Graduate Program Overview — Master of Science in Capture Management & Government Business Development

"The federal market is not a lottery. It is a pipeline — and the pipeline is teachable. The graduate program is where you learn to teach it, to measure it, and to lead the organization that runs it."

Degree: Master of Science (MS) in Capture Management & Government Business Development **Credits:** 30–36 graduate credits **Format:** 14-week courses, one 75-minute session per week (plus substantial weekly reading and a written deliverable). Designed for both full-time students and working professionals; see The adult-pro student. **Home in the curriculum:** The Master's tier of the bachelor's → master's → doctorate ladder. Sits between the undergraduate foundations (Dream Foundations) and the doctoral tier (Visionary Leadership). Maps to the **L2 Builder** level of the Innovator's Launchpad (see align/concept-to-system-map.md). **Texts:** the doctrine and literacy folders of this repository, plus the graduate course syllabi in this folder. Every graduate course draws its advanced canon from the same machine-side doctrine the undergraduate tier teaches — rendered, as always, at **concept altitude** (concepts are durable, tools are swappable — doctrine/08).

Why a graduate degree in capture management

The undergraduate tier teaches the pipeline: how money moves, how solicitations work, how a firm qualifies, scores, prices, and submits. It is the operating skill of the discipline.

The graduate tier answers three questions the undergraduate tier deliberately does not ask:

1. **Why does the market behave the way it does?** (theory) — Why does incumbency dominate awards? Why do set-asides work — or not? Why is the winner's curse real in LPTA bids? The answers come from microeconomics, auction theory, game theory, and organizational theory.
2. **How do we know what we think we know?** (research) — Which factors actually drive win probability? How do we measure capture readiness, price-to-win, or the value of a certification? The answers come from research design, measurement, and statistics.
3. **How is the money actually governed?** (advanced finance) — What makes a cost allowable, allocable, and reasonable? What do DCAA, CAS, and TINA demand? How is a defensible price built from a cost structure? The answers come from the FAR cost principles and the disciplines built around them.

A capture professional with the undergraduate tier can run a pursuit. A graduate of this program can *lead the discipline*: set the strategy, design the measurement, defend the price, and govern the organization that does the work.

The three pillars

Pillar	Courses	What it produces
Graduate theory	Microeconomics of Procurement & Markets · Competitive Strategy & Game Theory · Organizational Theory & Governance	A professional who can explain *why* the market rewards what it rewards, and predict competitive behavior
Research & finance	Research Methods in Procurement & Capture · Advanced Finance (FAR, DCAA, CAS, TINA)	A professional who can measure the pipeline and build a defensible price
Business structuring	Electives (teaming, JV, subcontracting; negotiations & pricing posture; intelligence; proposal & color-team leadership; pipeline economics & portfolio management; orals coaching & presentation discipline) + the culminating capstone/thesis	A professional who can structure a pursuit — or an entire firm — as a business

The third pillar is the **business structuring** core of the degree. The federal market does not reward good proposals; it rewards well-structured organizations that run disciplined pipelines. The ORBITAL doctrine (doctrine/06) is the skeleton of a pursuit-as-business; the graduate program extends that skeleton to the firm level: how to choose a teaming posture, how to price, how to gather intelligence, how to govern.

The credit model (30–36)

The degree is **30 credits** for a student who enters already holding the undergraduate-tier foundations (or demonstrated equivalency), and up to **36 credits** when a **Foundations Bridge** is required.

Component	Credits	Detail
Core required	15	GC 501 Microeconomics · GC 510 Competitive Strategy & Game Theory · GC 520 Organizational Theory & Governance · GC 530 Research Methods · GC 540 Advanced Finance
Graduate electives	9	Choose three of six: GE 610 Negotiations & Pricing Posture · GE 620 Teaming, Joint Ventures & Subcontracting · GE 630 Competitive & Market Intelligence · GE 640 Proposal Management & Color-Team Leadership · GE 650 Pipeline Economics & Portfolio Management · GE 651 Orals Coaching & Presentation Discipline
Culminating experience	6	GC 690 Graduate Capstone (applied) **or** GC 690T Thesis (research)
Foundations Bridge *(if required)*	0–6	GB 500 Foundations of the Federal Market · GB 510 Analytical Foundations *(taken by admittees who do not pass the prior-learning assessment)*

Component	Credits	Detail
Minimum / maximum	**30 / 36**	15 core + 9 electives + 6 culminating = 30. Adding the bridge reaches 36. A student may substitute a fourth elective for elective-hours credit only with the program director's approval.

Every course is **3 credits** and runs **14 weeks**, matching the rhythm of the undergraduate semester so the two tiers can share faculty, guest speakers, and — where useful — the same real, published-and-closed solicitations as teaching objects.

Prerequisites and admission

Two doors into the program:

Door A — The undergraduate tier (Dream Foundations)

A student who has completed the undergraduate tier of this curriculum (its shared core, an audience track, and its capstone) — or an equivalent undergraduate course of study in government contracting, business development, or public administration — enters at the full 30 credits.

Door B — The experienced professional (prior-learning assessment)

The program is built for the **adult-pro student**: the mid-career capture manager, business development executive, contract administrator, pricing analyst, veteran transitioned into govcon, government procurement professional, or small-business owner who already *does* this work but has never studied it as a discipline. These students are admitted through a **prior-learning assessment (PLA)** that measures the undergraduate-tier learning outcomes directly:

- Can they explain where federal money lives and how it flows?
- Can they read an RFP and a NOFO: locate the SOW, the evaluation criteria, the compliance requirements?
- Can they draw the pursuit pipeline and explain the purpose of each stage and gate?
- Can they compute a pursuit score and make a defensible bid/no-bid call?
- Can they build an ORBITAL?

The PLA is a portfolio review plus a written assessment built from the undergraduate syllabus's own midterm and capstone exercises. A professional who

passes it enters at the full 30 credits. One who does not pass — or who prefers the structure — takes the **Foundations Bridge** first (GB 500, and GB 510 if quantitative foundations are also needed), entering at up to 36 credits.

> **The design principle behind Door B.** The discipline of federal pursuit has historically been learned on the job — by practitioners who are excellent at their work and were never taught why it works. This program treats that experience as real currency, but it also refuses to let experience substitute for the theory, the research, and the finance the degree is built to teach. The PLA honors the first half of that sentence; the core curriculum enforces the second.

The adult-pro student

This program is deliberately teachable **while working**. The design decisions:

- **One session per week.** A 75-minute session, evenings or weekends, with the week's reading and a single written deliverable. The undergraduate model — one course, one session per week — scales to a graduate load of two courses per term.
- **The case travels with the job.** Weekly assignments are built on real, published-and-closed solicitations and on the student's *own* pursuit portfolio where ethics allow. An adult-pro student does not do hypothetical homework; they bring their real competitive landscape, their real pricing posture, and their real teaming questions into the room.
- **Peer cohort.** The adult-pro cohort is itself the teaching asset: capture managers, pricing analysts, COs, small-business owners, veterans. The discussion prompts in the modules assume this mix.
- **Accelerated paths.** A student with a CAS-certified pricing background may test out of portions of GC 540 via the PLA-style challenge; a student who runs a capture org may petition to substitute a firm-level governance project for part of GC 520. Challenge exams are the rule, not the exception, for adult-pro students.
- **The culminating experience is portfolio-real.** The applied capstone is not a simulation; it is a structured, research-grounded treatment of a real (closed) competition — and, where a student has the authority, their own firm's next pursuit run under the program's discipline.

Program sequence

Full-time (two years, four terms)

Term	Courses
Fall, Year 1	GC 501 Microeconomics · GC 520 Organizational Theory & Governance

Term	Courses
Spring, Year 1	GC 510 Competitive Strategy & Game Theory · GC 530 Research Methods
Summer, Year 1	*(thesis students: GC 690T proposal and IRB/ethics review; capstone students: solicitation selection)*
Fall, Year 2	GC 540 Advanced Finance · GE elective (1)
Spring, Year 2	GE electives (2 and 3) · GC 690 / GC 690T culminating defense

Part-time (three years — the adult-pro standard)

Term	Courses
Fall, Year 1	GC 501 Microeconomics · *(bridge: GB 500 if required)*
Spring, Year 1	GC 520 Organizational Theory & Governance · GC 530 Research Methods
Fall, Year 2	GC 510 Competitive Strategy & Game Theory · GE elective (1)
Spring, Year 2	GC 540 Advanced Finance · GE elective (2)
Fall, Year 3	GE elective (3) · GC 690 / GC 690T (start)
Spring, Year 3	GC 690 / GC 690T (defense)

Prerequisite ordering. GC 501 and GC 520 have no prerequisites beyond the foundations. GC 510 assumes GC 501 (it uses game-theoretic tools on market structures). GC 530 assumes basic algebra and a willingness to work with public data; GB 510 exists for students who need the statistical refresher. GC 540 assumes GC 501 (cost and price economics) and is best taken with or after GC 510 (competitive pricing posture). The culminating experience requires completion of GC 530 (it is a research-grounded project) and the relevant electives.

The culminating experience

The capstone and the thesis are two renderings of one requirement: **demonstrate graduate-level mastery of capture management, government business development, and business structuring, under rigorous review.**

GC 690 — Applied Graduate Capstone (6 credits)

A team or individual project built on a **real, published-and-closed solicitation** — the graduate version of the undergraduate capstone, run at full professional altitude:

1. A complete capture plan: customer map, competitive landscape, incumbent analysis, discriminators and themes.
2. A teaming posture decision with a partner-rubric defense.
3. A full ORBITAL with a defensible budget.
4. A research-grounded score and bid/no-bid recommendation (the score must cite evidence, not assertion).
5. A **pricing volume at FAR cost-principle altitude**: cost structure, indirect rate build-up, BOE for every cost element, price-to-win position argued against the competitor band and the affordability ceiling.
6. A governance design: the gates, the decision rights, the ethical walls, the OCI posture.
7. A defense before a panel that includes a practitioner and a faculty researcher.

GC 690T — Thesis (6 credits)

An original, empirical or analytical study contributing to the discipline's knowledge base. Examples a student might pursue:

- A validation study of a pWin factor model against published award data.
- A taxonomy of organizational conflict-of-interest cases and their structural causes.
- A calibration study of contract-type margin floors against realized outcomes.
- A comparative case study of incumbent displacement plays and their outcomes.
- A measurement study of capture readiness and its relationship to award likelihood.

The thesis is the bridge to the doctoral tier: it must demonstrate research design, measurement, and analysis competence at the level taught in GC 530, and it is expected to be of publishable quality. Thesis students defend before a faculty committee.

Graduate-level learning outcomes

By the end of the program, a graduate can:

- **Explain the market.** Use microeconomics, auction theory, and game theory to explain why the federal market behaves as it does — incumbency, set-asides, winner's curse, best-value vs. LPTA, price signaling.

- **Set the strategy.** Build a competitive strategy for a pursuit or a portfolio: positioning, discriminators, ghosting, teaming posture, bid/no-bid discipline.
- **Govern the firm.** Design the governance of a pursuit organization: gates, decision rights, ethical walls, OCI management, procurement-integrity compliance.
- **Measure the pipeline.** Formulate a research question about procurement or capture, design a study, gather and analyze data, and state what can and cannot be concluded.
- **Build the price.** Construct a FAR-compliant cost structure, apply cost principles and (where relevant) CAS, prepare for DCAA scrutiny, and assemble a price-to-win position with a defensible basis of estimate.
- **Structure the business.** Choose among teaming, joint venture, subcontracting, and mentor-protege postures; design the business structure of a pursuit or a firm; lead the proposal and color-team system.
- **Write and defend.** Produce a graduate-level treatment of a real pursuit and defend it under questioning — the same standard the discipline demands of a professional who will sit in a source-selection room.

The concept-altitude principle (graduate edition)

The undergraduate tier's founding rule — **concepts are durable, tools are swappable** (doctrine/08) — is enforced *harder* at the graduate level. The graduate canon is drawn from the same machine-side doctrine the ecosystem encodes in its rule, formula, and playbook layer; the program renders that canon at **concept altitude**:

- Not "the pricing-to-win formula," but: *a target price is anchored to three signals — the competitor price band, the customer's affordability ceiling, and the cost-plus floor implied by the contract-type margin floor.*
- Not "the teaming rule," but: *the teaming posture decision weighs capability fit, past-performance match, set-aside eligibility, vehicle access, and partner risk.*
- Not "the color-team rule," but: *reviewer independence, finding specificity, and a forward-only cadence are the structural properties that make a review system trustworthy.*

A graduate of this program could run the discipline with paper, a whiteboard, and the published record. That is the test. If a course in this program ever requires knowledge of a specific product or system to complete an assignment, that is a bug — flag it.

The degree fellowship doctorate crosswalk

Layer	Launchpad level	This program
Bachelor's (Dream Foundations)	L1 Explorer	The undergraduate tier: money, pipeline, documents, ORBITAL, scoring
Master's (Curiosity in Action)	**L2 Builder**	This program: theory, research, finance, business structuring
Doctoral (Visionary Leadership)	L3 Architect + L4 Networker	The doctoral tier: advanced research, AI-systems governance, cross-organizational capture orchestration

The doctorate tier *builds on* this program. GC 530 (research methods) is the direct prerequisite for doctoral research; GC 690T (thesis) is the expected entry credential for doctoral candidacy. The alignment map (align/concept-to-system-map.md) keeps the degree fellowship course crosswalk current; this program is the "Master's (Curiosity in Action)" row rendered as a full degree.

The courses

#	Course	Credits	Semester(s) in sequence
GC 501	Microeconomics of Procurement & Markets	3	Fall Y1
GC 510	Competitive Strategy & Game Theory for Capture	3	Spring Y1
GC 520	Organizational Theory & Governance	3	Fall Y1
GC 530	Research Methods in Procurement & Capture	3	Spring Y1
GC 540	Advanced Finance: FAR Cost Principles, DCAA, CAS, TINA	3	Fall Y2

#	Course	Credits	Semester(s) in sequence
GE 610	Negotiations & Pricing Posture	3	elective
GE 620	Teaming, Joint Ventures & Subcontracting	3	elective
GE 630	Competitive & Market Intelligence	3	elective
GE 640	Proposal Management & Color-Team Leadership	3	elective
GE 650	Pipeline Economics & Portfolio Management	3	elective
GE 651	Orals Coaching & Presentation Discipline	3	elective
GC 690 / GC 690T	Applied Graduate Capstone / Thesis	6	culminating
GB 500 / GB 510	Foundations of the Federal Market / Analytical Foundations	3 / 3	bridge (as required)

Each course syllabus in this folder is a complete 14-week plan: learning outcomes, weekly schedule, assessment summary, and policies. The matching module in `modules/graduate/` is the session-by-session teaching plan for instructors, following the same module contract as the undergraduate tracks (`modules/module-template.md`).

Policies worth stating plainly

- **The doctrine is the degree.** Every assignment tests the concept, never a tool. Graduate altitude means *more* theory and *more* rigor, not more software.
- **Real documents, safe exercises.** All teaching objects are real, published-and-closed solicitations and public records. No assignment

touches a live competition, and no assignment requires a student to use proprietary or source-selection-sensitive information.

- **Academic integrity — and procurement integrity.** This program treats integrity as a professional skill, not a rule. Fabricated evidence, invented solicitations, or misrepresented work fails the relevant assessment outright. Students who work in the industry are expected to observe ethical walls and the procurement-integrity rules in their own work — the organizational-theory course teaches exactly where those walls are.
- **Challenge exams.** Adult-pro students may challenge any core course they can demonstrate mastery of; the prior-learning assessment is the mechanism. Challenge is the exception, not the default, and a challenged course still requires a demonstration of graduate-level (not experiential) competence.
- **Late work.** The pipeline has deadlines; so does the degree. The one professional grace: an honest early warning beats a silent late submission.

The undergraduate tier teaches you to run the pipeline. This program teaches you to explain it, measure it, price it, structure it, and lead it. The pipeline is teachable — at every altitude.