

Past Performance Readiness Guide

Building, Framing, and Leveraging Experience for Contracting Success

Past performance is one of the most heavily weighted evaluation factors in government and complex corporate contracting. This guide explains what qualifies as past performance, how to document it, and how to present it strategically in proposals, certifications, and capability statements.

Past performance is not just a list of projects, it is evidence of capability, reliability, and risk mitigation.

Note: *This guide is for planning and readiness purposes only and does not replace solicitation instructions or agency guidance.*

Section A — What Counts as Past Performance

Past performance may include work performed as:

- A prime contractor
- A subcontractor
- A joint venture partner
- A key personnel role (in limited circumstances)

Common qualifying examples:

- Completed or ongoing contracts
- Task orders
- Purchase orders
- Long-term service agreements
- Construction or professional service engagements

What generally does NOT count on its own:

- Marketing claims
- Internal projects without a client
- Experience without documented scope or outcome

Section B — Prime vs Subcontractor Performance (Critical Distinction)

Prime Contractor Performance

- You held direct contractual responsibility
- You controlled delivery, invoicing, and client communication
- Evaluators typically assign greater weight

Subcontractor Performance

- You performed a defined portion of scope
- You must clearly state:
 - your role
 - percentage of work
 - responsibilities performed

- Sub performance is valid but must be accurately framed

Do not inflate or imply prime responsibility if you were a subcontractor.

Section C — Required Elements of a Strong Past Performance Entry

Each past performance example should include:

Element	Description
Client/Agency:	_____
Contract Type:	_____
Period of Performance:	_____
Dollar Value:	_____
Scope of Work:	_____
Outcomes:	_____
Relevance:	_____
Point of Contact:	_____

Incomplete entries weaken credibility and may be disregarded.

Section D — Writing Effective Past Performance Narratives

Past performance narratives should be specific, factual, outcome-focused, and aligned to solicitation scope.

Recommended structure:

1. Context – Who the client was and what was required
2. Role – What you were responsible for
3. Execution – How the work was performed
4. Outcome – Measurable results
5. Relevance – Why it matters for this bid

Avoid:

- Generic language
- Unverifiable claims
- Excessive adjectives
- Copying marketing copy

Section E — Relevance Matters More Than Size

Evaluators prioritize similarity of scope, complexity, delivery method, and regulatory environment.

A smaller, highly relevant project can outweigh a larger but unrelated one.

Section F — Past Performance in Certifications

Certifications often evaluate operational control, independence, and capability consistency.

Past performance used in certification applications must (1) match stated NAICS codes, (2) align with business descriptions, and (3) reflect actual control by qualifying owners.

Inconsistencies between certifications, narratives, and past performance are a common cause of denial.

Section G — Past Performance in Proposals

Solicitations may have requirements such as:

- Specific number of examples
- Timeframe limitations (e.g., last 3–5 years)
- Minimum dollar thresholds
- Reference contact verification

Always follow solicitation instructions first, even if they conflict with internal templates.

Section H — Managing Limited or No Past Performance

If past performance is limited:

- Use subcontracting strategically
- Leverage joint ventures (where allowed)
- Highlight key personnel experience (if permitted)
- Focus on relevance, not volume

Do not fabricate or overstate experience.

Section I — Reuse, Tracking, and Updates

Best practice is to maintain a past performance library that includes:

- Centralized narratives
- Verified references
- Updated outcomes

- Tagged by NAICS and industry

This reduces proposal time and improves consistency.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

- Inflating roles
 - Mixing prime and sub responsibilities
 - Using outdated references
 - Ignoring relevance
 - Reusing narratives without tailoring
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How Quin-Z Supports Past Performance Readiness

We support clients by:

- Reviewing existing past performance
- Identifying gaps and misalignment
- Developing compliant narratives
- Structuring past performance libraries
- Aligning experience with bid strategy

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