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MITC Receives \$145,000 SBA Grant to Assist Maine Exporters

In September, the U.S. Small Business Administration announced that MITC received a \$145,000 grant in the latest round of funding under the State Trade and Export Promotion (STEP) program. Created in 2010 and reauthorized in 2015, the STEP initiative provides funding to states and U.S. territories to increase the number of businesses that export.

Administered by MITC, the STEP Financial Assistance Award provides eligible Maine companies with reimbursements toward specified costs associated with export development activities. Eligible businesses may receive reimbursements totaling up to \$8,000 per year. Companies in rural Maine (defined as Aroostook, Franklin, Hancock, Kennebec, Knox, Lincoln, Oxford, Piscataquis, Somerset, Waldo, and Washington counties) may receive up to \$9,000 per year.



Export Assistance ROI 26:1

Since 2011:

97 projects funded

\$259,160 of assistance
provided to
Maine companies

\$6.6 million in actual
sales to date

Beginning October 1, eligible businesses can apply for reimbursement of expenses in the following three areas critical to export success.

International Business Development: Eligible companies can access funding for international business matchmaking services or attendance at an international trade show. Associated services such as shipping, interpretation, or in-country ground transportation which support the matchmaking or trade show activity are also reimbursable up to a cap of \$2,500 per project, with a maximum of two projects per company per year. Companies in rural Maine may receive up to \$3,000 per project.

Advanced Export Skills Development: Eligible companies can access funds to participate in private export skills training or purchase export compliance services up to \$2,500 per company per year. STEP funds can be used to cover registration costs or consulting fees, but not travel costs.

Foreign Marketing Support: For the first time this year, STEP funds can now be used to improve international marketing efforts by engaging consultants for advertising and marketing campaigns, SEO services, or translation and/or localization of websites and sales literature. Companies may receive up to 50% of what they spend, up to a cap of \$3,000 per year.

To apply for a STEP Financial Assistance Award, companies need to meet SBA eligibility requirements and complete a simple online form that includes an overall project budget. Guidelines, eligibility requirements, and the link to the online application form available on the MITC website (mitc.com).

Sustaining Roundtable Members

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President's Corner

I hope you all enjoyed the glorious Maine summer. As the fall season arrives, this is an excellent time to meet with one of our Trade Specialists to discuss ways to expand sales in current overseas markets and emerging markets to consider. We're ready to assist with your planning for 2017!

Highlights in this issue include:

✓ Again this year, MITC has received a STEP grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration to assist Maine exporters. As a result, we are able to reimburse eligible businesses for costs associated with export development activities such as business matchmaking services, trade show participation, and export compliance training. (*see cover article*)

✓ Our StudyMaine initiative is organizing an education-focused trade mission to visit five cities in Russia from January 23 – February 1. With the U.S. as the second most popular study abroad destination for Russian students, this market looks promising for Maine schools. (*see page 4*)

✓ An icon of Maine's paper industry for more than 150 years, Sappi has recently launched an innovative new line of release paper – the Ultracast Nexus line which is servicing new market niches. (*see page 5*)

Save the date and join us for our popular Annual Member Holiday Reception on December 13 at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute in Portland from 5:00 – 7:00 PM. Prior to the reception, we will be hosting an informal Open House at our new facility in the Marine Trade Center (see below) and would be delighted to show you around. Stay tuned for more details!

Kind regards,

Janine Bisailon-Cary,
President



We've moved to the Marine Trade Center building on the Portland waterfront! When you're in the neighborhood, stop in to see our new space. Be sure to update your database with our new address: 2 Portland Fish Pier, Suite 204, Portland, ME 04101.

CANADA DESK

FOCUS ON QUEBEC

COREX Opportunities

Launched in March 2015, the COREX program initiative facilitates and promotes trade between Quebec and the seven states in the northeastern U.S. (New York, Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island). Through this program, the Quebec Federation of Chambers of Commerce (FCCQ) has produced an innovative tool dedicated to help U.S. and Quebec businesses develop their network and seize new business opportunities on both sides of the border.

Quebec is Maine's 2nd largest trading partner within Canada. Its geographic proximity and diverse economy present many opportunities for Maine businesses across many sectors including food, construction, green building, new manufacturing technologies, energy, life sciences, and aerospace. Trade between Quebec and Maine increased by more than 30% between 2011 and 2015.



A product of the Quebec Federation of Chambers of Commerce, **COREX Opportunities** is a no-cost, web-based trade platform giving you the opportunity to search for and connect directly with businesses and opportunities in the province of Quebec. This online meeting platform targets business opportunities and facilitates international trade in a single click allowing users to:

- **ASK** questions targeted to users and organizations with the relevant expertise to answer or with an interest in the subject matter you are inquiring about.
- **FIND** new buyers, suppliers and commercial partners or find out about new business opportunities in your areas of expertise.
- **POST** a request for proposals, invitation to tender or business opportunity with the assurance that it will be sent to users and organizations that possess the relevant expertise to assist you.

COREX Opportunities provides a B2B networking platform that aims to create connections and broaden exchange for entrepreneurs and companies in the Northeastern United States and their industry counterparts in Quebec.

“We are very proud of COREX Opportunities; it supports companies on both sides of the border to connect more easily, to seize new opportunities, and to build stronger relationships. This fall, we will focus our effort on the US market to develop new partnerships. More American businesses will be able to enjoy the privileges of the platform and extend their businesses through the FCCQ’s extensive network.”

Mr. Stéphane Forget, CEO of Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec (FCCQ)

For more information, please visit www.corexfccq.com
or contact Canada Desk Director Jeff Bennett at jbennett@mitc.com
or 207-553-7709.

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Going Beyond Paper: Non-Traditional Applications Keep Business Profitable

Sappi North America has long been an important part of Maine's paper industry, planting its roots as The S.D. Warren Company more than 150 years ago. Throughout its history, Sappi has overcome industry challenges through its forward-thinking approach to the paper and pulp business, focusing on unprecedented innovation.



At the company's Westbrook Mill, which has been operating since 1854, Sappi has found success in a lesser-known, niche market: release papers. This specialty has offered innumerable opportunities for the company to remain competitive, grow a profitable business, and exercise creativity in the industry.

Simply put, release papers contain a textured surface pattern that can then be cast onto a synthetic material. Sappi currently meets more than one third of the world's demand for release paper, which provide the surface aesthetics for coated fabrics and synthetic leather used in footwear, clothing, upholstery and accessories, as well as the textures for decorative laminates found in kitchens, baths, flooring and other surfaces.

"The biggest misconception of this industry is that paper is in the product our customers are buying," said Collins. "In fact, the paper acts as a mold, imparting the texture to the synthetic end-product. Our paper does not become part of the end-product."

"Between 80 and 90 percent of our release papers are used in the textile and synthetic leather industry, Collins explained. "All around the world, people touch products made from Sappi release paper every day and do not know it."

Despite how common the materials textured by release papers are, the subtle nuances of Sappi's Ultracast and Classics products open an enormous world of possibilities. With over 240 patterns available to customers, Sappi's release business is a master craft in the industry and leads the charge in innovation to make paper far more than a printing medium.



"Sappi's biggest contribution to the industry is the extremely high quality of the textures, not just the paper. That is why they are sought after," continued Collins.

The recent release of its Ultracast Nexus line showcases the company's technical expertise, understanding of the market and investment in innovation to meet customer needs. Ultracast Nexus release paper is easier to use, lasts longer, and provides a new level of efficiency to manufacturers, according to Collins.

With over 240 patterns available to customers, Sappi's release business is a master craft in the industry and leads the charge in innovation to make paper far more than a printing medium.

Sappi North America, headquartered in Boston, is a market leader in converting wood fiber into superior products that customers demand worldwide. The company operates two mills in the state of Maine: Somerset Mill in Skowhegan and Westbrook Mill and Technology Center in Westbrook. Sappi North America is a subsidiary of Sappi Limited (JSE), a global company headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa, with more than 13,000 employees and manufacturing operations on three continents in seven countries and customers in over 100 countries around the world. Learn more at: www.sappi.com/na.

Maine Education Mission to Russia

MITC's **StudyMaine** initiative is organizing education focused trade mission to Russia. From January 23 - February 1, 2017, the mission delegation will visit Moscow, Kazan, Ekatarinburg, Novosibirsk, and St. Petersburg.

With the 6th largest economy in the world and a strong upper middle class, Russia is a promising market for international student recruitment. The U.S. is the second most popular study abroad location for Russian students with enrollment to U.S. schools increasing over 13% within the last five years.

Mission Benefits Include:

Customized One-on-One Appointments: Gold Key Matching Service individual meetings in Moscow, Kazan, Ekatarinburg, Novosibirsk, and St. Petersburg based on your school's goals.

In-Country Research: Research will be conducted by industry specialists, and you'll have the opportunity to meet via teleconference to discuss your school's objectives before leaving Maine.

Market Briefings: Learn more about current economic and political conditions in Russia and neighboring countries.

Group Tours and Events: Visit high schools and higher-education institutions and meet with Russian government leaders to gain first-hand knowledge of the education environment.



StudyMaine

For more information,
please contact Zeynep Turk at turk@mitc.com
or 207-541-7474.

Maine Trade Mission to Toronto

There was no late August lethargy for the delegation of Maine companies that spent a busy few days in Toronto. MITC and U.S. Commercial Service lead the trade mission to Canada's largest city and economic hub. Representatives from Maine companies participated in market briefings, facility tours, and most importantly, one-on-one business meetings with potential partners in the Greater Toronto Area. Over 16 meetings were held during the two-day visit.

"This was my first experience in such an event, and I found it to be very productive, interesting, and very well organized. This also was a tremendous learning experience for me. I came back to my office with a list of about 60 companies for follow up."

- Andre Allard, Application Specialist, Artel



The Maine delegation included representatives from U.S. Commercial Service, Artel, MITC, Kepware Technologies, and Port City Living. (Not pictured, Elmet Technologies)

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WHAT'S AHEAD

Getting More Out of Trade Shows
November 15 • Webinar

Annual Holiday Member Reception
December 13
5:00 - 7:00 PM
Portland, ME

Winter Fancy Food Show
January 22-24
San Francisco, CA

Maine Education Mission to Russia
January 23 - February 1
Moscow, Kazan, Ekaterinburg, Novosibirsk,
and St. Petersburg

International Business Forum
February 9
Presque Isle, ME

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