



# Michigan's State Trade Expansion Program (MI-STEP)

**Applications must be received a minimum of three (3) business days prior to the start date of travel or the start date of an eligible non-travel activity.** Applications that do not meet this submission requirement are **not eligible** and will not be processed or approved.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

MI-STEP is designed to spur job creation by empowering Michigan small businesses to export their products. The program has three primary objectives:

- Increase the number of Michigan small businesses that export
- Increase the dollar value of Michigan exports
- Increase the number of Michigan small businesses exploring significant new trade opportunities

**MI-STEP applications are accepted annually October 1–September 15.**

## ELIGIBILITY

Up to \$15,000 in assistance to offset 50% of approved expenses per fiscal year. Michigan companies must meet the following eligibility criteria to qualify for MI-STEP funds:

1. Be in accordance with Small Business Administration (SBA) guidelines and size standards: [www.sba.gov/content/small-business-size-standards](http://www.sba.gov/content/small-business-size-standards)
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the costs associated with exporting and doing business with foreign purchasers, including the costs of freight forwarding, customs brokers, packing, and shipping, per SBA guidelines
3. Demonstrate potential for export success and positive impact on the regional economy
4. Be able to provide, upon request, a copy of a Michigan LARA annual report filing **or** a copy of sole proprietorship or limited partnership filing from the county registrar's office
5. Provide an EIN linked to a Michigan address
6. Be in good standing with the Michigan Department of Treasury and other regulatory agencies
7. Must be an export-ready U.S. company seeking to export goods or services of U.S. origin or have at least 51% U.S. content
8. Be able to demonstrate minimum gross annual revenue of \$100,000
9. Be a full-time means of employment
10. Demonstrate a competitive advantage and capability of entering international markets against local products and services
11. Wholesale distributors of imported products are ineligible
12. MI-STEP program utilization is not guaranteed and is subject to ITM/program manager discretion

## ALLOWABLE USES

Program guidelines reflect federal STEP grant guidelines. Funds may be approved for export marketing-related activities including:

1. Participation in foreign trade missions;
2. U.S. Department of Commerce services
3. International website design, development, and translation; search engine optimization and localization maintenance and monitoring; e-commerce fees including hosting and maintenance
4. Design and translation of international marketing media, including social media and digital ad placements
5. International trade show participation
6. Foreign sales trips
7. Up to three lifetime participations in U.S.-based trade shows, where at least 20% international attendance can be demonstrated by the company
8. Participation in export-training workshops
9. Reverse foreign buyer missions (meeting space/audio visual)
10. Cost of compliance testing and/or international certifications for an existing product for entry into an export market
11. Sample product shipping
12. Export credit insurance premiums

## EXPENSE/REIMBURSEMENT LIMITATIONS

- Meals, entertainment, cell phone charges, gifts, and personal expenses are ineligible
- Passport and visa fees are ineligible
- Immunization and COVID-related testing expenses are ineligible
- Travel reimbursement is limited to two (2) company employees who must be U.S. citizens
- Flights must adhere to Fly America/Open Skies agreements. Only economy flights are eligible for reimbursement. Flight eCredits are ineligible.
- Fees for shipping products to be sold in market are ineligible
- Ground transportation including, but not limited to, mileage, taxis, Ubers, trains, and rental cars are ineligible
- Printing materials/services are ineligible
- Give-aways, promotional items, clothing, etc., are ineligible
- Conferences, annual meetings, and symposiums are ineligible
- Annual membership fees and dues are ineligible
- Reimbursements are subject to funding availability on a first-come, first-served basis, regardless of application approval status

**To get started, complete the [online intake form](#) or contact your regional [international trade manager](#).**