



Ohio International Market Access Grant for Exporters (IMAGE)



Overview

The Ohio International Market Access Grant for Exporters (IMAGE) is a program funded by the State of Ohio and the United States Small Business Administration as part of the National Export Initiative to double U.S. exports by 2015.

IMAGE is designed to increase exports and create jobs by helping small companies promote their products and services in new international markets.

The IMAGE program is administered by the Ohio Department of Development's Office of Export Assistance.

Eligible Export-Related Expenses

IMAGE funds will reimburse companies a maximum of \$6,000 (50 percent reimbursement on qualifying expenditures up to \$12,000)* for activities associated with new international marketing initiatives, including:

- **International trade show participation (excluding airfare, meals, and lodging) - e.g. booth space rental and construction, interpreter fees, freight costs to ship booth, and trade show participation fees**
- **Subscription to services provided by the U.S. Commercial Service - e.g. International Partner Search, Gold Key Service, Commercial News USA, etc.**
- **Select international marketing and technical translation services - e.g. website and marketing material translation services, technical manual translations, and label translation services**
- **Exporter specialized education programs - e.g. Global Target**

***Companies located in the Ohio Appalachian region may qualify for an additional 50 percent reimbursement up to \$2,000 to use toward the eligible export-related activities listed above.**

Companies may apply for an additional 50 percent reimbursement up to \$3,000 for any State of Ohio trade mission, OR up to \$2,000 for any U.S. Department of Commerce trade mission, to use toward participant fees, market research and appointment setting fees, economy class airfare, and lodging.

Ineligible Expenses

Many marketing-related expenses are considered “costs of doing business” or, for other reasons, fall outside the regulations of the IMAGE Program and therefore are not eligible for reimbursement. This list should not be considered complete. If you have questions concerning your company's eligible reimbursements, contact the Ohio Department of Development's Office of Export Assistance before incurring the expense.

General Ineligible Expenses

- Any activity not specifically included or approved as part of the participant company's IMAGE Program Agreement or Approved Amendment
- Travel expenses, catering, and attendance fees related to international trade seminars are not eligible
- Travel and lodging expenses related to tradeshows held in the U.S. are never eligible for reimbursement
- Expenses incurred for an activity prior to approval of the activity or amendment
- Any activities and functions held in conjunction with unauthorized parties as set forth by the U.S. Bureau of Industry and Security
- Vehicle rental and fuel to transport tradeshow materials and samples
- Compliance or related export documentation fees (e.g., ITAR, REACH, CE Marking compliance)
- Visa fees

Ineligible Expenses (cont.)

Business-Related Ineligible Expenses

- Salaries, living expenses, office costs, allowances, office parking fees
- Administrative expenses including communication costs (phone, fax, Internet) including those related to travel (hotel and cellphone charges)
- Refundable deposits and advances
- Rental, lease, or purchase of warehouse space
- Purchase, construction, or lease of space for permanent displays
- Meals, reception refreshments, entertainment, or gifts
- Website development beyond approved translation services
- Product samples
- Business cards beyond approved translation services, seasonal greeting cards, subscriptions or publications
- Routine translation and interpretation services not related to eligible promotional materials
- General company literature that does not include product promotion information
- Membership and Program fees
- Management consultant fees
- Product-related ineligible expenses
- Product research and development
- Package and label design/production and origin identification stickers not specifically required by importing country

Ineligible Expenses (cont.)

Marketing-Related Ineligible Expenses

- Slotting and shelf-space fees, licensing fees, product registration, and similar sales expenses
- Coupons, redemptions, price discounts, and any other activity to reduce the selling prices of a product
- Advertisements or any other marketing and promotions items that feature a coupon that reduces the cost of the product
- Promotions or products that are deemed offensive
- Promotions and advertisements that disparage any other company or product either directly or indirectly

Guidelines for Funding

- Grant approval must be obtained prior to commencement of activities and/or expenditure of funds.
- Grant awards are administered on a first-come, first-served basis and are contingent upon availability of funds.
- Grant awards will be based on the overall quality of the export-related activity, as determined by the Office of Export Assistance, and the company's match of grant funds.
- After the costs are incurred, the company will be reimbursed upon submission of the following to the Ohio Department of Development's Office of Export Assistance:
 1. Invoice;
 2. Proof of payment, i.e. receipts;
 3. Proof of activity; and
 4. Economic impact evaluation.

Guidelines for Eligibility

- Company asserts that it meets the requirements of the Small Business Size Regulations set forth by the SBA.
- Company has been in business for not less than the one-year period ending on the date on which assistance is provided under an IMAGE grant.
- Eligible activities (e.g. travel) must be executed by direct employees of the company.
- Company is operating profitably, based on operations in the United States from the firm's most recently completed fiscal year.
- Company has taken the Export Questionnaire and achieved a score of at least 66, thus demonstrating an understanding of the costs associated with exporting and doing business with foreign purchasers, including the costs of freight forwarding, customs brokers, and packing and shipping.
- Company has in effect a strategic plan for exporting, as outlined under "Client Commitments" on page 5 of the IMAGE application.
- Company attests that it shall not knowingly enter into any lower tier covered transaction with a person in the Excluded Parties List System.

Guidelines for Eligibility (cont.)

- Company agrees to abide by the Fly America Act when utilizing IMAGE funds for air travel expenses.
- Company operates a licensed business in Ohio to manufacture, assemble, and/or distribute a product or provide an exportable service.
- Company must identify one or more qualifying, achievable export activity or initiative requiring financial support.
- Company certifies that the products to be promoted contain a majority of U.S. content.
- Company is in good standing with all State of Ohio agencies, including the Ohio Department of Taxation.
- Company agrees to submit an economic impact evaluation as a requirement for reimbursement.
- The IMAGE program requires the application to be signed by a corporate officer, certifying eligibility criteria will be met.

How to Apply

1. Visit www.IMAGE.development.ohio.gov and download the following application materials:

- SBA Self-Representation Form and SBA Debarment Certification Form
- IMAGE Application
- ODOD Tax Clearance Form
- Vendor Forms: 1) Vendor Information Form, 2) W-9 Form, 3) DMA Form, and 4) DMA Compliance Form (these forms pertain to the Ohio company requesting the funds)

How to Apply (cont.)

2. Complete the application materials, print out, and sign where appropriate. NOTE: forms are not savable.
3. Scan all forms and return electronically to IMAGE@development.ohio.gov.

How to Apply (cont.)

4. Upon approval, grantee will receive a list of documentation required for reimbursement, along with three copies of a grant agreement form via mail for perusal and signature. Grantee will return all three signed, original grant agreements to:

Ohio Department of Development
Attn: Bonnie Spurlock
77 S. High St., Floor 29
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Grantee will receive final copy of the grant agreement with final ODOD signatures via mail.

How to Apply (cont.)

5. Grantee uses grant funds for qualifying activity.

6. Grantee sends documents for reimbursement electronically to IMAGE@development.ohio.gov:

- Invoice
- Proof of payment
- Proof of activity
- Economic impact evaluation

For clarification on these items, please reference list of Documentation Required for Reimbursement, available at www.IMAGE.development.ohio.gov.

When sending sensitive financial documents, it is recommended that grantee redacts account numbers and line items irrelevant to the claim. Please do not send originals – only photocopies.

How to Apply (cont.)

7. Reimbursement check is produced with a payout date of 30 days after receipt of invoice, and mailed to grantee.

8. The Office of Export Assistance will follow up with grantee every six months for a period of two years to capture actual sales results.

Companies that fail to provide actual sales results may be ineligible for future grants.

Any and all sales information will be kept confidential and only reported in aggregate form.

Contact Us

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Ohio

**Department of
Development**