

State Trade Expansion Program Export Voucher Application and Program Guidelines

October 1, 2018 – September 29, 2019

Administered by the Washington State Department of Commerce

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

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Section I – General Information

A. Program Overview

The State of Washington Department of Commerce Export Assistance Program seeks to increase the number of eligible small business concerns (ESBC) that export. The program is funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Administration’s State Trade Expansion Program (STEP).

The Export Voucher program is used to reimburse eligible ESBCs up to \$5,000 for specific export-related expenses. Voucher awards will be based on funds available, the number of applications submitted and the merits of the applications- especially the projected sales resulting from the activity; late, weak or incomplete applications will not be approved.

The export voucher application is available [here](#) on the Export Washington website.

B. Summary of Export Voucher Process

- Company reads program guidelines.
- Company applies for a [DUNS number](#) (this verifies the existence of your company globally) and [SWV number](#) (this is how state agencies send payments to companies).
- Company submits application at least **1 month in advance** of the first travel date.
- Application is reviewed to ensure the company meets the basic qualifications to receive a STEP voucher (see Section 1, Part C).
- Application is forwarded to the appropriate Program Manager for further review.
- The Export Voucher Committee (composed of representatives from WA Commerce's Export Program Managers and US Export Assistance Center) meets to review applications.
- Applicant is notified of their application status with next steps.
- Awarded company executes proposed activity and incurs expenses.
- STEP Program Manager follows up with the applicant requesting documents within 30 days of the activity (or by **September 20, 2019**- whichever comes first).
- The company receives a deposit or check in about 3-4 weeks.

C. Participant Eligibility

Qualifying Washington companies must:

- Be organized or incorporated and operating in the U.S.
- Meet a) the applicable industry-based small business size standard established under section 3 of the Small Business Act; or b) the alternate size standard applicable to the program, under section 7(a) of the Small Business Act and the loan program, under Title V of the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 (15 U.S.C. 695 et seq.) The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) size standards are found at 13 C.F.R Part 121. Use this [sba.gov link](#) for information on size standards for your business based on your NAICS code.
- Be in good standing with the Washington State Department of Revenue.
- Have a Federal Identification Number tied to a Washington address.
- Adhere to the following additional program criteria:
 - (a) have been in business for not less than the 1-year period ending on the date on which the Export Voucher is provided;
 - (b) demonstrate understanding of the costs associated with exporting and doing business with foreign purchasers;
 - (c) export goods or services of US origin or have at least 51% US content;
 - (d) have in effect a strategic plan for exporting;
 - (e) demonstrate export readiness; and
 - (f) be registered with the WA Secretary of State
- Agree to provide information on export sales data resulting from the Export Voucher funding, and respond to all subsequent Commerce surveys on a timely basis. Commerce will send surveys every six months, for up to 4 years. By applying for an export voucher, you are agreeing to respond to these confidential surveys with information on export sales data.

Section II – Program Specifics

A. Important Program Points

- **ESBCs are limited to one Export Voucher per program year (10/1/2018 to 9/29/2019).**
- **Activity must end by Sep 13, 2019.**
- ESBCs must be either “new to export” or “market expansion” – that is, the event/activity must help them to enter a new market or expand where they do not already have significant export sales.
- Applications must be submitted for future shows.
- Export Voucher reimbursement is limited to 75% of paid eligible expenses, up to \$5,000.
- ESBCs will be required to provide receipts and invoices for the voucher amount as well as 25% of the voucher award in “cash match” or non-reimbursable, out of pocket expenses.
- The 25% company cash match may not come from any other federal government source.
- Preference will be given to ESBCs that:
 - Are minority-owned, Native American-owned, veteran-owned, disabled veteran-owned, woman-owned, rural, or socially and economically disadvantaged.
 - Focus on or operate in the aerospace, information communication & technology, life sciences, clean technology or advanced manufacturing industries.
- An Export Voucher may be used to cover participation costs for only one individual, unless the activity is targeted by Commerce, in which case it may be used to cover costs for up to two individuals with prior approval. See the [link](#) for a list of events targeted by Commerce.
- Companies that are awarded a voucher may receive less than the award amount if they do not submit enough eligible or cash match expenses, or other documents.
- **Vouchers can only be used for the approved activity and approved expenses stated in the award notification. Applicants must notify the STEP Program Manager if unable to complete the activity.**
- **If you do not submit all the necessary documents within 30 days of the last event date, or by Sep 20, 2019 (whichever comes first), the STEP Program Manager retains the right to revoke your voucher award.**
- These terms and conditions are subject to change without notice based on funding availability and changes in federal and state procedures and laws.

B. Eligible Events and Activities

Only specific events and costs are eligible for reimbursement:

Eligible Events

- International Trade Shows
- International Trade Missions
- Foreign Market Sales Trips

Eligible Expenses

- Airfare (compliant with the [Fly America Act guidelines](#))
- International Trade Show and Trade Mission Fees
- Payment of website fees for translation, SEO, and localization (capped at \$3000)
- Shipping of samples (capped at \$2000)
- Compliance testing an existing product for entry into an export market (capped at \$2000)
- Certain services from the US Commercial Service

Cash Match Expenses

- Hotel, meals, transportation, any other export expenses that does not include entertainment or alcohol

C. Regarding Airfare

The following requirements must be met in order to receive reimbursement for airfare:

- Travelers must comply with the [Fly America Act](#).
- The traveler must use a US carrier when available, or a carrier from a country with a current [Open Skies Agreement](#) with the US.
- **Boarding passes** must be retained and submitted to the STEP Program Manager.
- An email confirmation from the airline stating the itinerary and confirmation of payment must be submitted to the STEP Program Manager.
- Airfare will only be reimbursed for one traveler unless the event is Commerce supported- in which case prior approval must be received.
- Airfare must be **basic economy class**. Premium economy is not economy.
- Airfare purchased with frequent flyer miles is ineligible for reimbursement.

D. Post Event Process

Once you return from your trip, you will receive an email from the STEP Program Manager requesting:

- Invoices and matching receipts for your reimbursable and cash match expenses.
- Submittal of the confidential Salesforce survey.

Section III – Program Administration

- Department of Commerce decisions on Export Voucher reimbursements are final.
- The financial and commercial information pertaining to or on application for an Export Voucher will be kept strictly confidential pursuant to **RCW 42.56.270**. Any information given on an application or subsequent completion report and surveys will only be reported as part of aggregated data from multiple Commerce clients that does not identify any individual responses or companies.