



TESTIMONY of TIFFANY FORD
SB 2018
JANUARY 15, 2025

Chairman Wanzek and members of the Committee:

My name is Tiffany Ford, Project Director for the North Dakota APEX Accelerator. The ND APEX Accelerator program is hosted by the University of North Dakota's Center for Business Engagement and Development, within the Nistler College of Business and Public Administration. Federal program funding is provided by the Department of Defense Office of Small Business Programs. APEX Accelerators have a local presence in all 50 states. The ND APEX Accelerator currently operates a statewide program with only three full-time positions.

The APEX Accelerators, formerly known as the Procurement Technical Assistance Program (PTAP), was authorized by Congress in 1985 to expand the number of businesses capable of participating in government contracts. The program focuses on building a strong, sustainable, and resilient U.S. supply chains by assisting a wide range of businesses that pursue and perform under contracts with the DoD, other federal agencies, state and local governments and with government prime contractors. APEX Accelerators work with federal, state, and local partners to provide the opportunity for companies new to government contracting to acquire the skills and know-how to compete in the government marketplace. Education and training ensures that all businesses become capable of participating in federal, state, and local government contracts. APEX Accelerators help businesses:

- Complete registration with a wide range of databases necessary for them to participate in the government marketplace (e.g., SAM).
- Identify which agencies and offices may need their products or services and how connect with buying agencies and offices.
- Determine whether they are ready for government opportunities and how to position themselves to succeed.
- Navigate solicitations and potential funding opportunities.
- Receive notifications of government contract opportunities on a regular basis.
- Network with buying officers, prime contractors, and other businesses.
- Resolve performance issues and prepare for audit, after receiving an award, if needed.

The government marketplace and procurement process is very complex and difficult to maneuver, however it offers an incredible opportunity for businesses to expand their market share, find new revenue streams, grow their workforce, and positively strengthen their community and state economy as a successful and profitable business. *Federal, state, and local governments reap the reward of having strong suppliers to keep costs down, and specifically for state and local governments, to keep dollars within their own local economy.*

The provisions of the cooperative agreement from the Department of Defense require each state APEX Accelerator program to obtain non-federal matching funds at a 65% federal/35% non-federal rate. *For every one dollar of support the program receives from our local partners, we leverage almost \$2 of federal funding.*

North Dakota's investment in this program is very small, measured against its economic impact. Since the beginning of the 2023-25 biennium, the ND APEX Accelerator has assisted nearly 600 small and large businesses in our state enter the government marketplace. **Many of these clients have been successful, having received more than \$736 million in government contracts.**

For the past 10 years, the ND APEX Accelerators program has been supported by the ND Department of Commerce. Over the past year and a half, we have engaged in ongoing discussions and collaboration with department leadership regarding program funding. In late December, we were informed that the current budget recommendation for the upcoming legislative session does not include funding for the program. Without the required state matching funds, the ND APEX Accelerators program will cease to exist beyond June 30 of this year. We remain committed to educating and advocating for the reinstatement of funding to ensure the continuation of this impactful program.

APEX Accelerators provide a critical front door for industry and is a vital partner in our state's entrepreneur ecosystem. This direct support to North Dakota businesses results in *diversification of revenue streams, real job creation in our communities, and positive economic impacts in our communities*. I have included with this testimony: a program impacts overview sheet, client successes and testimonials, and data on clients and award amounts by county, demonstrating that the impacts are statewide. Thank you for taking the time to review this testimony. Please reach out if there are questions or need for clarification.

Respectfully,
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\$736.3M IN FEDERAL CONTRACTS AWARDED TO CLIENTS

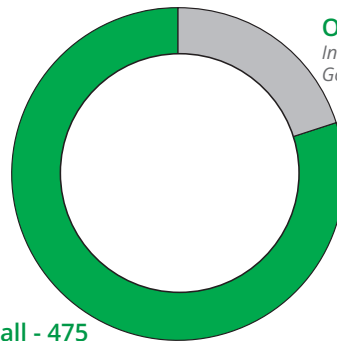
86% of all federal contracts awarded in ND



597

Unique Clients Served

BUSINESS SIZE



Other than Small - 122
 Includes Large, Non-profit, Local Government Entities

Small - 475
 Includes Small Disadvantaged and Minority Owned Small



8 out of 10 Federal Prime contracts in the state are ND APEX clients

TOP TECHNOLOGIES

ND's top critical and emerging technologies sought by DoD

- 1 Advanced & Network Sensors
- 2 Artificial Intelligence
- 3 Advanced Computing/Software
- 4 Advanced Manufacturing
- 4 Microelectronics & Semiconductors
- 4 Communication & Networking

TOP 5 INDUSTRIES

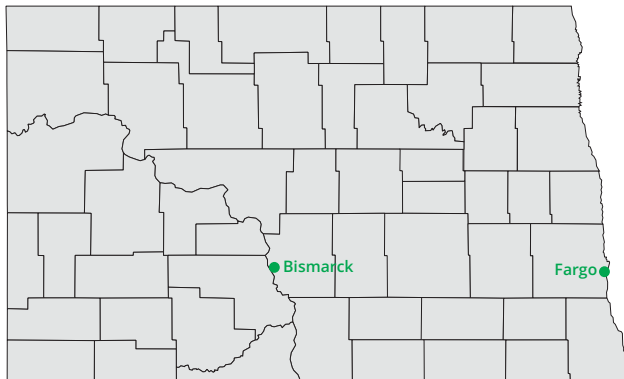
Number in parenthesis indicates 2-digit NAICS

- 1 Construction (23)
- 2 Professional & Scientific (54)
- 3 Admin & Support Services (56)
- 4 Manufacturing (31-33)
- 5 Accommodation & Food (72)

PROGRAM GOALS

The APEX Accelerators program, under management of the Department of Defense (DoD) Office of Small Business Programs (OSBP), plays a critical role in the Department's efforts to identify and help a wide range of businesses enter and participate in the defense supply-chain. The program provides the education and training to ensure that all large and small businesses become capable of participating in federal, state, and local government contracts. In 2024, program metrics focused on the following:

- Cultivate and sustain the Defense Industrial Base (DIB) and Government Industrial Base (GIB)
 - » Facilitate achievement of DIB and GIB readiness for new entrants
 - » Sustain the DIB and GIB
- Increase Equity and Inclusion
 - » Increase the number of DIB and GIB-ready Small Disadvantaged Businesses (SDBs), HubZones, Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Businesses (SDVOBs), and Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB) businesses
 - » Promote subcontracting opportunities for SDBs, HubZone businesses, SDVOBs, WOSBs, and other underrepresented small businesses
- » Encourage and support participation in Mentor-Protege Program (MPP)
- Educate to Increase Awareness of and Compliance with Foreign Ownership Control or Influence (FOCI)
- Improve Cybersecurity on the DIB and GIB
- Connect innovative businesses to Government-led Innovation Programs (GIPs)
- Strengthen the Supply Chain
 - » Support Defense Production Act (DPA) Title III activities
 - » Support Industrial Base Analysis and Sustainment (IBAS)
- Identify businesses working on critical and emerging technologies and capture information about the businesses



ND APEX ACCELERATOR

The ND APEX program is a resource for assisting North Dakota businesses in obtaining federal, state, and local government contracts. Our services also include training webinars as well as workshops around the state and an annual procurement event with one-on-one matchmaking opportunities. Our team is here to assist your business in navigating the government contracting learning curve and make the whole process easier.



This APEX Accelerator is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the Department of Defense.

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APEX ACCELERATORS

Helping businesses enter and participate in the government supply chain

We are a nationwide network of procurement professionals that help local businesses compete successfully in the government marketplace. Our 97+ APEX Accelerators operate in 300 offices as the bridge between buyer and supplier to foster a diverse and resilient domestic industrial base that can deliver preeminent solutions to the military and other government users.



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*Jan. 1, 2023 - Mar. 31, 2024 statistics provided by the Office of Small Business Programs

APEX Accelerators provide a critical front door for industry.

We work with federal, state, and local partners to expand suppliers to the federal, state, and local government marketplaces and provide opportunities for companies new to government contracting to acquire the skills and know-how to compete.

Our work increases economic opportunity across the entire country which advances our national security. A strong economy with a modernized industrial ecosystem creates a strong military that deters potential adversaries.

The Work We Do Together Matters:

- ▶ Fortifying the Defense and Government Industrial Bases
- ▶ Increasing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- ▶ Increasing Awareness of and Compliance with Foreign Ownership, Control, or Influence
- ▶ Improving Cybersecurity of the Defense and Government Industrial Bases
- ▶ Facilitating Innovation for the Defense and Government Industrial Bases
- ▶ Strengthening the Supply Chain
- ▶ Capturing Market Data in Key Industries

Our Services



NO COST GUIDANCE

Providing contract support, registration assistance, suitability assessments and more, at no cost to you



SUITABILITY ASSESSMENT

Evaluating readiness for government opportunities and positioning your company for success



REGISTRATION ASSISTANCE

Registering with essential databases to facilitate participation in the government marketplace



MARKET RESEARCH

Pinpointing the agencies in need of your product or service



BID OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFICATION

Creating daily notifications of government contracts your company can bid on



NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

Extending opportunities to meet buying officers, prime contractors, and other businesses



PROPOSAL ASSISTANCE

Supporting complex solicitation packages to ensure you capture every contract opportunity



CONTRACT SUPPORT

After winning a contract, help is available for some contract performance issues and audits

We're Here to Help:





CLIENT SUCCESS



GREENSTONE CONSTRUCTION

Owner: Justin Lindteigen

Notable: Certified SDVOSB and 8(a) Program, continues to gain extensive experience

Awards: 290 awards totaling **\$167,301,553**

Agencies: DoD Air Force/Army/Navy/National Guard, USDA, Dept. of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Dept. of Veterans Affairs, GSA Public Building Service, Bureau of Land Management, North Dakota OMB, Local government

Industry: 236220 – Commercial and Institutional Building Construction

Services used: All APEX services including assistance with certifications, maintaining Bid match search profile, APEX sponsored training.

“We are always working diligently to gain experience with new agencies in North Dakota, but it can be challenging to meet the right people and build relationships at the various agencies. ND APEX created the opportunity for our team.”

“ND APEX has provided unprecedented support that has helped Black Ridge Construction understand and move forward in government contracting. Without this resource, I’m not sure that we would be where we are today. BRC would recommend NDAPEX to all small businesses

looking into government contracting. Their advisement and accountability have been phenomenal.”



Owners: Will Klinke and Casey Schumacher

Notable: New business 5/25/2023 but owners previously worked for a gov't contractor

Awards: 5 awards totaling **\$177,311**

Agencies: USDA, GSA Public Buildings Service, Dept. of Interior

Industry: 236220 – Commercial and Institutional Construction

Services used: Attended Industry Day Event, SAM/SBA Profile, Bid Match, explored teaming/joint venture, DCAA training event



BUDDING STARS

Owner: Amanda Tukums

Notable: Signed as a client after attending 2018 Fargo Navy Week event

Awards: 60 awards totaling **\$1,270,058**

Agencies: USDA, DoD Army, Dept. of Interior, Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Dept. of Treasury, Dept. of Homeland Security

Industry: 561720 – Janitorial Services

Services used: Market research, SAM.gov, finding opportunities, Bid Match, training webinars, federal regulations

MY AQUATIC SERVICES

Owner: Troy Derheim

Notable: SDVOSB certification, 2019 SBA ND Small Business Person of the Year

Awards: 22 state and local awards totaling **\$221,700**

Agencies: Fargo School District, ND Dept. of Human Services, Fargo Park District, City of Moorhead

Industry: 238990 – Other Specialty Trade

Services used: SAM, market research, Bid Match, training webinars, federal regulations

DAMAJA SYSTEMS

Owner: De Lorenzo L. Jackson

Notable: SDVOSB certification, prepping for 8(a) application

Awards: 7 awards totaling **\$8,066,271**

Agencies: Dept. of Veterans Affairs, DoD, State of Rhode Island

Industry: 325413 In-vitro Diagnostic Substance Manufacturing (COVID test kits), 721110 hotels

Services used: APEX assisted with SBA VetCert, SAM.gov, SBA Profile, DLA Internet Bid Board System (DIBBS), Bid Match, Finding Opportunities



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Physical Address County	Client Count	Award Count	DoD	Other Fed	State	Commercial
Barnes	12	2	\$ 20,640	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Bottineau	5	2	\$ 54,900	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Bowman	1					
Burke	1					
Burleigh	86	40	\$ 576,796	\$ 21,582,730	\$ 200,000	\$ 450
Cass	221	688	\$ 48,207,344	\$ 593,166,919	\$ 0	\$ 0
Cavalier	2					
Dickey	1					
Dunn	3					
Eddy	3	2	\$ 14,700	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Emmons	3					
Foster	1					
Golden Valley	4					
Grand Forks	67	53	\$ 22,692,380	\$ 1,154,277	\$ 0	\$ 0
Griggs	2	1	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 72,000	\$ 0
Hettinger	2					
Hillsborough	1					
Lamoure	1					
McHenry	4	8	\$ 36,100	\$ 117,000	\$ 0	\$ 0
McIntosh	5					
McKenzie	12	46	\$ 1,759,409	\$ 6,821,355	\$ 0	\$ 0
McLean	12	39	\$ 29,270	\$ 11,009,644	\$ 0	\$ 0
Mercer	10	6	\$ 399,667	\$ 103,500	\$ 0	\$ 0
Morton	18	2	\$ 50,404	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Mountrail	3					
Oliver	1					
Pembina	4	2	\$ 0	\$ 105,920	\$ 0	\$ 0
Pierce	1					
Ramsey	7	3	\$ 0	\$ 18,493	\$ 0	\$ 0
Renville	1					
Richland	11	1	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 300,000	\$ 0
Rolette	9					
Sioux	1					
Slope	2					
Stark	30	8	\$ 90,558	\$ 64,280	\$ 10,000	\$ 0
Steele	2					
Stutsman	14	3	\$ 18,240	\$ 53,938	\$ 0	\$ 0
Towner	2					
Trails	10					
Walsh	4	1	\$ 0	\$ 9,912	\$ 0	\$ 0
Ward	47	58	\$ 12,441,319	\$ 30,342	\$ 0	\$ 0
Wells	2	3	\$ 14,074,941	\$ 0	\$ 270,280	\$ 0
Williams	38	3	\$ 687,975	\$ 84,937	\$ 0	\$ 0