



Funded in part through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration.

Program Guidelines

Missouri Department of Economic Development *International Trade and Investment Office*

301 West High Street, Suite 720

Jefferson City, MO 65101

Phone: 573-751-4855

Website: https://ded.mo.gov/international-trade

Email: exports@ded.mo.gov

# Introduction

The Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015 (HR 644), signed into law on February 24, 2016, made the State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) a permanent provision of the Small Business Act to make grants to States, and the equivalent thereof, to carry out projects that support developing exports by eligible small business concerns (ESBCs).

The Missouri Department of Economic Development administers the Missouri State Trade Expansion Program=Unlimited Possibilities (MO STEP=UP) grant program, funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration. The goal of the MO STEP=UP Program is to increase the number of Missouri small businesses that export, the dollar value of exports, and the number of Missouri small businesses exploring significant new trade opportunities.

**Purpose**

The underlying premise of STEP is to supplement funds for export activities, not to substitute federal funds to cover costs that applicants would normally or otherwise cover. The use of federal funds for STEP will be limited to the statutory uses of funds that directly benefit ESBCs to become an exporter, increase their export sales, and/or increase new export opportunities.

# Eligibility

The target for this program is small businesses. For purposes of implementing the MO STEP=UP Program, the below operationally defines the term ‘eligible small business,’ as an entity that:

* Has 500 employees or fewer;
* Is licensed to do business in the State of Missouri and is in good standing with the Missouri Secretary of State;
* Has been in business in Missouri for no less than 1-year on the date of application for funding;\*
* Is operating profitably in the US;
* Has demonstrated export sales potential and intent, understanding the costs associated with exporting and doing business with foreign purchasers, including the cost of freight forwarding, custom brokers, packing and shipping, and has a strategic plan in effect for exporting;\*\* and
* Has goods and services that are either of US origin, or have at least 51% US content.

\**Must have been issued a Missouri business charter by the Missouri Secretary of State for at least one year.*

*\*\*A copy of the applicant’s export plan may be required to complete the application.*

Registrants must acknowledge and commit to the reporting methodology as set forth by the US Small Business Administration and the State of Missouri.

Special Consideration is given to businesses in the priority sector, **Advanced Manufacturing**, and for engagement in key international markets. The Missouri Department of Economic Development (MO DED) will focus assistance to eligible small businesses for the [North American Industry Classification System (NAICS)](https://www.census.gov/naics/?58967?yearbck=2017) Codes and key international markets identified below.

* **Target NAICS Codes:** 111, 112, 115, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 331, 332, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 339, 511, 424, or 541
* **Key markets:** Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Europe, India, Israel, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Southeast Asia, Taiwan, and United Arab Emirates

# MO STEP=UP Program

The MO STEP=UP Program targets two distinct types of companies: current exporters (market expansion) and new-to-export companies.

**Market Expansion (ME)** – Companies who currently export to one or more markets (Canada counts!) and are seeking to expand into new country market(s); or expand into a new region or new segment or new product line within an existing market.

**New-to-Export (NTE)** – Companies with no export experience at all; only “accidental” or “novice” exporting experience; or no export experience within the past 24 months.

New-to-export companies are allowed one funded activity as a non-exporter. Subsequent applications will be accepted after the company has completed an approved export training program (see Export Training Program section).

Program benefits:

* Up to 70% of actual costs or $5,000 maximum reimbursement for trade show costs in the advanced manufacturing sector and in a priority market;
* Up to 70% of actual costs or $4,000 maximum reimbursement for trade mission participation costs in the advanced manufacturing sector and in a priority market;
* 50% of actual costs or $2,000 maximum reimbursement for costs of subscription services provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce (USDOC; “Gold Key”);
* 50% of actual costs or $3,000 maximum reimbursement for expenses related to the website and product translation (**one** time per language), search engine optimization (SEO), and localization;
* 50% of actual costs or $2,500 maximum reimbursement for the design and production of eligible marketing media;
* 50% of actual travel expenses or $1,000 maximum reimbursement for airfare (economy/coach class only) - for **one** corporate full-time employee;
* 50% of actual costs or $1,000 maximum reimbursement for lodging – for **one** corporate full-time employee.

**EXPENSES TO BE REIMBURSED**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity/Expense Category** | **Trade Show** | **DED or Governor’s Trade Mission/ Foreign Market Sales Trip** | **USDOC/MDA/USDA/ World Trade Center/Other**  **Activity** | **Export Training**  **Program** |
| Registration/ Participation Fee/  Booth Construction/  \*Shipping Samples  \*To trade shows and/or trade missions only | 50% of actual cost  +10% for Target Industry in a General Market, OR  +20% for Target Industry in a Key Market.  Max $5,000 | 50% of actual cost  +10% for Target Industry in a General Market, OR  +20% for Target Industry in a Key Market.  Max $4,000 | 50% of actual cost  +10% for Target Industry in a General Market, OR  +20% for Target Industry in a Key Market.  Max $5,000 Trade Show, OR Max $4,000 Trade Mission | 50% of actual cost for registration or participation fee  Max $2,500 |
| International Market Media Design | 50% of actual cost  Max $2,500 | 50% of actual cost  Max $2,500 | 50% of actual cost  Max $2,500 |  |
| Website and Product Translation, Search Engine Optimization, Localization | 50% of actual cost  Max $3,000 | 50% of actual cost  Max $3,000 | 50% of actual cost  Max $3,000 |
| US Department of Commerce Subscription Services (Gold Key) | 50% of actual cost  Max $2,000 | 50% of actual cost  Max $2,000 | 50% of actual cost  Max $2,000 |
| Airfare | 50% of actual cost  Max $1,000 | 50% of actual cost  Max $1,000 | 50% of actual cost  Max $1,000 |
| Lodging | 50% of actual cost  Max $1,000 | 50% of actual cost  Max $1,000 | 50% of actual cost  Max $1,000 |
| **TOTAL** Maximum funding per company per grant cycle: **$15,000.00** | | | | |

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**Key markets:** Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Europe, India, Israel, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Southeast Asia, Taiwan, and United Arab Emirates.

## Eligible MO STEP=UP Expenses

Federal funds for STEP will be limited to the below statutory uses of funds that directly benefit ESBCs to become an exporter, increase their export sales, and/or increase new export opportunities.

* Airfare and/or lodging in conjunction with an approved activity.
  + Airfare – (consistent with Fly America Act guidelines) – Only the cost of an economy/coach class airline ticket will be eligible for reimbursement. If a higher class ticket is purchased and submitted for reimbursement, or the purchased ticket includes personal dates of travel, documentation indicating the cost of an economy/coach class ticket must be provided. The submitted comparison price of the economy/coach class airfare must be for the same airline, flight number and normal dates of travel as the higher class ticket that was purchased. Documentation from the airline provider’s website must be submitted at the time of reimbursement. Seat upgrades are not reimbursable. Airfare/lodging must be booked separately, not as a package. Airfare purchased using gift cards; frequent flyer miles, airline e-credits, etc., is not reimbursable.
  + Lodging – hotel room/tax charges **up to the Per Diem rate** or at the designated event/conference hotel(s). The Per Diem rates can be found on the U.S. General Services Administration website at: <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates>. Other types of lodging may be reimbursable up to the per diem rate. Non-hotel lodging receipts must contain itemized information showing the charges. Air fare/lodging must be booked separately, not as a package. Please contact our office for more information.
  + Ground transportation - Cost for mileage within the state of Missouri or contiguous states may be reimbursable beyond local travel, in lieu of airfare and shipping costs, **if the more cost-effective option**. Local travel is any travel conducted entirely within a 50-mile radius of the organization’s address of record. Approved requests for mileage will be reimbursed at the prevailing state rate per mile. Documentation of the route taken and total miles will be required. Costs for mileage using a rental vehicle are not reimbursable. Ground transportation costs during international travel are not eligible. Please contact our office for more information.
* Participation in trade show exhibition, including registration fees, standard booth space, standard build out.
* Participation in foreign trade missions, US DOC/USDA/MDA matchmaker trade delegations, and/or foreign market sales trips.
* US DOC subscription services (Gold Key) - contact DED for details or questions.
* Shipping samples in conjunction with participation in a trade show and/or trade mission only (max $3,000 for shipping).
* Website and product translation into foreign language (one time per language), search engine optimization (SEO) and localization services.
* Design of international marketing media including brochures, social media platforms, websites, billboards, newspapers, posters, branding and advertising.
* Export training (see Export Training Program section).

## Ineligible MO STEP=UP Expenses

* Employee salaries;
* Baggage fees, flight insurance, seat upgrades, online booking fees;
* Rewards points (e.g., airlines);
* Passport and/or visa fees;
* Currency exchange fees;
* Immunizations or COVID testing;
* Cell phones and cell phone charges;
* Meals and entertainment, including expenses related to entertaining current or prospective clients or government officials;
* Car rental/mileage, parking, and other ground transportation fees for international travel;
* Printing/copying of materials;
* Promotional items intended as giveaways;
* Booth items purchased for use at an event that remain the property of the company (e.g., TVs, bookshelves, magazine racks, etc.);
* Television and radio production;
* New product development or alteration of existing products.

Activities receiving funds from federal or other state sources are not eligible (i.e., funding cannot be combined).

**Export Training Program**

Missouri new to export companies will be afforded the opportunity via STEP funds to participate in an approved Export Training program. The Chancellor’s Certificate in International Trade is managed by the World Trade Center-St. Louis in partnership with DED where companies may receive a scholarship to participate. Alternatively, the Heartland Export Accelerator through the World Trade Center-Kansas City, is eligible for partial reimbursement to qualifying companies. Lastly, the national SIDO New to Export Training is an approved program and eligible for partial reimbursement to qualifying companies. Any other export training programs are reviewed for eligibility on a case-by-case basis.

**MO=STEP Participation Process Overview**

1. Review, complete and sign the DED disclosure/confidentiality agreement;
2. Submit an application for the trade activity of interest, including additional documentation as per MO DED;
3. Receive written approval from the DED in advance of the trade activity;
4. Complete or take part in the trade activity;
5. Upon completion of the trade activity, submit pertinent paid receipts and documentation for reimbursement to MO DED;
6. Complete a program evaluation and impact statement;
7. Receive reimbursement for eligible expenses from MO DED.

**Application/Approval Process/Reimbursement Procedures**

* Eligible applicants must submit a complete application form in no less than **15 business days prior** to a trade activity in order to be considered.
* Application review will consider activity, market opportunity, impact, likelihood of success, and availability of funds. **Approval of the application is required in advance of the event.**
* After completion of the trade activity, all paid receipts and source documentation evidencing the costs must be submitted to DED for reimbursement **within 90 days** of the activity ending.
* Reimbursement is the lesser of the authorized amount in the approval letter or the actual eligible costs.
* A Tax Clearance letter from the Missouri Department of Revenue indicating that the applicant/company has no outstanding taxes due must accompany the request for reimbursement.
* The DED reserves the right to deny reimbursement to companies that do not submit their reimbursement documents in a timely manner.

## Reporting

Each participant shall complete a Client Impact Statement (CIS) that provides the outcomes of participation in the approved MO STEP=UP trade activity. The CIS will be aggregated by DED (without company identification) to determine the return on investment to the program as a whole. Additional reporting will be requested periodically to update sales figures from approved events to comply with SBA requirements.

## Application Checklist

1. Marketing Activity
   * Completed and Signed Application Form
   * Export Plan (if required)

Supporting Documents

* + Executed Disclosure and Confidentiality Agreement (DCA) Form (valid for one year)
  + SBA Self-Representation Form (valid for one year)
  + SBA Debarment Certification Form (valid for one year)
  + MissouriBUYS registration (instructions below/one time requirement)
  + Sign and Return Certificate of Statement (original signature page)
  + E-Verify Memorandum (instructions below/one time requirement)
  + Fly America Document (if applicable)

1. Additional documentation required after activity takes place:
   * Itemized, paid receipts
   * Certificate of Tax Clearance letter (provided by the MO Department of Revenue (DOR) (valid for 90 days)
   * Company Invoice to DED
   * Client Impact Statement (CIS)

## MissouriBUYS/MOVERS

The State of Missouri has implemented a secure, web-based statewide eProcurement system, MissouriBUYS.

As a recipient who will be reimbursed by the state, you will be required to register your business with the Office of Administration through MissouriBUYS. The vendor registration portal is available on the MissouriBUYS website at [https://missouribuys.mo.gov](https://missouribuys.mo.gov/).

Clicking on the ‘register’ link will allow you to get a username and password. There are links to informational documents and a training video if you need help with the process. Prior to starting registration, please make sure you have the following information available:

* Organization’s Taxpayer ID Number (TIN)
* Business Type (Corporation, LLC, Sole Proprietorship, etc.)
* Email Address
* ACH-EFT Payment Information
* Internal Revenue Service W-9, Request for Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) and Certification

## E-Verify Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):

The E-Verify Program, conducted jointly by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Verification Division and the Social Security Administration (SSA), is designed to provide employment status information to determine the eligibility of applicants for employment. E-Verify requires that participating commercial employers use the automated Verification Information System (VIS) to check the SSA and the USCIS databases to verify the employment authorization of ALL newly hired employees. An employer's participation in E-Verify is free. To access the E-Verify website, go to: <https://e-verify.uscis.gov/enroll/>.

**All MO STEP=UP applicants must:**

* [Enroll in E-Verify](https://www.e-verify.gov/employers/enrolling-in-e-verify)
* Check the box on the Certification confirming enrollment and participation in E-Verify
* Attach an electronically signed copy of the E-Verify MOU to the MO STEP=UP application

## To access the ‘electronically signed MOU’ – the following must already by completed:

* Must have successfully enrolled in the E-Verify program; and
* Must have successfully completed the tutorial.

## To retrieve a copy of your electronically signed MOU:

* Wait until you have received a Confirmation email from E-Verify / USCIS that the company is successfully enrolled in the program
* Log back into your Account
* Click on “Edit Company Profile” in the left menu
* Scroll about halfway down and click on the green “View MOU” button. (Make sure all pop-up blockers have been disabled.) The electronically signed version pop ups in

a separate screen.

* ONLY the Program Administrator can access the electronically signed MOU.

*For additional assistance, you can contact E-Verify using the toll free Help line number, 888- 464-4218.*