



Michigan's State Trade Expansion Program (MI-STEP)

Program eligibility and application guidelines

GENERAL INFORMATION

The MI-STEP program is designed to spur job creation by empowering Michigan small businesses to export their products. The program has three primary objectives:

- Increase the number of Michigan small businesses that export
- Increase the dollar value of Michigan exports
- Increase the number of Michigan small businesses exploring significant new trade opportunities

ELIGIBILITY

Up to \$15,000 in assistance is available to offset 50 percent of approved expenses per fiscal year. Michigan companies must meet the following eligibility criteria to qualify for MI-STEP program funds:

1. Be in accordance with Small Business Administration (SBA) guidelines and size standards:
www.sba.gov/content/small-business-size-standards
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the costs associated with exporting and doing business with foreign purchasers, including the costs of freight forwarding, customs brokers, packing, and shipping, per SBA guidelines
3. Demonstrate potential for export success and positive impact on the regional economy
4. Provide an EIN number linked to a Michigan address
5. Be in good standing with the Michigan Department of Treasury and other regulatory agencies
6. Must be an export-ready U.S. company seeking to export goods or services of U.S. origin or have at least 51 percent U.S. content

ALLOWABLE USES OF MI-STEP PROGRAM FUNDS

Program funds may be approved for export marketing-related activities including:

1. Participation in foreign trade missions
2. U.S. Department of Commerce services

3. Website translation into foreign language, search engine optimization, and localization services capped at \$6,000 reimbursement per award year*
4. Design of marketing media (brochures, branded giveaways, social media, advertising, etc.) capped at \$6,000 reimbursement per award year
5. International trade show participation
6. Foreign sales trip
7. U.S.-based international trade show participation
8. Participation in export training workshops
9. Reverse foreign buyer missions (meeting space/audio visual)

EXPENSE/REIMBURSEMENT LIMITATIONS

- Meals, entertainment, cell phone charges, gifts, and personal expenses are ineligible
- Passport and visa fees are ineligible
- Immunization expenses are ineligible
- Travel reimbursement is limited to two (2) travelers who must be U.S. citizens
- Flights must adhere to Fly America/Open Skies agreements. Only economy flights are eligible for reimbursement —no upgrades
- Travel expenses for distributors or sales representatives not employed by the Michigan company are ineligible
- Fees for shipping products to be sold in market are ineligible
- Fees for shipping sample products cannot exceed \$4,000 reimbursement per award year
- Mileage is reimbursable at the federal per diem rate —no gas receipts, unless used with a rental car
- Export compliance testing expenses are ineligible
- Printing materials/services are ineligible

*In response to COVID-19, international website development is now reimbursable up to 75% effective through 9/29/2020.

To get started, complete the online intake at <http://michiganbusiness.org/export> or contact your regional International Trade Manager!

Questions may be sent to export@michigan.org.