

How to Register for SAM.gov

A Step-by-Step Guide for First-Time Government Contractors — Free Resource from Regium Academy

SAM.gov (System for Award Management) is the official U.S. government database businesses must register in to bid on federal contracts, receive federal grants, or get paid by a federal agency. Registration is completely free and is required before you can apply for many certifications, including Women-Owned Small Business (WOSB) and 8(a) status. This guide walks you through the entire process from start to finish.

■ This is FREE

Registering and renewing your SAM.gov account costs \$0. If a website asks you to pay a fee to "register" or "activate" your SAM.gov account, it is NOT the official government site. The real site is sam.gov.

Before You Begin: What You'll Need

- A **Login.gov** account (free) — this is how you'll securely sign in to SAM.gov.
- Your business's **legal name**, written exactly as it appears on your IRS documents.
- Your **EIN (Employer Identification Number)**. Note: if your EIN was issued less than 2 weeks ago, the IRS database may not have updated yet, which can delay validation.
- Your **physical business address** (a P.O. Box will NOT work for this field).
- One or more **NAICS codes** that describe what your business does (you can look these up at naics.com).
- Your **bank routing and account numbers** for direct deposit (EFT) — needed if you'll be paid by the government.
- Be ready to print, sign, and notarize a short letter if you are the first person registering your entity (the "Entity Administrator letter").

Step-by-Step Registration

Step 1: Create a Login.gov Account

Go to login.gov and click "Create an account." You'll need an email address and a phone number for two-factor authentication. Verify your email, then set up your two-factor sign-in method (text message or authentication app).

Step 2: Start Your Entity Registration on SAM.gov

Go to sam.gov and sign in with your new Login.gov account. Click "Get Started" under "Register Your Entity." Choose the registration type that matches your business (most small businesses select "Register

Entity").

Step 3: Entity Validation & Get Your UEI

SAM.gov will ask for your legal business name, physical address, and EIN to validate your entity against IRS records. Once validated, you'll automatically be issued a **Unique Entity ID (UEI)** — a 12-character ID that replaces the old DUNS number. Write this number down and save it; you'll need it for every certification application going forward.

Step 4: Complete Your Core Data

This section covers your business details: physical and mailing addresses, start date, fiscal year end, and your EFT (banking) information for payments. Each section saves on its own, so you can stop and come back without losing your progress.

Step 5: Add Your NAICS Codes & Business Type

Select the NAICS code(s) that best describe your services, and mark one as your "primary" code. You'll also self-certify your business size (small business, etc.) and select any applicable socio-economic categories — for example, Woman-Owned, Veteran-Owned, or Small Disadvantaged Business — if they apply to you.

- Tip: only select NAICS codes that genuinely describe work you can perform. Listing too many unrelated codes can raise red flags during a contract review.

Step 6: Complete Reps & Certifications

This section is a series of yes/no questions and certifications related to federal regulations (things like labor practices, lobbying activities, and environmental compliance). Answer each honestly based on your business.

Step 7: Add Points of Contact

You'll designate at least one Electronic Business Point of Contact and a Government Business Point of Contact. These can be the same person if you're a sole proprietor.

Step 8: Submit the Notarized Letter (First-Time Registrations)

If this is your entity's first SAM.gov registration, the system will generate a letter naming you as the Entity Administrator. Print it, sign it in front of a notary, and either upload it through SAM.gov or mail it to the Federal Service Desk address provided. Many banks and shipping stores (like UPS Store) offer notary services for a small fee.

Step 9: Submit & Wait for Approval

Once every section shows "Complete," click Submit. Processing typically takes about **7–10 business days** for U.S.-based businesses. You'll receive an email when your registration becomes "Active."

Common Mistakes That Cause Delays

- **Name/EIN mismatch:** your legal business name in SAM.gov must match the IRS EXACTLY, including punctuation (e.g., "LLC" vs "L.L.C.").

- **Brand-new EIN:** if your EIN is less than 2 weeks old, wait before registering — the IRS database may not have caught up yet.
- **P.O. Box as physical address:** the system requires a real street address for your physical location.
- **Missing or unclear notarized letter:** a blurry signature or notary seal is one of the most common reasons registrations get rejected.
- **Incomplete sections:** SAM.gov won't let you submit until every section is marked complete — double check the "Reps & Certs" and "Points of Contact" sections, which are easy to skip.

After You're Approved

- Save your UEI somewhere safe — you'll need it for every grant, contract, or certification application (including WOSB, 8(a), and state MBE/WBE certifications).
- Your registration must be **renewed every 12 months**. Set a calendar reminder, since an expired registration will make you ineligible for awards until it's reactivated.
- Keep your information current any time your address, ownership, or banking details change.