

Project Proposal:
Tracing Federal Dollars: A State-by-State
Exploration of U.S. Government Contracting

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[CMSC 471 Data Visualization]

April 13th, 2025

Project Proposal

Our project aims to explain the complex and often opaque system of U.S. federal contracting by visualizing how government funds are distributed across states through awarded contracts. Using real data from USASpending.gov, we will explore which federal agencies are issuing contracts, which companies are receiving them, and how these distributions vary across states.

The USASpending dataset is extensive, with millions of contract records spanning multiple years, agencies, vendors, and geographic locations—making it ideal for revealing patterns through visualization. The visualization will help users understand how public money is allocated geographically and what economic sectors are prioritized in different regions.

To ensure depth and feasibility within the project’s scope, our analysis will concentrate on federal contracting awarded within the last five years, focusing specifically on three key states: **Virginia, California, and Maryland.** This selection allows us to directly investigate critical questions, such as the reasons behind Virginia’s high defense spending, the concentration of tech vendors in California, and the contracting patterns in a state with significant federal agency presence like Maryland. This targeted approach will provide clear, comparative insights into the distribution and impact of federal funds.