Guide — Your First 30 Days in a GovCon BD / Capture Role

You got the job. The first thirty days decide how the next three years go. This is the sprint — a week-by-week plan for turning a new hire into someone who can hold a seat at the bid/no-bid table by the end of the first month.

> **The one sentence that frames the sprint.** *Your first month is not about proving you know things — it is about proving you can learn the right things fast: the pipeline, the people, and the register. The curriculum taught you the doctrine; the first 30 days teaches you this company's version of it.*

This guide is for anyone starting a federal business-development or capture role — analyst, representative, capture manager, proposal manager — at any size of firm. It is deliberately **concept-first**: everything here can be done with paper, a whiteboard, and the firm's own records. No specific software is required or assumed (the stack-agnostic rule applies to your onboarding too: the *register* is a system of record, whichever one the firm uses).

The sprint at a glance

Week	Focus	End-of-week deliverable
Week 1	Learn the pipeline	A one-page map of the firm's pipeline and how this company moves work from lead to award
Week 2	Meet the machine	A people map (who owns each stage) and a first pass at the wins/losses story
Week 3	Get your hands on a pursuit	Your first capability statement draft + a shadowed gate review
Week 4	Earn a seat	A bid/no-bid one-pager presented to a real owner — and a seat at the table

The four weeks stack: Week 1 gives you the *shape*, Week 2 the *people*, Week 3 the *artifact*, Week 4 the *decision*. By day 30 you should be able to walk into any meeting and know *which stage a conversation belongs to* — the single most transferable skill in this industry.

Week 1 — Learn the pipeline

Focus. Understand how this company actually makes money. You do not yet need to know the details of every pursuit; you need to know the *machine* — the stages, the gates, and where the company is in them right now.

Do this week: - **Read the company's own story.** Who it is, what it sells, who its customers are, what it has won. The past-performance library (public awards on USAspending.gov, the firm's win announcements, its capability statements) is the fastest way in. - **Draw the pipeline.** Sketch the firm's actual pipeline — from market sensing to delivery — on a whiteboard. Where does it start? Where are the gates? Which gates are real (decisions actually get made there) and which are ceremonial? Compare it to the doctrine's pipeline (doctrine/03). - **Meet the register.** Find the opportunity register / CRM. Learn what a row is, what a stage is, what a score means here. Ask how a new opportunity enters and who owns it at each stage. - **Read the wins and losses.** If the firm has a win/loss log or post-mortems, read them all. If it does not, that is itself a finding — note it, mention it, and volunteer to help build one (that is an easy early win).

Week-1 checklist: - [ ] I can draw the firm's pipeline from memory, with the gates marked. - [ ] I can name the firm's top three customers and its most recent wins. - [ ] I know where the opportunity register lives and what a row in it contains. - [ ] I have read at least one win post-mortem and one loss post-mortem. - [ ] I have a list of at least five questions I could not answer — and who to ask.

Questions to ask this week: - "What does our pipeline look like right now — how many active pursuits, what stages?" - "Which gates are real here? Where do decisions actually get made?" - "What did we win last year, and why do we think we won it?" - "What did we lose last year, and what did we learn?" - "Where does a new opportunity first touch the company?"

Week 2 — Meet the machine

Focus. Understand who does what, and build the relationship map that makes every later week faster. A BD career runs on *who knows who* as much as on *what you know.*

Do this week: - **Map the people to the pipeline.** For each pipeline stage, name the person who owns it — capture, proposals, pricing, contracts, delivery, leadership. You are building the people map you will consult for the rest of your time here. - **Meet the capture teams.** Get thirty minutes with each capture or pursuit lead, active or recent. Ask them about the pursuits they are running and the lessons they have learned. People love to explain their work; let them. - **Understand the bids in flight.** Get the list of active pursuits. For each: what stage, who owns it, what is happening next. You do not need to know everything; you need to know *what is on the board.* - **Learn the supporting**

cast. Pricing, contracts, finance, HR, delivery — the people who make a win real after submission. A capture person who knows the delivery team's constraints writes better proposals. - **Find the company's certifications and vehicles.** Which set-asides does it hold (HUBZone, 8(a), WOSB/VOSB, SDVOSB)? Which contract vehicles (IDIQs, schedules, GWACs)? These are the lanes it can actually play in — the certification literacy from the doctrine, now made specific.

Week-2 checklist: - [ ] I can map every pipeline stage to a person. - [ ] I have met (or booked) every active capture/pursuit lead. - [ ] I know every active pursuit and its stage. - [ ] I can name the firm's certifications and its top three vehicles. - [ ] I have been introduced to pricing and contracts.

Questions to ask this week: - "If a great opportunity dropped into my lap today, who is the first person I take it to?" - "Which active pursuit is the best one for me to learn on — and who owns it?" - "What does our pricing team need from capture to do their job?" - "What does the delivery team wish capture understood about them?" - "Which certification or vehicle would you add if you could, and why?"

Week 3 — Get your hands on a pursuit

Focus. Produce your first artifact and watch a gate run. By the end of this week you have something you made, and you have seen the discipline happen live.

Do this week: - **Write your first capability statement draft.** Pick one real capability the firm has (or, if you are at a startup, one you are helping define) and draft a one-page capability statement: who the company is, what it does, proof it has done it, and the customer problem it solves. The capability-statement concept in the doctrine is your shape. This will be revised forever — the first draft is the point. - **Shadow a gate review.** Find the next gate happening in the firm — a qualify, bid/no-bid, or readiness review — and ask to sit in. Watch how the owner assembles evidence, how the criteria are (or are not) applied, and how the decision is made and recorded. The gate anatomy — trigger, criteria, decision, owner — is what you are looking for. If the gate runs badly, you have just learned the most valuable lesson the job can teach: what the discipline looks like when it is missing. - **Take one opportunity and trace it.** Pick one row in the register and follow its paper trail: who found it, how it was qualified, what it scored, what happened. Reconstruct its journey. - **Ask for a small task.** Offer to do something genuinely useful: refresh a watchlist, verify a NAICS code, update a competitor profile, draft meeting notes from a capture session. Small useful beats big enthusiastic.

Week-3 checklist: - [ ] I have a first capability statement draft (even ugly — that is the point). - [ ] I have sat through at least one gate review and written down what happened. - [ ] I have traced one real opportunity through the register. - [ ] I have completed one small, genuinely useful task for an active pursuit. - [ ] I can name the three things that would make a gate review excellent vs. ceremonial.

Questions to ask this week: - “Can I sit in on the next bid/no-bid review?” - “Who wrote this capability statement last — and could I see the version history?” - “What makes a ‘yes’ at our bid/no-bid gate? What makes a ‘no’?” - “Is there an opportunity in the register you wish someone would clean up?” - “What is the one thing you wish you had known in your first month?”

Week 4 — Earn a seat

Focus. Move from observer to contributor at the decision table. The goal of the first month is not to run anything — it is to earn the right to be *in* the room when a call gets made.

Do this week: - **Prepare a bid/no-bid one-pager.** Take one real opportunity in the register (or one you found). Build a one-page recommendation: the opportunity, the firm’s eligibility (certifications, NAICS, capacity), your score (pWin factors and value), and a bid / bid-with-conditions / no-bid call. Use the scored-pursuit sheet (SC-E5) shape. You are not expecting your call to win — you are demonstrating that you can *structure* the decision. - **Present it.** Get thirty minutes with the capture owner or a director and walk through it. The presentation is the point: it is your first time defending a position with evidence in this company. - **Get a seat.** Ask for a standing assignment on one active pursuit — a watchlist owner, a research support role, a note-taker at capture sessions, a compliance-matrix starter. A seat, even a small one, is the deliverable of the first month. - **Write your own 30-day note.** One page: what you learned, what the firm does well, what you would improve (including the win/loss log gap if you found one), and what you want to own next. Send it to your manager. This single habit — written, honest, forward-looking — marks you as a professional, not a hire.

Week-4 checklist: - [ ] I have written a one-page bid/no-bid recommendation with evidence. - [ ] I have presented it to an owner and taken the feedback. - [ ] I have a standing assignment on at least one active pursuit. - [ ] I have sent my manager a one-page 30-day note with a next-30-days plan. - [ ] I know which stage each active pursuit is in, and who owns it.

Questions to ask this week: - “What would I need to do to be the owner of a pursuit by next quarter?” - “Which of my 30-day suggestions is worth acting on?” - “Who else in the company should meet me before I get busy?” - “What is the one metric you would want me to be accountable for at day 90?”

The master list of questions to ask in your first month

Some questions to ask repeatedly, of different people, until the answers converge:

- **About the market:** Who are our real competitors for the work we want? Where do we win and where do we not even try? What would we never bid, and why?
- **About the discipline:** Which gate is our strongest? Which is our weakest — and is the weakness in the criteria, the evidence, or the courage to say no? How are wins and losses actually captured and learned from?
- **About the money:** How do we price? What is our margin floor? How long does it take us, on average, to get paid after a win? (If no one knows, you have found the subject of your next self-directed study — the company-building module will teach you why that number matters.)
- **About you:** What did the people who succeeded here do in their first year? What did the people who failed do? What does this firm promote, and what does it tolerate?

What good looks like at day 30

You are not expected to know everything. You *are* expected to have demonstrated four things:

1. **You can hold the map.** You know the firm's pipeline, its gates, its people, and its register — and you can say *which stage a conversation belongs to.*
2. **You can produce.** You have written at least two real artifacts: a capability statement draft and a bid/no-bid one-pager, both revised by feedback.
3. **You can sit in the room.** You have attended at least one gate review and earned a standing assignment on a pursuit.
4. **You ask better questions than you answer.** The mark of a BD professional is not knowing everything — it is knowing *who knows*, and asking the question that unlocks them.

If you have those four, your first month was a success regardless of the details. Then the real work begins: the credential ladder tells you where the career goes, and the company-building module tells you what the firm needs to become in order to grow. The doctrine is durable; your first thirty days is where you prove you can apply it.