

How to Get Government Contracts

What Growth Leaders Understand About
Building a Successful Business in the
State, Local, and Education (SLED) Market

Introduction

Every year, organizations of every size begin exploring how to get government contracts. Some are expanding beyond increasingly competitive commercial markets. Others are looking to diversify revenue, establish longer-term customer relationships, or capitalize on growing public investment in technology, infrastructure, professional services, healthcare, education, and public safety.

Most guides focus on how to register as a vendor, apply for contracts, and submit bids. Those steps are important—but they're only part of the picture.

Whatever your reason for being here, it's easy to understand the appeal.

The state, local, and education (SLED) market represents one of the largest and most resilient sectors of the U.S. economy.

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Unlike commercial markets that fluctuate with consumer demand or quarterly performance, government agencies must deliver essential services regardless of economic conditions. They protect communities, educate students, deliver healthcare, maintain transportation systems, secure critical networks, improve constituent services, and modernize infrastructure. Those responsibilities create continuous demand for products, services, technology, and expertise across virtually every industry.



Why Registration Alone Doesn't Lead to Government Contracts

Many organizations enter the government market by focusing on tactical steps:

- Registering as a vendor
- Monitoring bid portals
- Pursuing certifications
- Waiting for solicitations to appear

These steps are all important. They establish the minimum requirements to compete in the government market.

But by themselves, they have little chance of producing the measurable business results most organizations are seeking.

Winning government contracts requires more than eligibility—it requires market position.

We all know government contracts are awarded through procurement. **But successful public-sector businesses are built through a market positioning strategy.**

Organizations that consistently grow in the SLED market understand that procurement is only one component of a larger ecosystem. Long before agencies publish requests for proposals (RFPs) they establish priorities, secure funding, evaluate options, learn from peers, engage industry experts, and define the outcomes they hope to achieve. The companies that become part of those conversations are better positioned when procurement formally gets involved.

Winning government contracts isn't simply about doing the paperwork and learning how government buys. **It's about understanding the market that government represents.**

Winning government contracts requires more than eligibility—it requires market position.



Success Requires Both

It's important to understand that this isn't a choice between procurement and market positioning. Successful organizations invest in both. Procurement provides the formal process through which contracts are awarded—and every organization must navigate it. But market strategy helps organizations become known, trusted, and relevant before opportunities emerge, positioning them to compete more effectively when procurement begins.



One of America's Largest Growth Markets

Government is the steadiest business in America.

It doesn't go out of business. It pays its bills on time. And when a solution delivers, government customers renew.

Recessions come and go, but the work of government and education doesn't.

This is mission-driven money—**budgeted, appropriated, and spent every single year.**

And right now, the shopping list is only getting longer: artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, digital services, infrastructure modernization, workforce transformation, and more.

Start with the states.

State governments alone represent an enormous economic market. They serve more than 335 million people and generate approximately **\$3.3 trillion in annual tax revenue**, supporting investments in the services, infrastructure, technology, and programs communities depend on.

What surprises many companies entering this market is not just its size—but its economic scale.

If U.S. states were measured as companies, dozens would rank among the largest enterprises in the country. Government isn't a niche market. It's one of the most significant economic engines in the world.

THE POWER OF STATE REVENUE

50 States. One Massive Market.

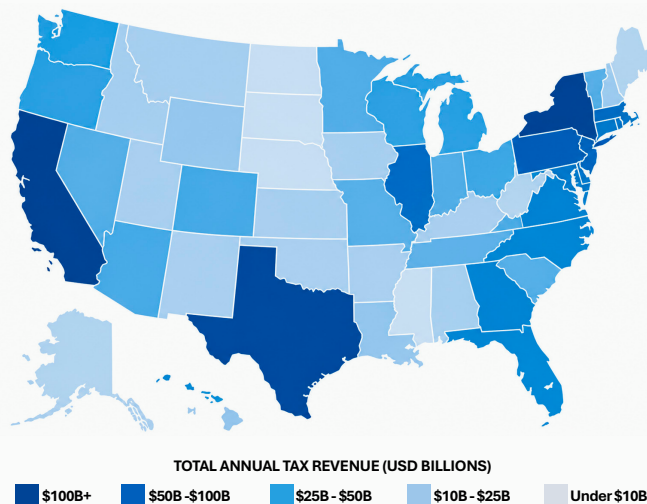
Total Annual Tax Revenue by state (USD Billions)

\$3.3T
TOTAL ANNUAL TAX REVENUE
Across all 50 states

335M+
PEOPLE SERVED
By state governments

50
INDIVIDUAL MARKETS
Each with unique priorities
and opportunities

5-6%
5-YEAR GROWTH RATE
Average annual growth in
total state tax revenue



STATE GOVERNMENTS MANAGE

\$3.3 TRILLION In Annual Tax Revenue
That's the size of the world's 6th largest economy.

TOP STATES BY TAX REVENUE

1	California	\$538.9B	6	Florida	\$115.1B
2	New York	\$277.0B	7	Ohio	\$99.5B
3	Texas	\$162.0B	8	Washington	\$92.5B
4	Pennsylvania	\$139.1B	9	Virginia	\$89.9B
5	Illinois	\$135.9B	10	New Jersey	\$89.8B

ALL STATES. ALL OPPORTUNITIES.

From the largest economies to rural communities, every state is investing in solutions to meet today's challenges and build for tomorrow.

TAX REVENUE BY RANGE (NUMBER OF STATES)

\$100B+	8 states
\$50B - \$100B	13 states
\$25B - \$50B	10 states
\$10B - \$25B	11 states
Under \$10B	8 states

FOCUS ON ALL 50 STATES. GROW EVERYWHERE.

Every state is investing to strengthen communities and improve outcomes. Solutions that work in one state can open doors in many others.

WHAT'S DRIVING STATE REVENUE?

AI & AUTOMATION
Driving efficiency, innovation, and smarter services

CYBERSECURITY
Protecting data, systems, and public trust

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION & MODERNIZATION
Upgrading systems and improving constituent experiences

PUBLIC SAFETY
Strengthening communities and first responders

INFRASTRUCTURE
Building resilient, connected and sustainable futures

THE TAKEAWAY

State governments generate \$3.3 trillion in annual tax revenue—and invest to create safer, stronger, and more connected communities. Your solutions can make an impact in every state.

THIS IS THE MARKET. THIS IS THE OPPORTUNITY.



And states are only one part of the opportunity.

Which raises a more practical question for growth leaders—when executives evaluate new markets, they typically ask three questions:

- Is the opportunity large enough?
- Is it growing?
- Can we compete effectively?

The SLED market doesn't just answer "yes"—it does so with a level of stability and predictability that's rare in any other sector.

Across the broader SLED market, more than 91,000 state agencies, counties, cities, school districts, colleges, universities, and other public institutions operate with approximately **\$4.2 trillion in annual budgets, including an estimated \$160 billion in IT spending**. That larger market includes the local government and education spending not reflected in the state-only figures above.

That investment spans virtually every industry:

- Technology providers modernize infrastructure and secure systems
- Professional services firms support operations and transformation
- Construction and engineering companies build and maintain public assets
- Healthcare organizations improve population outcomes
- Manufacturers supply equipment across public safety and education

Government doesn't buy products.

It buys the capabilities required to run society.

So, the question isn't whether government buys what you sell. The question is: "How do you become a company government trusts enough to buy from?"



Government is the ultimate recurring revenue model. Stable budgets. Long-term contracts. High renewal rates. But access is earned—through trust, not transactions.

Because in the public sector, **trust is the entry point to opportunity.**

Public servants don't just evaluate vendors—they compare notes. They ask peers. They rely on relationships and proven experience to reduce risk. Which means:

- Showing up where they gather matters
- Speaking their language matters
- Being known before the RFP matters

In this market, **one trusted reference is worth more than a hundred cold calls.**

Understanding the SLED Market

The SLED market is not a single buyer. It is a diverse ecosystem of public-sector organizations, each with its own mission, leadership, and decision-making process. The good news is that many are influenced by the same underlying forces—from budget pressures and legislative mandates to workforce shortages, cybersecurity threats, funding opportunities, and the need for digital modernization—making it easier to identify common opportunities across the market.

Understanding who these organizations are—and their similarities and differences—is the first step toward developing a successful public-sector growth strategy.

State Governments

State governments are among the largest purchasers in the SLED market, often managing enterprise-scale initiatives involving technology modernization, cybersecurity, transportation, health and human services, workforce

development, public safety, and critical infrastructure. Because of their scale and funding, state agencies issue some of the largest contract opportunities available to private industry.

Municipal Governments

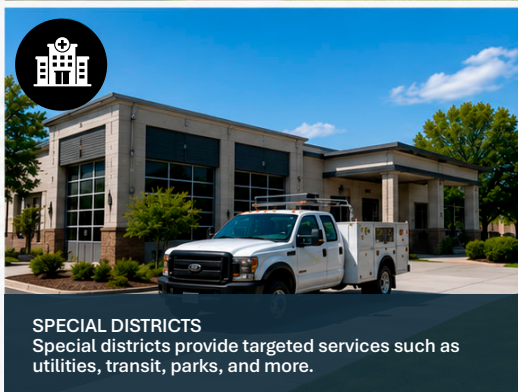
Cities, towns, villages, and boroughs deliver many of the services residents use every day. From permitting and public works to public safety, utilities, transportation, and constituent services, municipal governments invest in solutions that improve operational efficiency and community outcomes.

County Governments

County governments typically serve larger geographic regions than municipalities and often oversee courts, elections, public health, emergency management, social services, property records, and regional infrastructure. They frequently deliver state-funded programs and services, creating unique purchasing requirements.

THE SLED MARKET LANDSCAPE

Diverse agencies. Distinct priorities. **Once connected mission: to serve!**



Different missions. Unique challenges. **Countless opportunities to make an impact.**  Understanding each market is the first step **to building trust and driving results.**

Special Districts

Special districts are independent governmental organizations created to perform specific public functions. These may include water and wastewater utilities, transportation authorities, fire districts, airports, ports, libraries, parks, healthcare districts, and electric utilities. Although smaller than many state agencies, special districts often manage highly specialized infrastructure and operational needs.

K-12 School Districts

Independent school districts focus on delivering primary and secondary education while managing technology, transportation, facilities, student services, cybersecurity, and administrative operations. As digital learning and student services continue to evolve, school districts remain significant purchasers of technology and professional services.

Public Colleges and Universities

Public higher education institutions operate complex organizations that combine academic programs, research, healthcare, athletics, facilities management, workforce development, and enterprise technology. Their purchasing needs extend well beyond education, creating opportunities across a broad range of industries.

The Strategic Takeaway

While these organizations share many of the same underlying drivers, they apply them differently based on their missions, constituents, and operational needs.

The common dynamics shaping government allow sellers to build a scalable market strategy. Differences across jurisdictions, agencies, and institutions require them to tailor how they execute that strategy.

For example:

- Budget cycles and funding sources vary.
- Strategic priorities differ by jurisdiction and agency.
- Success is measured according to each organization's mission.
- Procurement approaches and buying decisions vary.

Companies that treat SLED as a single, homogeneous market often struggle because they rely on one message, one sales strategy, and one growth plan for every audience. The most successful organizations build a common strategic foundation, then adapt their messaging, engagement, and go-to-market approach to the priorities of the markets they serve.

Companies that consistently succeed don't just try to "sell to government." They build expertise within carefully selected segments of the SLED market where their capabilities align with well-defined public-sector challenges.

That shift—from pursuing every opportunity to become highly relevant within the right opportunities—is where sustainable growth begins.



The Best Government Contractors Don't Begin With Procurement

Most organizations enter government contracting backwards.

They register as a vendor. Then they monitor bid sites. Then they wait for opportunities—and attempt to compete. It's a logical sequence and a common starting point. But it places organizations in a reactive position, competing only after a purchasing decision is already well underway.

Why? Because by the time a Request for Proposal (RFP) reaches the public, months—or even years—of planning have already occurred.

- Agency leaders have identified operational challenges
- Budgets have been debated
- Funding has been approved
- Technology roadmaps have been developed

- Stakeholders have evaluated alternatives by speaking to providers
- Departments have spoken with peers
- Industry trends have influenced priorities

In many cases, agencies have already developed a clear understanding of the outcomes they hope to achieve through internal planning, market research, peer collaboration, and industry engagement. **Procurement simply formalizes those decisions.**

That's why successful companies invest as much energy understanding the market before procurement gets involved as they do responding to RFPs. They study:

- Capital improvement plans
- Technology modernization initiatives
- Strategic plans

THE GOVERNMENT BUYING JOURNEY

The RFP is near the end of the process — your opportunity to influence starts much earlier.



SUCCESSFUL COMPANIES BEGIN HERE

They engage early—helping shape priorities, building credibility, and becoming a trusted resource long before procurement begins.



MOST COMPANIES ENTER HERE

They show up when the RFP is released—when requirements are already defined and decisions are already influenced.



The more visible, valuable, and trusted you are before the RFP, **the more likely you are to be on the shortlist—and win.**

- Legislative priorities
- Budget proposals
- Contract expiration schedules
- Peer agency initiatives
- Economic conditions
- Emerging federal funding
- Workforce pressures
- Community expectations

None of these guarantee a contract. But together, they reveal something much more

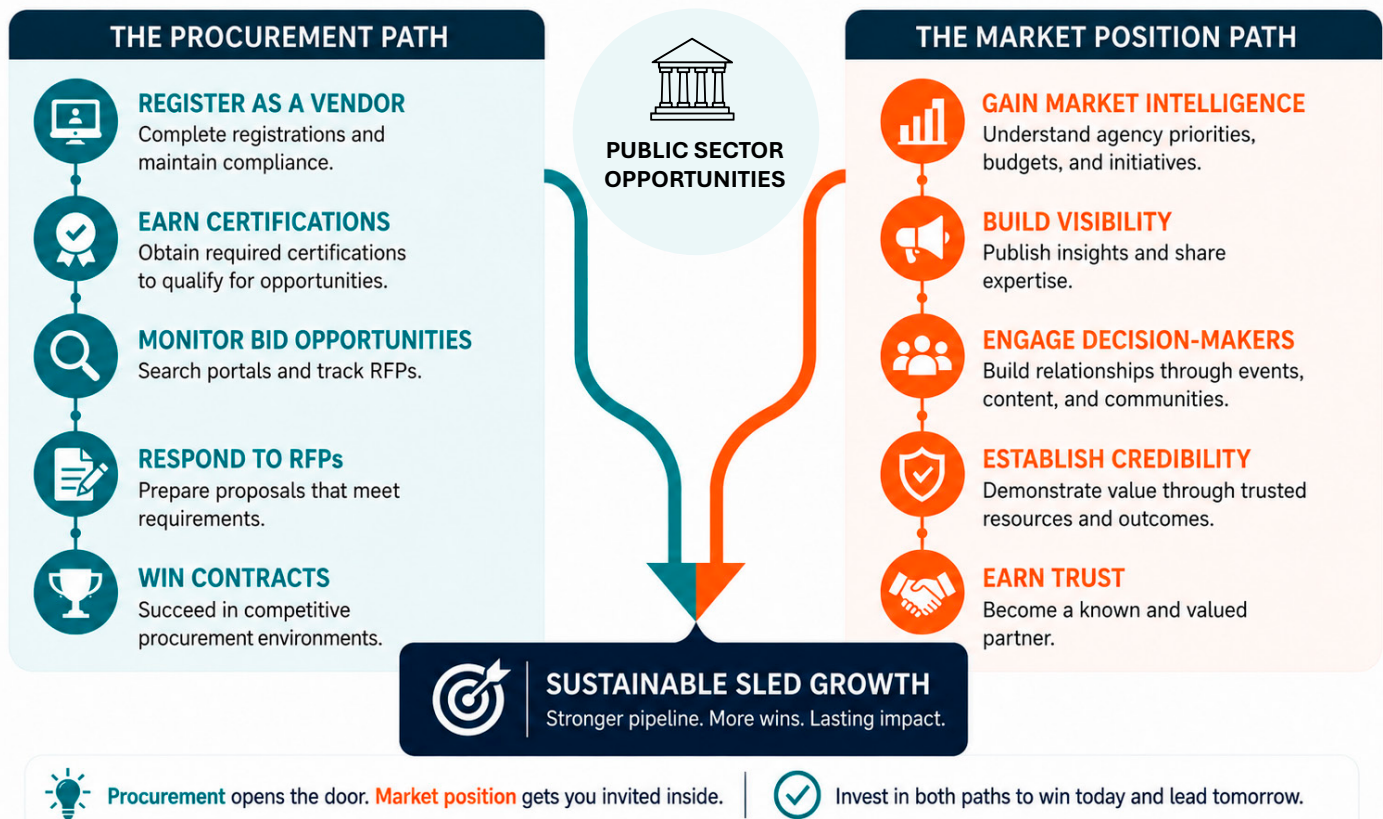
valuable: **where the market is heading before it takes its first formal procurement step.**

Companies that understand where public-sector priorities are moving make better decisions about where to invest sales resources, marketing and sales programs, partnerships, product development, and executive engagement.

They don't simply respond to demand. They anticipate it.

TWO PARALLEL PATHS TO SLED GROWTH

Successful companies invest in both **procurement** and **market position strategy** to win more government contracts.



Explore Further

Understanding agency priorities before procurement begins requires more than monitoring bids. [Explore e.Republic's market intelligence resources](#) to identify technology trends, investment priorities, and emerging opportunities across the SLED landscape.

Trust Is Built Long Before a Contract Is Awarded

Commercial sales often reward speed. **Yet, public-sector growth rewards credibility.**

Government leaders make decisions that affect taxpayers, students, employees, first responders, and entire communities. Those decisions are scrutinized, documented, audited, and remembered.

Selecting the wrong partner carries consequences far beyond budget. As a result, public-sector organizations rarely evaluate vendors based solely on product capabilities. Government buyers also want to determine factors such as:

- Can the company deliver what they promise?
- Do they understand the public sector environment?
- Have they solved similar challenges elsewhere?
- Will they still be here years from now?

These questions are rarely answered by a proposal alone. Instead, sellers answer them over time by engaging with the SLED community, showing expertise and demonstrating an understanding of the issues government leaders face every day.

This is why organizations with strong visibility across the SLED ecosystem frequently outperform competitors with comparable products.

While government contracts are awarded through procurement, trust is earned through sustained participation in the market over time.

Organizations that consistently engage the market don't simply build awareness. They build trust. Trust creates confidence.

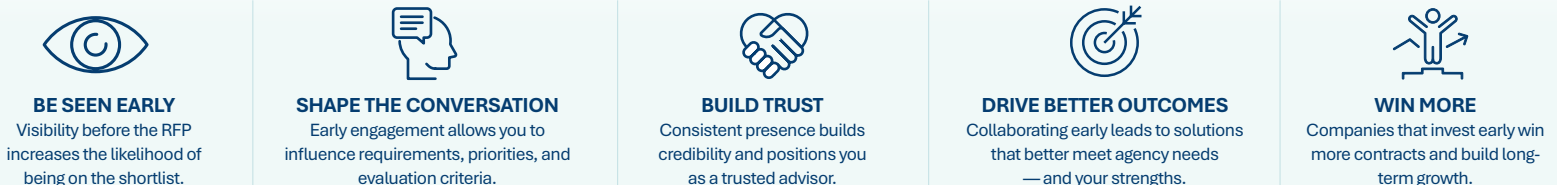
And confidence dramatically lowers perceived risk.

THE JOURNEY TO A GOVERNMENT CONTRACT

The RFP is near the end of the process — your opportunity to influence starts much earlier.



WHY IT MATTERS



Procurement is a moment in time. Market position is built over time. **Start early. Stay engaged. Win more.**

The Invisible Shortlist: Why Relationships Matter Before Sales Conversations Can Occur

Every agency has an informal network of companies it already knows. Not companies that have been promised work. Just companies that have demonstrated expertise.

They've published relevant research. They speak at industry events. They share practical insights and expertise—whether gained from serving public-sector organizations directly or by adapting proven commercial approaches to address government priorities. They educate practitioners rather than simply market to them. As a result, when new initiatives emerge, they're already part of the conversation because they've become trusted advisors.

This isn't favoritism. **It's earned trust and credibility rising to the top.**

Government leaders make decisions under intense public scrutiny. Naturally, they gravitate toward companies that demonstrate they understand government challenges, contribute meaningful expertise, and help practitioners make better decisions long before procurement gets started.

This creates what many companies fail to recognize: **an invisible shortlist.**

Long before a procurement team evaluates proposals, decision-makers often have a

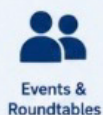
THE INVISIBLE SHORTLIST

By the time the RFP is released, agencies have already shaped their thinking with organizations they **know**, **trust**, and have **seen in action**.



INSIDE THE ROOM: THE SHORTLIST IS SHAPED EARLY

Agencies build familiarity and confidence through:



Events & Roundtables



Research & Insights



Peer Connections



Thought Leadership



Successful Engagements



Trusted organizations are considered first—often before an RFP is ever drafted.



OUTSIDE THE ROOM: TOO LATE TO GET NOTICED

Many companies see the opportunity for the first time when the RFP is released.



No Prior Visibility



Not on Anyone's Radar



No Context or Understanding



Competing Too Late



Lower Chances of Winning



At this stage, it's hard to influence—and even harder to win.



Get in early. Build trust. Shape the conversation.

The shortlist is built long before the solicitation.

working knowledge of which organizations understand their environment, which firms have relevant experience, and which companies consistently contribute meaningful ideas to the market.

This doesn't guarantee a contract. But it does mean your proposal is evaluated within the context of an existing reputation rather than introduced as a complete unknown.

The most successful organizations don't spend years trying to become better known after they begin pursuing contracts. They become known before they ever pursue them.

"Government doesn't expect every vendor to have decades of SLED experience. It does expect vendors to understand its environment, respect its mission, and demonstrate how their expertise can create public value."

— Cathilea Robinett, Chief Executive Officer @ e.Republic



Continue the Conversation

e.Republic's **executive summits, industry events, leadership forums, and community programs** provide opportunities to engage with state, local, and education leaders around the issues shaping public-sector priorities—not simply procurement opportunities.



Growth Comes From Focus—Not Coverage

Many companies entering government contracting believe success requires casting the widest possible net. They register everywhere, monitor every bid, respond to every opportunity, and expand into every state.

While ambitious, this approach often produces the opposite of its intended outcome:

- Resources become fragmented.
- Sales teams struggle to understand dozens of procurement environments.
- Marketing messages become generic.
- Capture efforts become reactive.
- Win rates decline.

Organizations that consistently grow in the SLED market make a different decision. **They focus.**

Rather than asking, *“Where can we sell?”*

They ask: *“Where are we uniquely positioned to create measurable value?”*

That answer might be a handful of western states investing heavily in wildfire resilience. It might be

large metropolitan transit agencies modernizing infrastructure. It might be higher education institutions accelerating AI governance. It might be county governments investing in cybersecurity. Or school districts modernizing digital learning environments.

Focus creates expertise. Expertise creates credibility. Credibility creates momentum. Momentum creates growth.

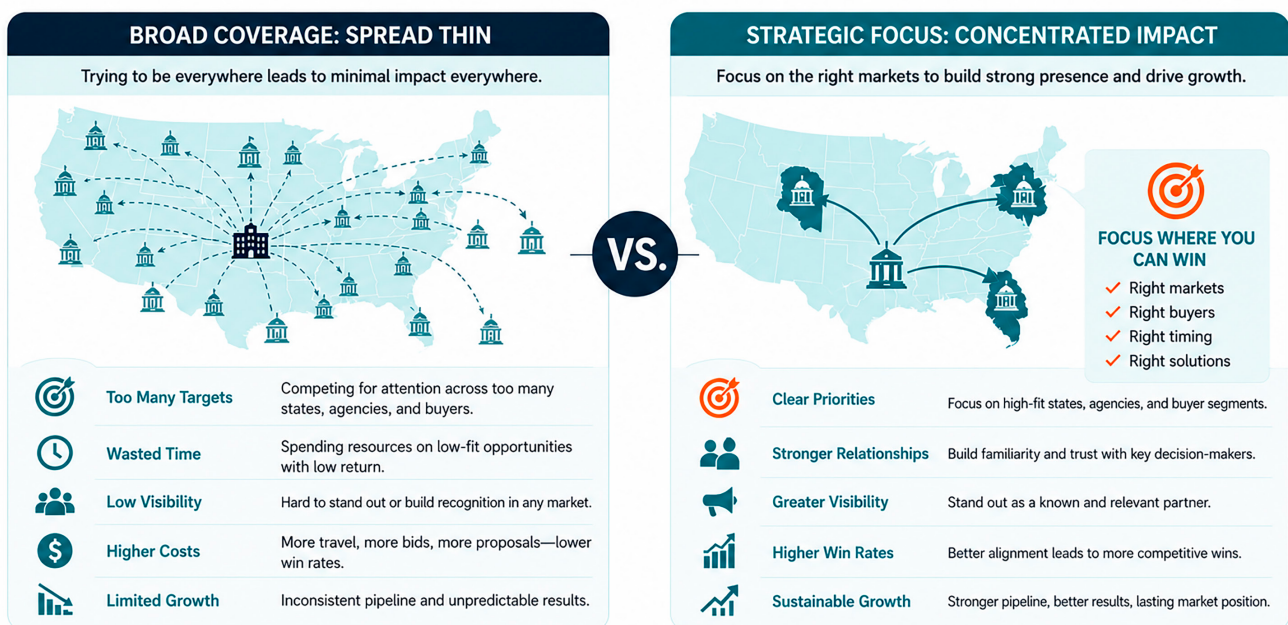
This principle applies regardless of size.

- Emerging companies often succeed because they solve highly specialized problems exceptionally well.
- Mid-market companies frequently outperform larger competitors through agility and regional expertise.
- Enterprise firms leverage scale, long-term investment capacity, and broad solution portfolios to support complex, multi-jurisdiction initiatives.

The market doesn’t consistently reward size. **It rewards relevance.**

BROAD COVERAGE VS. STRATEGIC FOCUS

Focus your resources where you can make the greatest impact.



ACTIVITY IS NOT STRATEGY.

Depth creates differentiation. Focus drives results.



THE BOTTOM LINE:

Go deep, not wide. Win in fewer places, **win bigger.**

Market Intelligence Is No Longer Optional

Many companies still view market intelligence as a tactical resource used to identify opportunities. Leading firms use it differently. They use it to make strategic decisions like:

- Where should we expand?
- Which agencies align with our strengths?
- What policy priorities are reshaping demand?
- Which technologies are gaining momentum?
- Where are contracts approaching renewal?
- How are peer agencies investing?
- Which markets are becoming more competitive?

These questions influence hiring decisions, partnership strategies, product roadmaps, marketing investments, and executive engagement long before they influence proposal development.

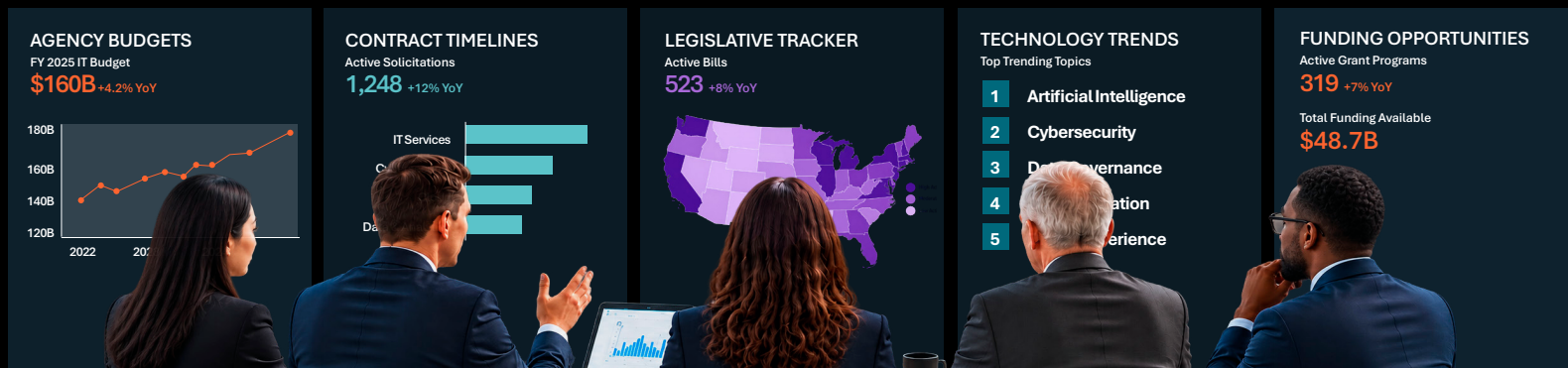
Market intelligence becomes less about finding contracts and more about understanding which markets are most likely to benefit from what your company does best.

Firms making multi-year investments in public-sector growth cannot afford to make those decisions based on yesterday's procurement notices. They require visibility into where government priorities are moving next.

MARKET INTELLIGENCE COMMAND CENTER

Real-time insights. Smarter decisions. Stronger results.

Market intelligence gives you the visibility to anticipate opportunities, understand the landscape, and engage the right buyer at the right time.



WHAT MARKET INTELLIGENCE DELIVERS

- ANTICIPATE OPPORTUNITIES**
Identify initiatives before they hit the RFP
- TARGET THE RIGHT ACCOUNTS**
Focus your resources on the best-fit opportunities.
- ENGAGE EARLIER**
Build relationships before the shortlist is set.
- REDUCE RISK**
Make informed decisions with trusted data.
- IMPROVE WIN RATE**
Better intelligence leads to stronger proposals.
- DRIVE LONG-TERM GROWTH**
Win more today and build lasting market position.

KNOW THE MARKET. SHAPE THE CONVERSATION. WIN MORE.



Explore the Data

e.Republic's market intelligence and research solutions help organizations understand technology priorities, agency initiatives, funding trends, executive perspectives, and emerging opportunities across the SLED ecosystem—providing the strategic context that informs smarter growth decisions.

Winning Government Contracts Is an Organizational Capability



Many companies assume government contracting belongs exclusively to business development. In reality, the highest-performing firms align multiple functions around a shared market strategy.

- Executive leadership establishes long-term investment priorities.
- Marketing builds credibility through education and thought leadership.
- Sales develops relationships and understands agency priorities.
- Subject matter experts contribute meaningful insight.
- Customer success creates references that generate future opportunities.
- Research teams monitor changing market conditions.
- Product leaders adapt offerings to evolving government needs.

Government growth isn't the responsibility of one department. **It's the result of organizational alignment.**

Companies that view SLED as a strategic growth market—not simply another sales channel—consistently outperform companies that treat every opportunity as an isolated transaction.

So, How Do You Get Government Contracts?

There is no shortage of tactical advice explaining how to become a government contractor, how to obtain government contracts, or how to start government contracting.

- You should absolutely register with the agencies you intend to serve.
- You should understand procurement requirements.
- You should monitor opportunities.
- You should write clear, compliant proposals.

Those activities are necessary. But they simply aren't sufficient on their own.

The companies that consistently win government contracts understand something more fundamental: **procurement is the culmination of a much longer journey.**

Success comes from:

- Selecting the right markets—not every market.
- Understanding agency priorities—not just solicitations.
- Contributing expertise—not simply promoting products.
- Building trust before asking for business.
- Investing in relationships before opportunities appear.
- Treating public-sector growth as a long-term market strategy rather than a series of transactions.

In the end, the question isn't simply how to get government contracts. It's how to become the kind of company government leaders want to work with when the opportunity arises. Companies that answer that question well don't just win more contracts. They build enduring positions within one of the largest, most resilient, and most consequential markets in the world.

What Comes Next

Understanding how market position shapes your success is the first step.

The next is knowing how to apply that insight—how opportunities take shape inside agencies, who influences them, and what it really means to earn a seat at the table before procurement begins.



Read next:
**How to Find and Win
Government Contract
Opportunities**

Continue Your SLED Sales and Marketing Journey

Whether you're entering the SLED market or expanding an established public-sector practice, deeper insight and consistent engagement are what drive long-term success.

Explore additional resources to help you succeed:

- **Insights, Research & Executive Briefs** — Explore trusted insights, original research, executive analysis, and practical guidance on technology trends, public-sector priorities, buyer perspectives, and growing a successful SLED business.
- **Market Intelligence** — Data, analysis, and agency insights to help identify emerging opportunities and make informed strategic decisions.
- **Events & Leadership Forums** — Connect with government leaders through summits, roundtables, and executive programs across the country.
- **Demand Generation & Strategic Engagement** — Programs designed to build awareness, credibility, and trusted relationships before opportunities become formal.
- **The 10 Laws of Government Sales & Marketing eBook** — Learn the foundational strategies that help organizations build credibility, strengthen market position, and create lasting relationships with government leaders.

Need Help?

Have questions about selling to state and local government or identifying the right markets for your organization?

Learn how e.Republic's more than 40 years of experience helping organizations engage the public sector can help you build the market strategy and positioning that create opportunities long before procurement begins.

Contact your account representative or email us at erepublic@marketing.com.

e.Republic®

THE CROSS-PORTFOLIO ADVANTAGE

One integrated platform. Six trusted brands. Endless opportunities to connect, influence, and grow.

government
technology

Governing

CENTER FOR
DIGITAL
GOVERNMENT

CENTER FOR
DIGITAL
EDUCATION

CENTER FOR
PUBLIC
SECTOR AI

Emergency
Management

IT and digital
transformation leaders
modernizing government.



State and local
government executives
and policy leaders.



Research, insights, and
communities driving
government innovation.



K-12 and higher ed
leaders advancing
digital learning.



AI insights and guidance
for smarter public
sector outcomes.



Public safety and
resilience leaders
protecting communities.



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Our cross-portfolio approach connects you to the right audiences, at the right time, through the right channels—maximizing reach, relevance, and results.



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Reach **hundreds of thousands** of public-sector leaders across all 50 states.



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Hosting **100's** of high-impact, public-sector events each year.



TRUSTED CONTENT

Publish **100's of** articles, reports, and research annually.



MULTICHANNEL REACH

Deliver across digital, print, email, and social channels.



TARGETED SOLUTIONS

Drive **measurable results** with tailored solutions for your goals.



PROVEN PERFORMANCE

Our partners achieve **higher visibility, stronger pipelines, and greater win rates.**



1 strategic partner. 6 powerful brands. Unlimited possibilities. **Let's build your success story—together.**

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CONNECTING
PUBLIC-SECTOR
PURPOSE WITH
PRIVATE-SECTOR
INNOVATION

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