
RHODE ISLAND STEP FY19

RI State Trade Expansion Program

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The John H. Chafee Center for International Business

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RI STEP FY19

The State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) is a national export initiative which makes matching-fund awards to states to assist small businesses in entering and expanding into international markets. Administered by the U.S. Small Business Administration's Office of International Trade, the program's objectives are to increase the number of U.S. small businesses that export and to increase the value of exports by small businesses.

The *Chafee Center for International Business at Bryant University*, in collaboration with the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation, is pleased to announce they have once again been awarded the STEP grant. The Chafee Center will work with eligible RI small businesses to enroll them in this valuable program and assist them in receiving STEP funding to support their international sales.

STEP ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

In order to participate in the RI STEP program, a company must meet the following requirements:

- Organized and incorporated in the United States
- Is registered in Rhode Island as a for-profit business and has operations in RI
- Meets the SBA definition of a "small business" (*see form*)
- Has been in business not less than 1 year
- Has sufficient resources to bear the costs associated with trade, including the costs of packing, shipping, freight forwarding and custom brokers.
- Is engaged in, or wishes to be engaged in, the delivery abroad of goods and/or services produced in the United States.
- Offers products that are of USA origin, or have at least 51% U.S. content

Eligible small business concerns will be classified as either:

NTE: New To Export = Businesses with either little or no export experience.

ME: Market Expansion = Active exporters focused on expanding into new country markets, into a new region or market segment or introducing new products in an existing market.



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

For more information contact:

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MATCHING-FUND AWARD OPPORTUNITIES

Eligible RI companies may apply for financial assistance for specific activities designed to support export growth. All requests for financial assistance must be ***pre-approved prior to the start of the activity*** and are available on a reimbursement basis, subject to completion of the approved project and submission of all required materials. **Requests for Approval** are reviewed on a first-come, first served basis while funding is available. All proposed projects and activities must take place between September 30, 2019 and September 29, 2020 to be eligible for first round of funding under this grant. Funding is not guaranteed and a Selection Committee will assess each application to determine suitability and level of funding.

In order to apply for STEP funding a company must:

- Meet the eligibility requirements for participation in the RI STEP grant. (See previous page)
- Submit STEP enrollment forms (STEP Self Representation Form and STEP Business Profile).
- Once enrolled, complete a **STEP Request for Approval**

Requirements for consideration for funding:

- The project or activity must meet the criteria for ***eligible activities***, as defined below.
- The company must be able to explain their export marketing strategy and show how the specific activity supports their strategy, either through entry into a new country market, entry into a new market or market segment, or introduction of a new product line into an existing market.
- The company must demonstrate how this activity will ***lead to an increase in export sales*** and provide a projected ROI.
- The company must be able to demonstrate an ability to ***effectively execute*** the project.
- The product or service being exported must be of U.S. origin or have at least 51% U.S. content.
- The company must be able to share in the cost of the activity, as shown by the total project budget.
- All requests require an estimated budget with quotes or other information to explain and justify the expenses.
- Requests must reflect the ***normal, standard costs*** for the project or activity.
- **Priority will be given to new projects and activities. Requests for repeat projects or activities within a 3-year period will be subject to greater scrutiny and ROI requirements. If approved, funding may be awarded at a reduced level.**

All **Requests for Approval** will be reviewed by the Selection Committee, taking into consideration the potential to result in increased export sales, the company's ability to execute and the projected ROI. The Selection Committee will make the final determination on approval and determine the appropriate level of funding. For companies that have received previous STEP support, their past efforts will also be taken into consideration, including their response to the quarterly Data Collection requests.

It is not the intent of the STEP grant that companies become dependent on receiving federal STEP funds. Companies are encouraged to graduate from the STEP program after a reasonable duration and priority will be given to new exporters, new initiatives and companies new to the STEP grant.

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ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES

Initial eligibility period: Activities must take place between September 30, 2019 and September 29, 2020

NE = New to Export Company

ME = Market Expansion Company

✓ Rhode Island Sponsored International Trade Events*

Rhode Island booth: Eligible companies may apply to participate in a Rhode Island booth at select trade events, funded directly with STEP monies. Participation through a competitive application process.

RI Trade Mission: Eligible participating companies may receive reimbursement of matchmaking fees:

- NTE : 100% Reimbursement of Trade Mission negotiated fees
- ME: 75% Reimbursement of Trade Mission negotiated fees
- Up to 75% reimbursement may be available for eligible marketing expenses in support of a Trade Mission or trade show participation.**

✓ U.S. Department of Commerce Programs*

U.S. Commercial Service Programs: Gold Key, IPS, Single Company Promotion, etc.

- Up to 75% reimbursement for both NTE and ME companies
- Maximum Reimbursement: \$1000 per project

✓ International Trade Show Exhibits (Foreign)*

Assistance with the cost of standard booth registration fees, booth furnishings, signage, electricity, etc.

Companies may include in their total request funding for marketing activities in support of their participation in the trade show, including design of marketing materials and social media marketing.**

(Shipping of samples is allowed, with a maximum **annual** reimbursement at 75% of \$2,000 per company.)

- NTE: Up to 75% Reimbursement, Maximum \$7500 per event
- ME: Up to 50% Reimbursement, Maximum \$5000 per event

LIMIT: TWO FOREIGN TRADE SHOWS PER COMPANY PER YEAR, UNLESS EXCESS FUNDING IS AVAILABLE IN THE 4TH QUARTER.

✓ International Trade Show Exhibits (Domestic)*

Funding for an international trade event in the USA is subject to the following conditions:

- Company **must** provide an **international** strategy for exhibiting at a specific domestic trade show
- Company must provide justification that the event will help create new export business opportunities, to include estimated number of foreign buyers present, presence of a foreign buying delegation, specific strategy to attract foreign buyers, and previous international experience at the event.
- Company must agree to provide a list of matchmaking activities completed and international leads obtained at the event as part of the requirement for reimbursement.
 - NTE: Up to 75% Reimbursement, Maximum \$3750
 - ME: Up to 50% Reimbursement, Maximum \$2500

LIMIT: ONE DOMESTIC SHOW PER COMPANY PER GRANT PERIOD

✓ International Training Programs

Reimbursement for participation in workshops, seminars or similar activities that deliver a structured program to provide knowledge on export policies, regulations and/or best practices.

- NTE: Reimbursement up to 75%, Maximum Reimbursement \$1500 per event
- ME: Reimbursement up to 50%, Maximum Reimbursement \$1500 per event
- Scholarships available for attending World Trade Day 2020
- Maximum Award per Company per grant period: \$2000

All training events limited to maximum two employees per company.

✓ Procurement of Consultancy Service

Professional in-country assistance with market entry and facilitation through professional agencies or consultants. Only allowed after consultation with the local U.S. Commercial Service to avoid duplication of services. May include assistance with website translation and SEO, and design of marketing materials.**

- NTE: Up to 75% Reimbursement, Maximum Reimbursement \$3750 per project
- ME: Up to 50% Reimbursement, Maximum Reimbursement \$2500 per project

*****Assistance with Websites and Marketing Materials capped at \$3000 total per grant period.***

*Travel expenses, including airfare, hotels and meals are not eligible for STEP reimbursement.

MAXIMUM AWARDS

- Total Maximum Dollar Award per Company: \$20,000
- Total Maximum Number of Awards/Activities per Company: 10

TO RECEIVE STEP FUNDING:

- Step 1: Complete a **Request for Approval**.
- Step 2: If approved, a **Letter of Approval** will be issued confirming the approved level of funding.
- Step 3: Submit a **Request for Reimbursement**.
Once the project is completed, the company must submit a Request for Reimbursement ***within 45 days of completion***, providing all required documentation. (***Note that failure to submit the appropriate request and documentation within 45 days without justification could jeopardize reimbursement of approved funds.***)
- Step 4: Response required to the quarterly Data Collection form with updated information on actual export activity that occurred as a result of a STEP supported activity.

For more information and to enroll in STEP contact:

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