

How to Become a Disaster Relief Contractor

In times of national crises, the federal government calls upon businesses across the country to deliver emergency goods and services where and when Americans need them most. As the COVID-19 pandemic showcased, the government's need for a network of reliable providers has become more important than ever.

Disaster Recovery Contracting Benefits

Fortunately, any U.S. business owner can do their part and be well compensated for assisting on this front. With this potentially lucrative compensation in mind, let's take a look at the benefits of becoming a disaster relief contractor with the federal government:

Help People Get What They Need

The spending expansion by the federal government is relevant to a long list of industries. With COVID, it was critical to get everything from masks, test kits, and ventilators to computers and laptops, telecommunication platforms, and cybersecurity software to those that need it most. **Disaster relief and recovery contractors bolster this pipeline, providing additional resources, manpower, services, and more to those affected by the disaster** — whether a pandemic, earthquake, or hurricane. There is immense honor in helping those in need, and it is truly the #1 benefit of these opportunities.

How Much Does FEMA Pay Contractors?

By their nature, disasters will surprise communities at any time, and it pays to be prepared. That's why **every year, a large portion of over \$500 billion for federal government contract spending is set aside to fund inevitable disaster relief work**. The financial benefits are immense when it comes to any kind of government contracting, and disaster relief is no different. Awards for storm cleanup contracts, pandemic response contracts, humanitarian aid contracts, etc. all can be incredibly beneficial for all parties.

Sets Businesses Up for Post-Crisis Success

Once a crisis has been fully quelled and resolved, contractors can experience even more advantages from the usual long-term benefits that federal registration provides. On top of the social and economic benefits of contributing during a disaster, registered organizations also have the ability to provide services against future disasters that will unfortunately but inevitably strike down the road.

But before organizations can actually perform any of the vital work they're capable of (or be called upon for aid through the official channels) they'll first need to [complete a registration process with the federal government](#).

How to Access FEMA & Disaster Relief Contracts

Under nationwide regulations, organizations must be registered with the federal government and listed in the SAM database before becoming eligible to provide disaster relief work. For more information on this process, [see our SAM registration guide](#). Here's a quick overview of the process:

Register with the System for Award Management

To register with SAM, a business must first acquire a UEI number. [Learn more about UEI numbers here](#). From there, any business can continue its registration process by visiting www.sam.gov and following the instructions found on the website. It's worth noting that government applications can be incredibly tedious and strict about the smallest factors, so be very diligent as you're going through this process. For help with this, [FAMR has been assisting businesses](#) just like yours get registered and win contracts for years, so we're happy to lend a hand!

Complete the Disaster Response Information Section in SAM

This special section within the [SAM Registration](#) process is required to be included in FEMA's Disaster Response Registry. The Disaster Response Registry is utilized by both FEMA and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers to source emergency relief contractors.

Submit for a CAGE Code

Next, a business will need to register with the [U.S. Defense Logistics Agency](#) to [receive a CAGE code](#). These codes are five-digit designations that are used extensively by the federal government. FEMA and the DLA work closely when it comes to emergency recovery — this partnership was formalized after Hurricane Katrina and has been leading the charge on disaster response ever since.

Complete FEMA's Industry Liaison Program Vendor Profile Form

Your company will also need to establish a profile with FEMA by filling out the Industry Liaison Program Vendor Profile form. Upon completion of the form, businesses should submit it to FEMA by emailing fema-industry@fema.dhs.gov.

Prepare Your Business' Web Presence

Your company should have an accurate, updated website that clearly describes the goods and services offered and (if possible) includes a link to your product catalog. In times of emergency, agencies move fast and a company's web presence can be the difference between winning a contract or not.

From there, a business is free to actively research to find contracting opportunities to pursue and apply for. Some common places to look are [Unison Marketplace](#), [DIBBS](#), [Sam.gov](#), and the [DHS Acquisition Planning Forecast System](#).

Top FEMA Contractors

Contrary to other [contracting areas like Defense](#), disaster relief contractors are typically local or regional businesses rather than national or multinational corporations. However, there are some companies that specialize in disaster response — these include **AshBritt**, **Ceres Environmental**, **Fluor**, **Bechtel Group**, **Vanguard Emergency Management**, and **WSP USA Inspection Services**.

FEMA Subcontracting

For smaller companies (or those not looking for huge contracts right now), subcontracting is another valuable opportunity worth looking into. We've explored [what subcontractors and prime contractors are in the past](#), and FEMA even has a [list of DHS prime contractors](#) for those interested in subcontracting to reach out to. These opportunities can still be lucrative for your business without the hefty responsibilities of prime contracting. Examples of FEMA subcontracting services could include more niche offerings like data analysis, risk assessment, debris cleanup, tool manufacturing, and more.

Registering to Provide Disaster Relief: Alone or with the Professionals?

Unfortunately, the heavy amount of clerical work involved (and that the tiniest filing error during registration can lead to hours of additional headaches navigating a complex addendum process) often result in many business owners opting to pass on this opportunity.

Thankfully, there are trusted options to help handle every step described above accurately and guide businesses on how to master the federal marketplace and the disaster relief opportunities. As with any important service regarding your business, before you consider putting its registration in the hands of anyone else, remember to [research reviews and assess their reliability through a trusted source](#) first. We have a strong track record of helping businesses across a variety of industries and sizes to get the awards they deserve.