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STATE TRADE EXPANSION PROGRAM PROGRAM GUIDELINES

WYOMING

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GRANT GUIDELINES [FFY25]

PURPOSE

The STEP Program exists to increase the number of small businesses that export, increase the value of exports, and increase the number of small businesses exploring significant new trade opportunities.

Funds are available through the Wyoming Business Council's State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) for companies seeking to attend international marketing events occurring through September 29, 2027. STEP is funded in part through a grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and is administered by the Wyoming Business Council (WBC). Participants must meet SBA eligibility requirements and be based in Wyoming to participate in STEP-funded programs.

Reimbursable awards are for 75% of eligible expenses, not to exceed \$5,000. The maximum number of awards per grant period for any Eligible Small Business Concern (ESBC) is two awards.

The grant period is July 1, 2026 to September 29, 2027. The trade event must be completed by September 29, 2027. During the trade event, grant recipients are required to hold business-to-business meetings with potential clients.

GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

The State Trade Expansion Grant operates as a reimbursement grant. Applicants must obtain grant approval before initiating any export activities and submit a reimbursement request afterward. Businesses are responsible for covering the costs associated with the international export activity and assume sole responsibility for any debts or liabilities incurred during this process. Grant funds will be disbursed after the export activity has taken place, and the reimbursement request has been submitted. **Applications are due no later than 45 days before the trade event and the final contract must be signed before the trade event occurs.**

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Wyoming-based businesses are eligible to apply for the State Trade Expansion Program if the following criteria are met:

1. **Business Structure:** For-profit partnership, limited liability company, limited liability partnership, or corporation registered with the Wyoming Secretary of State with a physical presence in Wyoming (no registered agents).
2. **SBA Size Standards:** Must meet the SBA definition of an "Eligible Small Business Concern" (ESBC) under 13 C.F.R. Part 121.
 - a. *Affiliates:* Employees or receipts of all affiliate companies must be included when determining size eligibility. Affiliation exists when an external party has 50% or more ownership or holds controlling power through contractual arrangements.
 - b. *Annual Receipts:* Calculated using total income (or gross income) plus cost of goods sold, averaged over the latest three or five complete fiscal years per 13 CFR 121.104.
 - c. *Employee Calculation:* Average number of employees for each pay period over the latest 12 calendar months. Every payroll individual counts as one employee regardless of hours or temporary status per 13 CFR 121.106.
3. **U.S. Content:** Products or services must have at least 51% U.S. content (meaning the product has undergone substantial transformation within the United States).
4. **Nexus to Wyoming:** A meaningful nexus to the state of Wyoming, with more than 50% of employees located in Wyoming.
5. **Employment:** Must have at least one full-time employee (in addition to the owner) who is not a 1099 contractor. More than 50% of total employees must be based in-state.
6. **Intent to Remain in Wyoming:** Provide a good faith declaration of intent to remain in Wyoming.
7. **Export Readiness & Resources:** The business must have been in operation for at least one year, demonstrate a commercialized product/service ready for

export, and possess access to sufficient resources to bear export-related costs (packing, shipping, customs brokers).

8. **Reporting:** Agree to complete all post-event reporting requirements and sales metrics tracking.
9. **Federal Standing:** Neither the company nor its principals may be debarred, suspended, or declared ineligible by any federal department.

INELIGIBLE BUSINESS TYPES

The following business entities and activities are explicitly ineligible for Wyoming STEP funding:

- Consulting agencies
- Distributors representing clients
- Companies, organizations, or individuals recruiting foreign direct investment
- Multi-level marketing (MLM), direct sales, or network marketing companies
- Law firms and legal service providers
- Real estate developers
- Retail businesses
- Educational institutions or for-profit schools recruiting foreign students
- Hospitality or tourism operators seeking to draw international visitors
- Non-profit organizations (unless a primary portion of activities directly assists entrepreneurs)
- Companies foreign-based or more than 49% foreign-owned
- Businesses engaged in activities illegal under Federal or State law, including marijuana operations

AWARD AMOUNTS & LIMITATIONS

State Trade Expansion Program grants will cover 75% of approved market expansion activity expenses, up to \$5,000. Individual companies are eligible for a maximum of two (2) grants per two-year grant cycle (September 30 - September 29) based on funding availability. In-kind contributions, such as staff time, are not eligible to meet this match requirement.

Graduation Policy: To ensure grant funds foster new market entry and long-term self-sufficiency across a broad base of Wyoming businesses, companies are limited to receiving STEP funding for the exact same trade show or event pavilion a maximum of three (3) times over the lifetime of the program (consecutive or non-consecutive years).

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

Below is a list of export activities that these funds *may* be used for:

- **International Trade Shows:** Booth space, registration fees, and exhibition costs.
- **Trade Missions:** Fees for state-led or federal (U.S. Commercial Service) trade missions.
- **Market Matchmaking:** Services like the Gold Key Matching Service (customized briefings, market research, and appointments with prospective partners).
- **Marketing & Localization:** Translation of materials, website localization for foreign markets, and design of foreign-market-specific marketing media.
- **Compliance Testing:** Costs associated with testing products for entry into a specific foreign market.

SUGGESTED EXPENDITURES

The following expenses are eligible for reimbursement under the State Trade Expansion Program:

- Airfare (consistent with [Fly America Act](#) guidelines)
- Ground transportation
- Parking
- Baggage fees
- Meals and lodging (based on [GSA/Department of State per diem rates](#))
- Registration fees and booth space for trade shows
- Trade mission fees
- Export consultancy services and/or international intellectual property protection
- Currency exchange fees
- Meeting space audio/visual for reverse trade missions
- Other associated travel expenses, including visas and travel insurance
- Fees for shipping sample products to trade shows and/or trade missions only
- Cost of compliance testing an existing product for entry into an export market
- Translation into foreign language, search engine optimization, localization services, and e-commerce fees
- Design of marketing media commensurate with STEP's statutory objectives deemed appropriate (including digital marketing activities)
- Attorney fees for review of international distributor agreements

INELIGIBLE EXPENDITURES

The following expenses are *not* eligible for reimbursement under the State Trade Expansion Program:

- **First & Business Class Flight Upgrades:** Business and first-class tickets are non-reimbursable. However, if a traveler flies First or Business Class, reimbursement up to the Economy rate is permitted only if the applicant provides a screenshot comparing the Economy price taken at the exact time of booking.
- **Airline/Hotel Points & Miles:** Redemption value of points/miles is non-reimbursable. Points may be used for upgrades, but proof of paid Economy fare must be provided.
- Passport fees
- Immunizations (including COVID-19)
- Expenses related to entertaining current or prospective clients or government officials
- New product development, alterations, or product enhancements
- Cellphones and cellphone charges
- Television and radio production
- Printing of general marketing materials, brochures, flyers, or business cards
- Travel expenses for foreign importers, distributors, or in-market representatives
- Wages, salaries, benefits, bonuses, or employee incentives
- Tips of any kind
- Capital goods and product supplies (except demonstration supplies)

APPLICATION EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Eligibility requirements met
- Status of good standing with Wyoming Secretary of State
- Export readiness & strategic intent
- Job creation potential
- Thorough responses addressing the export problem and goals
- Appropriate supporting documentation
- Application received on time

APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- Pre-Application: Linked [here](#).
- Application: *(You will be notified to fill out the application upon verification from WBC staff)*
- Copy of the company's current exporting plan and strategy detailing how this activity supports the export plan. If you need assistance with an export plan, please let us know and we will be happy to introduce you to an advisor for assistance. (Upload in Section 5 of the application.)

- Required Federal Forms: Please complete and upload the following forms with the STEP application.
 - Self Representation as an Eligible Small Business Concern Form - linked [here](#).
 - Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters Form - linked [here](#).
 - Completed and up to date IRS W-9 in the case that your company is not currently in the State of Wyoming's payment system. W-9 forms can be found [here](#). (Upload in Section E of the application.)

REIMBURSEMENT PROCESS

- Complete an official company invoice in PDF form, invoiced to the Wyoming Business Council. The final amount of each expense listed in the invoice should be 75% of the total expense. Submit all corresponding receipts in the same PDF document as the invoice in order as each expense is listed. An example of a STEP invoice can be found [here](#).
- Submit Reimbursement Request and copies of receipts for each expense detailed in the expense sheet Complete and return Reimbursement Request no later than 30 days after the approved market expansion activity takes place. The request form link will be listed in the company's approval letter.
- Grantees will receive reimbursement within 45 days.

POST-EVENT REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

To maintain compliance with federal SBA requirements and ensure continued federal funding, grant recipients must complete Progress Performance Reports (PPRs) following project completion.

- **Reporting Schedule:** Companies may be required to complete up to five (5) follow-up reporting cycles post-event over a 12-to-18-month period.
- **Required Metrics:** Reports must capture projected vs. actual export sales, ongoing trade leads, distributor contracts signed, export barriers encountered, and success story write-ups.

CONTACT INFORMATION

I am an established Wyoming-based company in an expansion or mature stage:

Attn: Kade McMillan

Market Development Advisor

kade.mcmillan@wyo.gov

FAQS

The application asks the applicant to affirm that they have a product or qualifying service that has at least 51% U.S. content. What defines 51% U.S. content?

As one example, sheet metal sourced from China and machined into a new toolbox in the United States has undergone a substantial transformation and meets the requirement. On the other hand, toolboxes sourced from China that have handles attached, labeling affixed, and packaged in the United States have not undergone a substantial transformation. They were toolboxes when they left China and they are still toolboxes in the United States.

The Wyoming Business Council invites you to review other examples from the [US International Trade Administration](#).

Who can apply for Wyoming STEP?

An eligible small business, as defined by the Small Business Act, is a business that is independently owned and operated, not dominant in its field, and whose size falls within the size standards established by the SBA. In addition, an eligible business, for the purposes of the Wyoming STEP program, must be physically located in and operated from Wyoming. Companies operating from a different State, with only a Wyoming Corporation and Registered Agent, are NOT qualified to apply.

For current size standards, visit the SBA website: [Make Sure Your Company Meets SBA Size Standards](#)

The eligibility criteria indicate applicants must have one or more full-time employees, in addition to the owner. What defines a full-time employee?

For purposes of the Wyoming STEP grant, the applicant needs to employ at least one full-time employee. They must be employed by the applicant company and cannot be leveraged through contracts or agreements with other companies, suppliers, etc.

How long does it take for application approval and how will I be notified?

The Business Council works as quickly as possible to approve applications within five to 10 business days. Approvals are based on the quality of the application, receipt of all required documents, and the funding dollars available. The Business Council reserves the right to accept or reject any application, amend the applicant's

requested funding, or limit application to any applicant. After approval, the Business Council will prepare a contract to be approved by the Attorney General. This process may take up to 30 working days. Spending and activities that occur before the contract is signed will not be eligible for reimbursement.

Every applicant will be notified of receipt of the application. Applicants will be notified of the approval and any conditions required as part of the contract.

When should a company submit its request for reimbursement?

Upon approval, each applicant will receive the required documents and the required backup documentation is to be submitted with reimbursement, along with the due date.

What is Gold Key?

Gold Key Matching Service offers the following:

- Customized market and industry briefings with our trade specialists.
- Timely and relevant market research.
- Appointments with prospective trade partners in key industry sectors.
- Post-meeting debriefing with our trade specialists and assistance in developing appropriate follow-up strategies.
- Help with travel, accommodations, interpreter service and clerical support.

For more information, visit [Gold Key Service](#).

Are companies required to use foreign U.S. Commercial Services (e.g., Gold Key, etc.) to qualify for funding?

U.S. Commercial Services (USCS) is a valued partner in the Wyoming STEP program and we encourage applicants to use their services when appropriate. However, purchasing similar services in a foreign country/market other than USCS does qualify as an eligible activity.

Can a food company apply?

Yes. Any Wyoming-based company that meets the requirements can apply for trade shows or trade mission activities. Companies that wish to learn more about becoming export-ready may participate in the training activities.

I have not exported within the past 12 months; can I participate?

Companies that have never exported and those that have not exported within the past 12 months will be contacted by a Business Council team member to ensure they have met the SBA guidelines to participate in the program. If the program guidelines are not met, recommendations will be made for the next steps to move that company to export readiness.

Can in-kind contributions be used for the 25% company match requirement?

No. Only cash contributions/expenses can be used as a match. Reimbursement will be made based on the approved eligible expenses listed in the application. Reimbursement will be up to 75% of approved eligible expenses up to \$5,000.00.

Questions regarding the various codes required on the application:

What is a NAICS code and how do I get one?

The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) classifies business establishments for collecting, analyzing and publishing statistical data related to the U.S. economy. These codes define establishments based on the activities in which they are primarily engaged.

Visit www.census.gov/naics to get your NAICS code. In the “2012 NAICS Search” box in the upper left, enter a keyword that describes your kind of business. A list of primary business activities containing that keyword and the corresponding NAICS codes will appear.

The application is asking for Export Control Classification Code. What is it and how do I get one for my company?

The Export Control Classification Code (ECCN) is a five-character, alpha-numeric designation used on the Commerce Control List (CCL) to identify dual-use items for export control purposes. An ECCN categorizes items based on the nature of the product; i.e., type of commodity, software, or technology and its respective technical parameters. For more information, visit [ECCS Website](#).

The application is asking for an HS Code. What is this and where do I get one?

The Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System known as the Harmonized System (HS Code) is an internationally standardized system of names and numbers to classify traded products. Visit [HS Code Lookup](#) for more information.

The SBA Self Representation as a Small Business Concern Form asks the applicant to affirm their small business is operating profitably. What defines operating profitably?

In the past, the SBA required that recipients of STEP matching grants were operating profitably. This has recently been clarified, to simply require that recipients of STEP matching grants are operating as “for-profit” businesses, not “nonprofit” organizations.

The Application is asking for a Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters form. Why?

This certification is required by Executive Order 12549, Debarment and Suspension, 13 CFR Part 145. By submission of this form, the applicant affirms neither the company nor its principals is debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, declared ineligible, or voluntarily excluded from participation in this program by any federal department or agency. If the applicant is unable to certify to any of the statements in this certification, an explanation is to be attached to the application. Visit [Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension and Other Responsibility Matters](#) to complete the form.

What is a DUNs number? Why do I need one?

This information is directly from the D&B website:

The D&B (Dun and Bradstreet) D-U-N-S number is a unique nine-digit identifier for businesses. It is used to allow a business to be eligible for federal government contracts and grants and, in some cases, establish a business credit file, which is often referenced by lenders and potential business partners to help predict the reliability and/or financial stability of the company in question. A D-U-N-S Number can be obtained free of charge. Other services offered by D&B, such as the business credit file, may have fees associated with them. D-U-N-S, which stands for data universal number system, is used to maintain accurate and timely information on over 250 million global businesses.

The D-U-N-S Number has been referred to as the “Social Security number for businesses.” The system is used in dozens of countries around the world, including the U.S., Australia and the European Union, and confers numerous benefits on businesses that participate. The business credit file associated with your business’s D-U-N-S number can help potential partners and lenders learn about your business and make informed decisions about working with you as a client, supplier or partner. Even after you’ve signed a contract or accepted a loan, your D-U-N-S number can be used to help get a clear view of your business, which can help you negotiate for improved terms and conditions or a favorable line of credit.

For free one-on-one expert D-U-N-S registration assistance contact Sarah Mikesell Growney, smikese3@uwyo.edu (307.757.6869) with the Wyoming SBDC Network APEX Accelerator or click here: [D&B D-U-N-S Registration Page](#).

What is a SAM registration?

The System for Award Management (SAM) is an official website for the U.S. government. SAM consolidated the capabilities of CCR/FedReg, ORCA and EPLS and registration is required to do business with the U.S. government. There is NO cost to use or register with SAM. We recommend you contact Sarah Mikesell Growney, smikese3@uwyo.edu (307.757.6869) with the Wyoming SBDC Network APEX Accelerator for free, expert registration assistance. Additional assistance is available on the HELP tab of the [System for Award Management Website](#), including user guides, videos and FAQs.