

Literacy — Agencies: A Deep-Dive Library

Every pursuit is agency-specific. The agency is not scenery — it is the other party in the conversation. The Department of Defense and the National Institutes of Health do not buy the same way, evaluate the same way, or even speak the same language. This library is the reference layer for the agencies you will actually meet: each profile is a teaching document that maps one agency to the doctrine and to the course.

Why agency depth matters

In the rest of the curriculum, agencies appear the way they do in the glossary — as one-liners: “the Department of Defense,” “the National Institutes of Health,” “NASA.” That is fine for vocabulary. It is not enough for a pursuit. A real solicitation names an agency, and that name carries a culture, a set of solicitation shapes, an evaluation philosophy, a vehicle landscape, and a small-business pool. The offeror who reads only the document — and not the agency behind it — is reading the letter without the intent, and we know from doctrine/02 that winning requires the strategy reading, not just the compliance reading.

This library fills that gap: **ten agency profiles that teach the durable shape of each buying culture**, so you can walk into a live solicitation knowing what kind of conversation you are in.

The recurring profile schema

Every profile is built on the same six lenses. That is deliberate — the lenses are the questions a capture professional asks before reading a word of the document:

Lens	The question it answers
Culture	How does this agency think and buy? Is it a <i>buyer</i> (it needs a thing done), a <i>funder</i> (it wants a mission advanced), or both?
Solicitation shapes	What documents does it use — RFPs, RFQs, BAAs, NOFOs, Research Announcements? Where are they published?
Evaluation emphasis	How does it judge? What is weighted — technical, past performance, price? Best value tradeoff or lowest-price-technically-acceptable?
Vehicles	What standing competitions does it run — IDIQs, GWACs, schedules, blanket agreements — and how do they change the game?

Lens	The question it answers
Past-performance expectations	How does it check the record — CPARS, SPRS, adjectival ratings, references?
Set-aside landscape	What small-business pools are open, which ones matter most here, and what certification do they require?

Learn the six lenses once and you can read any profile in this library — and any agency *not* in it, because the lenses transfer.

How to read a profile

The profiles are reference documents, but they are also teachable. Use them in two modes:

1. **Study mode.** Read a profile end to end before you meet that agency in a class session or a pursuit. The **learning pointers** box at the end of each profile tells you which doctrine chapters and course modules the profile feeds.
2. **Reference mode.** When a solicitation lands, open the relevant profile and run the six lenses against the live document. Note what matches — and what has changed since the profile was written. Change is expected; the lenses are the durable part.

The library at a glance

Profile	Read it when...
The Department of Defense	You are pursuing the defense market — the largest buyer on earth, and the home of FAR/DFARS, GWACs, and the set-aside machine.
The SBIR/STTR machine	You are considering the small-business R&D set-asides — the most predictable federal funding path for a small technical company.
The Department of Homeland Security	You are pursuing security, IT, or emergency-management work across a component-driven department.
The Department of Energy	You are pursuing energy, science, or nuclear-security work — or reading the STTR NOFO that anchors this curriculum's worked exemplar.

Profile	Read it when...
The National Institutes of Health	You are pursuing biomedical research funding — the grant economy’s center of gravity.
NASA	You are pursuing space, aeronautics, or technical work — where technical weight is everything and Source Evaluation Boards decide.
GSA	You are trying to get <i>on the schedule</i> — the shared procurement infrastructure nearly every agency uses.
The Department of Veterans Affairs	You are pursuing the healthcare-systems market or the SDVOSB/VOSB set-aside world.
State, USAID, and the civic market	You are pursuing foreign-affairs and foreign-assistance work — or the state/local market that sits outside federal rules.

A standing caution: agencies change

Everything in these profiles is accurate as a *shape*, and the shapes are durable. But the specific names, vehicles, and rules are not eternal. Two examples from recent history:

- The SBIR/STTR authorization **lapsed on September 30, 2025** — the first lapse in the programs’ four-decade history — before being reauthorized in 2026. Programs can pause.
- The past-performance system **PPIRS was retired** and folded into **SPRS**, **CPARS**, and **FAPIS**; the DHS vehicle **EAGLE II** has been giving way to **EAGLE Next Gen**; the GSA **OASIS** family has become **OASIS+**. Vehicles retire and get replaced; the *function* — a standing competition you win once and then chase orders against — endures.

That is doctrine/08 in its purest form: **tools change, concepts don’t** (doctrine/08). Treat every proper noun in this library as the *current address of an institution*, not the institution itself. Before a pursuit commits, **verify against the live solicitation** — the date, the vehicle, the set-aside status, the evaluation factors. The published document is ground truth; a profile is a map that tells you what to look for.

Where this lives in the course

The agency profiles are part of the literacy layer, the student’s reference shelf alongside the glossary, the acronym decoder, and the reading maps (how-to-read-

a-nofo, how-to-read-an-rfp). They make the doctrine concrete: doctrine/01 tells you the money lives in agencies; these profiles tell you what each one is like to work with. Use them the same way you use the case study — as the concrete object you practice the doctrine on.

Learning pointers

Learning pointers. This library is the agency-facing layer of the curriculum. - **Doctrine** — every profile keys off doctrine/01 (where the money lives), doctrine/02 (solicitations), and doctrine/03 (the pursuit pipeline). The set-aside landscape is the small-business detour from doctrine/01 made concrete per agency. - **Literacy** — pair a profile with where-the-money-flows (the plumbing) and industry-standard-canon (the vocabulary). - **Case study** — Ravonics (case-study/ravonics.md) holds HUBZone status, four NAICS codes, and an STTR research partner; each profile shows which lanes that opens and which agency would care. - **Practice** — after studying a profile, take a real, published, closed solicitation from that agency (SAM.gov or Grants.gov) and run the six lenses against it. That is the capstone exercise scaled to one agency. - **Course** — the profiles feed the solicitation-reading course (undergraduate-102) and the competitive-intelligence elective (graduate-elective-competitive-market-intelligence).