How to Locate Expiring Federal Contracts in FPDS-NG

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During the Fall APTAC 2015 National Training Conference, Guy Timberlake, Co-Founder and Chief Executive Officer of The American Small Business Coalition, provided back to back General Session presentations on locating and using competitive intelligence to help our PTAC clients win more government contracts and subcontracts. A significant portion of his presentation was devoted to locating and exploiting data within the Federal Procurement Data System – Next Generation (FPDS-NG).

Mr. Timberlake provided many insights, tools and resources during his presentation. However, when he demonstrated in real time how to access specific FPDS data, many of the attendees could not see the specific steps and search results on the conference projection screens. This article attempts to fill in some of the details on how to conduct searches in FPDS-NG. Additionally, it provides an overview of the FPDS-NG system's purpose, what's reported and not reported in the system, data element search conventions and tips on how to increase the fidelity of search results. The last section of the article provides detailed, step-by-step instructions on how to locate expiring Federal contracts in FPS-NG.

What is the purpose of FPDS-NG?

In accordance with the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FATA) of 2006 (Pub. L. No. 109-282), all Federal award data must be publicly accessible for all unclassified contract actions exceeding the micro-purchase threshold, and any modification to those actions that changes previously reported contract action report data, regardless of dollar value. [FAR 4.603(a) and (b)] The Federal Procurement Data System – Next Generation (FPDS-NG) satisfies the FATA requirement for public access to certain types of contract award data.

What Contract Actions are reported to FPDS-NG?

FPDS-NG is the federal government's primary depository for contracts whose estimated value is $3,500 or more or that may be $3,500 or more. Per Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 4.6, Federal agencies are required to report all contract actions that used appropriated funds, such as contracts for supplies, equipment, construction, services, research and development, replenishment of stock, Ability One and UNICOR contract actions. See FAR 4.606(a) and (b) for the full list of reportable contract actions and other actions that may be reported if approved in writing by the FPDS Program Office.

What Actions are not reported to FPDS-NG?

It is equally important to know what government actions are not reported in FPDS-NG. For example, the FPDS-NG database does not contain data on grants, cooperative agreements, Imprest fund transactions,

interagency agreements with other federal agencies or transfers of supplies within and among agencies, actions using predominantly non-appropriated funds, orders from the GSA Stock and GSA Consolidated Purchase Program, and actions for petroleum or petroleum products ordered against a Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) Indefinite Delivery Contract (IDC). See FAR 4.606(c) for the complete list of actions that are not reported to FPDS-NG.

Per FAR 4.606(d), "Agencies not subject to the FAR may be required by other authority (e.g., statute, OMB, or internal agency policy) to report certain information to FPDS. Those agencies not subject to the FAR must first receive approval from the FPDS Program Office prior to reporting to FPDS". For example, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Library of Congress are not subject to the FAR but both report contract actions to FPDS-NG. Since there may be small business contracting opportunities at agencies not subject to the FAR and FPDS-NG reporting requirements, it may be necessary for PTAC counselors to investigate how those agencies acquire goods and services and learn where those agencies report their historical contract award data. As many PTAC counselors already know, it is sometimes easier to develop a relationship with a smaller agency that is not being targeted by numerous large and small businesses.

As an aside, this particular aspect of government contracting not subject to the FAR and FPDS reporting may be ripe for further research and publication of findings and recommendations in future APTAC Connect Newsletters. Furthermore, it would be extremely beneficial to PTAC counselors and their supported small business clients if the Office of Federal Procurement Policy (OPP) published a definitive list of government agencies that are not subject to the FAR. Additionally, it would be beneficial if the FPDS Program Office published a complete list of Federal agencies, including those Agencies not subject to the FAR, that are required to submit or have elected (and been approved by the FPDS Program Office) to submit contract award data to FPDS-NG. Follow on research could then be focused on understanding how those agencies that are not required to follow the FAR conduct their procurements. Based upon the author's limited experience and anecdotal evidence, these types of agencies are quick to point out that they are not subject to the FAR, but many state that they use FAR principles to guide their internal acquisition regulations, policies and procedures. Nonetheless, it is important for PTAC counselors to know the agency's specific procurement regulations and procedures before providing a recommended course of action to a supported client.

How do Federal Agencies use FPDS-NG?

FPDS's real time relational database contains summary level contract data. Federal government officials use it for policy and trend analysis. "The resulting data provides a basis for the development of recurring and special reports to the President, Congress, Government Accountability Office (GAO), Federal executive agencies and the general public. Additionally it provides a means of measuring and assessing the effect of Federal contracting on the Nation's economy and the extent to which small, veteran-owned small, service-disabled veteran-owned small, HUBZone small, small disadvantaged, women-

owned small business concerns, and AbilityOne nonprofit agencies operating under 41 U.S.C chapter 85, Committee for Purchase from People Who Are Blind or Severely Disabled, are sharing in Federal contracts…" [FAR 4.602]

Is FPDS-NG data useful for Government Contractors?

Government contractors use FPDS-NG data to enhance their ability to compete in the Federal marketplace. PTAC counselors that know how to exploit the data in FPDS can help their clients focus their marketing efforts on agencies and contracting offices that buy the types of products and/or services they sell; identify new prime and subcontract opportunities and locate expiring contracts.

Does FPDS-NG contain detailed contract information?

Unfortunately, FPDS-NG contains summary level information about the contract. It does not provide, among other things, "contract line item" or the "contract line item number" (CLIN) data or pricing, statements of work (SOW), contract terms and conditions (T&Cs), contractors' proposal information, deliverables or subcontract information. [FPDS-NG FAQs at https://www.fpds.gov] Contract information, other than a company's proprietary and/or sensitive information, can usually be obtained via a formal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request made to the contracting officer. Please see the following FOIA website to see the format for FOIA requests, and what can and cannot be released to the public. http://www.foia.gov/.

PTAC counselors that know how to exploit FPDS data and locate the solicitation associated with the contract award can help their clients avoid the need to submit time-consuming and potentially costly FOIA requests for contract data. As many PTAC counselors already know, the Agency's contract award number is often different from the Agency's solicitation number. If the Agency did not list the solicitation number in their FPDS-NG report, it is sometimes difficult or nearly impossible to locate the original solicitation and associated Contract Line Item Number (CLIN) structure/requirements, scope of work and specific deliverables unless the Agency's contracting office, Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (SADBU) or Office of Small Business Program (OSBP) small business specialist is willing to disclose that data. If you cannot locate the original solicitation, ask the agency contract specialist or small business specialist for that information. If they tell you to submit a FOIA request, tell them it is in the Government's best interest to provide that information since it helps promote competition for the Agency's future requirements. Contact information for Agency Small Business Specialists can be located at the Agency's Website, or via https://www.acquisition.gov/procurement-forecasts or http://www.osdbu.gov/members.html.

FPDS-NG Search Tips

PTAC Counselors that have conducted searches on FPDS-NG already know that the system is not intuitive or user friendly. Furthermore, the vast majority of "training" resources listed on the FPDS website is intended for Department of Defense (DoD) and civilian agency users that are tasked with entering contract actions within FPDS. If you are not familiar with this system, it is recommended that

you go to the FPDS-NG website at https://www.fpds.gov/fpdsng_cms/index.php/en/ and review the FPDS-NG and ezSearch FAQs located on the left hand side of the FPDS-NG homepage.

When you click on the ezSearch FAQs, you will be redirected to the following FPDS-NG ezSearch Data Element Mapping page. It is important to review and understand how the FPDS-NG database fields were defined, the type of searches you can perform in each data field and the list of acceptable search values you can enter into each search field. This should help reduce your frustration with the system and reduce the number of "dead end" search results. As currently deployed, FPDS-NG will not allow users to perform "Google™-Like" searches in data fields that require an exact value. (There is currently an ezSearch Beta version that reportedly allows you to perform "Google™-Like" searches. However, the author has not used or evaluated the utility of that Beta platform).

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FPDS-NG to ezSearch Data Element Mapping

FPDS-NG Element	ezSearch Field	Search Type	List of Values/Examples
A-76 Action	A76	Exact	YES, Yes, yes, NO, No, no
Action Obligation	Action Obligation($)	Exact	From value and/or To value. Allows both Obligations and De-obligations
Agency Code	Agency Code	Exact	The 4 character Agency ID
Agency Name	Agency Name	Free Text (Full Words)	Environmental Protection Agency | Protection | or any part of it
Completion Date	Award Completion Date	Exact	From Date and/or To Date
Award Status	Award Status	Exact	Accepts only F
Award Type or IDV Type	Award/IDV Type	Free Text (Full Words)	BPA | BPA Call | Blanket Purchase Agreement (any part of it) PO | Purchase Order | Purchase | Order DO | Delivery Order | Delivery | Order DCA | Definitive Contract | Definitive | Contract Cooperative Agreement | Cooperative | Agreement Grant For Research | Grant | Research Intragovernmental Funded Space Act Agreement (or any part of it) Training Grant| Training | Grant GWAC | Government Wide Acquisition Contract (or any part it) IDC | Indefinite Delivery Contract (or any part if it) FSS | Federal Supply Schedule (or part of it) BOA | Basic Ordering Agreement (or part of it) BPA | Blanket Purchase Agreement (or part of it) Other Transaction Award | Other Transaction Other Transaction Order | Other Transaction Other Transaction IDV | Other Transaction
Current Contract Value	Base and Exercised Options Value	Exact	From value and/or To value. Allows both Obligations and De-obligations
Commercial Item Acquisition Procedures	Commercial Item Acquisition Procedures	Free Text (Full Words)	Commercial Item | Commercial | Item Supplies or services pursuant to FAR 12.102(f) | Supplies | FAR | or any part of the value Services pursuant to FAR 12.102(g) | Services | FAR | or any part of the value Commercial Item Procedures not used | Commercial | Not | or any part of the value
Commercial Item Test Program	Commercial Item Test Program	Exact	YES, Yes, yes, NO, No, no
Contract ID	Contract ID	Exact	Exact Award or IDV PIID without the dashes
Type of Contract	Contract Pricing Description	Free Text (Full Words)	Time and Materials | Time | or any part of the value
Contract Type	Contract Type	Exact	AWARD, IDV
Contracting Agency Code	Contracting Agency ID	Exact	The 4 digit Agency ID
Contracting Office Code	Contracting Office ID	Exact	The 4 digit Agency ID
Contracting Office Name	Contracting Office Name	Free Text (Full Words)	Environmental Protection Agency | Environment | or any part of the value

The following provides the "Search Types" and corresponding rules for performing an ezSearch in FPDS-NG:

Search Type	Description
Exact:	Search is case sensitive and requires the complete phrase
Free Text (Full words):	Search is not case sensitive and complete words match the field
Partial Text:	Search is not case sensitive and partial words match the field

You can use ezSearch and conduct Advanced Searches within FPDS-NG without registering. However, it is recommended that you create a FPDS-NG username (email address) and password. Doing so will allow you to gain access to the FPDS-NG "Data Dictionary" and allow you to create custom "Adhoc Reports". The following depicts where to register on the FPDS-NG homepage.

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After you register and log-in to FPDS-NG, you will be directed to the following "new" home page. Click on the "For more information about FPDS click here" link.

After clicking on the above link, you will be redirected to the following "Welcome to Federal Procurement Data System – Next Generation" webpage. There are two resources on this webpage that you cannot find on the public homepage: The FPDS-NG "Data Dictionary" and "Custom (Adhoc) Report Quick Start Guide'. Please note the webpage does not use the term "AdHoc Report Quick Start Guide". This guide can be found by scrolling down this webpage and clicking on the hyperlink titled "reports

training documentation" under the Custom (AdHoc) Reports section. This guide is noted for future reference but will not be discussed further in this article.

Welcome to Federal Procurement Data System – Next Generation

FPDS-NG offers public users unprecedented access to the spending patterns of the Federal government – at no cost. Once you have registered at www.fpds.gov, you will have access to all actions in that have been submitted to FPDSNG from across the Federal government.

Prior to using the system, we recommend that you review the information on this page. FPDS-NG is designed as a self-service tool for the public. You will find details on what information is in FPDS-NG and the many ways to access it. Additionally, detailed Help files are available that describe how to get reports and generate your own.

What's in FPDS-NG?

Contract Actions:

- **Fiscal Year 04 Data:** Agencies report contract actions, including base actions and modifications, to FPDS-NG. FPDS-NG has been expanded to include new fields for Fiscal Year (FY) 04 and forward. The data dictionary contains a description of the data for FY 04 and forward.
- **Real-time Availability:** In many cases, contract data is available to the public when the contract is awarded to the vendor. With FPDS-NG, the information is now available in near real-time.
- **Legacy Data:** Over 12 million legacy contract actions were migrated from the FPDC system and are now available in FPDS-NG. This includes FPDC transactions back to 1979.
- **Release of Data:** For security reasons, the Department of Defense (DoD) only releases contract data after a 90-day waiting period. However, the contract information is included immediately in the aggregate spending totals found in Standard Reports.

How do I access the detailed contract actions?

Advanced Search Capability:

- Advanced Search provides a quick and easy shortcut to search through all contract actions. The search criteria include vendor name, contract number, Procurement Instrument Identifier (PIID), North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), funding agency/contracting office or contracting agency/office, dollars obligated and date ranges.
- Advanced Search returns a summary for each contract that meets the criteria with a link to the detailed contract action.
- With the vast number of records available for search, we recommend that you maximize your search by narrowing the criteria. To ensure that the system is available for the entire user population, large queries may be limited.
- Advanced Search is available by clicking on the Advanced Search button at the top of the FPDS-NG Reports Suite main menu screen.

FPDS-NG Data Dictionary

After clicking on the above "data dictionary" link you will be redirected to the 232 page GSA Federal Procurement Data System-Next Generation (FPDS-NG) Data Element Dictionary, Version 1.4 dated January 1, 2013. The Data Element Dictionary provides, among other things, the FPDS-NG data element name, definition, data source, format of the input of the element, and reference to the FAR and/or DFARS (if applicable} for all of the data elements within FPDS-NG. The Table of Contents starts on page number 16. For example, if you did not know the difference between "Current Completion Date" and "Ultimate Completion Date", you could look up those data elements in the Table of Contents and either click on the term or go to the pages (page numbers 34 and 35) for those data elements. The following provides the applicable definitions for these data elements. It is important to note that the definition of the "Current Completion Date" includes the base contract period plus ***only the options that have been exercised***. Whereas, the "Ultimate Completion Date" includes the base contract period ***and the estimated completion date if all options were exercised***. Also, it should be noted that the current version of PFDS-NG uses the term "Estimated Completion Date" or "Est. Ultimate Completion Date". Presumably this change was made to reflect that not all options are exercised.

This distinction between the two completion dates is important to remember when searching for expiring contracts. It is a reasonable assumption that the agency will exercise all options under an Indefinite Delivery Vehicle (IDV) if the agency has a continuing need for the requirement, the contractor's performance has been satisfactory, funds are available and the contractor's price is still

deemed fair and reasonable. As such, you should use the "(Est.) Ultimate Completion Date" vice the "Current Completion Date" when searching for expiring contract opportunities.

2C	Current Completion Date
ElementNo:	2C
Name:	Current Completion Date
DEName:	Current_Completion_Date
Screen Name:	Completion Date
XML Tag Name:	currentCompletionDate
XML Version:	Version 1.0 and later
Derivation:	None
Definition:	The completion date of the base contract plus options that have been exercised.
Instruction:	Report the contract completion date based on the schedule in the contract. For an initial award, report the scheduled completion date for the base contract and for any options exercised at time of award. For modifications that exercise options, report the revised scheduled completion date for the base contract including exercised options.
FAR/DFARS:	DFARS 253.204-70(b)(4)

2D	Ultimate Completion Date
ElementNo:	2D
Name:	Ultimate Completion Date
DEName:	Ultimate_Completion_Date
Screen Name:	Est. Ultimate Completion Date
XML Tag Name:	ultimateCompletionDate
XML Version:	Version 1.0 and later
Derivation:	Default to Current Completion Date if left blank.
Definition:	The estimated or scheduled completion date including the base contract or order and all options (if any) whether the options have been exercised or not.
Instruction:	Enter the mutually agreed upon contract completion date for the entire contract or order including all options or other modifications. For a delivery order, this refers to the delivery order completion only, not the referenced indefinite delivery vehicle.

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Is it advisable to use key words to search for historical contract award data in FPDS-NG?

When setting up a client's Bid Match Profile, we have learned from experience to rely more upon key words than business codes to locate tailored and targeted contract opportunities for our clients. The use of broad North American Classification System (NAICS) codes, Product Service Codes (PSC) codes or Federal Supply Classification (FSC) codes often produces bid matches that are not pertinent or within the client's capabilities. However the use of key word searches within FPDS-NG often yields mixed and disappointing results. For example, the search results may contain contract actions that have the search term in a company's name and the associated contract requirement may be unrelated to the product or service that was purchased by the agency.

As stated previously, the current FPDS-NG system was never designed to perform "Google™-Like" key word searches. Furthermore, many PTAC counselors know that contracting officials do not always provide complete and meaningful descriptions of what was purchased in the FPDS "Description of Requirements" field. Until the proposed FPDS-NG Beta system replaces the current system, it will be important to understand how searchable data elements are defined in the FPDS-NG Data Dictionary, and select business codes and other discrete search parameters related to your PTAC client's interests, target market(s) and capabilities.

How to locate expiring contracts in FPDS for your Client's Products and/or Services

This section of the article provides detailed instructions on how to locate expiring contracts in FPDS. However before commencing a search, it is important to assess the probability of follow-on contract opportunities. Not all expiring contracts will require follow-on contracts for services or products if the agency's purpose was to fill a one-time need. The nature of the product or service and the Agency's dependence upon continued supplies and/or services should lend itself to follow on contract opportunities. For instance, there may be follow-on contract opportunities if an Agency does not have sufficient workforce to conduct support operations and the Agency has deemed it is not in the Government's best interests to hire more employees. In contrast, there will most likely not be any direct follow-on contract opportunities to build another Medical Facility in the same location as specified in an expiring contract.
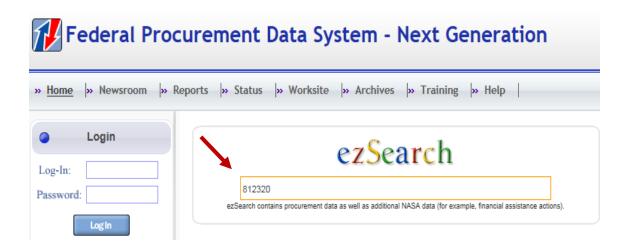
In addition to assessing the probability of follow-on contract opportunities, it is important to assess an Agency's projected time frame for re-competing the contact. The nature and complexity of follow on requirements for products and/or services could impact an Agency's Procurement Administrative Lead Time (PALT) to develop a follow-on acquisition plan, solicit offers and award the contract. Their goal is to ensure they have sufficient lead-time to solicit and award a follow-on contract to either the incumbent or successor so that there is no interruption in services, supplies or support. For complex services, the lead time may be six months or a year or more. A PTAC client that is not the incumbent contractor may need greater advance notice of an expiring contract opportunity. This could allow them more time to fully understand the agency's prior (and potential follow-on) requirement, assess their internal

capabilities and shortfalls, identify potential teaming partners, and prepare a customer focused proposal by the due date specified in the follow-on solicitation. For commercial services or products that are not as complex, the agency's lead time may be six months or less. If you are not sure of the Agency's lead time for a specific follow-on requirement, you can review previous solicitations to assess the lead time needed by comparing the published solicitation issue dates and award dates for comparable opportunities. Additionally, you could ask the Agency's small business representative(s) for the expected release date and closing date of the follow-on solicitation. This information will be helpful to selecting an appropriate date or date range for your FPDS search for expiring contracts.
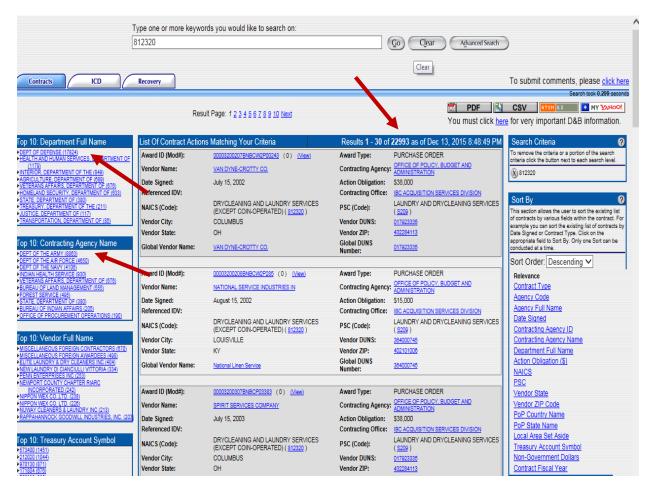
For this example: The PTAC client has multiple industrial laundry facilities located throughout the State of Texas. The client is a small business under their primary NAICS code 812320 Dry cleaning and Laundry Services (Except Coin-Operated). (Size Standard: $5.5 million in average annual receipts). In addition to listing this NAICS code in their Federal System for Award Management (SAM), they listed PSC Code S209 Laundry & Dry Cleaning Services. They are looking for contracts within the State of Texas that will be expiring between 01 March 2016 and 30 September 2016.

(1) Go to www.fpds.gov and enter your client's NAICS code 812320 in the ezSearch field and press the enter button on your keyboard. It is recommended that you do not use Keywords on FPDS-NG searches because there are no product descriptions in the contract data fields. A Keyword search would most likely only match a very limited number of words such as company name, agency name, and NAICS title.
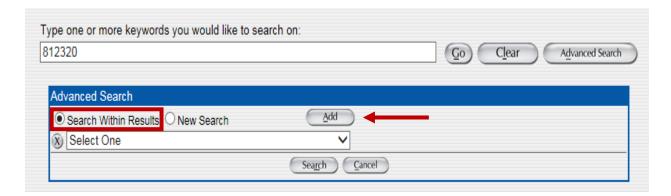

(2) This initial search yields 22,993 contract actions as of Dec 13, 2015. In addition to summary level information about the depicted contract actions, the left hand column shows the top 10 Departments, top 10 Contracting Agencies and top 10 Vendors that had reportable contract actions under the selected NAICS code. It is interesting to note the large number of contract actions associated with miscellaneous Foreign Contractors. This is most likely due to DoD's need to provide ongoing laundry services in overseas locations.
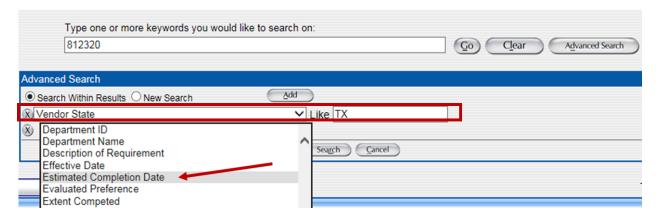
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(3) Click on the "Advanced Search" button at the top of the page

(4) Click on "Search Within Results".

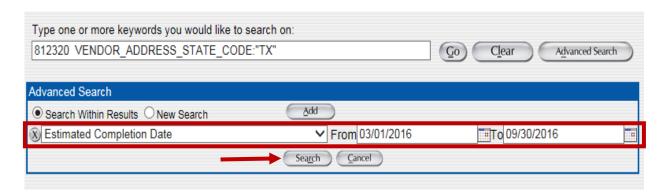(5)Click on the "Add Button. This will open a selection box with scroll down options.

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(6) Click on the selection box and scroll down to "Vendor State". Highlight and then click on "Vendor State". In the "Like" box to the right, type in the State Abbreviation. In this example, I used "TX" for Texas.

(7) Click on the "Add Button" action to open the selection box again to add another search parameter. In this case, we want to add "Estimated Completion Date" to locate expiring contracts.

(8) New boxes will open next to "Estimated Completion Date". Click on the calendar icons to enter the dates desired by your PTAC client or the dates you suggested to the client. In this example I entered 03/01/2016 to 09/30/2016.
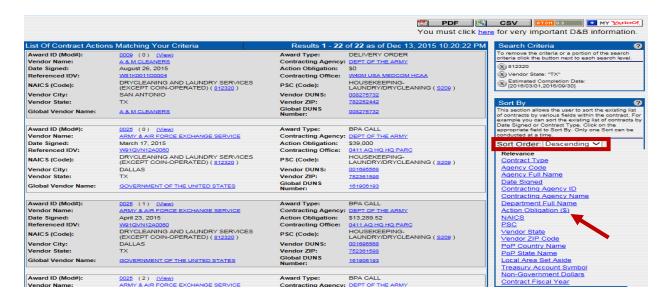
(9) Click on the "Search" button.

The following results indicate there are 22 Laundry and Dry Cleaning contract actions with firms listing their principle office in Texas with expiration dates in the date range from 03/01/2016 to 09/30/2016. This is a far more manageable list of contract actions then the 22, 993 we found when searching with just the NAICS code.

(10) The next step is to prioritize the list by going to the "Sort By" Box on the right hand side. Highlight and click "Descending".

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(11) Highlight and click on "Action Obligations ($)". This will resort the 22 contract actions with the largest dollar contracts at the top and smallest on the bottom.
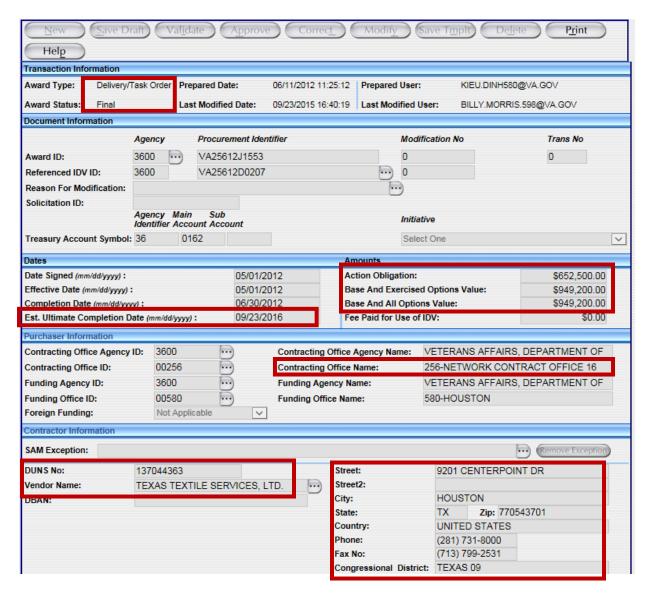

(12) After re-sorting the search results to reflect the highest dollar actions on top, you can see that Texas Textile Services, LTD received a Delivery Order from the Department of Veterans Affairs. Click on the "View" button to the right hand side of the "Award ID (Mod#)" to see more details about this contract action. Additionally, it is recommended that you create a report of your search results by clicking on the PDF or CSV (Excel) buttons on the right hand side of the webpage.

After clicking on the "View" button on this contract and the others, you will have access to all of the FPDS Data Entries that were applicable to the selected contract action.

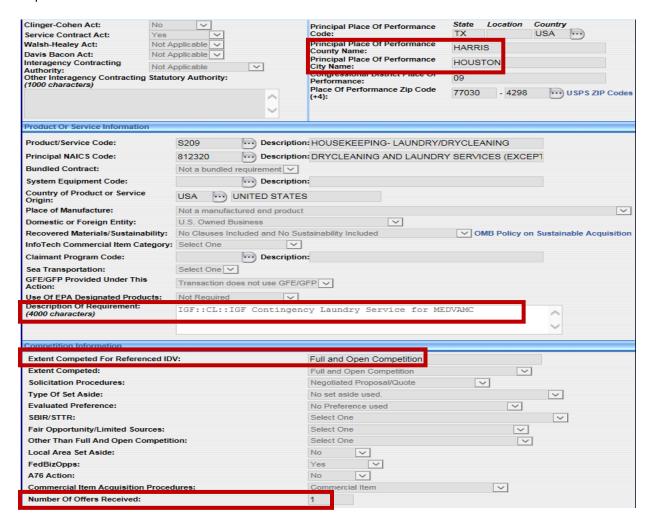**How to Locate Expiring Federal Contracts in FPDS-NG (cont.)**

In the top portion of the report, you can see that the vendor was awarded a final Task Order against an Indefinite Delivery Vehicle (IDV) contract in the amount of $652,500 by the Veterans Administration, bringing the total value of the base contract and all options to $949, 200. Additionally, we can see that the Estimated Ultimate Completion date of 09/23/2016 falls into our client's search parameters. Under "Contractor Information" you can locate the Vendor's name, DUNS number and point of contact information. This information can then be used to locate other contracts this vendor might have won and the government agencies that procured this company's services.

The following sections of the FPDS-NG report depict the "Principle Place of Performance" as Houston, TX. The contract was for "Contingency Laundry Services" for a VA Medical Center. Of note, the original solicitation for the Indefinite Delivery Vehicle contract was issued as a Full and Open Competition and

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there was only one offer received by the contracting office. If the client has the requisite capabilities and capacity to perform a contract of this magnitude and the agency has a need for follow-on services, the agency would most likely appreciate additional competition by your client. Since the requirement description stated the contract was for "Contingency Laundry Services," I would recommend the client call the VA's small business specialist to determine if the Agency plans on re-competing this requirement.

PTAC counselors can use the business intelligence gained from FPDS-NG searches to help their supported clients develop targeted market capture strategies and win more follow-on contract contracts. If you need assistance with your FPDS-NG searches, you can call the Federal Service Desk (FSD) at (866) 606-8220, Option Number 6, or submit a question via their Web Site at https://www.fsd.gov/fsd-gov/home.do.   The operating hours for the FSD Help Desk are Monday - Friday 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern Time.