



## STEP 2021-2022 Guidelines

Effective: July 1, 2021 – September 29, 2022

The U.S. Small Business Administration's State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) grant initiative provides funding to states and U.S. territories to increase the number of businesses that export. Administered by Maine International Trade Center (MITC), the objective of the **STEP Financial Assistance Award** is to encourage Maine companies to seek new international sales through financial support for costs associated with such activities.



Eligible businesses may receive a maximum of five STEP Financial Assistance Awards for up to \$20,000 per year. MITC will reimburse 75% of eligible costs associated with activities in the following categories:

### International Business Development: up to \$10,000 per activity

International business development services awards will reimburse up to \$10,000 in costs associated with business matching services or international trade show participation, plus associated expenses such as shipping\*, interpretation, or transportation.

Under expanded guidelines, international airfare, lodging, and meals are now eligible, subject to federal travel policies. Contact MITC staff for details.

Expenses relating to domestic trade shows are eligible *only* if the company engages *international* matchmaking services such as the US Commercial Service international buyer's program or equivalent.\*\* A receipt for this service and a copy of the meeting schedule will be required for reimbursement. Eligible companies may receive support for one domestic trade show per grant year.

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\* *The maximum amount allowed for shipping costs is \$4,000.*

\*\* *Companies receiving support from other Federal sources such as Branded or other Market Access Programs should contact MITC staff for details on how these programs may be used together.*

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### Export Skills Development: up to \$6,000 per activity

Export skills development awards will reimburse up to \$6,000 in costs associated with private or public training and export compliance and consulting services.



## STEP 2021-2022 Guidelines (cont.)

### Export Marketing Assistance: up to \$8,000 per activity

Export marketing assistance awards will reimburse up to \$8,000 in costs associated with developing international marketing material. This includes costs associated with hiring consultants and marketing agencies to improve international marketing strategies.

### E-commerce and Digital Marketing: up to \$10,000 per year

E-commerce and digital marketing awards will reimburse up to \$10,000 in costs associated with E-commerce platform hosting and website development fees. This includes costs for search engine optimization targeting foreign markets, online market listings, and online international payment solutions.

Applications for a STEP Financial Assistance Award must be approved prior to incurring costs; costs incurred before receiving approval will not be reimbursed. Applications must be received by September 16, 2022. Funded activities must be completed before September 29, 2022.

### Eligibility

To apply, companies or firms must meet the U.S. Small Business Administration's definition of small business, and manufacture or perform at least 51% of the covered good or service in Maine and meet any other SBA guidelines for receiving federal grants.

### Required for Application

Companies must apply for the **STEP Financial Assistance Award** in advance. Funds may not be used to pay for activities or costs incurred prior to the approval of the activity.

For more  
information, please  
contact us via email:  
[STEP@mitc.com](mailto:STEP@mitc.com)

Businesses must complete and submit a Self-Representation as an "Eligible Small Business Concern" form on the next page.

### Timeline for Reimbursement

The typical processing time for applications is two weeks from date of submission to notification. Once a company is approved for a **STEP Financial Assistance Award**, the company must conduct the activity within the timeframe stated in the grant. After the activity is complete, the company will submit paid invoices, copies of meeting schedules, post-activity surveys, and any other required information to MITC. Once MITC has received all required documentation, reimbursement payments are made to the company within 60 days of the end of the quarter. MITC will conduct confidential surveys on completion of the supported activity and at 6 and 12 months following the activity.



**U.S. SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20416**

**SELF-REPRESENTATION AS AN ‘ELIGIBLE SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN’**

The undersigned seeks services from a State grant recipient under the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015 (HR 644), which authorized the State Trade Expansion Program (STEP).

Section 503 of the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015 defines the term ‘eligible small business concern,’ as a business concern that:

1. Is organized or incorporated in the United States;
2. Is operating in the United States;
3. Meets
  - 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 programs 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 the following [sba.gov link](https://www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/contracting/contracting-officials/small-business-size-standards) for information on size standards for your business (<https://www.sba.gov/category/navigation-structure/contracting/contracting-officials/small-business-size-standards>);

4. Has been in business for not less than 1 year, as of the date on which assistance using a grant under this subsection commences; and
5. Has access to sufficient resources to bear the costs associated with trade, including the costs of packing, shipping, freight forwarding, and customs brokers.

Submitting false information in order to obtain services from a STEP grant recipient is a violation of Federal law. If you submit false information the Government may seek criminal, civil, and/or administrative remedies against you, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. §§ 1001, 1040; and 31 U.S.C. §§ 3729–3733. The Government may elect to exclude you from further participation in certain Federal programs and contracts if you submit false information in connection with receiving services from a STEP grant recipient.

**I hereby certify that the business I represent is seeking services from a STEP grant recipient and is an ‘eligible small business concern,’ pursuant to the above definition.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Company Name