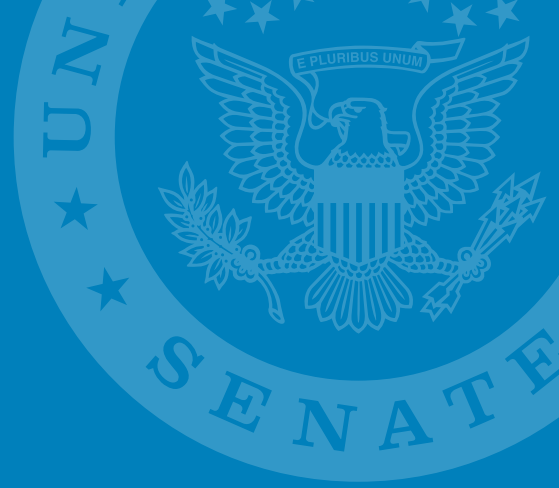


# How to Apply for a Grant



S T E V E D A I N E S  
UNITED STATES SENATOR



Dear Fellow Montanan,

Small business is the backbone of our communities and our state's economy. Like you, I know that jobs and prosperity comes from small businesses and Montanans. According to the Small Business Administration State Profile for FY2018, Montana has over 118,000 small businesses in the state, making up 99.3 percent of all businesses. These organizations employ over 244,000 Montanans, or 65.2 percent of the state workforce. Small business is incredibly important to our state. With 28 years of private-sector experience, I know just how hard it is to run a small business and I know just how important small business is to Montana families.

Doing business with the Federal government is never easy. Wait times for a contract are long, sometimes longer than makes good business sense. And the rules and regulations are thicker than a telephone book. That said, Federal contracts are the way we provide goods and services to Warfighters at Malmstrom Air Force Base and firefighters working with the Forest Service across the state. Federal contracts can be a good opportunity for Montana small businesses willing to take the challenge. The purpose of this guidebook is to give Montanans a place to learn about Federal contracts, to decide if it makes sense for their business, and how to get started.

On behalf of all Montanans, thank you for the work that you do to support our state's economy. Please don't hesitate to contact my office if you have any thoughts or concerns.

Thank you and God Bless.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Daines".

Steve Daines  
United States Senator





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# 1. Introduction

The Federal Government spends billions of dollars every year on contracts. In Montana alone, the Federal government spent \$9.3 billion dollars in 2018—500 million of which was spent on federal contracts.<sup>1</sup> Your small business can learn how to tap into those funds.

The vision, creativity, and common sense practices that Montana small business leaders bring to the table is exactly what the Federal Government needs. The process may seem challenging at first glance, yet if you follow the guidelines in this manual, you can serve your country and bring the great state of Montana more growth and new opportunities.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) works to assign up to 23% of prime government contract dollars to eligible small businesses.



The government wants to partner with you:<sup>2</sup>

- To ensure that large businesses don't "muscle out" small businesses
- To gain access to the new ideas that small businesses provide
- To support small businesses as engines of economic development and job creation
- To offer opportunities to disadvantaged socio-economic groups

***“The BEST WAY for newcomers to learn the ropes when it comes to earning federal contract work is through SUBCONTRACTS.”***



However, before you jump right in, newcomers to government contract work should be aware that<sup>2</sup>:

- The government has a preference for doing business with well established businesses that have a proven track record for delivering on time and on budget.
- Government contracts can be very competitive and some businesses spend \$80,000 to \$130,000 to win their first contract.
- Return on investment may take up to 2 years and some agencies require electronic invoicing and payments.
- Rules for government contracts can be extremely complex and bureaucratic.
- Every agency is different and it can take experience working with or for the agency to understand customer needs and build personal relationships.

Despite these challenges, the purpose of this manual is to guide you through the process and put you in the best position to win a federal contract for your small business.

It is also important to note that the best way for newcomers to learn the ropes when it comes to earning federal contract work is through subcontracts. The government can require prime contracts to create opportunities for small businesses through a subcontracting plan. Subcontracts are a great way to learn how best to work with federal government customers, gain valuable personal relationships, and develop a record of delivering results on time and on budget.

It is important to be aware that the government may have requirements for prime contractors that flow-down to subcontractors. Some of these requirements can include compliance, monitoring, and reporting. Any prime contractor with a subcontractor plan can be selected for review of subcontracting compliance.

Subcontract work offers a great experience for newcomers. Once you learn the ropes through subcontracting, your business will be a step closer to winning bids and proposals as a prime contractor.



<sup>1</sup> USA Datalab:

<https://datalab.usaspending.gov/contract-explorer.html>  
<https://www.usaspending.gov/#/state/30>

<sup>2</sup> Small Business Administration Contracting Guide:

<https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-guide>



# 2 Pursuing Federal Contracts

## A. Conduct Market Research

Before you throw your hat in for a federal contract, you need to decide if this decision makes sense for your business. It can be very expensive and time consuming to research, prepare, and submit bids and proposals. A big picture view of market conditions can be useful in assessing risk and potential profits. There are several resources that can provide useful data about the federal market.

- The General Services Administration (GSA) has a Vendor Toolbox that can help you decide if federal contracting makes sense for you: <https://vsc.gsa.gov/ra/toolbox.cfm>
- You can find information about contracts over \$25,000 using the Federal Procurement Data System: [https://www.fpds.gov/fpdsng\\_cms/index.php/en/](https://www.fpds.gov/fpdsng_cms/index.php/en/)
- It is also possible to look for trends in government spending using the USAspending.gov searchable database: <https://www.usaspending.gov>
- In addition, federal agencies provide predictions about upcoming opportunities for businesses through the Agency Recurring Procurement Forecasts website: <https://www.acquisition.gov/procurement-forecasts>

## B. Identify Contract Opportunities

Once you've done the market research, the next step is identifying specific opportunities. Several resources are available to help find sources for federal contracts.

- The GSA Technology Transformation Service hosts the Contract Opportunity Finder on the USA.gov website to help small and/or disadvantaged businesses find contracts: <https://www.usa.gov/find-government-contracts>
- The GSA Schedules Program has contract opportunities that allow contract holders to sell to any government agency through just one source, instead of needing to contract with every individual agency: <https://www.gsa.gov/buying-selling/purchasing-programs/gsa-schedules>
- FedBizOps is a website with a searchable database of agency contracts. It serves as a marketplace for government business: <https://www.fbo.gov/>
- Many federal agencies have Offices of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization that can help small businesses search and compete for federal contracts: <https://www.usa.gov/expand-business#item-213433>
- Government agencies use the Dynamic Small Business Search (DSBS) database to find small businesses for upcoming contracts: [http://web.sba.gov/pro-net/search/dsp\\_dsbs.cfm](http://web.sba.gov/pro-net/search/dsp_dsbs.cfm)





***You need to decide if***

***this decision MAKES SENSE***

***for your business.***



### **C. Find Subcontracts**

After researching the market and identifying contract opportunities, you should always be on the lookout for subcontracts: <https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-guide/prime-subcontracting>

- The SBA maintains the SubNet database of subcontracting opportunities posted by large contractors looking for small businesses to serve as subcontractors: [https://eweb1.sba.gov/subnet/client/dsp\\_Landing.cfm](https://eweb1.sba.gov/subnet/client/dsp_Landing.cfm)
- The SBA maintains a list of prime contractors that have subcontracting plans: <https://www.sba.gov/document/support--directory-federal-government-prime-contractors-subcontracting-plans>
- The GSA also maintains a subcontracting directory, which is a list of prime contractors that are required to have subcontracting plans: <https://www.gsa.gov/small-business/find-and-pursue-government-contracts/seek-opportunities/subcontracting-directory-for-small-businesses>
- Department of Defense publishes lists of prime contractors that can also be used to find subcontracting opportunities: <https://business.defense.gov/Acquisition/Subcontracting/Subcontracting-For-Small-Business/>



# 3. Register Your Business

## A. Determine the NAICS Code for your Business

Once you have decided that pursuing federal contract opportunities makes sense for your business, and you have identified a few contract opportunities, the next step is to figure out the North American Industry Classification (NAICS) code for your industry: <https://www.naics.com/search/>

## B. Determine if your Business is a Small Business

The NAICS code is important because the SBA uses these codes to determine if you're eligible to apply for contracts as a small business.

A good rule of thumb is that most manufacturing companies with up to 500 employees count as a small business. For non-manufacturing companies, a business that has less than \$7.5 million dollars in average annual sales qualifies as a small business.

If you are still unsure, the SBA has a tool to help you determine if your business qualifies as a small business: <https://www.sba.gov/size-standards/>

## C. Get a DUNS Code for your Business

After finding your NAICS code, the next step is to register for a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) code. DUNS is a unique identifier for businesses, much like a social security number for individuals. Unlike social security numbers, the DUNS number is not issued by the government, but is instead managed by a private company, Dun & Bradstreet. <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/displayHomePage.do;jsessionid=81407B1F03F2BDB123DD47D19158B75F>

***“A good rule of thumb is that MOST manufacturing companies with up to 500 employees count as a SMALL BUSINESS.”***



## **D. Register your business with the System for Award Management**

Finally, register your business with the federal government's System for Award Management (SAM). This is the official website for doing business with the federal government. To register, you will need to have a DUNS number and a taxpayer identification number (TIN). In addition, you will also need your bank routing number, bank account number, and bank account type for electronic funds transfers (EFT). <https://www.sam.gov/SAM/>

## **E. Determine Eligibility for Set Asides or Sole-Source Contracts**

When preparing your business's background information for SAM, it is important to determine if your business is disadvantaged, veteran owned, woman owned, or located in an underutilized area. Certain set-aside or sole-source contracts are available for competition for certain business categories. To determine if your business is eligible under any of these categories, you can use the SBA's Certify website: <https://certify.sba.gov/am-i-eligible>.

You are now ready to submit proposals and bids for federal contracts.





# 4 Submit a Proposal or Bid for a Solicitation

You have done the research, you've registered your business and now you're ready to submit that proposal. Again, before you submit your bid, remember that doing subcontract work will likely increase your chance for winning the big contracts. The process for a federal contract is tedious, time consuming, and costly, but with the right preparation, your business is bound for success.

## A. Best Practices for Preparing a Proposal or Bid

Read the solicitation carefully. This is key. Bids that win are the ones that are responsive to the solicitation and meet the needs of the customer. Tailoring your bid or proposal to the solicitation is essential.

Likewise, submitting all required documentation and following instructions carefully is essential for a winning bid. Simply failing to follow formatting instructions can be a reason why bids and proposals are thrown out by federal reviewers.

Different agencies may have different rules and requirements for bids and proposals. Do not assume that agencies handle contracts the same way. When possible, get in touch with program managers at the agency that are the points of contact for the solicitation, who can provide agency specific instruction as to how best to prepare a bid or proposal.

It is important to do this early, so that valuable time and effort is not wasted. Beware of deadlines, and never submit a late bid or proposal. Program managers may be forced to throw out late bids and proposals.

## B. Review Process for Bids and Proposals

Bids and proposals can take from 30 to 120 days to review. Depending on the size, complexity, and the individual agency, review times may take even longer. Different factors may be considered, including the quality of the bid or proposal, past performance of the business, and potential pricing. Standards and procedures for evaluating bids and proposals may differ between agencies. It is vital that you are in sync with the solicitation point of contact to get details on how bids and proposals will be evaluated.

## C. After an Award is Made

If a bid or proposal is accepted, be prepared to negotiate. Program managers may accept all or part of a bid or proposal, and may ask for modifications. It is important for a business to have a strong negotiator that knows the pricing and fully understands what the government is asking for with respect to the requirements listed in the solicitation. Building a rapport with the program manager or contracting official is very important and good performance can be very helpful in obtaining future contracts.





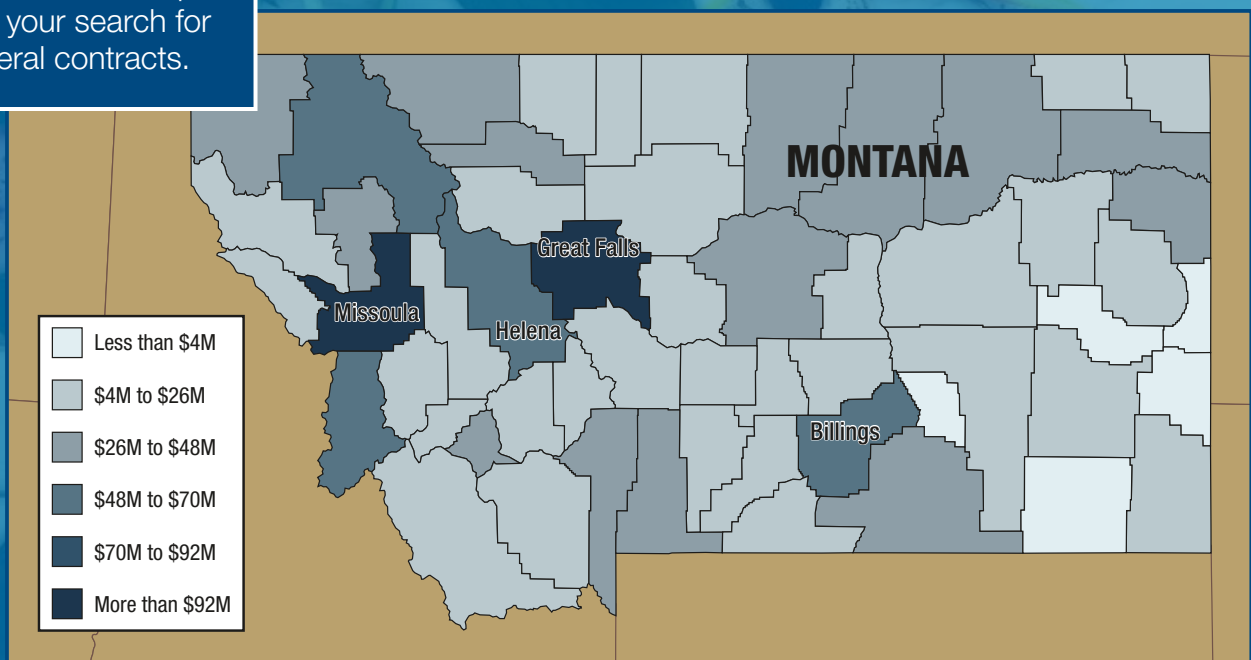
***“Bids that win are the ones that are **RESPONSIVE** to the solicitation and **MEET THE NEEDS** of the customer.”***



# 5 2018 Federal Contracts in Montana

*Data shown below obtained from [usaspending.gov](https://usaspending.gov), accessed 11/5/2018*

Understanding which federal agencies are doing business in Montana can be very useful to help tailor your search for federal contracts.

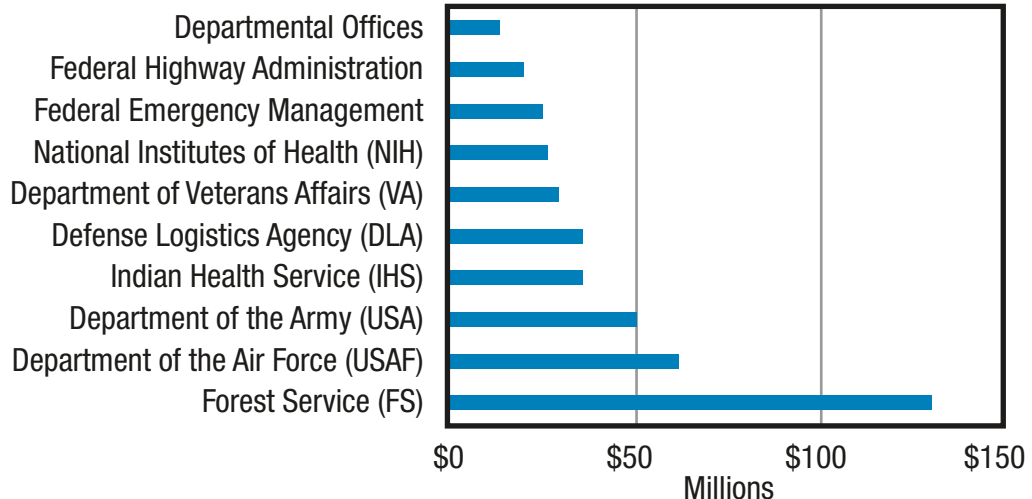


*Figure 1. FY2018 federal contracts in Montana*

A total of 13,084 federal contracts were performed in Montana in 2018. Most federal contracts are concentrated in the larger Montana population centers such as Missoula, Great Falls, and Billings.



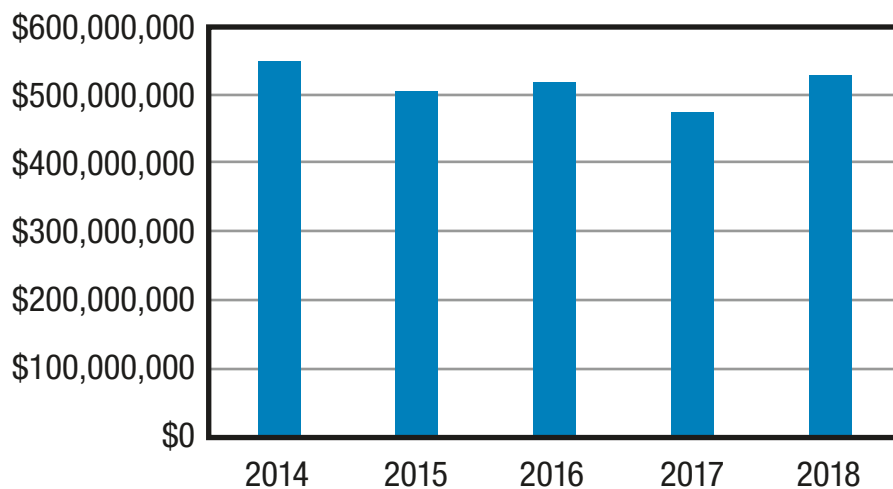
The Top 10 agencies with federal contract obligations in Montana have spending that range between \$13 million to \$130 million dollars. Overall, the biggest source of federal contracts in Montana is the Department of Defense (DoD). However, DoD contracts are split between their services and other sub-agencies. The top source of federal contract obligations in FY2018 was the Forest Service at \$129,377,285.



*Figure 2. FY2018 Top 10 Agencies in federal contract obligations in Montana*

Each fiscal year, the federal government obligates about \$500 million dollars in contracts performed in Montana. While the vast majority of these contract dollars are obtained by Montana companies, out of state companies also compete and win federal contracts performed in Montana.

### Federal Contract Dollars Obligated in Montana



*Figure 3. Federal contracts in Montana from FY2014 to FY2018*



# 6. Points of Contact for Federal Contracts

Every federal agency is different with its own special needs, business processes, and contracting procedures. It won't hurt your business to build a good relationship with contracting officers at different agencies. You should get to know them, know their mission, and know their needs. Even different locations (bases) in the same organization can do things differently. Customer service is the key to repeat business!

## **USDA Forest Service**

### **East Side Acquisition Team, Region 1**

<https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/custergallatin/workingtogether/contracting>

#### ***Region 1 includes the following:***

Helena National Forest  
Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest  
Lewis and Clark National Forest

Gallatin National Forest  
Custer National Forest  
Dakota Prairie Grasslands

Gary Stephens, ESAT Zone Manager  
Phone: (406) 624-3440  
[gary.stephens@usda.gov](mailto:gary.stephens@usda.gov)

Lori Austad  
Phone: (406) 329-3858  
[lori.austad@usda.gov](mailto:lori.austad@usda.gov)

Michael Lucas  
Phone: (406) 329-3979  
[michael.j.lucas@usda.gov](mailto:michael.j.lucas@usda.gov)



***Customer service  
is the key to  
repeat business!***





**Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization,  
Specialist in Key USDA Agencies (Forest Service)**

Cele Aguirre-Bravo, Ph.D.  
Sustainability Small Business  
Program Coordinator  
USDA, Forest Service, BO/AQM/WO  
Phone: (703) 605-5144  
[caguirrebravo@usda.gov](mailto:caguirrebravo@usda.gov)

**Air Force Global Strike Command-Malmstrom Small Business Specialist  
Montana -AFGSC- Malmstrom AFB**

Phone: (406) 731-3123 or (406) 731-4028  
<https://www.airforcesmallbiz.af.mil/Small-Business/>  
<https://www.airforcesmallbiz.af.mil/Small-Business/Locate-Specialist/>

**341<sup>st</sup> Contracting Squadron  
Malmstrom AFB Contracting Squadron**

Phone: (406) 731-3744 DSN: 632-3744  
<https://www.malmstrom.af.mil/Units/341st-Mission-Support-Group/Contracting-Squadron/>

**US Army Corps of Engineers Omaha District**

Ginger Gruber, Chief of Contracting  
Phone: (402) 995-2047  
<https://www.nwo.usace.army.mil/Business-With-Us/Small-Business/>  
<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23FedBizOpps%20%40OmahaUSACE>

**Indian Health Service, Billings Area Office**

Jerry Black, Chief of Contracting  
Phone: (406) 247-7068  
[jerry.black@ihs.gov](mailto:jerry.black@ihs.gov)  
<https://www.ihs.gov/billings/>

**Federal Highway Administration**

Mandy Wylie, Small Business Specialist  
Office of Acquisition and Grants Management  
Phone: (202) 366-0438  
[mandy.wylie@dot.gov](mailto:mandy.wylie@dot.gov)

**FEMA Small Business Specialist**

Robert Keegan  
Phone: (202) 288-4657  
[robert.keegan@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:robert.keegan@fema.dhs.gov)



# Procurement Technical Assistance Centers in Montana

Doing business with the Federal government may seem challenging, but there is further help available for you. The SBA sponsors Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTACs) to provide in-person help, and training to small business owners. PTAC services are free or available at nominal cost. PTACs are part of the Defense Logistics Agency's (DLA) Procurement Technical Assistance program.

## Big Sky Economic Development Authority Montana Procurement Technical Assistance Program

Statewide PTAC  
<http://www.montanaptac.org>  
222 North 32nd Street Suite 200  
Billings, MT 59101  
(406) 256-6871

Deanna Langman, CPP  
Statewide Program Manager  
Phone: (406) 869-8410  
Email: [langman@bigskyeda.org](mailto:langman@bigskyeda.org)

Rosalind Dix  
Government Contracting Advisor  
Phone: (406) 869-8413  
Email: [dix@bigskyeda.org](mailto:dix@bigskyeda.org)

## Montana State University

The Montana counties of Broadwater, Gallatin, Lewis and Clark, Madison and Park  
<http://www.montanaptac.org>  
2310 University Way  
Bldg. 2, Ste. 2  
Bozeman, MT 59715  
(406) 994-7748

Phillip Luebke, CPP  
Government Contracting Advisor  
Certified VA Verification Counselor  
Phone: (406) 994-7748  
Email: [phillip.luebke@montana.edu](mailto:phillip.luebke@montana.edu)

## University of Montana

Office of Research and Creative Scholarship  
<http://www.umt.edu/research/innovation/>  
University Hall 116  
Missoula, MT 59812

Patty Cox, CPP  
Government Contracting Advisor  
Phone: (406) 243-4030  
Email: [patricia.cox@umontana.edu](mailto:patricia.cox@umontana.edu)



***“[It] may seem challenging  
but there is further help  
available for you.”***





### Great Falls Development Authority

<http://www.gfdevelopment.org>

300 Central Ave #406  
Great Falls, MT 59401  
(406) 564-0957

Lillian Sunwall  
Government Contracting Advisor  
Phone: (406) 750-1253  
Email: [lsunwall@growgreatfalls.org](mailto:lsunwall@growgreatfalls.org)

### Montana West and Flathead County Economic Development

<http://www.dobusinessinmontana.com>

44 2nd Avenue West  
Kalispell, MT 59901  
(406) 257-7711

Doug Bolender, CPP  
Government Contracting Advisor  
Phone: (406) 257-7711  
Email: [doug@dobusinessinmontana.com](mailto:doug@dobusinessinmontana.com)

### Ravalli County Economic Development Authority

<http://www.rceda.org>

274 Old Corvallis Road  
Hamilton, MT 59840  
(406) 375-9416

John Schneeberger, CPP  
Government Contracting Advisor  
Phone: (406) 375-9416  
Email: [john@rceda.org](mailto:john@rceda.org)

### Snowy Mountain Development Corporation

<http://www.snowymtndev.com>

613 N.E. Main  
Lewistown, MT 59457  
(406) 535-2591

Carly Wheatley  
Government Contracting Advisor  
Phone: (406) 535-2591  
Email: [wheatley@snowymountaindevelopment.com](mailto:wheatley@snowymountaindevelopment.com)



## Native American Development Corporation PTAC

Mary Walks Over Ice  
Program Manager  
Phone: (406) 259-3804  
Email: [mwalksoverice@nadc-nabn.org](mailto:mwalksoverice@nadc-nabn.org)

Stacey LaCompte  
Phone: (701) 250-0728  
Email: [stacey@agencymabu.com](mailto:stacey@agencymabu.com)

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Procurement Specialist  
Phone: (406) 294-7994  
Email: [tguardipee@nadc-nabn.org](mailto:tguardipee@nadc-nabn.org)

Robert Much  
Procurement Specialist  
Phone: (406) 442-8543  
Email: [rmuch@nadc-nabn.org](mailto:rmuch@nadc-nabn.org)

Dustin Baird  
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Phone: (605) 455-2500  
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Program Director  
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Email: [lsmith@nadc-nabn.org](mailto:lsmith@nadc-nabn.org)







S T E V E   D A I N E S  
D A I N E S . S E N A T E . G O V