

Government Sector And Green Services



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In this increasingly post-COVID age of opportunities, you may be thinking: How can I maintain my landscape and turf management business while also growing new [client relationships](#)? The answer may lie in government and municipal work. Why? Because the government sector's need for economically and environmentally responsible alternatives is rapidly increasing.



(Photo: Getty Images)

What You Need To Know

Whether you are aiming to work with private or public entities, it is important to understand how you as a landscape/turf management service

provider can differentiate your business to these potential customers in a highly fragmented and low barrier-to-entry industry. One strategy I recommend involves looking at differentiation through the lens of sustainability. This view includes three primary responsibilities of focus:

- Economic
- Environmental
- Social

Breaking these responsibilities down will help you to understand how you may help a municipal/government client prospect to think about their operational structure in terms of sustainability.

Economic: Is the government organization looking to save money? You might think this is always the case. But in my experience working with—and for—municipalities, saving money may only be the goal 25% of the time. The value proposition that most government organizations are striving for more often is a better way to maximize their budgets, rather than cut or reduce them. Once a tax base is established, although saving money for individual taxpayers sounds like a nice idea, maintaining the current budget and avoiding the need to raise taxes is a much more realistic goal and selling point.

Environmental: Knowing what the issues and opportunities are is your first responsibility. It is important to be aware of non-point source run-off contaminants in creeks, streams, lakes, and other watersheds. In our business, we are growing through watershed initiatives that are multiplying each year all over North America. Particularly, issues related to our industry include fertilizer, pesticide, and salt contamination of fresh watersheds. Furthermore, all these contaminants are now becoming regulated at an ordinance and legislative level. Being aware of these pollution issues, and how to solve them before they become further regulated, is a key ingredient for landscape service providers to set themselves apart.

Social: Reputations are especially important to include when identifying the value proposition(s) to offer. Helping government agencies save money and perform their tasks with increased environmental responsibility will certainly help the reputations of government officials, particularly those that are elected. Therefore, you need to know what the current or potential future issues and opportunities are that could affect the reputation of the government agency or official(s) you are prospecting. Opportunities could include sustainability initiatives and certifications they can promote, and also operational efficiencies you can create in their current structure.

How To Qualify

Three aspects of your business that government entities will look at when considering your services are safety, insurance, and revenue.

Safety. Priority #1 to qualify for any government contract is your safety record. Know your experience modification rating, also known as EMR or MOD. This rating will likely be a qualifier you should be aware of. MOD ratings of

.08 and less are normally what is needed to qualify for larger government projects.

Insurance. Bond insurance may be a new requirement you need to be aware of—both the process and expense of obtaining it. Ask your insurance agent what you need to know before you dip your toe in the water with municipal clients.

Revenue. Each municipality has a different requirement for revenue for outsourced contractors. State level organizations typically require outsourced contractors have a continuous three-year history of earning at least \$1 million in annual revenue. Smaller local and county agencies often require less, and are more concerned with your reputation, how long you've been in business, and the overall longevity and reliability of your firm.

Differentiators

Equipment usage should consider options for reducing air and noise pollution. Furthermore, both pollution issues are increasingly being addressed through local ordinances that limit or restrict the use of 2 stroke gas-powered equipment. Gas fumes from 2 stroke equipment is a contributor to carbon/greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Noise from this equipment is a contributor to noise pollution as measured in decibels. Consider converting your noisy backpack blowers and trimmers with electric powered blowers as value to offer.

Two resources that offer information about air and noise pollution as it relates to the landscape industry are:

- [Quiet Communities](#)
- [American Green Zone Alliance](#): See article in this issue about AGZA.

Ecological Landscape Management (ELM™) is coming to the forefront of importance, particularly regarding the quantity and quality of the freshwater resources we as a human race require to survive. Landscapes should not only be beautiful and functional but also compatible with ecological systems. and incorporate more responsible cultural practices that include options for mowing, fertilizing, and weed control processes.

Learn more about ELM [here](#).

Sustainable Winter Management (SWiM®) practices are becoming of greater concern. Salt use and its effect on polluting lakes, streams, and broader watershed regions, and drinking water resources is a serious concern, particularly for municipalities. SWiM® ensures that property owners, managers, contractors, and public officials effectively plan for and control costs, risks, quality of service, and environmental effects managing winter storms.

Learn more about SWiM [here](#).

Getting Started With Work In The Government Sector

Each government organization tends to process its outsourcing initiatives a little bit differently. What you will most likely find becoming more common is municipal agencies are increasingly looking to outsource many aspects of work they traditionally completed “in house.”

What started as outsourcing paving projects has evolved into mowing median strips, to all-inclusive exterior maintenance of entire urban districts, including mowing, trimming, tree and shrub maintenance, sidewalk maintenance, trash policing, and sweeping, in some cases.

- Sign up for the public job notifications each municipality offers that you determine would be a good fit in your market.
- Consider if you qualify for one or more of the incentive-based programs. For example, research woman- or veteran-owned types of programs.
- Contact your local, county, and state Departments of Public Works (DPWs) and/or highway departments to inquire if they are looking for any outsourcing help for their landscaping work.

Working with the government sector has changed since I started in the business more than 30 years ago. Depending on your experience, what you may think is “untouchable” is becoming more available for those companies that are prepared to prospect and perform work through the lens of sustainability.

Sexton is a 30+ years professional in the landscape and winter management and sustainability industries. He is Founder and CEO of [WIT Advisers](#), a firm that promotes practices that enable companies to take a sustainable approach to landscape and snow and ice management by providing consulting, training, and management on best practices. Sexton can be reached by email at psexton@witadvisers.com.

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