the National Archives, Social Security Administration and Department of Homeland Security – it’s a long list. How has the group done so well for so long? “We specialize in what you might call problem jobs,” says Wilson, such as public housing renovation, asbestos abatement, installing blast-resistant windows and storefront glass and removing and installing 160 windows in a VA Hospital in South Dakota. There are good reasons for that: someone has to do them, and there’s far less competition for jobs that are seen as dirty or complex.

“I would love to build Wal-Marts and Lowe’s stores, but in this day and age, when everything is bid per square foot, you’ll get 25 bids within a few percent of each other,” Wilson says. “When you get to those other bids, the bid spread grows significantly, and the number of bidders is reduced drastically. It just makes sense to go after these bids.” Like any business, Wilson’s group is alert to repeat customers, even if those customers are government agencies. Friends and contacts will inform the group when a contract is posted, and that’s very satisfying, he says. It’s proof his guys have done their job well. By law, government agencies must post all contracts, require certain certifications and show no favoritism, but obviously the better a firm performs, the more likely the agency will be to work with that firm again.

The group works on so many different types of projects – commercial, residential, small businesses, housing authorities, the federal government – that what the Wilson Group really specializes in is variety. “We are spoiled,” Wilson says. “Some people have to do the same thing again and again. We get to work on different jobs all the time. And MO PTAC has been a big part of that.”

MO PTAC also offers a variety of services to help with the contracting process. Among the most popular is an electronic bid-matching service, through which a business is notified when a government agency seeks to purchase a product or service. Here are the stories of four Missouri firms who discovered MO PTAC and made government contracts work for them.

C & M Contractors, Inc.
C & M Contractors, Inc., a woman-owned general contracting business, had never worked in conditions like these. Among all of the other devastation, the May 2011 tornado that flattened a large part of Joplin also destroyed the city’s high school and athletic fields.

School officials announced the Northpark Mall would provide temporary classrooms in September, and the athletic department announced that football, basketball, baseball and other sports programs would continue. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers New York District, which specializes in rebuilding schools, needed a contractor to build new fields as quickly as possible.

C & M had only been in the PTAC program for five months, but the firm’s excellent track record ensured they received the nearly $1 million job. Several business counselors, notably Willis Mushrush, business and procurement specialist with University of Missouri Extension at West Plains in Howell County, had been helping C & M with government contracting since 2010.

The PTAC program has one mission -- to help transform Missouri businesses through success with government contracting. In the past three years, the program helped Missouri businesses win $857.4 million in government contracts.

A cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.
The MO SBTDC is funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.
The MO PTAC program has one mission -- to help transform Missouri businesses through success with government contracting.

Missouri Procurement Technical Assistance Centers
Helping Missouri businesses win lucrative government contracts

If the answer is Yes, contact MO PTAC today. The PTAC team will work with you to find opportunities, prepare a bid, interpret regulations and assist you with the appropriate certifications. Small disadvantaged, veteran- and woman-owned firms are particularly encouraged to apply for government contracts. MO PTAC also offers low-cost training sessions on winning government contracts; to find the next session, visit missouribusiness.net/ptac/events.asp. To find the MO PTAC center nearest you, go to www.missouribusiness.net/ptac/centers.asp. Or call 573/882-8058.
MO PTAC cuts through red tape
to help create Missouri jobs

“We were a little concerned about having to work so quickly,” says Melinda Vaughn, president, who co-founded the company in 1995 with Charlie Bass and his wife. “To pull engineers in and do a design-build in such a short time frame was definitely a challenge.”

But Vaughn and Bass were up to the challenge and arrived in Joplin the day after receiving the contract to survey the sites and assemble subcontractors and engineers.

Only nine days later, the C & M team completed the design and negotiations for the new baseball, soccer, softball and football fields. The fields were sodded by Sept. 1 – an amazing 45 days ahead of schedule. The grading was complete, the stadium lights shining when the student-athletes took the field in the fall.

Says Bass, “The damage to Joplin was indescribable, and losing so many people in a town that size was a tragedy. Being picked to help rebuild the fields was a real honor, and we did everything we could to finish this job on time and within the budget.”

Joe Vasquez, owner of Vasquez Commercial Contracting, LLC, wasn’t thinking much about construction. He wanted to be an accountant. He and his twin brother were such diligent students they were named University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC) Accounting Students of the Year.

Vasquez was such a good bookkeeper commodity that he had a job offer from a leading CPA firm 14 months before graduation.

“That was a relaxing time,” Vasquez reminisces of his last collegiate years. “I didn’t have to fight for a job at graduation because everyone else did.” But, it was probably the last relaxing time he’s had.

He soon plunged into 80-hour-plus weeks and was being groomed for great things at the CPA firm. After five years, however, he’d burned out.

In the meantime, he married. His father-in-law owned a small construction firm performing mainly residential work. Vasquez had also gotten to know the construction industry in the course of multiple audits, discovering what worked and what didn’t. His father-in-law urged him to leave accounting and join him.

“He said, ‘Come work with me! I’ll show you what real work is, and you’ll earn a real wage,’” Vasquez says.

Vasquez became a partner in the corporation as a project manager and de facto CFO. But Vasquez wanted more. So his father-in-law encouraged him to found Vasquez Commercial Contracting in 2008.

Vasquez immediately joined the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of Greater Kansas City and “went to every possible meeting and networking event.”

“Having MO PTAC as a partner has been a definite plus,” Vaughn says. “When you’re in government work, it is not as straightforward as commercial work, so you need every lead you can get.”

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Vazquez’s work ethic impresses everyone. Here’s what the Army Corps of Engineers had to say about work performed on military bases in Kansas and Missouri:

“Throughout this project, Mr. Vasquez and his team have demonstrated exceptional customer service and attention to detail. In addition to completion of the scope of work, the Vasquez crew had maintained a yard of overgrown weeds, cleared vines from a stretch of fence, cleared trash from around the site, and fixed a sagging portion of fence with no request for additional compensation.

“Construction was completed early with zero modifications, a perfect safety record, on budget. We couldn’t have asked for more than that.”

Vazquez Commercial Contracting, LLC, Kansas City

The Wilson Group, Inc., Greenwood

Not all successful government contractors hold minority- or woman-owned, 8(a), disadvantaged or HUBZone designations. However, Jeff Wilson, co-founder and president of the Wilson Group, Inc., a general contracting firm with about 50 full-time employees located in Greenwood, Mo., southeast of Kansas City, is such a contractor.

When his father, who brought him into the contracting business retired, Wilson founded the new company with his wife, Janet, now CFO, and his brother, now vice president, in 2003.

His son, a daughter, a cousin and other Wilsons work or have worked for the group. “You might say we’re a Wilson family,” he quips.

Wilson was already familiar with government contracting, especially on military bases, and the group did well enough in government and other contracting its first years. But Wilson spent way too much time looking for opportunities in the government’s weekly Commerce Business Daily, he says. “Then I’d see a job across the street and think, ‘How did I miss that?’”

The Commerce Business Daily was discontinued in 2001. Replacing it, however, were contracts posted on confusing, sometimes overlapping government websites.

Wilson knew he needed help. He had heard of MO PTAC’s powerful contract search engine through the construction grapevine and signed up for PTAC services in 2003.

Utilizing MO PTAC’s search engine and counseling services, the Wilson Group has obtained hundreds of awards. In the past year alone, the group has won nearly $15 million in contracts. That’s not even including his firm’s indefeasible delivery, indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contracts with TSA, the United States Postal Service and others.

The Wilson Group also performs work for the Army Corps of Engineers, Department of Agriculture, Department of Defense and the state of Missouri.

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