
THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO

CBE & SAM Government Contracts in Washington D.C.

How to Establish Your D.C. Presence, Win Government
Contracts, and Grow Your Business with Compliant
Dedicated Desk Solutions

PRESENTED BY

OSI OFFICES

1629 K Street NW, Suite 300 | Washington D.C. 20006

osioffices.com | (202) 600-7777

Trusted Since 1981 — 45 Years of Service

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 **Understanding CBE Certification**
What it is, why it matters, and eligibility requirements

2 **Understanding SAM Registration**
Federal contracting gateway and registration process

3 **The Physical Address Requirement**
Why both programs demand a verified D.C. presence

4 **CBE Certification: Step-by-Step Process**
Complete walkthrough from application to approval

5 **SAM Registration: Step-by-Step Process**
Complete walkthrough from UEI to active status

6 **Preference Points & Contracting Benefits**
How CBE and SAM unlock competitive advantages

7 **OSI Offices: Your Compliance Solution**
Dedicated desk plans built for government contractors

8 **Plan Comparison & Pricing**
Choose the right solution for your contracting needs

9 **Getting Started Checklist**
Your action plan to begin winning contracts

1. Understanding CBE Certification

The **Certified Business Enterprise (CBE)** program is Washington D.C.'s premier small business inclusion initiative, administered by the Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD). It is designed to promote economic growth by giving local businesses preferential treatment in bidding for D.C. government contracts and procurement opportunities.

Why CBE Certification Matters

The District of Columbia actively directs its spending to certified local businesses. In Fiscal Year 2024, the Bowser Administration spent a record-breaking \$1.2 billion with small, certified businesses. The program has grown to over 2,030 certified businesses, and the FY2026 Green Book sets a \$1.5 billion spending goal with local businesses. This represents an enormous pool of opportunity for certified enterprises.

Key Benefit: CBEs receive up to 12 preference points (effectively a 12% price advantage) when bidding on District contracts. D.C. agencies must spend 50% of their expendable budgets with certified small business enterprises.

CBE Eligibility Requirements

- **Physical Presence:** The principal office of the business must be physically located in Washington D.C.
- **Ownership:** More than 50% owned, operated, and controlled by a District-based enterprise, or owned by a non-District-based enterprise that is more than 50% owned by District residents.
- **Management:** The CEO and highest-level managerial employees must perform their managerial functions in the principal D.C. office.
- **Revenue Nexus:** More than 50% of gross receipts must be District gross receipts.
- **Business Registration:** Must be registered with the DC Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP).
- **For-Profit Status:** Only for-profit entities are eligible for CBE certification.

CBE Certification Categories

Once certified as a Local Business Enterprise (LBE), businesses can apply for additional subcategories, each offering specific preference points:

Category	Abbreviation	Preference Points
Local Business Enterprise	LBE	2 points
Small Business Enterprise	SBE	3 points
Disadvantaged Business Enterprise	DBE	2 points
Resident-Owned Business	ROB	5 points

Development Zone Enterprise	DZE	2 points
Longtime Resident Business	LRB	5 points
Veteran-Owned Business	VOB	2 points
Equity Impact Enterprise	EIE	2 points

Note: A maximum of 12 preference points can be applied to any single contract bid.

2. Understanding SAM Registration

The **System for Award Management (SAM.gov)** is the U.S. government's official registration system for all businesses that want to do business with the federal government. Managed by the General Services Administration (GSA), SAM registration is completely free and is a mandatory prerequisite before any entity can bid on or receive federal contracts, grants, or financial assistance.

What SAM.gov Provides

- **Entity Registration:** Official database of all businesses eligible for federal contracts.
- **Unique Entity ID (UEI):** Your unique identifier across all government systems.
- **CAGE Code:** A 5-character identifier assigned by the Defense Logistics Agency.
- **Contract Opportunities:** Access to federal contract listings (formerly FedBizOpps).
- **Visibility:** Over 350,000 active entities are registered, and government agencies search SAM to find contractors.
- **Certification Gateway:** SAM registration is required before applying for SBA certifications like 8(a), HUBZone, SDVOSB, and WOSB.

Critical Requirement: SAM.gov requires a verified physical business address. P.O. boxes are NOT accepted as your primary address. Your address must match IRS records and be verifiable through the USPS database.

Key SAM Registration Facts

Item	Details
Cost	Completely FREE — never pay third parties for registration
Processing Time	7-14 business days after submission
Renewal	Must renew every 365 days to remain active
Required Address	Physical street address (no P.O. boxes)
Key IDs Needed	EIN/TIN, UEI, CAGE Code, NAICS Codes
Banking Info	Required for Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) payments

3. The Physical Address Requirement

The single most important — and often most challenging — requirement that both CBE certification and SAM registration share is the need for a **verified physical business address** in Washington D.C. This is not just a formality; it is the foundational requirement that establishes your business's legitimacy and eligibility for government contracts.

CBE: Physical Nexus Requirements

For CBE certification, the DSLBD requires that your principal office be physically located in the District. A 2020 amendment under Mayor Bowser strengthened these requirements significantly: businesses must be independently owned and operated, and may no longer use the "asset test" to establish local eligibility. The CEO and principal officers must work from the D.C. office. DSLBD conducts site visits within the Washington Metropolitan area to verify that businesses meet the local business enterprise definition.

SAM: Address Validation Requirements

SAM.gov uses an Entity Validation Service (EVS) that independently verifies the existence and uniqueness of every entity that registers. Your physical address must match IRS records exactly and align with the USPS database. Mismatches between official records and entered data are one of the most common reasons for registration delays and failures. The address is used for official correspondence, verification, and establishing your business's operational location.

**A virtual mailbox or P.O. box will NOT satisfy these requirements.
A dedicated desk with a verifiable lease and Certificate of Occupancy WILL.**

What You Need to Demonstrate

- **Lease Agreement:** A formal lease or occupancy agreement showing your business at a D.C. address.
- **Certificate of Occupancy:** Documentation proving you have authorized use of the physical space.
- **Operational Presence:** Evidence that managerial functions are performed at the D.C. location.
- **IRS Consistency:** Your address must match federal tax filings and state registration records.
- **USPS Validation:** The address must be recognized and deliverable via the U.S. Postal Service.

"This is exactly where OSI Offices provides its greatest value — giving contractors a legitimate, verifiable, prestigious D.C. address with all the documentation needed for both CBE and SAM compliance."

4. CBE Certification: Step-by-Step Process

- 1 Establish Your D.C. Presence**

Secure a physical office location in Washington D.C. with a verifiable address, lease agreement, and Certificate of Occupancy. OSI Offices' dedicated desk solutions are specifically designed to fulfill this requirement immediately.
- 2 Register Your Business in D.C.**

Register with the DC Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP). Obtain your Basic Business License and ensure all business documentation reflects your D.C. address.
- 3 Obtain Required Documents**

Gather your Certificate of Clean Hands from the Office of Tax and Revenue, company capability statement, personal and business tax returns (last 3 years), financial statements, and resumes of key personnel.
- 4 Take the CBE Wizard**

Visit the DSLBD website and use the CBE Wizard tool to confirm eligibility and generate a customized checklist of required documents for your specific business type.
- 5 Register in the District Enterprise System (DES)**

Create your account in DES using the Chrome browser. Save your credentials. This is the platform where you will complete and submit your application.
- 6 Complete & Submit Your Application**

Fill out the online CBE application and upload all required checklist documents. Applications are processed on a first-come, first-served basis.
- 7 DSLBD Review & Site Visit**

DSLBD will review your application (processing takes up to 45 business days) and may conduct a site visit to verify your physical location and operations.
- 8 Certification Granted (3-Year Term)**

Once approved, your CBE certification is valid for 3 years. You will receive renewal reminders at 90, 60, 30, and 1 day before expiration.

DSLBD Contact: (202) 727-3900 |

Monthly Webinars: 1st Wednesday of each month — "Learn How to Become a CBE"

5. SAM Registration: Step-by-Step Process

- 1 Establish Your Physical Address**

Ensure you have a verified physical business address (not a P.O. box) that matches your IRS records. OSI Offices provides a compliant K Street address with full documentation support.
- 2 Create a Login.gov Account**

Visit login.gov and create an account using a personal email address (not shared) that you will have long-term access to. This is your authentication gateway to SAM.gov.
- 3 Obtain Your Unique Entity ID (UEI)**

Visit SAM.gov and select "Get a Unique Entity ID." You will need your legal business name and physical address. This process is free and takes approximately 30 minutes.
- 4 Gather Required Documentation**

Prepare your EIN/TIN, banking information for EFT payments, NAICS codes, key personnel information, and a notarized Designation Letter for the Entity Administrator.
- 5 Complete Entity Registration**

Log into SAM.gov, access the Workspace section, and begin the entity registration process. Select the appropriate entity type and "All Awards" or "Financial Assistance Only" designation.
- 6 Enter Business Details**

Provide your legal business name (exactly as on IRS documents), physical address, financial information, and select your NAICS codes. Ensure 100% consistency across all fields.
- 7 Submit & Await Validation**

SAM.gov validates your information against multiple federal databases including the IRS, SSA, and Treasury. Initial registration typically takes 7-14 business days.
- 8 Receive CAGE Code & Go Active**

Once validated, you will receive your CAGE code (assigned by the Defense Logistics Agency) and your registration status will show as "Active." Set a calendar reminder for annual renewal.

Free Help: APEX Accelerators (formerly PTACs) offer free SAM registration assistance.

Federal Service Desk: (866) 606-8220 | Mon-Fri 8am-8pm ET

6. Preference Points & Contracting Benefits

Holding both CBE certification and SAM registration opens the door to an extraordinary range of government contracting opportunities at both the District and federal levels. Here is what you stand to gain:

D.C. Government Contracts (CBE Benefits)

- **Up to 12 preference points** on contract bids — effectively a 12% price advantage over non-certified competitors.
- **50% spending mandate:** D.C. agencies must spend 50% of their expendable budgets with certified SBEs.
- **Set-aside contracts:** Contracts under \$250,000 are set aside exclusively for CBE small business enterprises.
- **Subcontracting requirements:** Government-assisted projects over \$250,000 must subcontract 35% to CBEs.
- **DC Supply Schedule:** Available exclusively to CBEs maintaining the SBE subcategory.
- **\$1.5 billion FY2026 goal:** Mayor Bowser has set an ambitious spending target with local businesses.
- **Grant opportunities:** Programs like the CBE Sustainable Energy Grants (\$291,000 in FY2026).

Federal Contracts (SAM Benefits)

- **Access to all federal contract opportunities** across every government agency.
- **Gateway to SBA certifications:** 8(a), HUBZone, SDVOSB, WOSB — all require active SAM registration.
- **Simplified Acquisition:** Small business contracts under \$250,000 through streamlined procedures.
- **Subcontracting visibility:** Prime contractors search SAM to find qualified subcontractors.
- **Grant eligibility:** Required for all federal grants and financial assistance programs.
- **Electronic payments:** Receive contract payments via Electronic Funds Transfer.

Pursuing BOTH CBE and SAM registration simultaneously positions your business to compete for the widest possible range of government opportunities — from District-level set-asides to multi-million dollar federal contracts.

7. OSI Offices: Your Compliance Solution

Since 1981, **OSI Offices** has been the trusted partner for Washington D.C. professionals and government contractors. Located at **1629 K Street NW, Suite 300** — steps from the White House and Farragut Square — OSI provides the essential infrastructure that contractors need to meet CBE and SAM compliance requirements.

Why OSI Offices is Ideal for Government Contractors

- **Dedicated Desk Solutions:** Purpose-built to satisfy the physical nexus and operational requirements for both CBE and SAM.
- **Lease Agreements & Certificates of Occupancy:** Full documentation support for your certification applications.
- **Prestigious K Street Address:** Elevate your business credibility with one of D.C.'s most recognized addresses.
- **CAGE Code & DUNS/UEI Assistance:** Guidance through the federal identifier acquisition process.
- **Professional Mail Handling:** AI-powered mail scanning, digital delivery, and daily forwarding through a secure client portal.
- **24/7 Building Access:** Demonstrate genuine operational presence with round-the-clock facility access.
- **Meeting & Conference Rooms:** State-of-the-art AV-equipped rooms for client meetings and presentations.
- **Building Lobby Directory Listing:** Your business name displayed in the building — visible proof of presence.
- **Month-to-Month Flexibility:** No long-term lease commitments, no security deposits, no setup fees.
- **40+ Years of Contractor Experience:** A proven track record of supporting hundreds of D.C. contractors and 500+ active members.

"OSI has been an integral part of our construction business over the past 5+ years. The team has always been responsive to our needs and we will continue to partner with them as extended members of the Aztec Construction LLC family."

— **Patricia Moore, President, Aztec Construction**

8. Plan Comparison & Pricing

OSI Offices offers four tiers of contractor-friendly plans, each designed to meet the specific compliance needs of CBE and SAM contractors. All plans include a prestigious 1629 K Street NW address.

Feature	Basic \$279/mo	Standard \$340/mo	Premium \$500/mo	Private Office From \$700/mo
Personal Dedicated Desk	✓	✓	✓	✓
CBE & SAM Compliant	✓	✓	✓	✓
24/7 Building Access	—	✓	✓	✓
K Street Address	—	✓	✓	✓
Lobby Directory Listing	—	✓	✓	✓
Office/Conference Hours	—	—	10 hrs	15 hrs
Digital Mail Package	—	—	✓	✓
Fully Enclosed Office	—	—	—	✓
Lease Documentation	✓	✓	✓	✓

Which Plan is Right for You?

Your Situation	Recommended Plan
New contractor seeking CBE/SAM compliance on a budget	Basic Dedicated Desk (\$279/mo)
Active contractor needing full-time access and a prestigious address	Standard Dedicated Desk (\$340/mo)
Established contractor meeting clients and needing room time	Premium Dedicated Desk (\$500/mo)
Growing team needing private, enclosed workspace	Private Office (from \$700/mo)

All plans are 30-40% less than comparable competitors. No setup fees. No security deposits. Month-to-month flexibility.

9. Getting Started Checklist

Use this action plan to move from initial interest to fully certified and registered government contractor. OSI Offices can assist you at every step of this journey.

Phase 1: Foundation (Week 1-2)

- Contact OSI Offices to secure your dedicated desk plan
- Sign your lease agreement and obtain your Certificate of Occupancy
- Register your business with DLCP if not already registered in D.C.
- Update your IRS records to reflect your new D.C. address
- Obtain a Certificate of Clean Hands from DC Office of Tax and Revenue

Phase 2: CBE Application (Week 2-4)

- Take the CBE Wizard at dslbd.dc.gov to confirm eligibility
- Register in the District Enterprise System (DES)
- Gather all required documents (tax returns, financial statements, capability statement)
- Complete and submit your online CBE application with all uploads
- Prepare for potential DSLBD site visit

Phase 3: SAM Registration (Week 2-4, concurrent)

- Create your Login.gov account
- Obtain your Unique Entity ID (UEI) at SAM.gov
- Identify your NAICS codes
- Prepare banking information for EFT setup
- Complete full entity registration on SAM.gov
- Await validation and CAGE code assignment (7-14 business days)

Phase 4: Activate & Win (Week 4+)

- Set up contract opportunity alerts on SAM.gov
- Apply for additional SBA certifications (8(a), HUBZone, etc.)
- Create your capabilities statement
- Begin bidding on D.C. and federal contract opportunities
- Set calendar reminders for SAM renewal (365 days) and CBE renewal (3 years)

READY TO GET STARTED?

Contact OSI Offices today to secure your compliant dedicated desk
and begin your government contracting journey.

Phone: (202) 600-7777

WhatsApp: (202) 459-8998

Email: manager@osioffices.com

Web: osioffices.com

Tour: calendly.com/osi-meeting/office-tour

1629 K Street NW, Suite 300, Washington D.C. 20006

Disclaimer

This guide is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, financial, or professional advice. Requirements for CBE certification and SAM registration may change. Always verify current requirements directly with the Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD) at dslbd.dc.gov and [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) respectively. OSI Offices assists with physical presence and documentation requirements but does not guarantee certification or registration outcomes. Consult qualified legal and business advisors for guidance specific to your situation.

Guide prepared by OSI Offices | osioffices.com | Updated 2025