

# STEP ELIGIBLE EXPENSE GUIDE

A COMPREHENSIVE MANUAL  
FOR ELIGIBLE EXPENSES



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# Shipping Expenses

Reimbursement is available to cover costs for shipping materials and sample products for approved eligible activities.

## ELIGIBLE SHIPPING EXPENSES

- ✓ Shipping product samples and materials to eligible promotional activities: trade shows, trade missions, and business meetings (virtual or in-person).

## INELIGIBLE SHIPPING EXPENSES

- ✗ Shipping of company product orders
- ✗ Packaging and label expenses

## Reimbursement Documentation for Shipping Expenses

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Itemized invoice
- Proof of payment (closed invoice or bank statement)



# Trade Shows

International trade shows allow your company to access a new international market along with connecting with thousands of buyers within a few days. Expenses related to international trade shows are eligible; however, domestic trade shows need to follow the Discover Global Markets list <https://www.trade.gov/attend-event> and be pre-approved by your grant specialist. Additionally, travel expenses to trade shows are eligible through the STEP grant (*for reimbursable travel expenses see page 5*).

## ELIGIBLE TRADE SHOW EXPENSES

- ✓ Exhibition fees/booth space rental
- ✓ Booth Insurance
- ✓ Temporary booth displays
- ✓ Demonstration supplies
  - Disposable cups, spoons, napkins
  - Items purchased to demonstrate your product
- ✓ Booth furnishings
- ✓ Booth display
  - Banners
  - Signage
- ✓ Shipping expenses (*refer to page 2*)
- ✓ Eligible domestic tradeshow (preapproval required)
- ✓ Show services
  - Labor
  - Storage
  - Utilities
  - Security

## INELIGIBLE TRADE SHOW EXPENSES

- ✗ Cost of product samples
- ✗ Ineligible domestic trade show
- ✗ Printing costs for display or marketing material
- ✗ Uniforms to promote brand
- ✗ Giveaway or promotional items
- ✗ Travel expenses for importers/distributors or in-market company representatives



## Reimbursement Documentation for Trade Show Expenses

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Itemized invoice (Trade show name, booth dimensions, and other services provided need to be listed)
- Proof of payment (closed invoice or bank statement)



# Travel

The TDA can reimburse travel expenses for up to two company representatives for the following:

-  Trade Shows
-  Trade Missions
-  International Business Meetings
-  U.S. Commercial Services Programs

## ELIGIBLE TRAVEL EXPENSES

-  Economy Airfare for two company employees
-  Lodging up to the per diem rate
-  In-country transportation fees (train, taxi, UBER, ferry, airfare)
-  Checked bag expense
-  Airport parking



## INELIGIBLE TRAVEL EXPENSES

-  Meals & Incidentals
-  Passport fees
-  Visa fees
-  Tips
-  Inoculations/ COVID-19 Testing
-  Tickets purchased with air-miles, award miles, and upgrades
-  Travel expenses for spouse, significant other, or family members unless they have a significant role in the company.

# Reimbursement Documentation for Travel Expenses

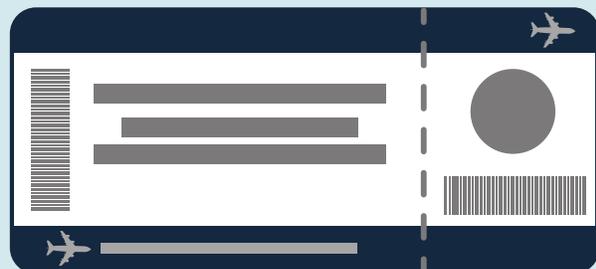
## Airfare:

TDA will only reimburse airline tickets up to the full-fare economy:

- ▶ Travelers must fly on a U.S. carrier or follow the Fly America Act and their Open Air Agreements with Europe, Asia, and Australia when leaving and returning to the USA.
- ▶ Travel outside of the U.S. may be on a foreign carrier.
- ▶ Provide an airfare quote for economy if flying business or first class. This quote must be obtained for the same day your company is flying and for the same airline.

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Airline Itinerary
- Passenger Receipt and or e-ticket
- Boarding Pass
- Airfare Quote (only if flying first or business class)



# Reimbursement Documentation for Travel Expenses

## Lodging:

TDA will only reimburse for the per diem rate which is listed here:

[https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per\\_diem.asp](https://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp)

In your payment request, please submit the following:

### *Hotel Bill:*

- Hotel's name
- Occupant's name
- Room rate
- Arrival/departure dates
- Proof of payment

### **For third party sites (Expedia, Orbitz, etc.):**

- Third party reservation
- Hotel bill at check-out

### **Airbnb Bill:**

- Occupant's name
- Room rate
- Arrival/departure dates
- Proof of payment



# Interpreter Fees

## ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- ✔ Translation for business meetings, trade shows, or trade missions
- ✔ Translation of documents

## INELIGIBLE EXPENSES

- ✘ Travel expenses for the interpreter

## Reimbursement Documentation for Interpreter Fees

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Itemized invoice (language of translation and event or document of translation)
- Proof of payment (closed invoice or bank statement)



# Website Expenses

The website expenses must clearly target a specific foreign audience.

## ELIGIBLE WEBSITE EXPENSES

- ✓ Website design with a direct focus on an international market
- ✓ Website translation
- ✓ SEO, SEO maintenance, and monitoring fees (only within the grant term)
- ✓ Website optimization
- ✓ E-commerce
- ✓ International monetary payment platform

## INELIGIBLE WEBSITE EXPENSES

- ✗ Website that targets only U.S. audiences
- ✗ Domain purchasing fees

## Reimbursement Documentation for Website Expenses

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Itemized invoice
- Proof of payment (closed invoice or bank statement)
- Website development contract or web page showing pages in foreign language

# E-commerce Expenses

Reimbursement is available to cover costs for E-commerce. E-commerce is specifically designed to help businesses sell their product online. There are several well-known platforms that are available to help grantees with their E-commerce needs: Amazon, Shopify, Weebly, Alibaba and Wix. Most countries have specific E-commerce platforms that cater specifically to their country. These platforms can also be used to help market your product online and or send email lists out to interested buyers. Please keep in mind that all E-commerce activities must have an international focus.

## ELIGIBLE E-COMMERCE EXPENSES

- ✓ E-commerce platform fees
- ✓ E-commerce hosting fees
- ✓ E-commerce maintenance fees  
(only within the grant term)

## INELIGIBLE E-COMMERCE EXPENSES

- ✗ Internet cost
- ✗ Email servers
- ✗ E-commerce services focusing on the domestic market
- ✗ Communication applications

## Reimbursement Documentation for E-commerce Expenses

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Itemized invoice
- Proof of payment (closed invoice or bank statement)

# Design of Marketing Media and Advertising

Design of marketing media and advertising must clearly target a specific foreign audience. This activity can be used to target print ads as well as virtual ads.

## ELIGIBLE MARKETING MEDIA/ADVERTISING EXPENSES

- ✓ Design of point of sales material for trade shows/business meetings such as fliers and brochures
- ✓ Translation of point of sales material
- ✓ Advertisement in international magazines (printed)
- ✓ Online advertisement (including social media) Social media placement costs must show proof they are targeting foreign markets.
- ✓ Audio/Video translation

## INELIGIBLE MARKETING MEDIA/ADVERTISING EXPENSES

- ✗ Printing costs
- ✗ Business Cards
- ✗ Design of marketing media that only focuses on U.S. Market
- ✗ Efforts to create or augment marketing and advertising campaigns to draw international visitors to a state
- ✗ Video Production

## Reimbursement Documentation for Design of Marketing Media and Advertising

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Itemized invoice
- Proof of payment (closed invoice or bank statement)
- For advertisement, a picture of ads either online and or in a magazine.

# Compliance Testing

Compliance testing is an eligible expense that allows companies to meet foreign market requirements.

## ELIGIBLE COMPLIANCE TESTING EXPENSES

- ✓ Testing of a product to be compliant for a foreign market

## INELIGIBLE COMPLIANCE TESTING EXPENSES

- ✗ Domestic compliance testing
- ✗ The cost associated with labeling your product with the compliance mark (for example, getting the CE mark on your product's packaging)
- ✗ New product development or alteration of existing products

## Reimbursement Documentation for Compliance Testing

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Itemized invoice (what test was performed and why)
- Proof of payment (closed invoice or bank statement)



# Outbound Trade Missions

International trade missions are a great opportunity to meet face-to-face with qualified foreign buyers. Allowable trade missions are conducted by federal, state, or local government agencies and are usually an excellent way to promote your product at a low cost.

## ELIGIBLE OUTBOUND TRADE MISSION EXPENSES

- ✔ Participation fees
- ✔ Translator
- ✔ Travel fees (outlined on page 5)

## INELIGIBLE OUTBOUND TRADE MISSION EXPENSES

- ✘ Translator's travel fees
- ✘ Ineligible travel fees (outlined on page 6)
- ✘ Cellphones and cellphone charges
- ✘ Expenses related to entertaining current or prospective clients or government officials
- ✘ Travel expenses for importers/distributors or in-market company representatives

## Reimbursement Documentation for Outbound Trade Mission Expenses

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Itemized invoice (name of government entity managing the trade mission)
- Proof of payment (closed invoice or bank statement)

# Reverse Trade Missions

Reverse trade missions are a great opportunity to meet face-to-face with qualified foreign buyers in the United States. Allowable reverse trade missions are defined as bringing foreign buyers to the United States to meet with potential suppliers of U.S. manufactured goods and services and are usually an excellent way to promote your product at a low cost.

## ELIGIBLE REVERSE TRADE MISSION EXPENSES

- ✓ Meeting space, Audio/visual support
- ✓ Video or virtual setup costs
- ✓ Services from an individual to translate documents, interpret conversations, and/or facilitate multilingual transactions

## INELIGIBLE OUTBOUND TRADE MISSION EXPENSES

- ✗ Payment of any costs associated with travel (transportation, lodging, etc.) of foreign buyers

## Reimbursement Documentation for Reverse Trade Mission Expenses

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Itemized invoice (name of government entity who is running the trade mission)
- Proof of payment (closed invoice or bank statement)

# U.S. Commercial Services Products

The U.S. Commercial Services offers low cost services to help U.S. companies export abroad. Some of their services include export counseling, market intelligence, commercial diplomacy, business matchmaking, and trade missions. These services are now offered both virtually and in-person.

## ELIGIBLE U.S. COMMERCIAL SERVICES PRODUCT EXPENSES

✓ Participation fees

## INELIGIBLE U.S. COMMERCIAL SERVICES PRODUCT EXPENSES

✗ N/A

## Reimbursement Documentation for U.S. Commercial Services Product Expenses

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Itemized invoice (name of service provided by the U.S. Commercial Services)
- Proof of payment (closed invoice or bank statement)



# Export Research Tools

Export research tools allows a grantee to subscribe to online databases that provide information about exporting products across the globe. These sites provide detailed data and analysis on industries and consumers and can help steer a company to the right international market.

## ELIGIBLE EXPORT RESEARCH TOOLS EXPENSES

- ✔ Export research subscription fees to help with international market analysis

## INELIGIBLE EXPORT RESEARCH TOOLS EXPENSES

- ✘ Research tools that only have a domestic focus

## Reimbursement Documentation for Export Research Tool Expenses

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Itemized invoice (name of company & subscription plan)
- Proof of payment (closed invoice or bank statement)



# Market Analysis

Market analysis allows a third-party company to conduct research for your business regarding an international market. This can provide a detailed plan of what markets are best suited for your product.

## ELIGIBLE MARKET ANALYSIS EXPENSES

- ✓ Fees associated with international market analysis from a third-party company

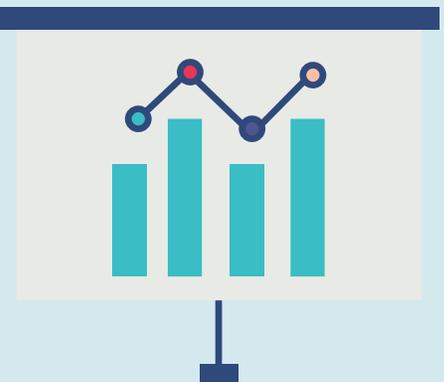
## INELIGIBLE MARKET ANALYSIS EXPENSES

- ✗ Cannot be conducted in-house
- ✗ Cannot be conducted on domestic markets

## Reimbursement Documentation for Market Analysis Expenses

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Itemized invoice (name of company & market research plan)
- Proof of payment (closed invoice or bank statement)



# Consultancy Services

Consultancy Services allows a third-party company to offer export consultancy services to your business regarding an international market. This can provide a detailed export marketing plan and market entry strategy best suited for your product. This activity is only allowable after the ESBC consults with the U.S. Department of Commerce to avoid duplication of services.

## ELIGIBLE CONSULTANCY SERVICES EXPENSES

- ✓ Fees associated with design and creation of an export marketing plan
- ✓ Market entry strategy based on a consultant's knowledge or experience in a particular market

## INELIGIBLE CONSULTANCY SERVICES EXPENSES

- ✗ Cannot be conducted in-house
- ✗ Cannot be conducted on domestic markets

## Reimbursement Documentation for Consultancy Service Expenses

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Itemized invoice (name of company & summary of consultancy services)
- Proof of payment (closed invoice or bank statement)

# Export Financial Counseling and Training Programs

Grantees can utilize their funds to expand their knowledge on exporting and finances. All training should have a focus on helping your business grow in the international market. Please contact your grant specialist to receive pre-approval for other training programs.

## ELIGIBLE FINANCIAL COUNSELING AND TRAINING PROGRAMS EXPENSES

- ✓ Export Financial Counseling Programs
- ✓ Training programs that have an emphasis on exporting

## INELIGIBLE FINANCIAL COUNSELING AND TRAINING PROGRAMS EXPENSES

- ✗ Programs, certifications, or classes that are predominantly focused on the domestic market or best business practices.

## Reimbursement Documentation for Counseling and Training Program Expenses

In your payment request, please submit the following:

- Itemized invoice (name of company & class/program description)
- Proof of payment (closed invoice or bank statement)



# Contacts

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