

INTERNATIONAL MARKET ACCESS GRANT FOR EXPORTERS

IMAGE

Program
Handbook



Department of
Development



U.S. Small Business
Administration

What is **IMAGE?**

The International Market Access Grant for Exporters (IMAGE) program provides grant funds to eligible businesses to engage in eligible export promotion activities.

Companies can access up to \$10,000 in grant year funds (starting Oct. 1) on a 50% reimbursement basis (e.g., the company spends \$20,000 on eligible expenses and gets reimbursed 50%, or \$10,000).

IMAGE is funded in part by the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) State Trade Expansion Program (STEP).

COMPANY ELIGIBILITY

- Company operates a licensed for-profit business in Ohio to manufacture, assemble, and/or distribute a product or provide an exportable service.
- Company certifies that the products to be promoted contain a majority (at least 51%) of U.S. content.
- Company has identified qualifying and achievable export activities or initiatives requiring financial support and has, in effect, a strategic plan for exporting.
- Company asserts that it meets the requirements of the Table of Small Business Size Standards set forth by the SBA and is not internationally headquartered.
- Company has been in business for no less than one year at time of application.
- Company attests that it shall not knowingly enter into any transactions with a person in the Excluded Parties List System.
- Company must be in good standing with all state of Ohio agencies.
- Company must not be debarred from doing business with the federal government.



ACTIVITIES

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT GRANT ACTIVITIES

- Activities must be approved before the activities are conducted.
- The earliest date that an activity can begin is the application approval date or Oct. 1, whichever date is later.
- All grant activities must be completed by the completion date listed on the first page of the countersigned grant agreement.
- Changes to initially approved activities can be made. For more information, please reference the section “Amending the Grant.”

ELIGIBLE GRANT ACTIVITIES:

- Exhibiting at international trade shows
- EXIM Bank Credit Insurance Premiums
- U.S. Commercial Service Programs
- Trade Missions organized by a government or an economic development entity. Individual trips are not considered trade missions. Trade missions will be approved on a case-by-case basis
- Supported Individual Market Visit
 - » Must be accompanied by a completed project from Ohio’s [International Market Support \(IMS\) Program](#), the American Hardwood Export Council, Market Builder from Food Export Association of the Midwest, or [U.S. Commercial Service’s](#) Gold Key program.
- Eligible domestic trade shows
 - » Only eligible for Ohio businesses who are exhibiting at a U.S. Commercial Service “[Trade Partnership Program](#).”
- Compliance testing
 - » Tests for existing products to enter a new or current market are eligible
- Translations of websites, digital and print marketing materials, product materials
- Designing of marketing materials. Printing costs are not eligible.

ELIGIBLE REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES:

- Booth registration fees, space, and booth build-out costs.
- International travel costs: Limited to two individuals per grant year, not per activity. Eligible days of travel are two days before the start of the event and one day after. **These costs are reimbursable only for those participating in the Ohio Department of Development IMS program, the American Hardwood Export Council, Market Builder from the Food Export Association of the Midwest, or U.S. Commercial Services Gold Key Program.**
- Economy-class airfare (subject to Fly America Act)
- Lodging only (subject to U.S. State Department per diem rates)
- Other costs may be eligible but must be pre-approved. If there are other costs that you would like to be considered, choose the “Other” option when completing the application.

INELIGIBLE COSTS/REIMBURSEMENTS:

If an activity or cost is not outlined above, applicants should consider those costs and/or activities to be ineligible for reimbursement. If you are not sure if a cost/activity is eligible or if you have an idea for a new cost/activity, email image@development.ohio.gov. Before emailing, refer to the list below for popular requests that are ineligible.

Some examples of ineligible costs/activities:

- Website development including search engine optimization and localization services
 - Printing costs, including printing of marketing materials
 - Standalone shipping of sample products. Shipping expenses may be reimbursed if conducted in conjunction with another approved activity (e.g., shipping sample products to a trade show).
 - Radio/television/virtual reality production
 - Food and beverages
 - Expenses related to entertaining current or prospective clients or government officials
 - Costs associated with individuals' attendance at meetings, conferences, and symposiums
 - Costs to purchase or create company promotional items
- (for example, pens with a company logo)
- Any travel within the United States (other than connecting flights to reach an international market on a pre-approved trip)
 - Visa fees
 - Customer discounts/coupons
 - Anything that is considered illegal under local, state, or federal law
 - Anything that is deemed offensive or is of a sexual nature
 - Communications costs, including international cell phone plans, charging cables, etc.
 - Payroll

IMAGE KEY DATES

September 27

IMAGE application open. The application window will close when funds have been exhausted. Companies will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis. Companies will be given 10 days to cure invalid applications before funding will be awarded to other companies. Reimbursement requests must be submitted within 30 days of completing each activity, but in no event later than 30 calendar days after the project completion date listed on page one of the grant terms.

October 1

Grant year begins. Grantees can commence activities on this date or on the date their applications were approved, whichever is later.

November

Final economic impact collection will be emailed to grantees.

THE GRANT PROCESS



APPLICATION:

The link to the application portal is: development.force.com. This link can also be found on the [IMAGE website](#). Applications must be received and approved before activities can begin.

Once logged into development.force.com, scroll down to the Export section. Select and complete the International Market Access Grant for Exporters (IMAGE) application.

DUE DILIGENCE CHECKS:

Before an application is fully approved and a grant agreement is issued the IMAGE program manager will ensure that the applicant:

- Does not have any Ohio tax issues
- Is registered with the Ohio Secretary of State to do business in the state of Ohio
- Has signed the debarment and self-representation forms
- Meets SBA size standards
- Is registered with Ohio Shared Services (OhioPays)

Registering with Ohio Shared Services: The supplier registration with Ohio Shared Services is necessary to reimburse grantees as Ohio Shared Services will issue the reimbursement and will maintain the necessary banking information for clients. To register with Ohio Shared Services or to update a registration, go to this website: ohiopays.ohio.gov. If you have any issues, please refer to the [contact link at the bottom of the website](#) to get in touch with Ohio Shared Services staff.

Funding will not be reserved for companies until all due diligence issues, including Ohio Shared Services registrations, are resolved.

SIGNING THE GRANT:

A grant agreement will be emailed to the contact email provided in the application. The applicant should review for accuracy and sign on the signature page. Email signed grant agreements to image@development.ohio.gov.

AMENDING THE GRANT:

If a grantee needs to make changes to the activities that were initially approved, the grantee should email image@development.ohio.gov with the following information as soon as possible:

- The activities (if any) that the grantee will no longer be completing
- Information for the new activity, including:
 - » The name of the activity
 - » The start date of the activity
 - » The completion date of the activity
 - » The country being targeted by this activity
 - » The total cost of the activity
 - » The amount requested for reimbursement
 - » A URL if applicable/available

REIMBURSEMENT REQUESTS

Reimbursement requests must be submitted within 30 days of completing each activity, but in no event later than 30 calendar days after the project completion date listed on page one of the grant terms.

The reimbursement portal will be activated when an approved application and grant agreement have gone through Development's internal processes. A detailed, step-by-step guide to submitting reimbursement requests will be included in an email when this is completed.

NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION:

The following information/documentation must be included with each reimbursement request via the reimbursement portal. All reimbursement requests must include:

- Invoices paired with its proof of payment
- Proof of payment. Proof of payment should be a bank/credit card statement, a wire transfer, a cleared check that can be retrieved from a financial institution. A screenshot taken from accounting software is not sufficient proof of payment.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION LISTED BELOW FOR EACH CATEGORY OF ACTIVITIES:

- International Trade Shows
 - » Picture of booth
- Trade Mission/Virtual Trade Mission
 - » Trade mission itinerary
- Domestic Trade Shows
 - » Picture of booth
 - » Business cards of international contacts made
- Compliance Testing
 - » Scope of Work confirming what testing will be done
- Supported Individual Market Visits
 - » Business cards/list of contacts made
 - » If using [U.S. Commercial Service's](#) Gold Key, a copy of the Gold Key that was done.
 - » If using Ohio's International Market Support (IMS) program, additional documentation beyond invoices and proof of payment is not necessary, as this information is accessible internally.
- Translation Expenses
 - » Scope of Work confirming what work is being done
 - » Before and after of the translated document, website, or video

ECONOMIC IMPACT COLLECTION

Economic impact will be gathered whenever a reimbursement request is submitted as part of the reimbursement portal. A final survey will be sent to all grantees in early November.

Providing information for each economic impact survey is required to stay eligible for future STEP-funded programs. In the event of a public records request, only aggregate program information, including impact, is provided.