



GRANT PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Presented by
JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.

WHAT IS METRO CHICAGO EXPORTS?

Small and medium-sized companies drive the regional economy through innovation and job creation. Metro Chicago Exports works with small and medium-sized companies in the seven-county region (Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will counties) and the City of Chicago, helping businesses navigate and address financial, structural and other barriers to exporting.

WHAT IS THE METRO CHICAGO EXPORTS GRANT PROGRAM?

Online applications for Metro Chicago Exports's 2017 Grant Program, presented by JP Morgan Chase, will be accepted until May 26, 2017.

The grant program will award up to \$5,000 to small and medium-sized companies in the seven-county region to implement an export plan. The grant will reimburse 50% of eligible expenses related to the plan.

HOW IS THE GRANT PROGRAM FUNDED?

JPMorgan Chase & Co. is a program sponsor of Metro Chicago Exports and funds the 2017 Grant Program.

HOW MANY GRANTS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED?

Metro Chicago Exports will make awards to approximately 50 companies.

WHEN IS THE APPLICATION DEADLINE?

The 2017 Grant Program application deadline is May 26, 2017. No applications will be accepted past this date.

WHAT DOES THE APPLICATION PROCESS INVOLVE?

Small and medium-sized companies located in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry and Will counties that demonstrate export potential with fewer than 500 employees are encouraged to apply.

The application process involves online submission of a grant application at www.metrochicagoexports.com.

If potential barriers to maximizing export potential are identified in the grant application, companies may be referred to export service providers to assist them in formulating international export plans.

WHAT ARE THE ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS?

In order to be considered for grant funding, an authorized representative of the company must certify that the company meets all of the following requirements:

- Registered to do business in one of the following seven counties: Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, or Will with a valid W-9 form listing company address
- Meets the Small Business Administration's definition of a small business – under 500 employees
- Been in business for at least one year from the date the application is submitted
- Operating profitably, based on domestic operations
- Provides a product/service manufactured in metro Chicago or made outside the region from which metro Chicago will derive a significant benefit from increased international sales or investment
- No legal liabilities which inhibit performance of grant/exporting
- Must be willing to share results from use of grant funds in the form of survey feedback or success stories.

Small and medium-sized companies that provide either goods or services are eligible to apply to the Metro Chicago Exports 2017 Grant Program. No preference will be given based on target export market, specific industry sector or to company location within the seven-county region.

WHAT DO GRANTS COVER?

The grant program awards may be used for the following activities including, but not limited to:

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

- Interpreter services in foreign markets
- Participation in group and individual trade missions and related costs and fees
- Participation in U.S. Department of Commerce certified trade shows and related costs and fees
- Professional customer “matchmaking” services
- U.S. Department of Commerce Gold Key Service
- U.S. Department of Commerce International Partner Search

COMPLIANCE

- Export compliance audits
- International certifications
- Legal fees associated with intellectual property protection, trademark protection and registration
- Product compliance certification

FINANCING

- International credit reports
- Letter of credit fees

MARKETING

- Development of international product marketing campaign
- Professional translation of marketing collateral and websites
- Web presence/e-commerce

TRAVEL

- Economy class international airfare for one individual including related taxes and fees

Companies may utilize grant funding for multiple services and activities taking place in calendar year 2017. Final use of funds must be pre-approved by the Metro Chicago Exports Program Manager.

WHAT ACTIVITIES ARE INELIGIBLE FOR GRANT FUNDING?

Grant funding cannot be used for travel or hospitality-related expenses including, but not limited to accommodation, domestic airfare, ground transportation, food and beverage purchases, entertainment, domestic certifications, and cost of product samples. Expenses for non-employees will not be reimbursed.

HOW ARE ELIGIBLE TRAVEL-RELATED EXPENSES DETERMINED?

Metro Chicago Exports will only reimburse expenses for international travel. Domestic travel is not an approved expense, including travel to an international show/conference that takes place in the U.S.

A company must demonstrate that any travel includes a defined business component, such as business-to-business matchmaking or meetings. Companies are encouraged to partner with the U.S. Commercial Service, Illinois Office of Trade and Investment, Small Business Development Center, or other metro regional partner agencies to structure business-to-business matchmaking opportunities.

Travel by the company without engagement of aforementioned partners may qualify for reimbursement with pre-approval from the Metro Chicago Exports Grant Program Manager. In order to gain pre-approval, the company must provide an explanation and scope for the travel, and explain how the travel will support the company's international sales efforts. To receive reimbursement, the company must present an agenda/itinerary of business meetings from the trip together with the reimbursement form.

Documented, eligible airfare for one employee will be reimbursed 50% for Economy class travel. Companies are free to select the airline of their choosing.

WHEN WILL THE WINNERS BE ANNOUNCED?

Grant Award recipients will be notified on or around June 26, 2017. Applicants for the 2017 Metro Chicago pitch competitions will be notified of the result via a separate email in June 2017 on whether they are chosen to compete as a finalist.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A COMPANY SELECTED TO RECEIVE THE GRANT?

Submission of an application does not obligate a company to accept grant assistance services, but submission does obligate a company to the terms and conditions outlined in the application if the grant is accepted. If a company decides not to move forward with the services or activities outlined in the application, the company must inform Metro Chicago Exports of its decision promptly so that funds may be appropriated to another company.

All grant award recipients must agree to share data about direct sales, signed partner agreements, and other company evidence of export success resulting from the Metro Chicago Exports Grant Award. All grant award recipients must be willing to share results from the use of grant funds in the form of survey feedback or potential success stories. The names of selected companies will be published in a press release about the 2017 grant program.

WHEN WILL COMPANIES RECEIVE THE GRANT FUNDS IF SELECTED?

The use of the grant funds is on a 50% reimbursement basis and subject to pre-approval of all expenses. This ensures that each company puts forth its own investment in each export-related activity. Requests for reimbursement must include the proper documentation or receipts, and proof of payment in U.S. dollars. To receive the maximum grant of \$5,000, a company will need to submit \$10,000 in eligible receipts.

WHAT IS THE TIMEFRAME FOR WHEN RECIPIENTS CAN USE THE GRANT?

The grant funds must be utilized by December 31, 2017. Companies may apply grant funds toward a service or activity that occurs any time in calendar year 2017, including expenses that occurred prior to the company's grant application submission.

ARE PRIOR APPLICANTS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR A 2017 GRANT?

Yes, businesses that submitted an application or received a prior award from the Metro Chicago Exports grant program in 2015 and 2016 are eligible to apply for the 2017 program. Their evaluation will include prior performance in the program.

HOW DOES METRO CHICAGO EXPORT'S GRANT PROGRAM COMPARE TO OTHER GRANT PROGRAMS LIKE I-STEP?

The 2017 grant program will award up to \$5,000 to small and medium-sized companies in the seven-county region to reimburse 50% of eligible expenses associated with implementing an export plan.

Reimbursement for eligible expenses is at a 50% rate. Companies may not use other grant assistance (i.e. I-STEP program) for the same activity such as trade shows or individual missions.

There will be a single round of Grant Awards for 2017. The application period closes May 26, 2017. Winners will be notified on or around June 26, 2017. Metro Chicago Exports Grant Program is not open on a rolling calendar basis.

WHAT IS THE METRO CHICAGO EXPORTS PITCH COMPETITION?

In addition to the Grant Program, Metro Chicago Exports will host two pitch competitions in 2017: the first in July and a second in October. Each Metro Chicago pitch competition will include ten finalists chosen from a pool of competitive applicants, who will have the opportunity to pitch their international plans for additional prizes awarded by a panel of judges.

Companies who would like to apply for a spot as a finalist in the pitch fests must complete the applicable section on the online grant application form. Note, participants in the 2016 Metro Chicago Xport Challenge are not eligible to participate in 2017.

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