

Capstone — Build an ORBITAL

The final assessment. You will take a real, published solicitation from SAM.gov or Grants.gov and produce the full pursuit package: a compliance reading, an ORBITAL, a score, and a bid/no-bid recommendation — all stack-free.

Teams: 3–4 students. **Presented:** Week 14. **Weight:** 35% (full rubric in course/assessments-and-rubric.md).

The assignment in one sentence

Pick a real, *published and closed* RFP or NOFO. Treat it as a genuine pursuit for a real organization. Produce the pursuit documents a professional capture team would produce — without using any specific software product.

Why “published and closed”

You work on opportunities that are real but over — the competition has already run, and the award is public. This gives you three gifts:

1. **Authenticity** — you read a document an agency actually wrote, with real evaluation criteria, real deadlines, real requirements.
2. **Safety** — nothing you produce has any bearing on a live competition; no ethical or regulatory risk.
3. **Ground truth** — the actual award is published. After you build your recommendation, you can compare your bid/no-bid call and your score to what actually happened. That comparison is the learning.

The deliverables

1. Solicitation mastery (compliance reading)

Produce a **compliance matrix**: every requirement in the solicitation, with the section/page it came from, mapped to where your response would satisfy it. Then a **strategy reading**: one page on what the agency actually cares about, read from the evaluation criteria and the intent behind the “shall”s.

This is the product of the compliance pass and the strategy pass from literacy/how-to-read-an-rfp.md (or how-to-read-a-nofo.md).

2. The ORBITAL

Build the seven-axis structure (doctrine/06), with real content sourced from the solicitation and the market:

- **Objective** — what the pursuit is trying to do, and what counts as success. Tie it to the agency’s stated outcome.
- **Resources** — the team and capabilities needed to deliver. Be honest about what exists and what must be acquired or partnered.

- **Budget** — the estimated value of the award, the estimated cost of delivery, and the pursuit cost to compete.
- **Indicators** — how you would know, mid-pursuit, whether you are on track.
- **Transport** — the vehicles and delivery path: the contracting vehicle, the delivery route, the channel to the customer.
- **Activities** — the work plan: what happens, in what order, by when.
- **Logistics** — what must be true for the work to happen: certifications, clearances, facilities, agreements.

Use any format — paper, whiteboard, spreadsheet, documents. The skeleton is the point, not the medium.

3. The score and the bid/no-bid call

Produce the scoring (doctrine/05):

- **pWin** — an honest, factor-by-factor estimate. For each factor, state the score, the evidence, and why you gave it. *A pWin without a defended factor breakdown is a guess.*
- **Value** — the expected value of the award, grounded in the solicitation’s own numbers (and the published award, if visible).
- **Composite** — $pWin \times value$.
- **The call** — BID, BID WITH CONDITIONS, or NO BID, against a threshold you state in advance. Write the one-paragraph defense.

4. Governance and gates

Name the **gates** this pursuit would cross (doctrine/04): the bid/no-bid gate, the threshold gate, the review gates, the readiness gate. For each: the criteria written in advance, the evidence that would satisfy them, and who owns the decision.

5. The presentation

Present the whole package in 15 minutes and defend it against a skeptical panel. The panel’s job is to push: *“Why is your pWin that high? Your budget doesn’t match your activities. Who owns this call?”* A strong defense is the difference between a good capstone and an excellent one.

What “stack-free” means

You may use any tools you like — a whiteboard, a spreadsheet, a word processor, paper. What you may **not** do is make your deliverable depend on a specific product, system, or AI tool. If your presentation requires knowing a particular piece of software, you have missed the point of the course (doctrine/08). The skill being tested is whether you can produce structure, score, and call from a raw document — the tool is irrelevant.

Suggested timeline

Week	Milestone
10	Choose your solicitation (with instructor approval). Confirm it is closed.
11	Compliance matrix + strategy reading drafted.
12	ORBITAL drafted; budget and indicators argued.
13	Score + bid/no-bid drafted; gates named; workshop with instructor.
14	Presentation and defense.

The post-mortem (do it, even though it is not graded)

After you present, look up the actual award. Who won, for how much, and why might that have happened? Update your pWin factors with what you learned. This is the learning loop (doctrine/03, stage 9) — and it is the moment the course becomes a career skill.