



California STEP
Exporting made easier for California small businesses



California State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) **Individual Company Export Promotion (ICEP)** **Reimbursement Program Guidelines**

Administered by the California Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz), California Department of Food and Agriculture, and the California Center for International Trade Development (CITD). Funded in part through a Cooperative Agreement with the U.S. Small Business Administration

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NOTE:

The terms and conditions of the STEP and STEP ICEP Program are subject to change without notice based on funding availability and changes in federal and state procedures and laws. All changes will be posted and made available at <https://californiaexport.org/icep/>

Section I – General Information

A. STEP ICEP Program Overview

The California State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) seeks to increase the number of eligible small business concerns (ESBC) that export, as well as to increase the value of goods and services currently being exported by eligible small businesses.

The Individual Company Export Promotion (ICEP) program is a sub-program of California STEP. The ICEP program will be used to reimburse eligible California small businesses **up to \$3,000 USD** for specific export promotion related expenses performed on trade promotion related activities not currently being supported by California STEP occurring October 1, 2018 through September 29, 2019. Reimbursement awards will be granted on the availability of funds, the number of applications submitted and the merits of the applications – such as the projected sales resulting from the activity; late, weak, or incomplete applications are ineligible for reimbursement.

ICEP Program Quick Facts:

- The ICEP program will reimburse eligible California small businesses **up to \$3,000 USD** for eligible export promotion related expenses.
- **ICEP Application Period will open and be effective for the following dates:**
 - **Round One:** 11/1/2018 – 1/31/2019 for activities completed between 10/1/2018 – 4/30/2019
 - **Round Two:** 4/1/2019 – 7/31/2019 for activities completed between 5/1/2019 – 9/29/2019
- Approved activities must be completed between October 1, 2018 – September 29, 2019
- ICEP applications must be submitted a minimum of 30 days in advance of the planned activity.*
- No applications for retroactive activities will be considered for reimbursement.*
- Application processing period: approximately 3 weeks

* Except for applications with activities taking place between Oct 1, 2018 and November 15, 2018, in which case applications must be submitted by December 1, 2018.

NOTE: Travel, lodging, and meal expenses are not eligible for reimbursement. Additionally, ICEP funds cannot be used in conjunction with any other STEP event.

B. Summary of ICEP Reimbursement Process

1. Eligible applicants must complete, sign, and submit the STEP application electronically (indicating ICEP as one of the STEP activities of interest) through <https://californiaexport.org/register/> at least 30 days prior to the planned activity.
Note: Upon successful registration, the company will get a confirmation email stating application was successfully submitted.
2. The STEP ICEP committee will review complete ICEP application submissions.
3. An official notice of decision will be sent to ICEP applicants via email from the Los Rios Community College District's CITD (@losrios.edu) within 2-3 weeks of successful online submission. This notice will provide applicants instructions for next steps.

4. Applicants will need to complete the required preliminary paperwork to establish themselves as a “payable vendor” and set up a purchase order.
5. Applicant Company will need to execute approved proposed activity, incur expenses.
6. Upon completion of approved proposed activity, applicant company will need to submit receipts, invoice, and post-event survey within 30 days of activity. Note: If you apply in Round 2, and your activity takes place in September 2019, you will need to submit paperwork within 14 days of activity to allow for timely processing of payment.
7. Once all criteria has been met, the Los Rios Community College District CITD will issue a reimbursement check for approved expenditures (to be received within 30-45 days).

C. Eligible Events and Activities

The ICEP program provides the opportunity for eligible companies to apply for direct financial assistance to implement an export promotion activity(s). Events/activity(s) that are eligible for reimbursement may include the following and must take place between October 1, 2018 and September 29, 2019:

- Participation fees for international trade missions that support exports.
- Participation fees for international export trade show exhibitions (to include registration fees, standard booth space fees, standard booth build out for trade shows).
- Export research tool subscription used to assist STEP Clients with market research (up to \$1,000 maximum) (may include subscription services from the U.S. Department of Commerce like a GKS)
- Website translations, search engine optimization, localization services (up to \$1,000 maximum)
- Cost of compliance testing of an existing product for entry into a foreign market (maximum of \$2,000)
- Fees for shipping sample products internationally (up to \$2,000 maximum)
- Other export initiatives determined to be appropriate by STEP administrators.

NOTE: Traveling, lodging, and meals are not eligible for reimbursement under the California STEP ICEP program. Additionally, ICEP funds cannot be used in conjunction with any other STEP event.

D. Participant Eligibility

Qualifying California companies must:

- Be organized or incorporated in the U.S.
- Be operating in the U.S.
- Meets
 - a) the applicable industry-based small business size standard established under section 3 of the Small Business Act; or
 - b) the alternate size standard applicable to the program, under section 7(a) of the Small Business Act and the loan program, 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 [sba.gov](https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/Size_Standards_Table_2017.pdf) link for information on size standards for your business based on your NAICS code: https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/files/Size_Standards_Table_2017.pdf

- Is exporting goods or services of U.S. Origin or that have at least 51% or more U.S. content.
- Registered to do business in the state of California and in good standing with
 - a) The California Secretary of State. To check if your business is in good standing, visit <http://kepler.sos.ca.gov/>. Or
 - b) If a company is registered as a sole proprietorship with a fictitious name, the applicant must be registered and in good standing with the county in which the business is located in – if this is the case, a company does not have to file through the Secretary of State.
- Has been in business for not less than 1 year, as of the date on which assistance using a grant under this subsection commences; and
- Has access to sufficient resources to bear the costs associated with trade, including the costs of packing, shipping, freight forwarding, and customs brokers.
- Agree to provide information on export sales data resulting from the ICEP reimbursement funding, and respond to all subsequent STEP surveys on a timely basis. STEP may send surveys every six months, for up to 3 years. By applying for a reimbursement, you are agreeing to respond to these surveys with information on export sales data.

E. Funding Criteria

The major ICEP reimbursement funding criteria include, but are not limited to, the following:

- California small businesses must identify a specific event/activity(s) on their ICEP reimbursement application (i.e. trade show, location, date, participation type, etc.)
- **California small businesses must either be “new to export” or “new to market”** – that is, the event/activity must help them to enter a new market.
- California small businesses are limited to one ICEP reimbursement per program year
- The selections for the ICEP reimbursement awards are based on available funds and the qualifications of the applicants. **An application submittal is no guarantee of an ICEP reimbursement award.** ICEP reimbursements will be paid in full up to the awarded amount, unless the California small business does not fulfill its obligations with regard to participating in the approved program or submitting required receipts and summaries.
- STEP may award a small business with an ICEP reimbursement of a lesser amount than requested in the application, based on strength of the application, the number of applicants, and the availability of funding.
- Program reimbursement ends when all funds have been disbursed, or when the ICEP application has closed, whichever comes first.
- These terms and conditions are subject to change without notice based on funding availability and changes in federal and state procedures and laws.

F. Selection Criteria

Applications will be reviewed and funding decisions will be rendered based on all of the following:

- All applications will be accepted beginning on November 1, 2018 through July 31, 2019.
- Evaluation of the application will be considered based on the following:

- Company Description
- Program Event / Activity Information
- Program Impact
- Program Budget
- Preference will be given to the following ICEP reimbursement applications:
 - First time eligible participants of the California STEP ICEP program
 - Eligible participants that are either “new to export” or “new to market”

Section II – Application Process

A. Process to Apply

To apply for funding, applicants must:

- Register for STEP at <https://californiaexport.org/register/> and select “**Individual Company Export Promotion**” as one of the activities of interest from the list of export promotion activities.
- **Submit STEP registration with indication of interest in the “Individual Company Export Promotion” activity at least 30 days in advance** of the event for which reimbursement is being sought with all required information.
- Submit STEP ICEP registration by July 31, 2019.

California STEP will notify applicants as to whether they have been approved for funding, and the dollar amount for which they may be reimbursed. In order to receive reimbursement, **successful applicants must:**

- Respond to the email notification confirming that they accept the voucher amount awarded;
- Follow-up on other paperwork needed for reimbursement.
- Execute proposed event/activity and incur relevant and approved expense(s);
- Submit completed reimbursement form(s) along with receipts and required post-event survey to California STEP as per instructions within 30 days following eligible event/activity.
 - Only eligible expenses accompanied by appropriate receipts will be considered for reimbursement.
 - Valid proof of payment(s): Invoices or bills that are not marked “paid” or “balance due 0.00” must be accompanied by proof of payment such as credit card or banking statement. A credit card or banking statement will not qualify on its own. Check payments must be accompanied by “Checks Paid” banking statement. Cash payments must be accompanied by a formal invoice on vendor’s letterhead, with the following information, at minimum: line item description of export promotional services provided, costs, payment received, date, and vendor’s wet signature.
 - Only receipts for activities that were specifically described in the ICEP application Event/Activity and Program Budget sections will be reimbursed.
 - Any and all reimbursement requests must be submitted on or prior to October 15, 2019. ***ANY REIMBURSEMENT REQUESTED RECEIVED LATER THAN OCTOBER 15, 2019 WILL NOT BE REIMBURSED.***

Successful ICEP reimbursement recipients will be sent a check for reimbursement within approximately 30-45 days of submission of receipts and required event summary documentation, assuming all other criteria have been met. **If you do not submit all the necessary documents within 30 days of the last event date, the STEP Program Manager retains the right to revoke your voucher award.**

If you elect not to participate in the event/activity after you have submitted an application, we ask that you notify California STEP as soon as possible so funds may be made available to other California small businesses. Not doing so in a timely manner may disqualify you from future participation in the ICEP program.

Note: If your application was not initially granted a reimbursement, you will be provided an opportunity to clarify your ICEP request for further review and consideration, at which time the review process may take an additional 21 days. Note: your ICEP application must still be approved prior to execution activity for reimbursement consideration.

B. Project Budget - Eligible Expenses

Budget information must be completed to the best of the small business' knowledge. Reimbursable qualified expense categories are indicated below; other expenses may qualify but only upon California STEP review and approval.

- Participation fees for international trade missions that support exports.
- Participation fees for international export trade show exhibitions (to include registration fees, standard booth space fees, standard booth build out for trade shows).
- Export research tool subscription used to assist STEP Clients with market research (up to \$1,000 maximum) (may include subscription services from the U.S. Department of Commerce like a GKS)
- Website translations, search engine optimization, localization services (up to \$1,000 maximum)
- Cost of compliance testing of an existing product for entry into a foreign market (maximum of \$2,000)
- Fees for shipping sample products internationally (up to \$2,000 maximum)
- Other export initiatives determined to be appropriate by STEP administrators

General conditions associated with the ICEP reimbursement:

- The ICEP reimbursement program cannot be used to reimburse travel expenses such as lodging, meals, in-country transportation, or airfare.
- The ICEP is a highly competitive process and in high demand, so it is recommended companies submit their STEP registration/ICEP application as soon as possible and as complete and accurate as possible.
- California small businesses may void their award or receive less than the full amount awarded if they do not fulfill their obligations with regard to participating in the approved program or submitting required receipts and summaries.

Section III – Payment Process

- ICEP reimbursements will be mailed within 30 days of submission of receipts and required event summary documentation, assuming all other criteria have been met.
- In order to be reimbursed, submitted receipts must be for expenses explicitly included in STEP ICEP reimbursement application—otherwise prior approval is required.
- Only receipts for expenses incurred during the ICEP reimbursement program year (October 1, 2018 to September 29, 2019) are valid for reimbursement.

Section IV – Program Administration

- California STEP decisions on ICEP reimbursements are final.
- The financial and commercial information pertaining to or in application for an ICEP reimbursement will be kept strictly confidential. Any information given on an application or subsequent completion report and surveys will only be reported as part of aggregated data that does not identify any individual responses or companies, unless otherwise permitted in writing by companies.

At the state level, STEP is managed by the:

- California Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz)
- California Department of Food & Agriculture

At the national level, STEP is managed by the:

- U.S. Small Business Administration’s Office of International Trade (SBA-OIT).

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