

DC STEP Application Instructions and Eligibility Criteria – FY2015

Program Purpose

The DC State Trade Export Promotion (STEP) Program is an initiative funded by the District of Columbia and the United States Small Business Administration (SBA) as part of the National Export Initiative to double U.S. exports by 2015. The purpose of the DC STEP initiative is to increase exports and create jobs in the District of Columbia by helping small businesses expand into new international markets. DC STEP program funds will reimburse participant companies for eligible activities associated with new international marketing initiatives.

Instructions

Before completing the STEP Program Application form, please read carefully the Guidelines for Funding (below) and the Eligibility Criteria (on page 2). To qualify for the DC STEP Program, an applicant must meet two sets of eligibility criteria:

1. DC Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD) criteria, and
2. Federal/SBA criteria

Guidelines for Funding

- STEP application form must be received six weeks prior to commencement of scheduled event/activity.
- STEP awards are administered on a first-come, first-served basis and are contingent upon availability of funds.
- STEP awards will be based on the overall quality of the export-related activity, as determined by the ExportDC review committee.
- DSLBD Grant Agreement (signed by applicant and returned to ExportDC at least two weeks before project start date)
- Eligible activities must be executed by direct employees of the company approved for STEP Program funding.
- Application must be signed by a corporate officer, certifying that the eligibility criteria will be met.
- Applicant agrees to abide by the Fly America Act when utilizing the STEP funds for air travel expenses.¹
- After completing the approved project, the STEP Program participant will be reimbursed upon submission of an invoice on company letterhead, proof of payment (receipts), proof of activity (photographs, itinerary, etc.), and
- The applicant agrees to submit a detailed report that illustrates the initial results and overall effectiveness of the approved event/activity within 30 days of event/activity completion. A follow-up report will be required at six-month intervals for a period of two years beyond the date of the approved event/activity.

Application Checklist

In order to be considered for the DC STEP Program, all applicants must submit the following documents:

- A signed original application is required from each candidate (when completed, please print form for signature)
- Strategic Export Plan (see guidelines and discuss recommended content with your ExportDC project manager)
- Export Readiness Self-Assessment (thirteen questions)
- SBA Self Representation as an “Eligible Small Business Concern”
- SBA Debarment Certification form²
- DSLBD Self Certification form (applicant attests that he/she meets all DC eligibility criteria)
- DSLBD Clean Hands Self Certification form (no outstanding tax liability)
- Evidence of DC Basic Business License (DCRA), DC corporate registration (DCRA), and DC tax registration (OTR)

Remittance of Documents (two steps)

1. Please email a scanned copy of all required documents to your ExportDC project manager, and
2. Remit all required documents by certified mail, courier service, or in person to your ExportDC project manager.

Questions

For further information about the DC STEP Program application and requirements, please contact Gizachew Andargeh, ExportDC Program Manager, at (tel) 202-741-0873 or (email) gizachew.andargeh@dc.gov .

DC Eligibility Requirements

District of Columbia

- 1) Company operates a business concern in the District of Columbia to manufacture, assemble, and/or distribute a product or provide an exportable service;
- 2) Maintain a principal office in the District of Columbia;
- 3) Operating in the District of Columbia for at least six months prior to STEP Program approval;
- 4) Be licensed and registered with the DC Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA); and
- 5) Be registered and in good standing with the DC Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR).³

Federal Eligibility Requirements

Federal/SBA

- 1) Company must have an exportable product or service at time of application;
- 2) Have in effect a strategic plan for exporting;
- 3) Meet the requirements of the small business size regulations set forth by the SBA;⁴
- 4) Operate as a for-profit business for not less than one-year (based upon the date on which assistance will be provided under the STEP Grant);
- 5) Operating profitably, based on US operations from the firm's most recently completed fiscal year;
- 6) Exportable products must contain at least 51% US content; and
- 7) Show understanding of costs associated with exporting and doing business with foreign purchasers.

Notes

¹**Fly America Act**

In most circumstances, the Fly America Act requires that individuals whose travel is paid for with federal grant funds fly on U.S. flag air carriers. Such carriers include American, United, Delta, US Airways, etc. For this reason, the Fly America Act is applicable to STEP Program recipients. However, there are several exceptions that enable travel on non-U.S. flag carriers. For additional information, please contact your ExportDC project manager.

²**Debarment Certification**

- A. The federal government cannot do business with contractors or grant recipients that have been debarred or suspended. Thus, it requires that contractors and grant recipients certify their own eligibility for federal contracts and grants by completing a Debarment Certification.
- B. STEP Program applicants shall not knowingly enter into any lower tier covered transaction with a person in the Excluded Parties List System (see SBA Debarment Certification form). For further information about the Excluded Parties List System, go to <https://www.epls.gov>.

³**Guidelines for business licensing and registration requirements in the District of Columbia**

Business entities seeking reimbursement funds under the DC STEP Program must be in compliance with the licensing and registration requirements of the District of Columbia at time of application. ExportDC requires evidence of 1) DC Basic Business License (DCRA), 2) DC corporate registration (DCRA), and 3) DC tax registration or recent Certificate of Good Standing (OTR). Business entities whose principals are required to maintain professional licensure by a local, state or national certification board or body will not be required to obtain a Basic Business License. The DC Department of Small and Local Business Development reserves the right to request additional documents to substantiate a firm's credentials in the District of Columbia (DC and federal tax returns, Form FR-500, lease, rental agreement, etc.)

⁴**Compliance with the SBA size standards**

The SBA size standards are based on either number of employees (mfr.) or average annual receipts (service provider).