
SCREEN • WRITE • COMPLY

CONTRACTING & ACQUISITIONS GUIDE

Compete with execution.

Say no to unwinnable bids.

Never price on contingency.

SCREEN | SCOPE | SUBMIT | RECORD

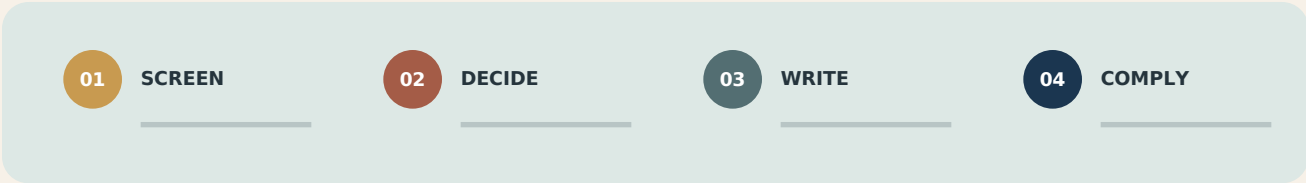
Veteran's Strategic Solutions LLC



START HERE

How to Use This Guide

Read the core guide first. Then use the worksheets to test paid execution demand against free APEX assistance, define the bid/no-bid product, budget insurance and systems, price flat-fee work, document scope and conflicts, invoice clients, track paid reviews, and control contingent-fee, ethics, confidentiality, cybersecurity, representation, deadline, and submission risks.

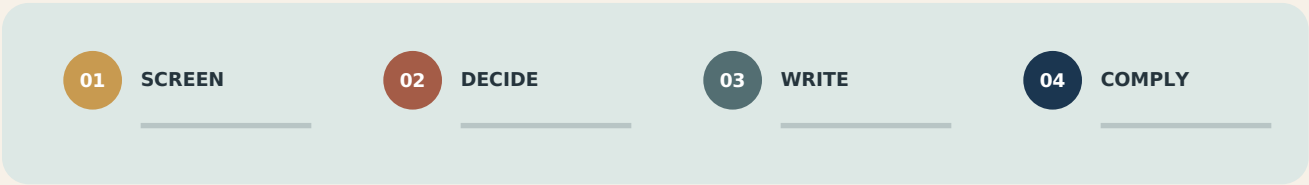


SOLICITATION REVIEW | Read scope, eligibility, evaluation, pricing, compliance, schedule, and incumbent signals before committing.

PIECE	USE
Core guide	Prove a bounded bid-or-no-bid review before expanding into proposal writing, capability statements, retainers, or post-award support.
Operating kit	Use the checklist, budget, estimate, consulting agreement, invoice, opportunity tracker, and compliance page for every client and solicitation.

CORE GUIDE 01

1. The bet



The core assumption that must be true: that a small business owner will pay you for help with federal contracting that he could get free from an APEX Accelerator.

That is a hard assumption and the document will not pretend otherwise. Every state has a federally funded APEX Accelerator that provides, at no cost: one-to-one counseling, SAM.gov registration walkthroughs, SDVOSB and VOSB certification guidance, bid matching across thousands of procurement sites, past pricing research, capability statement help, bid review before submission, and introductions to prime contractors.

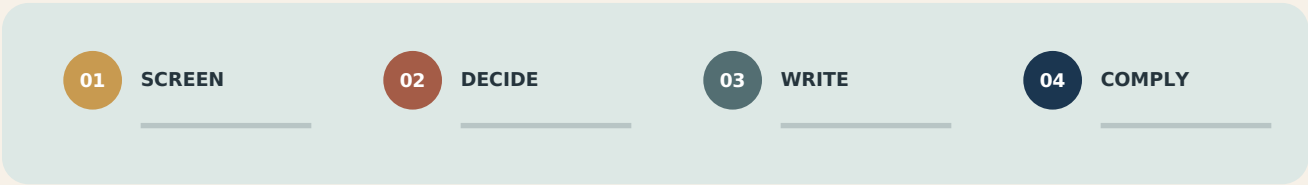
That is most of what a paid govcon consultant sells. If you cannot say clearly what you do that APEX does not, you have no business here.

What APEX structurally cannot do: move fast on a deadline, write the proposal for you, sit inside your company as part of the team, or say the words “this one is not worth bidding.” They advise; they do not execute, and they are booked.

BUSINESS LENS	CONTROL
Fit	Separate advisory help from deadline-driven execution the customer will pay for.
Decision	Document eligibility, evaluation, past performance, effort, risk, and bid-or-no-bid reasoning.
Rule	Use flat fees or hourly retainers and never price on a contingent award fee.

CORE GUIDE 01

1. The bet Continued



The fastest zero-budget test: call five small businesses that already hold or have bid a federal contract. Ask what part of the process they paid someone else to do. If the answer is consistently “nothing, we used APEX,” this line is closed where you are.

Three reasons this fails:

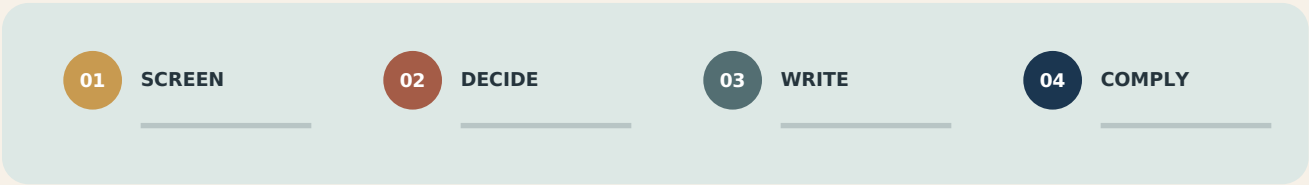
No past performance. You are selling expertise in a field that scores past performance above almost everything, and you have none of your own.

The free alternative is genuinely good. This is not a weak incumbent.

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CORE GUIDE 01

1. The bet Continued



The market may not be near you. See section 7 — this is the most location-dependent line in the set.

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2. Who pays, in their own words

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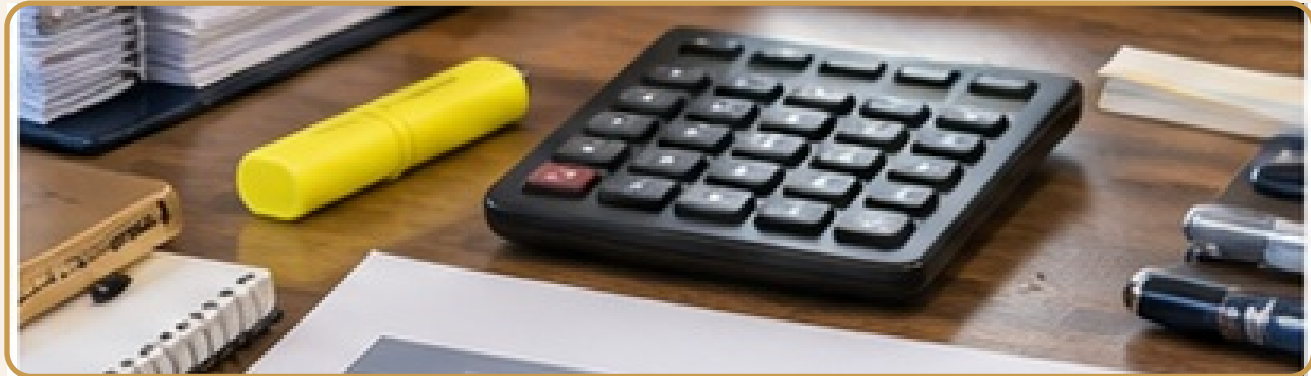
COMPLY

"The solicitation closes Thursday and I've got half a proposal." — deadline pressure, the warmest possible lead

"We won a contract and now I don't know what we've agreed to." — post-award compliance, and the most underserved need in the whole field

"I registered in SAM eight months ago and nothing's happened." — registered but never bid, an enormous and frustrated population

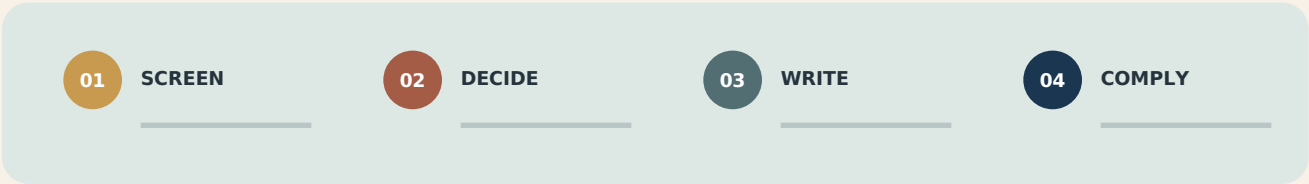
"Should we even bid this one?" — the question nobody answers honestly, because everyone selling govcon help is paid to say yes



BID OR NO BID | Deliver a short, documented decision that protects the client's time and proposal budget.

CORE GUIDE 03

3. The smallest version you can charge for



A bid/no-bid review. Flat fee, 48-hour turnaround, one solicitation.

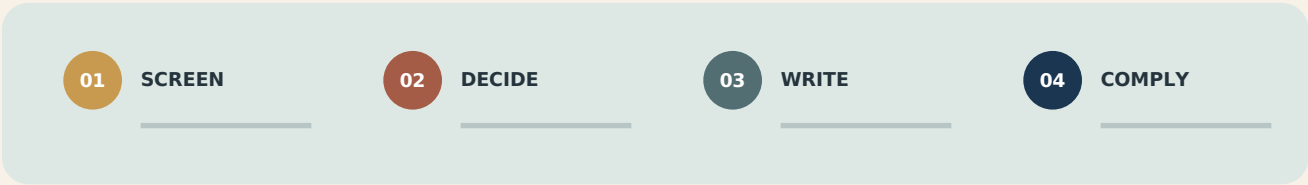
You read the solicitation and produce a short written answer: bid or don't, and why. Set-aside status, size standard, past performance requirements, wage determinations, the evaluation method, and whether the incumbent has already effectively won it.

It is bounded, it is fast, it is repeatable, and it is the one thing nobody else will do straight — because a consultant paid to help you bid has every incentive to tell you to bid.

The second product is a capability statement, which almost every small business needs and almost none has done properly.

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4. What it actually takes



Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.

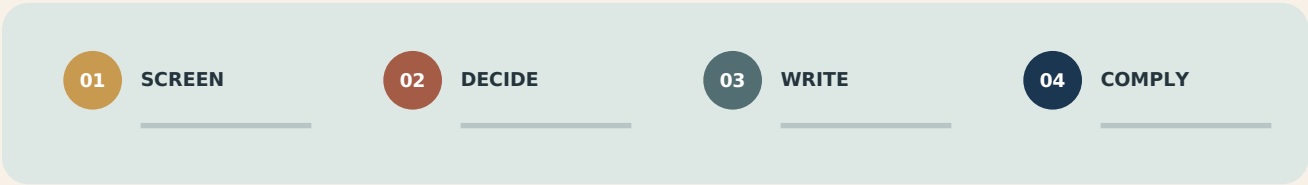
The hard legal rule that shapes your pricing. FAR subpart 3.4 and clause 52.203-5 — the Covenant Against Contingent Fees — prohibit contingent fees for soliciting or obtaining a government contract. The statutory basis is 10 U.S.C. 3321(b)(1) and 41 U.S.C. 3901. If breached, the government can annul the contract outright or recover the full amount of the fee.

So: never charge a percentage of an award. Not ever, not in any form, however the client asks for it. There is a narrow “bona fide agency” exception, but GAO looks at whether the agent contacts government officials, and the safe position for a one-person firm is a flat fee or an hourly retainer with no success component.

One more. If you are separating from federal service, post-government-employment restrictions under 18 U.S.C. 207 may limit who you can represent and on what. Ask an ethics counselor before your last day, not after.

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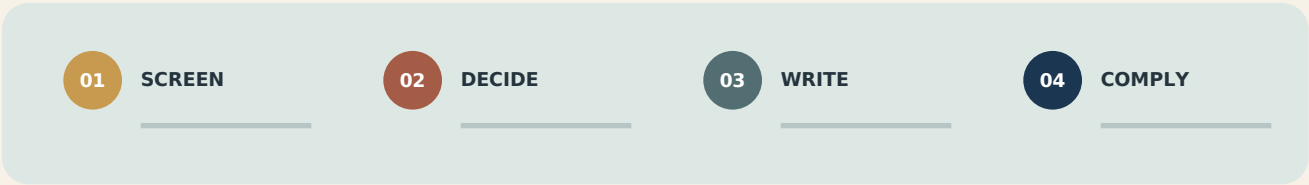
4. What it actually takes Continued



Staffing: solo. Proposal work scales through subcontracting to other writers on a per-project basis, not through payroll.

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5. Pricing



Anchor on the mid tier and never price on a contingency.

The pricing argument that works: a client who bids three unwinnable solicitations has burned 120 hours of his own staff time. The bid/no-bid review that stops one of those has paid for itself several times over, and it is measurable in a way that “we’ll help you win” never is.

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6. First 90 days, and the one metric

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Days 1-30. Register in SAM yourself, all the way through, and document every failure. Your own lived registration is the credential you do not yet have. Visit the local APEX Accelerator and find out precisely what they do and do not do.

Days 31-60. Build one capability statement and one bid/no-bid review as samples, using a real solicitation. Get the E&O bound.

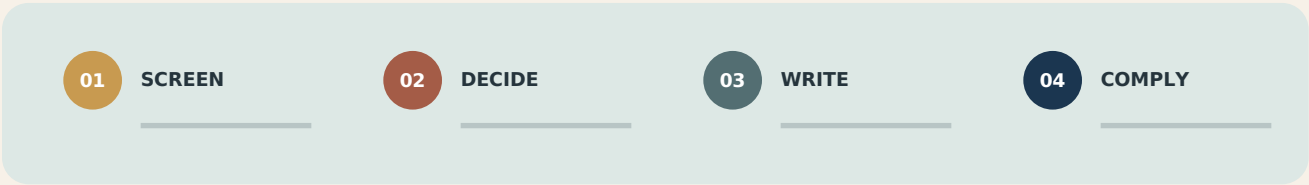
Days 61-90. Five conversations with businesses that are registered but have never bid. Offer the first review at cost in exchange for a reference.

The metric: paid reviews delivered per month. Not proposals won — you do not control that, and pricing or measuring yourself on outcomes is exactly what the contingent-fee rule forbids.



PROPOSAL CONTROL | Assign owners, evidence, compliance checks, reviews, deadlines, submission, and archive responsibilities.

7. Honest assessment

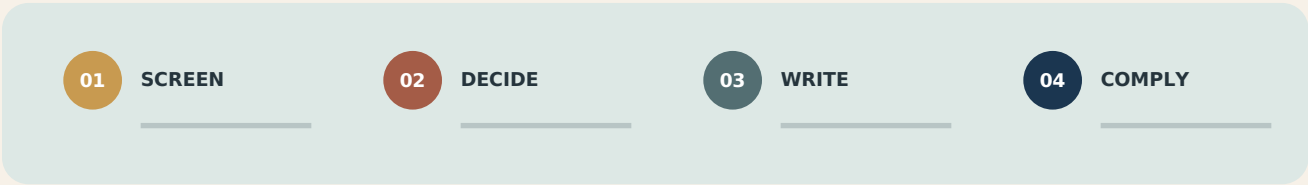


Location decides this line more than any other in the set.

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CORE REFERENCE

Contracting Startup Cost Reference

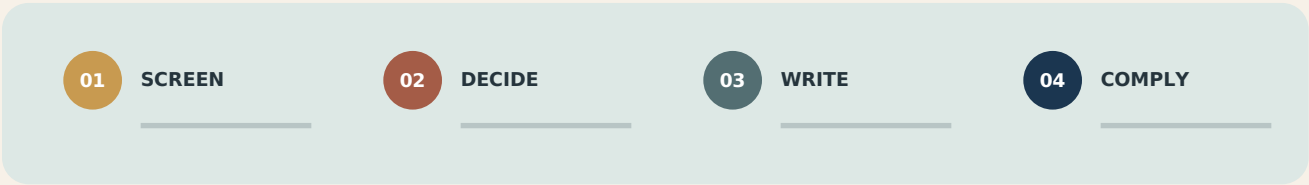


Use the source figures as the planning baseline. Replace local, personal, already-owned, and time-sensitive assumptions with actual quotes and requirements before launch.

Item	Cost	Notes
LLC, EIN, bank, domain	See setup guide	—
Professional liability (E&O)	\$500–2,000/year, management consulting band	Three quotes
General liability	About \$32/month	Bundle for the discount
SAM.gov registration	Free	An industry charges veterans \$600–1,500 for this. Say so out loud in your marketing
Reference material	Free	acquisition.gov, sba.gov, usaspending.gov
Realistic startup	\$600–2,500 first year	Almost all insurance

CORE REFERENCE

Source Pricing Reference



Use the source figures as the planning baseline. Replace local, personal, already-owned, and time-sensitive assumptions with actual quotes and requirements before launch.

Tier	Price	What it is
Low	\$250-500	Bid/no-bid review, one solicitation, 48 hours
Mid — recommended	\$1,500-4,000	Capability statement plus registration and certification support, or a single proposal section package
Premium	\$2,500-5,000/month	Retainer: ongoing opportunity screening, proposal support, post-award compliance

WORKSHEET 01

Startup Checklist

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DONE	ACTION	OWNER DATE NOTES
☐	Define the exact contracting and acquisitions customer, problem, deliverable, service area or channel, and buying trigger.	
☐	Run the source's smallest low-cost demand test before buying major equipment or committing to long-term overhead.	
☐	Write the offer, inclusions, exclusions, timing, acceptance standard, and customer responsibilities.	
☐	Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.	
☐	Confirm federal, state, local, tax, advertising, privacy, accessibility, contract, and record requirements [VERIFY].	
☐	Obtain general liability, professional liability, property, auto, workers' compensation, cyber, and client-required coverage as applicable [VERIFY].	
☐	Create intake, estimate, scope, approval, delivery, quality-control, incident, invoice, and closeout records.	
☐	Price from actual labor, materials, equipment, travel, payment fees, taxes, rework, overhead, and reserve.	
☐	Complete one paid pilot and document the result only with written customer permission.	
☐	Track the source's one metric, plus gross margin, delivery time, exceptions, referrals, and repeat work.	

WORKSHEET 02

Equipment and Budget Worksheet

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ACQUISITION SYSTEM | Standardize intake, conflicts, NDA, scope, files, version control, invoicing, and post-award handoff.

ITEM	NEEDED	ESTIMATE	ACTUAL	NOTES
Formation, registrations, licensing, tax setup, contracts, and professional review [VERIFY]				
General liability, professional liability, property, auto, workers' compensation, cyber, and required coverage [VERIFY]				
Core equipment, tools, supplies, safety gear, storage, maintenance, replacement, and backups				
Computer, phone, software, scheduling, payment, e-signature, records, security, and backup				
Website, business email, phone, listings, signage, accessibility, privacy, and marketing [VERIFY]				
Original intake, estimate, scope, checklist, quality, incident, invoice, and closeout templates				
Training, credentials, continuing education, renewal, testing, and professional memberships [VERIFY]				
Vehicle, delivery, travel, fuel, mileage, parking, tolls, rental, and route costs as applicable				
Bookkeeping, merchant fees, taxes, legal review, data protection, and records [VERIFY]				
Contractor, employee, payroll, supervision, quality control, and administrative support [VERIFY]				
Working capital, refunds, rework, claims, chargebacks, downtime, deductibles, and reserve				

BUDGET CONTROL

TOTAL ESTIMATE: _____ TOTAL ACTUAL: _____ CASH RESERVE: _____

WORKSHEET 03

Pricing and Estimate Template



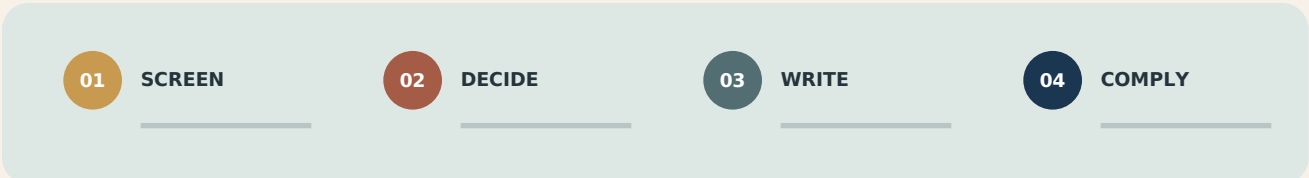
CLIENT	SERVICE LOCATION	ESTIMATE NUMBER	DATE

SERVICE OR INPUT	BASIS	AMOUNT
Discovery or intake	Customer and scope	
Core service or product	Quantity and basis	
Materials or direct costs	Actual or allowance	
Labor or professional time	Hours or fixed scope	
Equipment, delivery, or travel	Written basis	
Documentation and quality control	Included or added	
Approved option or add-on	Written basis	
Rush, after-hours, or change [VERIFY]	Written basis	
Tax or required fee [VERIFY]	Confirmed basis	
Total estimate		

TOTAL ESTIMATE	DEPOSIT OR AUTHORIZATION	VALID THROUGH

WORKSHEET 04

Contracting Consulting Agreement



FIELD	AGREED DETAIL
Customer, legal entity, contacts, billing, service or delivery location, dates, and decision-maker	
Customer need, current condition, objective, constraints, success standard, and source documents	
Selected offer, quantities, deliverables, inclusions, exclusions, options, and completion standard	
Schedule, access, dependencies, customer preparation, approvals, delays, and communication	
Materials, equipment, substitutions, delivery, storage, utilities, security, and site conditions [VERIFY]	
Inspection, testing, checklist, documentation, acceptance, correction, and handoff	
Change orders, added work, hidden conditions, cancellation, rescheduling, and out-of-scope requests	
Fee, deposit, expenses, tax, invoicing, payment, late payment, refunds, and chargebacks [VERIFY]	
Licensing, permits, insurance, safety, privacy, accessibility, and customer-required controls [VERIFY]	
Warranty, maintenance, service response, damage, loss, limitation, and claim procedure [VERIFY]	
Confidentiality, records, photos, data, testimonials, portfolio use, retention, and deletion [VERIFY]	
Completion, acceptance, closeout, support period, complaint, dispute, termination, and signatures [VERIFY]	

WORKSHEET 05

Invoice Template

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BUSINESS	CLIENT	INVOICE NUMBER	DATE DUE

DESCRIPTION	QUANTITY	RATE	AMOUNT
Discovery or intake			
Core service or product			
Materials or direct cost			
Delivery or travel			
Documentation or quality control			
Approved option			
Approved change			
Tax or required fee [VERIFY]			

SUMMARY	AMOUNT
Subtotal	
Tax [VERIFY]	
Credits / adjustments	
Total	
Balance due	

Opportunity and Client Tracker

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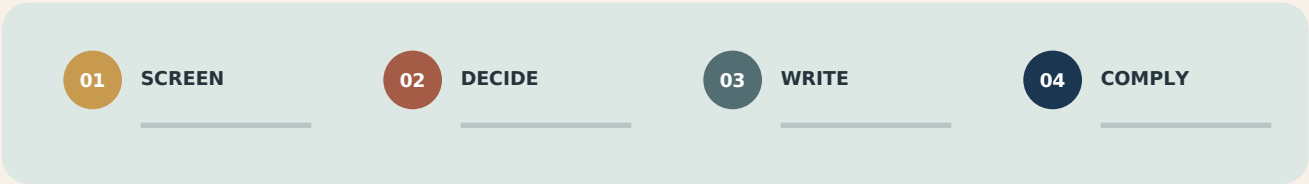
DATE	CLIENT	SOLICITATION	BID NO-BID	NEXT DEADLINE

DATE	REVIEW	PAID	DECISION	HOURS	CLOSEOUT

ONE METRIC

PAID REVIEWS DELIVERED: _____ HOURS SAVED: _____ DEADLINES MET: _____

Contracting Compliance and Ethics Page



Check licensing, zoning, and tax rules for your own city and state before starting.

CHECK	CONTROL	INITIALS NOTES
☐	Licensing, zoning, tax, advertising, privacy, accessibility, safety, environmental, and local rules are confirmed [VERIFY].	
☐	Required insurance, certificates, limits, exclusions, additional insureds, drivers, workers, and subcontractors are confirmed [VERIFY].	
☐	Written scope defines the offer, exclusions, responsibilities, schedule, acceptance, payment, warranty, and change control.	
☐	Equipment, tools, vehicles, products, software, storage, access, and backups are inspected and fit for the actual work [VERIFY].	
☐	Training, credentials, permits, inspections, records, recurring renewals, and customer requirements are current [VERIFY].	
☐	Customer, payment, property, employee, health, identity, and confidential data are minimized and protected [VERIFY].	
☐	Pricing, credentials, affiliations, testimonials, savings, results, and outcome claims are truthful and documented.	
☐	Incident, damage, spill, injury, complaint, refund, breach, interruption, and escalation procedures are written [VERIFY].	
☐	Work stops for unsafe conditions, missing authorization, inadequate coverage, prohibited scope, deception, or requirements outside competency.	

STOP RULE

Do not accept or continue work until authorization, conflicts, representation limits, contingent-fee prohibition, post-employment restrictions, confidentiality, cybersecurity, records, scope, source integrity, deadline, submission responsibility, and applicable procurement rules are confirmed [VERIFY].