Center for Grant EXCELLENCE

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Registering with SAM.gov and Acquiring a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI)

This quick guide provides an overview of the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) registration process and how to obtain a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). These steps are required for any organization seeking to apply for or receive federal funding.

A Step-by-Step Guide for New Federal Grant Applicants

Background

As of April 2022, the federal government transitioned from the Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) to the Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) as the official identifier for entities doing business with the federal government. "*All of the Integrated Award Environment systems — SAM.gov, eSRS, FSRS, FPDS, and CPARS — as well as all other GSA systems, are now only using the UEI to identify entities. Registrants in those systems have been assigned their UEI and can view them in SAM.gov*" (U.S. General Services Administration).

The UEI is issued through SAM.gov, the central registration system for federal award recipients.

Registering with SAM.gov and obtaining a UEI is a mandatory prerequisite for:

- Applying for federal grants as a prime awardee.
- Receiving federal contracts.
- Being listed as a subrecipient or contractor on a federal award.

Submitting registration, renewing, and receiving a UEI are FREE. Any request for payment either through registration or renewal is a scam.

Key Components

What is SAM.gov?

- The official U.S. government system for registering to do business with federal agencies.
- Managed by the General Services Administration (GSA).
- Free to use–no cost to register or renew.

What is a UEI?

- A 12-character alphanumeric identifier assigned to each entity upon registration in SAM.gov.
- Replaces the DUNS number for all federal award processes.
- A UEI is mandatory for applying **AND** receiving federal grants or contracts.

Common Issues with Multiple UEIs

Sometimes organizations will intentionally or unintentionally have multiple UEIs. At times this is done to expedite financial transactions or separate recipient information among an organization's departments. This practice is generally not recommended for the following reasons:

1. **Tracking and managing multiple UEIs**
   - Multiple UEIs for the same legal entity can create administrative and compliance issues.
   - Record keeping can be complex, requiring staff to carefully track each UEI status, associated information, and expirations.
2. **Data Integrity and Consistency**
   - Variations in address, contact information, or business names across UEIs can cause validation issues.
   - Difficulty reconciling records especially when reporting to federal agencies or reconciling financial data.
   - Data silos: If different departments have different UEIs, this can lead to fragmented data.
3. **Increased Risk of Noncompliance**
   - Different UEIs may be subject to different reporting and compliance requirements (i.e. prime awardee vs. sub-awardee).
   - Risk of using the wrong UEI in a federal transaction, which can lead to delays, rejection of the transaction, and/or potential complications with SAM.gov registration.

- Organizations undergoing a Single Audit **must** disclose their multiple UEIs. However, a common issue of noncompliance arises when organizations fail to disclose their multiple UEIs due to improper internal controls and oversight.

4. **Financial and Administrative Impacts**
   - If a UEI is inactive or incorrect this can cause delays with payments or federal grant awards.
   - Increased administrative costs results when more time and resources are spent on UEI management.

Please note*:* As the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) states, *"if you are listed in SAM.gov, whether your registration is active or inactive, you already have a UEI, which you can view by logging into SAM.gov. If you're **new** to SAM.gov and registering for the first time, your UEI will be generated during the registration process."*

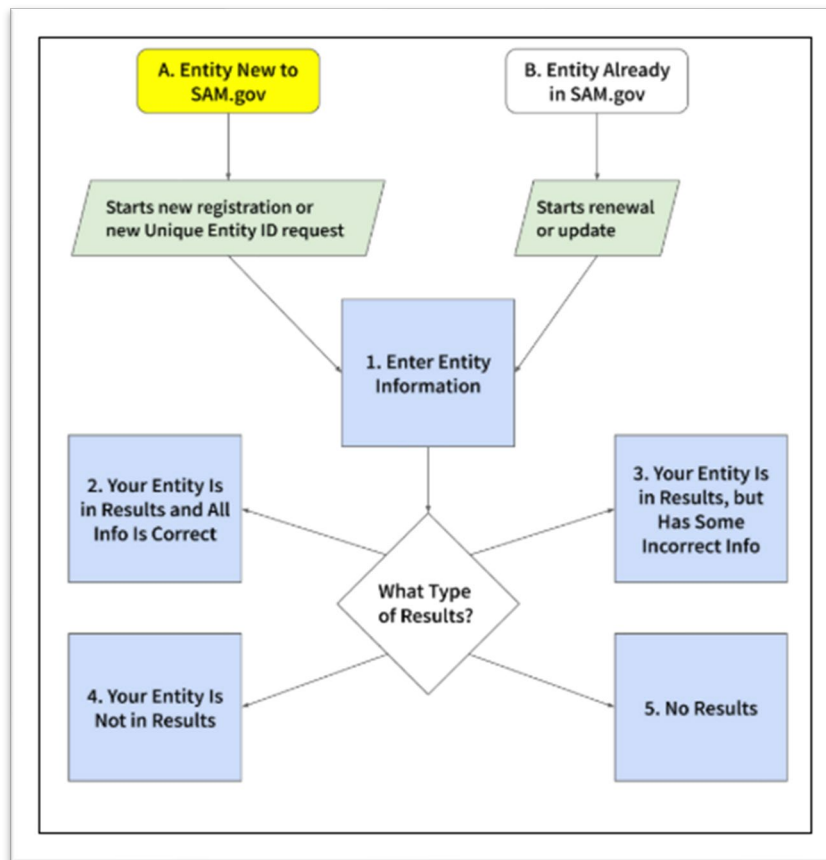The image below shows the process of Entity Validation.

Figure 1: Entity Validation Process

To watch the full Entity Validation and Registration process, please refer to this training created by GSA: "Entity Registration - Workspace Navigation."

There are two options in obtaining a UEI.

Understanding the Difference: Unique Entity ID vs. Full Entity Registration

1. **Registering your Entity**: Registering your entity enables your organization to receive contracts or financial assistance directly from the federal government, rather than through a subcontractor or intermediary. To pursue federal contracts as a prime contractor or seek assistance as a prime awardee, registration in SAM.gov is required. The registration process involves obtaining a UEI and submitting key information about your organization, including assertions, representations and certifications, and other relevant business details.

2. **Getting a Unique Entity ID Only**: Some entities that work with the federal government, such as sub-awardees, may opt not to register in SAM.gov. However, without registration, these entities are not eligible to bid directly on federal contracts as prime contractors or apply for federal assistance as prime awardees. If an entity's goal is to obtain a UEI without full registration, this can be done through SAM.gov with minimally required information. The process simply verifies the organization's legal business name and address.

Steps to Register and Obtain a UEI

1. **Create a Login.gov Account:** Login.gov is a secure and centralized digital identity service for accessing various U.S. government websites and services using one account and password.

   - Required to access SAM.gov.
   - Use a secure email.
     - Recommend using the email associated with the organization you are registering.
   - Use multi-factor authentication.
   - Entity validation will be the first step in getting your Unique Entity ID or registering at SAM.gov.

Please note: You must create a Login.gov account **BEFORE** you can access SAM.gov. SAM.gov only recognizes one email address on Login.gov accounts. Adding email addresses to your Login.gov account **may cause your SAM.gov login to fail.**

2. **Log into SAM.gov**
   - Navigate to https://sam.gov and sign in using your Login.gov credentials.

3. **Start New Entity Registration**
   - Select "Get Started"
   - Select "Create New Entity"
   - Follow the questions and prompts

Please note: You will be asked the type of registration you want to complete. Depending on the type of registration selected, there will be different sections that will need to be completed.

   - **All Awards:** This registration allows you to bid on contracts and other procurements, as well as apply for federal financial assistance.

   - **Financial Assistance Awards Only:** This type of registration allows you to apply for financial assistance or grants and loans.

For an extensive checklist, please review the U.S. General Services Administration Entity Registration Checklist.

For **All Awards registrations**, prepare these sections:	For **Financial Assistance Awards Only registrations**, prepare these sections:
• Unique Entity ID • Core Data • Assertions • Reps & Certs • Architect and Engineering Responses • Defense FAR Supplement (DFARS) questionnaire (if applicable) • Points of Contact (POCs) • SBA supplemental page (If you are a small business)	• Unique Entity ID • Core Data • Reps & Certs • Points of Contact (POCs)

Figure 2: Entity Registration Checklist

4. **Enter Business Information (Unique Entity ID)**

   • Legal business name, physical address, mailing address, start date, fiscal year end date.

   • Entity search: SAM.gov will check to be sure there is not already an entity record.

   • Confirm Entity Details: If a record is found, you will be required to confirm if entity details need to be updated or confirm everything looks correct.

   • Add incorporation details: State, Start Date and Fiscal Year End Date

5. **Documentation Upload (Proof of Entity Validation Documentation)** Documentation required must show your entity information exactly as you entered it in the "Enter Entity Information" screen on SAM.gov.

List A: For proof of name and/or address, choose documents from List A.   At least one document must have both your full, correct legal business name and current, correct physical address.

List A - Name and/or Address

Most Commonly Used Documents:
- Articles of Incorporation/Organization/Formation (if stamped as filed with an authority)
- Bank Statements* (redact information that isn't necessary for validation)
- Certificate of Formation/Organization (if stamped as filed with authority)
- Department of Treasury IRS letter assigning your EIN
- Secretary of State Certificate of Filing
- Screenshot/PDF file of your business profile* in your state's online business registry or Secretary of State website (must be current registration and must include the registry URL)
- Utility Bill* (water, gas, or electric only)

Other Documents You Can Use:
- Bylaws for your company (if stamped as filed with an authority)
- Certificate of Good Standing* issued by your state to your business that contains date of incorporation, organization, or establishment
- City Business Tax Certificate*
- Department of Treasury IRS Tax Exemption Status Letter*
- "Doing-business-as" or DBA document (if stamped as filed with an authority)
- Driver's License (for sole proprietors or individuals doing-business-as only; must be non-expired and have your exact name)
- IRS Form 8822-B or Form 990 for address change (filed only)
- IRS forms marked as received by the IRS or processed by a CPA or e-filing software (e.g., Form 1040 with schedule C for sole proprietors)
- IRS Form 1099* if you are the recipient (not the filer)
- License to Operate* (issued by city, state)
- Limited Liability Company Articles/Articles of Amendment (if stamped as filed with an authority)
- Partnership documentation (if stamped as filed with an authority)
- Passport (may only be used by sole proprietors or individuals doing-business-as where the physical business address is on the passport; must be non-expired and have your exact name and address. Passports without addresses or with addresses that are different than your physical business address cannot be used)
- Share Certificate
- State Sales and Use Tax Permit*
- Tax invoice* (federal, state, local, international)
- Town charter, documentation from state governments for town's formation; Governor's declarations; formal resolution from town council establishing office.

List B - Start Year and State of Incorporation

Most Commonly Used Documents:
- Articles of Incorporation/Organization/Formation (if stamped as filed with an authority)
- Certificate of Formation/Organization (if stamped as filed with an authority)
- Department of Treasury IRS letter assigning your EIN
- Secretary of State Certificate of Filing
- Screenshot/PDF file of your business profile* in your state's online business registry or Secretary of State website (must be current registration and must include the website URL)

Other Documents You Can Use:
- Bylaws for your company (if stamped as filed with an authority)
- Certificate of Good Standing* issued by your state to your business that contains date of incorporation, organization, or establishment
- "Doing-business-as" or DBA document (if stamped as filed with an authority)
- IRS forms marked as received by the IRS or processed by a CPA or e-filing software (e.g., Form 1040 with schedule C for sole proprietors, only if it contains your business start date)
- Limited Liability Company Articles/Articles of Amendment (if stamped as filed with an authority)
- Partnership documentation (if stamped as filed with an authority)
- Town charter, documentation from state governments for town existence; Governor's declarations; formal resolution from town council establishing office, if it contains the date your entity began

Figure 3: Image from SAM.gov Entity Validation Documentation Requirements

List B: For proof of your entity start year and state, choose documents from List B.

Documents in List A and List B with an asterisk (*) **must** be 5 years old or less.

For organizations that are international you will need to choose documents from **List C** (see image below). All international documents must have a satisfactory English language translation attached.

For more information on required document, please visit Knowledge Base - What documentation can I use to validate my entity?

List C - National Identifier (international only)
- Screenshot/PDF file of your business profile* in your country's official online business registry (must be current registration and must include the registry URL). *Do not submit screens from U.S. federal websites.*
- Government-issued proof of tax identification number, employer identification number, or other identifier issued by your government.
- Government-issued tax receipt/return
- Passport (for sole proprietors or individuals doing-business-as only; must be non-expired and have your exact name and address)

Figure 4: Image from SAM.gov Entity Validation Documentation Requirements

6. **Receive UEI Automatically**

   - The UEI is assigned during the registration process.

7. **Submit and Wait for Activation**

   - Registration review can take 7–10 business days or longer. If your entity fails TIN or CAGE code validations, you will receive an email with instructions on updating your information and resubmitting your registration.

Understanding the Impact

Case Study: Nonprofit Organization Seeking Federal Grant

- **Entity:** Small nonprofit applying for a federal education grant

- **Issue:** UEI registration stalled due to a mismatch between IRS records and SAM.gov entry

- **Cause:** The legal business name entered in SAM.gov included an ampersand ("&") while the IRS record used "and"

- **Resolution:** The organization submitted a scanned IRS EIN letter and Articles of Incorporation. SAM.gov support corrected the record within 5 business days, the UEI was issued, and the nonprofit successfully submitted its grant application.

Case Study: City Department with Duplicate UEI

- **Entity:** A city department is registering separately from the main city UEI

- **Issue:** Duplicate UEI error due to overlapping address and TIN with the parent entity.

- **Cause:** SAM.gov auto linked the department to the city's existing UEI

- **Resolution:** The department submitted a letter from the city's finance office confirming its independent operations. SAM.gov assigned a new UEI after manual review.

Common Issues and Troubleshooting Tips

Issue	Cause	Resolution
Validation Failure	Mismatch in legal name or address with IRS	Submit IRS EIN letter and utility bill or lease
Duplicate UEI	Multiple registrations with same TIN/address	Provide documentation proving separate operations
Browser Errors	Incompatible browser or cookies disabled	Use Chrome or Firefox; clear cache
Delayed Processing	Missing documents or system backlog	Monitor status in SAM.gov Workspace and contact Federal Service Desk if needed

Implications

- **Timeliness**: Registration can take several weeks. Start early to avoid missing deadlines or possible funding opportunities.
- **Accuracy**: Inconsistent or incorrect information can delay or reject registration. Make sure information is correct at the time of registration.
- **Compliance**: UEI and SAM.gov registration must be renewed annually to remain active.

Next Steps and Recommendations

- Begin SAM.gov registration **well before** any grant deadline.
- **Assign a regular staff member** to maintain and update SAM.gov records yearly.
- Use the SAM.gov help desk or GSA support for troubleshooting, if needed.
- **Keep documentation** (e.g., IRS letters, bank info) ready for verification. See Figure 3 and 4 (above) for documentation needed.

Additional Resources

- SAM.gov Official Website
- U.S. General Services Administration - UEI Transition Resources
- Login.gov – Secure access to federal systems
- FSD.gov – Knowledge Base (Entity Validation and Registration)

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