

Program Objectives

Saskatchewan Trade & Export Partnership's (STEP) Market Diversification Program (MDP) is a temporary funding program that supports the domestic and international marketing efforts of Saskatchewan exporters. The program provides financial assistance to help companies enter new markets or return to a new market within 24 months of their initial visit, where minimal or no sales have been achieved. New market segments within established geographic markets may also be considered. Eligible projects must take place between April 1, 2026 and March 31, 2028.

Trade activities taking place in the United States are not eligible under this program.

Who Can Apply

Applicants must meet all of the following requirements:

- Produce an exportable product or service to markets outside Saskatchewan, with at least 50% Saskatchewan content, meaning:
 - The last substantial transformation of the goods occurred in Saskatchewan; and
 - At least 50% of the total direct production or manufacturing costs (labour and materials) are sourced within Saskatchewan.
- Be in full compliance with all government laws and regulations.
- Have minimum annual sales of \$25,000.
- Be currently an incorporated business, partnership or proprietorship based in Saskatchewan and registered federally or provincially for a minimum of two years. Applicants may be required to provide proof of incorporation or supporting documentation.
- Be able to provide a written trade strategy or export marketing upon request.
- Must be:
 - Exhibiting in a trade show, or trade event in a new export market outside Saskatchewan and/or;
 - Participating in a STEP-led trade activity to a new export market
 - Applicants participating in a STEP led trade mission with a trade show component but not exhibiting are eligible for a maximum reimbursement of 30%.
- STEP Premium Members may also apply for eligible business development activities in prospective markets outside of trade shows and STEP missions.

Please Note:

- The Market Diversification Program is intended to reduce market-entry risk for Saskatchewan-based exporters. Applicants must demonstrate a clear economic benefit to the province.
- Applicants not headquartered in Saskatchewan must generate at least 30% of total revenues from Saskatchewan-based facilities to be eligible.
- Funding decisions will also consider sector diversity to ensure broad participation across Saskatchewan industries.

Ineligible Applicants

- The following are not eligible for funding:
 - Government entities and employees
 - Associations
 - Educational institutions
 - Not-for-profit organizations
 - Brokers, agents and distributors
 - Research institutions

Application Deadlines

Applications must be submitted no later than 45 days prior to the proposed trade show, trade event or trade mission.

Note: Meeting eligibility requirements does not guarantee approval or funding.

Funding limits

- Funding is provided as a non-repayable contribution and will not exceed:
 - 50% of eligible costs for an for an initial visit to a new market; or
 - 30% for:
 - A return visit to a new market within 24 months where minimal or no sales have occurred; or
 - Participation (without exhibiting) in a STEP-led mission with a trade show component.
- Non-STEP members:
 - May apply only if exhibiting in a new market.
 - Are not eligible to participate in STEP-led trade missions.
 - May submit up to two (2) applications per fiscal year, to a maximum of \$6,000 CAD.
- STEP Regular Members:
 - May submit up to three (3) applications per fiscal year, to a maximum of \$8,000 CAD.
- STEP Premium Members:
 - May submit up to four (4) applications per fiscal year, to a maximum or \$10,000 CAD.
- Each application must include a minimum total expense of \$1,000 CAD.

STEP's fiscal year runs April 1 – March 31.

Eligible Expenses:

Eligible costs may be reimbursed at up to 50% for an initial visit to a new market, or up to 30% for a return visit to a new market within 24 months where minimal or no sales have occurred, or for participation (without exhibiting) in a STEP-led mission that includes a trade show component. Eligible costs, reimbursed at the approved rate, include:

Travel Costs:

- Return economy airfare or mileage for up to two applicant employees.
- Mileage is calculated using the provincial mileage rate based on Google Maps distance.
- Ineligible travel costs:
 - Flights purchased with points.
 - Business or first-class airfare.
 - Seat selection and travel insurance.
 - Online vacation/group packages.
 - Additional personal travel beyond approved activity dates.

Accommodations

- Hotel accommodations for up to two employees (excluding incidentals).
- Time Shares and accommodations paid with points are not eligible.

On Ground Transportation

- Does not include personal or company vehicles.
- Ineligible transportation costs:
 - Parking expenses.
 - Rentals paid with points.

Trade Show Costs

- Booth Space and standard booth furnishings (carpet, power, Wi-Fi, display case, table, chairs).
- Trade show registration fees.
- Ineligible trade show costs:
 - Membership fees and sponsorship costs

Shipping Costs

- Shipping of trade show booths only.
 - Does not include shipping of products or samples.

Translation & Interpretation Costs

- Translation of marketing materials for the specific trade event (printing excluded)
- Accredited interpreters for the target market (must not be company employees)
- Language must be specified.

****All representatives must be full-time employees, and all invoices must be billed directly to the approved company or participating employees.**

Reimbursement Process:

Funding is provided on a reimbursement basis only for eligible direct costs already incurred; funding advances are not available.

- Within 21 days of completing the trade activity, applicants must submit detailed invoices or receipts and clear proof of payment for the following eligible expenses:
 - travel costs
 - E-tickets or airline receipts, or
 - Mileage calculated using Google Maps
 - Accommodation expenses
 - On-ground transportation costs
 - Trade show exhibition and/or registration fees
 - Shipping costs for a trade show booth
 - Translation of marketing materials or interpretation services specific to the trade event
 - A detailed itinerary of the business program conducted while abroad
 - A completed Market Diversification Program Evaluation Form outlining actual business generated from the visit (*available from the Program Administration*)
- Once all required documentation is received and approved, reimbursement will be issued by EFT within four weeks in Canadian dollars.
- The EFT payments will be made to the company or legal entity, not the individual.

Compliance and Default

Failure to meet the documentation requirements or submission timelines will result in the applicant being considered in default. In cases of default, the applicant's eligibility will be rescinded, and no reimbursement will be issued.

Applicants may not use other Canadian government funding (federal, provincial, or municipal) to cover the same eligible costs, including travel, accommodation, on-ground transportation, trade show fees, shipping, translation or interpretation services.

STEP may contact applicants up to six months after their return to request a report on the outcomes and results of the trade activity.