



# DCCED’s International Trade Assistance Grant (ITAG)



U.S. Small Business Administration  
*Funded in part through a grant with the U.S. Small Business Administration.*

December 18, 2023 – September 29, 2024

Administered by the State of Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, Office of International Trade

## Program Guidelines, Instructions, and FAQs

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## Introduction

The Alaska Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DCCED) administers the International Trade Assistance Grant (ITAG) through its Office of International Trade (OIT). This reimbursement-style program seeks to increase the number of small businesses in Alaska 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 businesses offset the cost of certain export-related expenses.

The Small Business Jobs Act of 2010 created the State Trade Expansion Program. Through awards to U.S. states and territories, SBA STEP helps small businesses overcome obstacles to exporting by providing grants to cover costs associated with entering and expanding into international markets. In the past ten years, the SBA has awarded \$215.5 million in 388 grants to all 50 U.S. States and six territories. This year, 2023, marks the 11<sup>th</sup> year of STEP funding awards and the first award for Alaska in six years.

## Eligibility

An Eligible Small Business Concern (ESBC) is a company/firm that meets and adheres to the following criteria:

- Products or services are of U.S. origin or have at least 51% U.S. content;
- Headquartered in Alaska, and at least 50 percent of the business's employees are employed in Alaska;
- Must be a small business that meets the U.S. SBA's definition:
  - Size standard requirements:
    - The applicable industry-based small business size standard established under section 3 of the Small Business Act; or
    - 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 link for information on size standards for your business:  
<https://www.sba.gov/federal-contracting/contracting-guide/size-standards>
- Has been in business for not less than 1 year, as of the date on which assistance using an ITAG grant commences;
- Has access to sufficient resources to bear the costs associated with international trade, including the costs of packing, shipping, freight forwarding, and customs brokers.
- Has a valid Unique Entity ID (UEI) issued by SAM.gov and has an active SAM.gov Registration. Proof provided must show that the business or business owner is not debarred from participation in a grant program by any Federal department or agency.

## Program Overview

The SBA issues STEP grant funds to U.S. States and Territories on an annual basis. The current program year is called SBA STEP 11, and the State of Alaska was awarded \$100,000. SBA STEP 11 funds have a program performance period from September 30, 2023-September 29, 2025. The SBA allows 2 years to expend all SBA STEP funds. DCCED will accept ITAG applications from companies beginning December 18, 2023, until September 29, 2024. The application period will close early if all available funds have been awarded. If more SBA STEP 11 funding becomes available after September 29, 2024, DCCED will

reopen ITAG for applications. If an application is received before the cut-off date, but funding is unavailable, that application will be wait-listed and have priority if ITAG re-opens.

## Eligible Expenses and Definitions

Eligible expenses for reimbursement:

- **Participation in foreign trade missions:** A foreign trade mission is defined as travel to a foreign country or participation in a virtual event by companies that will enable them to explore or expand international business opportunities. It can be organized by the state or an outside service provider. As a result of participating in foreign trade missions using grant funds, companies are expected to yield tangible outcomes, such as seeking out potential international buyers and increasing export sales volume.
- **Subscription services provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce:** Grant recipients may elect to utilize the services available from the U.S. Commercial Service, the trade promotion arm of the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration, to assist with entering or expanding their markets; choosing the best market for their products or services; evaluating prospective foreign business partners; increasing market potential; and gold key matchmaking services.
- **Payment of international website fees:** Grant funds can be used for translating websites into foreign languages, localizing websites to foreign markets, and search engine optimization for foreign markets.
- **Design of international marketing media:** Marketing media is used to promote a company's product or service to strengthen its export sales potential, ability to reach its target audience, and/or export market opportunities using brochures, social media platforms, websites, billboards, newspapers, branding and advertising, posters, advertisements in international magazines, or other media approved in advance by DCCED.
- **International trade show exhibition:** A company can apply for reimbursement to showcase and demonstrate its products and services at an international trade show. This includes foreign trade shows for company export development and domestic trade shows. Special rules apply for domestic trade show participation. Please reach out to the ITAG Program Manager for details.
- **Participation in export training workshops:** To use grant funds, training workshops and education courses must have a direct benefit to, and assist, companies with gaining credible knowledge of export policies, regulations, and/or best practices. Outcomes, such as export plans, strategies, and best practices handouts should be deliverables.
- **Procurement of international consultancy services:** This activity is only allowable after company consultation with DCCED and the U.S. Department of Commerce to avoid duplication of services. Eligible expenses can include consultant fees, market research fees, certification and compliance testing fees, and licensing fees.

## Ineligible Expenses

Ineligible expenses include:

- Construction or renovation of facilities or acquisition of real estate;
- Litigation, whether civil, criminal, or administrative;
- Providing matching contributions to any other Federal awards;
- Meals, lodging, per diem, or other subsistence expenses associated with local travel. Local travel is any travel conducted entirely within a 50-mile radius of your organization's address of record;

- Travel by elected officials;
- Costs associated with printing materials; and
- National and regional association dues and travel to association events.

### Important Program Specifics

- There is an obligatory company cash match for each reimbursement award. In other words, companies will be reimbursed up to 75% of eligible expenses. The company cash match may not come from any other federal government source. There is a maximum reimbursement amount of \$10,000 per company for each grant performance period.
- The minimum award amount is \$1,000. Applications for expenses that equal less than the minimum award amount (after the company match is calculated) will not be awarded. Eligible export activities can be combined under one application to reach the minimum award amount.
- Applications must be for activities that will conclude prior to September 29, 2024.
- Companies must be either “new to export (NTE)” or engaging in “market expansion (ME)” —that is, the event/activity must help them to enter a new market or expand where they do not already have significant export sales.
- Companies will only be reimbursed for the approved activity and approved expenses stated in the award notification. Applicants must notify the ITAG Program Manager immediately if they are unable to complete an activity that has been awarded.
- If you do not submit all the necessary documents by the award expiration date, the ITAG Program Manager retains the right to revoke your award.
- The SBA requires the State to report on all grant recipients after their activity has concluded. Your company will be required to fill out quarterly reports for the duration of the program performance period (September 29, 2025). **Not completing the reporting requirements will result in your company being ineligible to receive future grants from the ITAG program, forfeiture of any remaining grant funds under ITAG, and reimbursement to DCCED of grant funds already expended.**
- These terms and conditions are subject to change without notice based on funding availability and changes in federal and state procedures and laws.

Applications are processed and awarded on a rolling first-come, first-served basis until all funds are expended. Applications should be completed and submitted well before the start of any intended activity. A Grant Agreement must be signed before initiation of covered activities. **Expenses incurred by a company prior to the ITAG grant award are not eligible expenses and will not be reimbursed.**

### Application Review

Once your application is submitted, it will be reviewed by DCCED. This process may take two to three weeks and involve communications between DCCED and the applicant, so please be sure to submit your application as early as possible to have an adequate amount of time for the review process. Applications will be evaluated based on several factors including availability of funds, the number of applications submitted, the merits of a given application (including the export readiness assessment for NTE companies and strategic export plans for ME companies), the projected sales resulting from the activity, and, if applicable, an applicant’s prior engagement with the program rules and requirements. Per the SBA guidelines, priority will be given to applications received from the following types of small businesses: businesses owned and controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, women-owned or veteran-owned businesses, businesses located in one of Alaska’s 25 Opportunity

Zones, and businesses located in rural Alaska (defined as anywhere outside of the Municipality of Anchorage).

### Application Approval

If your application is approved, you'll receive a confirmation email that will include your ITAG Grant Document Packet as well as the next steps for completing the grant reimbursement process. Your ITAG Grant Document Packet will include:

- *Grant Agreement:* This document will detail the requirements for your grant. Once reviewed, this will need to be signed by a member of the management team from the participating company and returned by email to DCCED. This document must be signed and submitted no later than two weeks before the start date of the tradeshow/event.
- *Immediate Performance Report:* This form will detail your experience and immediate sales associated with the attended tradeshow or other eligible event. This form is required to complete the reimbursement and must be submitted within 45 days of the final date of the tradeshow/event listed on the grant agreement.
- *Expense Detail Report:* This form will compile all eligible expenses that you would like to consider for your grant reimbursement. Complete this form by listing all eligible expenses associated with the tradeshow or other eligible event. Please be sure to submit all receipts/proof of payment for any expense listed on this form. Any expense listed on this form that does not include a valid proof of payment will not be included in your grant reimbursement. This form is required for reimbursement and must be submitted within 45 days of the final date of the tradeshow/event listed on the grant agreement.

### Application Checklist

Certification Regarding Debarment, Suspension, Ineligibility and Voluntary Exclusion Form	<input type="checkbox"/>
SBA Self-Representation as an Eligible Small Business Concern	<input type="checkbox"/>
DCCED Small Business Survey	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proof of Active SAM.gov Registration	<input type="checkbox"/>
ITAG Program Application	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Optional:</b> If your company already has an Export Readiness Assessment from an outside source, please include it with your application.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Optional:</b> If your company already has a Strategic Export Plan from an outside source, please include it with your application.	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Confidentiality Statement

All documents submitted to DCCED, including applications, are public records governed by the Alaska Public Records Act, AS 40.25.110 – 40.25.295. Information disclosed to DCCED that is claimed as confidential or proprietary may be exempt from production under the Alaska Public Records Act. If you wish to have information treated as confidential, you must identify the information and mark it as confidential. All applicants should review the Alaska Public Records Act to determine what information may be exempt from disclosure.

## FAQs

### *What is the difference between STEP and ITAG?*

STEP is the State Trade Expansion Program, a grant program that is administered by the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA). STEP is available for states and territories to apply and help fund their programs. The International Trade Assistance Grant (ITAG) is the State of Alaska's name for the program that utilizes the SBA's STEP funds. You may see references to both STEP and ITAG throughout the program materials.

### *What is the program performance period?*

STEP 11 funds are available from September 30, 2023-September 29, 2025. The SBA allows 2 years to expend all STEP funds. DCCED will accept applications from eligible small business concerns beginning December 18, 2023, until September 29, 2024. The application period will close early if all available funds have been prescribed. If more STEP 11 funding becomes available after September 29, 2024, DCCED will reopen the program for applications.

### *What is a Unique Entity Identifier, why do I need one, and how do I get one?*

The ITAG program is a passthrough of federal funds. All entities applying for federally funded awards are required to have a valid unique identifier. A Unique Entity ID (UEI) is issued by SAM.Gov. Registering for a UEI is free for all entities doing business with the State of Alaska or the Federal Government. To obtain a UEI, go to [SAM.Gov](https://sam.gov) and follow the instructions to register your entity.

### *Who is eligible?*

International Trade Assistance Grants are awarded to small businesses that meet the U.S. SBA's definition and can self-certify their eligibility. Small businesses are generally defined as those with 500 or fewer employees; however, SBA might have different parameters based on your company's NAICS code. Candidates must evaluate and certify their eligibility by submitting two required SBA forms and one business survey form: Self-Representation as a Small Business, Debarment Certification, and the DCCED Business Survey.

### Additional Eligibility Criteria:

- Products or services must be of U.S. origin or have at least 51% U.S. content;
- Companies must have been in business for at least one year prior to application;
- Businesses must be headquartered in Alaska, and at least 50 percent of the business's employees must be employed in Alaska;

- Companies must be either “new to export” or engaging in “market expansion”—that is, the event/activity must help them enter a new market or expand where they do not already have significant export sales.
- Access to sufficient resources to bear the costs associated with international trade, including the costs of packing, shipping, freight forwarding, and customs brokers.
- A valid Unique Entity ID (UEI) issued by SAM.gov and an active SAM.gov Registration. Proof provided must show that the business or business owner is not debarred from participation in a grant program by any Federal department or agency.

### *How does the funding work?*

Funded in part through a grant with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), money is available to assist Alaska small businesses seeking to begin or grow international sales. ITAG reimburses up to 75 percent of a company's eligible expenses, with a maximum reimbursement amount of \$10,000 for the current grant cycle. Eligible applicants may apply for multiple activities until they reach the maximum reimbursement amount for that program performance period.

### *What is the process?*

Applications are processed and awarded on a rolling first-come, first-served basis until all funds are expended. Applications should be completed and submitted with ample time for DCCED’s review and approval before the start of any intended activity. A Grant Agreement must be signed before initiation of covered activities. *Grants will not cover any activity retroactively.*

**Required Documents:** Download, print, and sign the Self-Representation as an Eligible Small Business Concern and Debarment Certification forms and complete the DCCED Small Business Survey. These forms are required and will need to be submitted along with your application. Proof of an active SAM.Gov registration is also required. A screenshot of the website that shows your company’s active status will suffice.

**International Trade Assistance Grant Application:** Complete the ITAG application by downloading the PDF application and guidelines from the ITAG website. Submit your completed application to DCCED’s ITAG Program Manager via email.

**Application Review:** Once your application is submitted, it will be reviewed by DCCED. This process may take two to three weeks and involve communications between the DCCED and the applicant, so please be sure to submit your application as early as possible to have an adequate amount of time for the review process.

**Application Approval:** If your application is approved, you’ll receive a confirmation email that will include your ITAG Grant Document Packet as well as the next steps for completing the grant reimbursement process. Your ITAG Grant Document Packet will include:

- *Grant Agreement:* This document will detail the requirements for your grant. Once reviewed, this will need to be signed by a member of the management team from the participating company and returned by email to DCCED. This document must be signed and submitted no later than two weeks before the start date of the tradeshow/event.
- *Immediate Performance Report:* This form will detail your experience and immediate sales associated with the attended tradeshow or other eligible event. This form is required to

complete the reimbursement and must be submitted within 45 days of the final date of the tradeshow/event listed on the grant agreement.

- *Expense Detail Report:* This form will compile all eligible expenses that you would like to consider for your grant reimbursement. Complete this form by listing all eligible expenses associated with the tradeshow or other eligible event. Please be sure to submit all receipts/proof of payment for any expense listed on this form. Any expense listed on this form that does not include a valid proof of payment will not be included in your grant reimbursement. This form is required for reimbursement and must be submitted within 45 days of the final date of the tradeshow/event listed on the grant agreement.

*Does my company need to fill out the follow-up surveys and reports once we have received our reimbursement?*

**Yes.** The SBA requires the state to report on all STEP fund recipients after their activity has concluded. Your company will be required to fill out quarterly reports for the duration of the program performance period (September 29, 2025). **Not completing the reporting requirements will result in your company being ineligible to receive future grants from the ITAG program, forfeiture of any remaining grant funds under ITAG, and reimbursement to DCCED of grant funds already expended.**

*How are reimbursements calculated?*

Reimbursements will be awarded up to 75 percent of the total costs submitted. The minimum award amount is \$1,000 and the maximum award amount is \$10,000.

For example, if your company applies to the ITAG program to attend an export training that costs \$1,500 and your application is accepted for 75 percent reimbursement, the calculation would be  $\$1,500 \times 0.75 = \$1,125$ . Your company would receive a reimbursement of \$1,125 for that application.

Total costs cannot be lower than \$1,335 to meet the 75 percent reimbursement floor of \$1,000. The maximum amount a company can be reimbursed is \$10,000 regardless of the total costs in the application. For example, if your company applies for expenses totaling \$15,000, your reimbursement will still only be \$10,000.

Activities may be awarded for reimbursement that is less than 75 percent of expenses due to the availability of funds.

*The activity my company wants to apply for does not reach the \$1,000 minimum. Can we combine activities in one application?*

Yes, eligible activities can be combined into one application to meet the \$1,000 reward floor. For example, your company may opt to apply for export training that costs \$1,200 and utilize a U.S. Department of Commerce subscription service that costs \$500. You would list both activities in your application with the total expected cost of \$1,700.