



U.S. Small Business STEP Tennessee Application Administration

Thank you for your interest in applying to STEP Tennessee.

Eligible Tennessee businesses may apply for the State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) grant and conduct allowable export development activities within the timeframe of the grant. STEP does not reimburse for activities that took place prior to the Eligible Small Business Concern (ESBC) self-representation date on the current grant year application.

We suggest that you complete this application on a computer rather than a mobile device. We advise that you compile all necessary information before you begin to complete the application form.

The following is the information that you will need to complete the application:

- Basic company contact details and key facts (e.g., Federal Tax Identification Number, employment data, revenue data, product/service information, etc).
- Background information on the company's existing export activity (e.g., export sales information, key export markets, channels, international marketing activities, budget, etc.).
- Anticipated export goals and strategies over the next three years (international marketing plan).
- Proposed export development activities under the STEP program, including sales projections, job growth projections and detailed budget information.

It may be a good idea to save your answers as a separate Word document before entering the data into the online application. With this information compiled in advance, we anticipate that it will take less than 45 minutes to complete this application. Please note that answers to all questions are required.

STEP Tennessee is focused on the following goals, and your proposal must show how your company's export activity(ies) will help achieve at least one of these goals:

- Increase the number of Tennessee companies that export (i.e., help new-to-export companies start exporting)
- Increase the value of a company's exports
- Increase the number of companies exploring significant new trade opportunities

All requests will be evaluated on the overall quality of the proposal, the company's ability to successfully execute the proposed project, and the projected export sales. Incomplete applications will be rejected.

- Do NOT incur any expenses for which you will be seeking reimbursement prior to approval as grants cannot be used to reimburse costs retroactively.
- Do not perform activities in Bolivia, Cuba, Iran, North Korea or Syria.

Applicants will receive a written response to their request.

HOW TO GET REIMBURSED

If you are awarded a STEP Tennessee grant, your company should submit a Request for Reimbursement within 30 days of project completion and include all required documentation based on the final expenses. STEP is a reimbursement grant. Therefore, all activities must have taken place and been paid for before reimbursement can be requested and expenses reviewed by the STEP team.

For guidance and details on the reimbursement process, see the Reimbursement Request form on our website.

If you have questions or need help, please contact:

Jeffrey Overby, Director, Tennessee Export Initiative, TEI@belmont.edu



U.S. Small Business
Administration

SBA SELF-REPRESENTATION AS AN ELIGIBLE SMALL BUSINESS CONCERN FORM

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](https://www.sba.gov/size-standards/index.html) link for information on size standards for your business (<https://www.sba.gov/size-standards/index.html>)
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.

Note: If do not meet the criteria above, you are ineligible for the STEP program.

The undersigned certifies that this is an export ready U.S. company seeking to export goods or services of U.S. origin or have at least 51% U.S. content.

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.

Business Name *

Name of Authorized Representative *

First Name

Last Name

Title of Authorized Representative *

Date



U.S. Small Business
Administration

Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion Lower Tier Covered Transactions

This certification is required by the regulations implementing Executive Order 12549, Debarment and Suspension, 13 CFR Part 145. The regulations were published as Part VII of the May 26, 1988 Federal Register (pages 19160-19211). Copies of the regulations may be obtained by contacting the person to which this proposal is submitted.

1. The prospective lower tier participant certifies, by submission of this proposal, that neither it nor its principals are presently debarred, suspended, proposed for disbarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this transaction by any Federal department or agency.
2. Where the prospective lower tier participant is unable to certify to any of the statements in this certification, such prospective participant shall attach an explanation to this proposal.

Business Name

Name of Authorized Representative

First Name Last Name

Title of Authorized Representative

Date

Month Day Year

Company Information

What is your company's competitive advantage (i.e., why is your product/service offering better than your competitors)?

What is your product/service's current share of the domestic market?

Description of trade activity you are applying for. Provide a clear and concise explanation of trade activity and justification for the activity (i.e., how it fits with your business plan and how it will lead to export sales). *

What is your current marketing strategy and annual budget

Please explain in detail how this project directly supports your company's export marketing strategy. Provide a clear and concise explanation of trade activity and justification for the activity (i.e., how it fits with your business plan and how it will lead to export sales). *

How are you currently selling these products to customers in the U.S.? (i.e. in-house sales force, commission agents, distributor/wholesaler/retailer channels, direct to end-users, internet/online sales, specialty/other).

Export strategy?

Please describe the products and/or services you plan to export in this project. *

What specific country or countries are you targeting with this project (list up to four countries)

Country Name	Is this a new country for your company?	If no, what % increase in sales do you hope to achieve
---------------------	--	---

Country

Country

Country

Country

How much per year can you afford to spend on export development?

How long will your management be willing to invest time and money to achieve acceptable export results?

What payment terms are you willing to offer reputable foreign buyers?

What is your logistics plan for transporting and/or distributing your products or services, if applicable?

Does your product require any assembly special technical support or after-sale service? If so, how will these services be provided in the foreign market?

Explain if there is any additional testing and/or certifications for your product that need to be approved in the foreign market(s). And if so, has your product already been tested and/or approved in those markets?

Does your product need to be modified (i.e., voltage)? If so, explain.

Are you willing to adapt your product and/or packaging to better suit foreign markets?

Specific Grant Application Activities

Please indicate below which STEP-eligible activity you will be seeking reimbursement for in this application (you may select up to two): *

1. Export promotion services through the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Commercial Service
2. International Website Optimization
3. Marketing Media Design
4. Trade Show Exhibition

#1 Export Promotion Services through the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. Commercial Service

Eligible for STEP reimbursement up to 75% - up to \$4,000/project

If you selected #1 or #2 above, are you currently working with the U.S. Commercial Service”?

Yes

No

The Process:

1. Learn about the eligible U.S. Commercial Service Programs.
2. Contact your nearest U.S. Commercial Service office in Tennessee to obtain the Participation Agreement (contract) for the proposed U.S. Commercial Service Activity.
3. Indicate below which service(s) you plan to employ, the dates of service, the target market/country, and the costs associated with each service.

If yes, name the person and office with whom you have contracted.

The following elements of this application correspond to each activity listed above. Please find the section for the activity you selected above and complete the section accordingly. The application continues to Activity Goals once your application activity section has been completed.

Note: the program offers a 75% reimbursement rate on eligible expenses, with a maximum benefit per company of \$7,000.

If no, you may proceed with the grant application process, but please contact your nearest U.S. Commercial Service office in Tennessee to complete the Participation Agreement (contract) process. Your application will not be approved until a signed Participation Agreement is provided.

USDOC Service

	Target Market(s)	Cost (\$)	Planned Date of Service
Initial Market Check			
International Company Profile			
Customized Market Research			
International Partner Search			
Gold Key Service			
Trade Show Representation			
Virtual Fair/Representation			
Other			

Eligible e-Commerce and website fee expenses include:

- Design and develop a website with an international focus (including website translation or localization)
- Oversight and maintenance/monitoring fee* for SEO (SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization, which is the practice of increasing the quantity and quality of traffic to your website through organic search engine results)
- Online market listing fees (online sites such as Etsy, Amazon, and eBay charge nominal fees for listing items on their website)
- e-Commerce Platform, including hosting and/or maintenance fees (e-Commerce software enables a business to sell products and services online)
- Expenses to set up websites to accept international payments
- Website Globalization Review Gap Analysis: an evaluation of a business's website from an international marketing and sales perspective, resulting in a report providing website SEO enhancements that will make your web presence more appealing and functional for overseas sales prospects.

* Any maintenance or monitoring activities must be concluded by September 29 annually.

International E-Commerce Website Service

#2 International Website Optimization

Eligible for STEP reimbursement up to 75% - up to \$5,000/project

Service Provider

Expected Completion Date

Month Day Year

Target Country(ies)

Expected Activity Total Cost (\$)

#3 International Marketing Media Design

Eligible for STEP reimbursement up to 75% - up to \$5,000/project

Development of marketing media* involves the ability to promote a product or service to strengthen export sales using any of the following:

- Brochures
- Social media
- Billboards
- Newspapers
- Posters
- International magazines
- Translation of marketing media, including audio and video

*This activity must be carried out by a third-party organization.

Service being Rendered

Service Provider

Expected Completion Date

Month Day Year

Target Country(ies)

Expected Activity Total Cost (\$)

#4 Trade Show Exhibition

Eligible for STEP reimbursement up to 75% - up to \$7,000/foreign show

Trade Show Name

International Show Location (City and Country)

Trade Show Start Date

Month Day Year

Trade Show End Date

Month Day Year

Note: Travel expenses are NOT reimbursable.

Describe how exhibiting at this trade show will help you meet your export goals

Trade Show Budget (please list all expenses in which you are applying for reimbursement):

Expense Amount (\$)

Booth/Space Rental

Booth/Space Design

Exhibitor Badges

Flooring

Freight, Drayage & Storage

Furniture, Lighting, etc.

Labor (show contractor)

Registration Fee(s)

Shipping (cost to ship booth/equipment/samples to and from the show)

Trade Show Advertising (Brochure, Graphics, Banners, Signs, etc.)

Utilities

Other

TOTAL

Estimated Outcomes from Proposed Grant Activities

Please complete the rest of the application in full.

Should you receive financial assistance from the STEP Grant, please state your goals/objectives?
*

How many new jobs do you expect will be created in your company after participating in the activity(ies)? *

How many jobs will be retained in your company after participating in the activity(ies)? *

How many new international clients do you expect to engage as a result of the activity(ies)? *

What dollar amount of sales do you expect to generate within the first 90 days after participating in the activity(ies)? *

What are your estimated long-term (18-months) sales to be generated by participating in the activity(ies)? *

PERMISSIONS & CERTIFICATIONS

The authorized representative **MUST** be a member of the senior management team. With this signature, the information presented in this document is accepted as an accurate representation of the company's activities for the purpose of evaluating the success of the activities as they relate to the STEP Program. The applicant certifies that:

- To the best of my knowledge, the data in this application is correct and supporting documentation will be available to TEI for review upon request.
- I understand that submitting false or misleading information may result in being found ineligible for reimbursement and permanent disqualification from any future participation in this program.
- My company meets the SBA eligibility criteria for the STEP program, including compliance with SBA size standards and U.S. content requirements.
- STEP funds will only be used for those activities included in the project budget and approved pursuant to the written application. Modifications to the proposed budget and activities require prior approval.
- I understand that TEI may conduct confidential surveys following the completion of the activity, and I will answer those surveys in a timely manner.
- I understand that I will be accountable for submitting paperwork, documenting expenses and meeting deadlines under the STEP program and that failure to do so may impact my eligibility for reimbursement under the program.
- I understand that TEI will not authorize release of financial and other company-confidential details provided on this application, except when required under applicable federal and state statutes, rules and regulations. It is understood that release of such information will be made available for the purposes of financial audits. It is also understood that my company name and city/town may be released for STEP program publicity purposes.
- I understand that the Tennessee STEP program is funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and that my contact details may be shared with the SBA for promotion of other SBA programs and services.
- I understand that information in this application will be shared with the TEI Office, District Export Councils of Tennessee, the U.S. Department of Commerce, and U.S. Commercial Service Tennessee.

I agree

I do not agree

The U.S. Small Business Administration and resources of other export programs that are offered by the agency and other federal agencies. Please check the appropriate box if you would like your company's name and contact information to be shared with other relevant agencies to learn more about federal export programs. Your choice to participate or not will not change the status of your

participation with SBA STEP. SBA's aim is strictly to share information about other opportunities with you. *

Yes

No

I agree to provide post-trade event required metrics. Each grant is funded in part through a grant with the U.S. SBA. The federal grant requires us to report all sales and job creation activity directly derived as a result of your participation in the Grant. By checking yes, you agree to provide sales and job creating statistics directly derived as a result of your acceptance of the STEP Grant award and financial assistance, on a quarterly basis following the STEP Activity and 12 to 18 months after the performance period of the Grant. All information provided is confidential. *

I agree

I do not agree

I understand that project costs will only be reimbursed for documented expenses. All costs must be represented by original receipts, original cost invoices, and proofs of payments. Check only one: *

I agree

I do not agree

I will ensure that all reimbursement requests will be submitted no later than 30 days after activity end date. Check only one: *

I agree

I do not agree

Name of Authorized Representative *

First Name

Last Name

Title of Authorized Representative *

Date *

Month Day Year

Telephone

Email

example@example.com

I understand grant funding is limited which may preclude all eligible applications from being funded. Check only one: *

☐ I agree

☐ I do not agree

Thank you for your interest. Please hit the "Submit" button.

For more information or assistance, please contact:
Jeffrey Overby, Director, Tennessee Export Initiative, TEI@belmont.edu