

# State Trade Expansion Program Export Voucher Program Guidelines

October 1, 2024 – September 29, 2025

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 – Program Overview

The Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) administers the Export Voucher program through its Small Business Export Assistance (SBEA) 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 (SBA) State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) and is used to help ESBCs offset the cost of certain export-related expenses. Companies may receive up to \$10,000 and/or a maximum of three vouchers per grant year.

Our review committee considers a number of factors when reviewing applications including: availability of funds, the number of applications submitted, the merits of a given application, the projected sales resulting from the activity, and, if applicable, an applicant’s prior engagement with the program rules and requirements.

The committee will not approve late, weak, or incomplete applications.

## Section II – Important Program Specifics

- Limit three Export Vouchers per program year (10/1 to 9/29), with a combined total not to exceed \$10,000. The \$10,000 award cap may be covered by one, two, or three vouchers.
- Applications for an export voucher must concern activities that will conclude by the grant year's close.
- Companies must be either "new to export" or engaging in "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.
- There is an obligatory 25% company cash match for each dollar reimbursed. Eligible match expenses are limited to all reimbursable expenses and cash match only expenses (primarily lodging and ground transport). The 25% company cash match may not come from any other federal government source.
- An Export Voucher may be used to cover travel costs for only one individual, unless previously approved by Commerce.
- 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 they are unable to complete the activity.
- If you do not submit all the necessary documents by the award expiration date, the STEP Program Manager retains the right to revoke your award.
- These terms and conditions are subject to change without notice based on funding availability and changes in federal and state procedures and laws.

## Section III – Eligibility Checklist and Application Process

### A. Participant Eligibility Checklist

In order to qualify for an Export Voucher, applicants must be able to answer in the affirmative to each of the below prompts.

My company is organized or incorporated in the United States.	<input type="checkbox"/>
My company is a registered business in Washington State	<input type="checkbox"/>
My company has been in business as a registered entity for at least one year at the time of my application	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>My company meets:</p> <p>a) the applicable industry-based small business size standard established under section 3 of the <a href="#">Small Business Act</a></p> <p>or</p> <p>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.</p> <p><i>Use <a href="#">the SBA's Size Standards Tool</a> for information on size standards for your business based on <a href="#">your NAICS code</a>.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>My company is in good standing with the Washington State Department of Revenue.</p> <p><i>You can confirm your businesses' good standing by using the <a href="#">Washington State Department of Revenue's Business Lookup Tool</a> or the <a href="#">Washington State Secretary of State's Corporation Search Tool</a>. Please do not apply until any issues with your standing have been fully rectified.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My company and its employees understand of the costs associated with exporting and doing business with foreign purchasers	<input type="checkbox"/>
My company has a strategic export plan	<input type="checkbox"/>
My company is export ready	<input type="checkbox"/>
My company will export goods/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%);	<input type="checkbox"/>
My company has a Federal Identification Number tied to a Washington address.	<input type="checkbox"/>
If awarded, my company agrees to provide information on export sales data resulting from the Export Voucher-supported activity, and respond to all subsequent Commerce sales 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.	<input type="checkbox"/>

## B. Eligible Reimbursable Expenses

We cannot reimburse expenses/activities that have already been completed or paid for prior to the submission of an application or issuance of an award. All activities must be completed during a single grant year.

The following specific activities and expenses are eligible for reimbursement:

- Design of digital marketing materials for exclusive use in a foreign market (such as ads in a foreign industry magazine or Facebook/Google ads specifically targeting foreign markets)
- Search engine optimization work exclusive to a foreign market
- Translation of international marketing materials, including audio/video
- International e-commerce fees
- Services of the [U.S. Commercial Service](#)
- International shipment of product samples to support a foreign trade show (excluding custom's fees/foreign duties)
- Compliance testing of an existing product for entry into an export market
- Cost associated with international IP protection limited to USPTO PCT transmittal, filing fees, search fees, Hague Intl Design App transmittal fees, Trademark Madrid Protocol fees
- International business travel up to two company representatives
  - Companies must retain ALL boarding passes for each leg of a traveler's journey. Failure to retain passes will result in the exclusion of the expense
  - Only **basic economy class** (premium economy is not economy) fares are eligible for reimbursement. Travelers may upgrade after booking economy and economy fare.
  - Travelers must comply with the [Fly America Act](#) by booking routes using a US carrier. Codeshare flights are allowable if booked via a US carrier's website and tickets are issued using the US carrier's flight code. For additional information on qualifying fares, click [here](#).
  - Companies must submit an email confirmation from the airline stating the itinerary and confirmation of payment 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 purchased with frequent flyer miles is ineligible for reimbursement.
- International trade show or trade mission fees (virtual or in-person)
- Foreign market sales trips
- EXIM Credit Insurance fees and private credit insurance fees
- Attorney fees to review international distributor agreements

*See next page for more expense information...*

### C. Eligible 25% Cash Match Expenses

- Any reimbursable expense listed above that relates to the approved activity
- Lodging (excluding food/drink, laundry, or other additional charges)
- Ground Transportation (excluding fuel)

### D. Commonly Submitted Ineligible Expenses

The following expenses are neither eligible for reimbursement or cash match.

- Any expense that pre-dates step approval
- Product development or alterations
- Food and beverages
- Fuel costs
- General business expenses including but not limited to:
  - shipping materials
  - printing expenses
  - equipment purchase/rentals (other than from an official trade show vendor)
  - employee salaries
  - cell phone and cell phone charges
- Customs fees or other fees to foreign governments associated with sample shipments
- Non-economy airfare
- Baggage fees
- Visa Fees
- Travel Insurance

## E. Export Voucher Application Process

- Read and understand these guidelines and share the program stipulations with relevant colleagues before applying.
- Please ensure that you apply at **least 6 weeks** in advance of your activity's start date and that you have not paid for the expenses for which you are seeking reimbursement. Expenses incurred before approval are ineligible.
- Submit your application via the [application portal](#).
  - If you have previously worked with the Small Business Export Assistance Team but have never used our application portal, you will need to contact [callum.cleary@commerce.wa.gov](mailto:callum.cleary@commerce.wa.gov) to activate your account.
- 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.
- Commerce issues award notifications via email to the email address associated with the application.
- If funds are unavailable, approved applications will be placed on a waitlist. Waitlisted companies may begin incurring eligible expenses and will be notified if funds come available in the order in which their application was approved.

## Section IV – Reimbursement Process and Checklist

Upon the conclusion of your activity and before the expiration date listed on your award notification letter, please complete the steps outlined in the checklist on pages 8 and 9 of these guidelines. Failure to complete each item on the checklist in a timely manner will delay the reimbursement process and may result in the forfeiture of your award. The requirements for expense eligibility and reimbursement are nonnegotiable.

## STEP Reimbursement Checklist (Page 1 of 2)

To Do:	Notes:	
Obtain a Statewide Vendor Number (SWV) or confirm your existing SWV is active.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Statewide Vendor Lookup</a>: Check to see if your company has an active SWV. The Office of Financial Management regularly purges inactive SWVs. Companies that have previously obtained an SWV should confirm their number is still active.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Vendor/Payee Registration</a>: register for a number.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Vendor/Payee Changes</a>: make changes to company information associated with an active SWV.</li> <li>• <a href="#">Vendor/Payee Direct Deposit</a>: Sign up for direct deposit (optional). Reimbursements are by default issued via paper check to the address associated with an SWV.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fill Out Steps 1-6 On Your Reimbursement Spreadsheet	<p>This excel file will be attached to your award notification email.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each line item should be for a single charge. DO NOT GROUP CHARGES.</li> <li>• “Date of Payment” is <b>not</b> the invoice date. This is the date on which you <b>paid</b> a fee.</li> <li>• If an expense does not match an option in the drop-down list, then it is likely not an eligible expense and should be excluded from this sheet.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Compile Supporting Documents (Receipts and Invoices and/or Proofs of Payment)	<p>Each charge listed on your Reimbursement Spreadsheet must be accompanied by documentation to show the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An invoice/receipt with enough detail to confirm that expense is eligible for reimbursement or cash match.</li> <li>• An invoice/receipt showing the date of purchase. Date of purchase must have occurred on or after your award/approval date. If you are submitting an invoice that does not show date of payment, please include a relevant receipt or bank statement showing the outgoing payment.</li> <li>• <b>All Fly America compliant airfare receipts must be accompanied by copies/screenshots of boarding passes for <i>each leg</i> of the journey. A partial set of boarding passes is not sufficient. An “eTicket” that does is not used for boarding is not sufficient.</b></li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>



### STEP Reimbursement Checklist (Page 2 of 2)

<p>Submit Your Completed Reimbursement Spreadsheet (as an Excel file) and Supporting Documents to <a href="mailto:step.vouchers@commerce.wa.gov">step.vouchers@commerce.wa.gov</a></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Improvised, hand-filled, or non-excel file spreadsheets will be rejected. If you require accommodations, notify SBEA.</li><li>• An invoice/receipt showing the date of purchase. If you are submitting an invoice that does not show date of payment, please include a relevant receipt or bank statement showing the outgoing payment.</li></ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><u>Additional Notes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• After you have populated your Reimbursement Spreadsheet, a projected reimbursement amount will appear at the bottom of the sheet.</li><li>• Remember to submit receipts to cover the obligatory 25% cash match. If you cannot meet the 25% cash match requirement, your reimbursement will be prorated to account for the cash match requirement.</li><li>• After all documents have been submitted and approved, companies should receive payment (via electronic check or electronic deposit) in about 4 weeks.</li><li>• Failure to submit reimbursement documents by your award expiration date may result in the forfeiture of your award.</li></ul>		

## Section V – Confidentiality Statement

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.