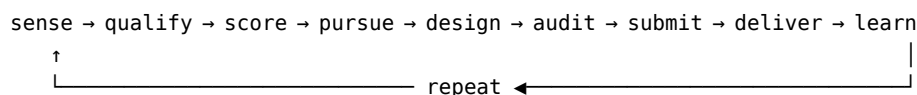


Doctrine 03 — The Pursuit Pipeline

One durable concept: winning federal work is a pipeline, not a lottery.

Most people imagine government business as a lottery: a solicitation appears, you write a proposal, and the agency either loves you or never calls back. The single most important idea in this course is that **it is not a lottery**. It is a pipeline — a sequence of stages, each with a defined job, each feeding the next, with gates in between that decide whether work continues. Understand the pipeline and you understand how organizations win, lose, and learn.

The shape



Read it like this: every cycle starts by *sensing* the market, *qualifies* what it found, *scores* the survivors, *pursues* the ones worth chasing, *designs* a proposal, *audits* it before it ships, *submits*, *delivers*, *learns* from the outcome, and *repeats* with the knowledge baked in.

The stages

- 1. Sense.** The market is a river of opportunities — thousands of solicitations, NOFOs, and forecasts every year. Sensing is the discipline of watching the river and recognizing what is relevant to *your* mission, capabilities, and certifications. Without sensing, you don't have a pipeline; you have a rumor.
- 2. Qualify.** Most opportunities are not worth pursuing, and the fastest way to go bankrupt is to pursue them all. Qualification is a fast, honest filter: *Are we eligible? Is it real? Does it fit?* This is where the **bid / no-bid decision** lives in its earliest form — a disciplined “no” is a professional outcome, not a failure.
- 3. Score.** The survivors get scored — a **probability of win (pWin)** combined with an estimate of the value. The classic shape of the score is a probability times an expected value: *how likely are we to win, and what is it worth if we do?* A low-probability, low-value pursuit is a gift you give your competitors. Scoring turns opinion into arithmetic.
- 4. Pursue.** Now the pursuit becomes real: the opportunity becomes a structured **ORBITAL** (Doctrine 06) — an object with an objective, resources, a budget, indicators, transport, activities, and logistics. Someone owns it. Money is committed. The clock starts.
- 5. Design.** The proposal is designed: the technical approach, the management plan, the past performance evidence, the pricing. This is a production effort with a deadline, not a burst of writing at the end.

6. Audit. Before anything ships, the work is reviewed by fresh eyes — the **color-team** discipline (pink for compliance, red for persuasiveness, gold for executive alignment, and beyond). An audit that fails is a gift: it caught the problem while there was still time to fix it.

7. Submit. The compliant, reviewed, ready package goes to the portal on time. Submission is an event, not a thought.

8. Deliver. If you win, the work begins — and the delivery is the next proposal's past performance. Every delivered contract is seed corn for the next pursuit.

9. Learn. The outcome is studied: what did the evaluators value, what moved the score, what do we do differently? This is the loop that turns a pipeline into a compounding asset.

Gates: where the discipline lives

Between the stages sit **gates** — deliberate decision points where work pauses for a judgment call. A gate is not a meeting; it is a checkpoint with criteria. The best gates are boring: *Does this pass the bar we set in advance? Yes or no?*

sense —[fit?] $\longrightarrow$ qualify —[bid/no-bid?] $\longrightarrow$ score —[threshold?] $\longrightarrow$ pursue
→ design —[review gates] $\longrightarrow$ audit —[ready?] $\longrightarrow$ submit $\longrightarrow$ deliver $\longrightarrow$ learn

The gate is the mechanism that keeps a pipeline honest. Without gates, organizations drift: they pursue everything, submit mediocre work, and confuse activity with progress. With gates, scarcity is forced into the open — *we only have so much capture capacity, so what deserves it?* That question, asked honestly at every gate, is the whole discipline.

A useful rule of thumb: **a gate should be passable or not, with criteria written before the work begins.** When the criteria are written after, the gate is theater.

Two shapes of the same idea

This course's vocabulary is deliberately consistent. The pipeline you just read is the same idea as:

- the **GROWTH** lifecycle — *Gauge, Research, Organize, Write, Target, Health* — when you are describing the production arc of a single pursuit;
- the **DREAM** approach — *Discover, Relate, Empower, Advise, Motivate* — when you are describing how you engage the customer and the mission;
- the **SuperNova** strategy — a full arc from *DREAM* $\rightarrow$ *ORBITAL Plan* $\rightarrow$ *STARTUP* $\rightarrow$ *Ops* $\rightarrow$ *LAUNCH* $\rightarrow$ *GROWTH* $\rightarrow$ *Mission Control* — when you are describing how a seed idea becomes an operating entity.

Different accents, one pipeline. That is by design: a student learning the pipeline should recognize it in a playbook, a proposal plan, or a corporate strategy deck.

What this means for your career

The pipeline is a durable mental model you can carry into any organization. When someone says “we should chase this opportunity,” you can ask *which stage is it in?* When a team says “we’re too busy,” you can ask *what would the gate say?* The pipeline turns business development from an adrenaline sport into an engineering discipline.

For the Strategic Initiative student, the pipeline is the ecosystem: how the organization allocates attention and capital. For the MBA student, it is the funnel: conversion rates, pipeline value, and where the leverage is. For the MPA student, it is the process: how the public side and private side of the same transaction each run their own pipeline and meet at the gate. You will spend the rest of this course inside this shape.

Self-check

1. Name the pipeline stages in order, and say in one sentence what each one does.
2. What is a gate, and why does a gate need its criteria written *before* the work begins?
3. How are the GROWTH lifecycle, the DREAM approach, and the Super-Nova strategy different accents on the same pipeline?