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**State Trade Expansion Program**

**Export Voucher Application and Program Guidelines**

October 1, 2021 – September 29, 2022

Administered by the Washington State Department of Commerce

Funded through a federal grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration

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# Section I – General Information

## Program Overview

The State of Washington Department of Commerce (Commerce) Commerce administers the Export Voucher program through its Small Business Export Assistance Team, which seeks to increase the number of eligible small business concerns (ESBCs) that export. The program is funded by the U.S. Small Business Administration’s State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) and is used to reimburse eligible ESBCs up to $10,000 for eligible export-related expenses.

## Participant Eligibility

Voucher awards are based on funds available, number of applications submitted and the merits of the application, especially regarding projected sales anticipated from the activity. Late, weak or incomplete applications will not be approved. The export voucher application is available [here](http://www.commerce.wa.gov/growing-the-economy/business-loans/export-voucher-program/). Qualifying Washington State companies must:

* Be organized or incorporated and operating in the U.S.
* Be a registered business in Washington State
* 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 [link](https://www.sba.gov/size-standards/) for information on size standards for your business based on [your NAICS code](https://www.naics.com/search/).
* 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 (ex-factory price of a good minus the aggregate value of foreign sources equals more than 51%);

(d) have in effect a strategic plan for exporting;   
(e) demonstrate export readiness; and

* Agree to provide information on export sales data resulting from the Export Voucher-supported activity, 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.**

## Export Voucher Application Process

* Company reads program guidelines.
* Company applies for a [DUNS number](https://www.sba.gov/contracting/getting-started-contractor/get-d-u-n-s-number) (this verifies the existence of your company) and [Statewide Vendor Number](https://ofm.wa.gov/it-systems/accounting-systems/statewide-vendorpayee-services/vendor-payee-registration) (this is how state agencies send payments to companies).
* Company submits application at least **1 month in advance** of the start of the export activity.
* The Export Voucher Committee (composed of representatives from Commerce, the Export Finance Assistance Center of Washington and the US Export Assistance Center) meets to review applications and ensure applicants meet program qualifications.
* Applicant is notified of their application status and next steps, if any.
* Awarded company executes proposed activity and incurs expenses. **(Past activities and expenses already paid for are not eligible for an export voucher.)**
* Washington State Department of Commerce decisions on Export Voucher awards and reimbursements are final.

## Eligible Events and Expenses

Only the following specific events and expenses are eligible for reimbursement:

* Design of international marketing, digital advertising (voucher reimbursement up to $6000)
* Translation of marketing media, including audio/video (voucher reimbursement up to $6000)
* Website design, maintenance and international payment handling (voucher reimbursement up to $10,000)
* Online market listing fees (voucher reimbursement up to $10,000)
* E-commerce platform fees (voucher reimbursement up to $10,000)
* Expenses to set up a website to accept international payments ($10,000)
* Services of the [U.S. Commercial Service](https://www.trade.gov/all-services)
* International shipment of product samples (voucher reimbursement up to $4,000)
* Compliance testing of an existing product for entry into an export market (voucher reimbursement up to $6,000)
* Export research tool subscription (voucher reimbursement up to $2,000)
* Cost associated with international IP protection (limited to the following--USPTO PCT transmittal fee [up to $120], filing fee [up to $200], search fee [up to $1040]; Hague Intl Design App transmittal fee [up to $60], Trademark Madrid Protocol fee [up to $250])
* International business travel (airfare only)
* International trade show or trade mission fees (virtual or in-person)
* International conference or symposium fees (for sales development only)
* Foreign market sales trips
* EXIM Credit Insurance fees

The following expenses are not eligible for export voucher reimbursement:

* Hotel, meals, in-country transportation, any export expenses that include entertainment or alcohol
* Approved expenses that exceed the voucher award amount

## Voucher Reimbursement Process

Within 30 days of completing your export activity, you should fill out the reimbursement sheet request and include the following documentation:

* Invoices and matching receipts for your reimbursable and cash match expenses.

Your response to Commerce’s confidential sales survey, which you will receive by email.

* Receipts and invoices to cover the 25% of the voucher award as a “cash match”, or non-reimbursable, out of pocket expense. If you cannot meet the 25% cash match requirement, your voucher award will be reduced to meet the cash match requirement.
* The company receives an electronic deposit or check in about 3-4 weeks once all documents have been submitted and approved.

# Section II – Program Specifics

## Important Program Points

* **Limit three Export Vouchers per program year (10/1/2021 to 9/29/2022), up to $10,000 total.**
* The $10,000 award cap may be covered by 1, 2 or 3 voucher applications.
* Only ecommerce and website fees are eligible for a maximum award of $10,000, all others are limited to amounts listed in these guidelines.
* **Export activities supported by an export voucher must end and be paid for by Sep 29, 2022.**
* Company 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 to be eligible for an export voucher.
* 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, or rural, socially and economically disadvantaged businesses.
  + 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 travel 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.
* **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 29, 2022 (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.

## Regarding Airfare

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

* Travelers must comply with the [Fly America Act](https://www.gsa.gov/policy-regulations/policy/travel-management-policy/fly-america-act).
* The traveler must use a US carrier when available, or a carrier from a country with a current [Open Skies Agreement](https://www.state.gov/open-skies-partners/) 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 will be reimbursed for **basic economy class**. Premium economy is not economy.
* Airfare purchased with frequent flyer miles is ineligible for reimbursement.

# Section III – Confidentiality

The financial and commercial information pertaining to or on your 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.