



**Illinois  
Department of Commerce  
& Economic Opportunity**

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## **Illinois Awarded \$850,000 to Support Small Business Exports**

SPRINGFIELD – The Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity’s Office of Trade and Investment has received \$850,000 in federal funds to support export growth among Illinois small businesses. The funding was awarded through the Small Business Administration’s competitive State Trade Expansion Program (STEP).

“In our increasingly global economy, companies looking to grow need to look beyond domestic markets,” Department of Commerce Acting Director Sean McCarthy said. “Illinois companies reported exports of more than \$63.4 billion in 2015. STEP will allow the Illinois Department of Commerce to continue to help Illinois companies explore new markets and grow their businesses through our State Trade and Export Promotion program.”

Illinois’ State Trade and Export Promotion (ISTEP) program provides small businesses with financial and technical assistance to increase their exports. Eligible companies may participate in group or individual trade and sales missions, and receive training and support in international marketing, product compliance and general export education. Through ISTEP, Illinois companies have the opportunity to attend international trade shows across the globe.

“Our STEP program, as well as SBA’s export loans and International Trade Centers, ensure local resources are available to help small businesses tap into the global marketplace,” SBA Illinois District Director Robert “Bo” Steiner said. “By funding Illinois and its export development partners, the SBA is delivering the tools and resources necessary for small businesses in our state to build relationships and launch their services and products abroad.”

STEP helps businesses increase their market reach and international sales, generating significant returns for U.S. companies. STEP recipients on average generate \$22 in U.S. small business export sales for every \$1 of STEP investment. In total, Illinois has received nearly \$3.9 million in STEP funding since FY 2011.

Exports represent a significant opportunity for Illinois businesses. Small and medium-sized companies account for 98 percent of U.S. exporters, however less than one percent of U.S. companies currently export. Illinois is the largest exporting state in the Midwest, and the fifth largest exporting state in the country.

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