

Federal Marketing: The 5 Basics You Should Know

Here are some essentials you need to know as you enter government marketing or prepare to take the next step up.

1. Missions and Organization

Unlike commercial enterprises, government agencies are driven by their missions. Ultimately, agencies buy things from companies to perform their missions better, faster, or more efficiently. Missions are usually pretty clearly stated on agency websites. Each agency typically publishes a strategic plan, which can be found on their website also. The government is commonly divided into the following segments:

- Defense (<https://www.defense.gov>)
- Civilian Agencies
- Intelligence Community (<https://www.intelligence.gov>)

2. Federal Budget

Know that the Government Fiscal year begins October 1 and ends September 30 of the following year. For example, the Federal fiscal year 2019 began October 1, 2018 and ends September 30, 2019. Federal funds must be spent by September 30 of each year and cannot be carried over. August and September are particularly crazy months as money shifts as government leaders try to spend their budgets. *More information:* <https://www.nationalpriorities.org/budget-basics/federal-budget-101/federal-budget-process/>

Follow the money – and spending trends in government. Congress can't fund everything and certain programs and agencies may fall in or out of favor. Cybersecurity, cloud and data analytics have been trending up for several years. *More information:* https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/budget/fy2018/ap_16_it.pdf

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3. Federal Government Buying

Generally speaking, to sell anything to the Federal Government, your product or service must be available through a Government Contract Vehicle. Know the difference between a GSA schedule, multiple award contracts, and proprietary contracts. Know that certain programs may be “set aside” for special preference groups such as small businesses, women-owned businesses, disabled veteran-owned businesses, HUB-zone businesses, etc.

4. Government Ethics

Government employees must comply with their agency’s code of ethics. It’s important to know the following when you organize campaigns and events targeting federal employees. Government employees may accept:

- Gifts of \$20 or less per occasion, not to exceed \$50 in a year from one source. This exception does not apply to gift cards, certificates and promotional codes that function as cash, although it does apply to those redeemable only at limited places, for example only at one store or at a group of affiliated stores such as those in a particular shopping center.
- Free attendance, food, refreshments and materials provided at a conference or widely attended gathering or certain other social events which an employee attends in his official capacity.

<https://ask.fedweek.com/federal-government-policies/rules-gifts/>

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5. Resources

Here are some additional sources of information you should be familiar with.

- Keep abreast of what's going on by listening online or at 1500 AM to [Federal News Network](#)
- Be familiar with leading associations that bring together industry and government. You can attend meetings and understand their priorities and challenges they facing.
 - DOD: [Armed Forces Communications and Electronic Association](#) (AFCEA), [National Defense Industrial Association](#) (NDIA)
 - Intelligence Community: [Intelligence and National Security Alliance](#) (INSA)
 - Civilian: [ACT-IAC](#), [AFFIRM](#)
- Find out more about the media consumption habits of government by reviewing [Market Connections](#) Federal Media & Marketing Study, an annual study
- Get a deeper understanding of agency pain points by reading Inspectors General reports or reports issued by the [General Accountability Office](#) (GAO)
- Know where to go for deeper, more comprehensive information about government contracting activity, including org charts. Become familiar with what paid subscription sources like [GovWinIQ](#) and [Bloomberg Government](#) offer.
- Know what government events are taking place by signing up for [GovEvents](#).