

GRANT PROGRAM

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

PRESENTED BY
JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.

WHAT IS THE METRO CHICAGO EXPORTS GRANT PROGRAM?

Metro Chicago Exports is launching the 2016 Grant Program, presented by JP Morgan Chase & Co., on April 4, 2016. Online Client Assessments will be accepted through May 27, 2016.

Metro Chicago Exports works with small and medium-sized companies in the seven-county region, helping businesses navigate and address financial, structural and other barriers to exporting.

Small and medium-sized companies drive the regional economy through innovation and job creation. Metro Chicago Exports invests in small and medium-sized companies to enable them to increase their global reach and further the region's economic competitiveness.

WHAT ARE THE SPECIFICS OF THE GRANT PROGRAM?

The single-round 2016 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.

In fall 2016, Metro Chicago Exports will host a pitch fest during which both 2015 and 2016 grant recipients will be eligible to submit a pitch for additional funding. Information about the pitch fest will be shared at a later date.

HOW IS THE GRANT PROGRAM FUNDED?

JPMorgan Chase & Co. is a program sponsor of Metro Chicago Exports and funding the 2016 Grant Program.

HOW MANY GRANTS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED?

Depending on the size of grants requested, Metro Chicago Exports will make awards to approximately 40 companies through this competitive program.

WHAT IS THE APPLICATION DEADLINE?

The 2016 Grant Program application deadline is May 27, 2016. 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 are existing exporters or new-to-export with fewer than 500 employees are encouraged to apply.

The application process involves two steps – an initial online Client Assessment and a formal Grant Application review of export plans, capabilities and potential. Companies that pass the Client Assessment phase will be invited to submit more comprehensive information about their plans to go global as part of the Grant Application process. If potential barriers to maximizing export potential are identified during the Client Assessment, companies may be referred to export service providers to assist them in formulating international export plans.

Companies must visit www.metrochicagoexports.com to complete the online Client Assessment to begin the process.

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
- At least three employees
- Been in business for at least one year from the date on which 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

Small and medium-sized companies that provide either goods or services will be eligible to apply to Metro Chicago Exports 2016 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 GRANTS WILL 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

CONSULTING

- Customized market research and analysis
- Export/international business plan development
- Export readiness assessments
- One-on-one export counseling

EDUCATION

- Export training programs
- Professional development

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. 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, domestic airfare, accommodation, ground transportation, food and beverage purchases, and entertainment. 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 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(s).

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

Travel-related business expenses (e.g., trade show fees, booth fees, shipping of materials to trade show, trade mission participation fees, interpreter fees) will be reimbursed 50% upon presentation of proper receipts or documentation.

HOW WILL WINNING COMPANIES BE SELECTED?

Applications submitted to the Grant Program will be reviewed for completeness. Final awards will be confirmed by the Metro Chicago Exports Grant Committee.

WHEN WILL THE WINNERS BE ANNOUNCED?

Grant Award recipients will be notified on or around July 11, 2016.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF EACH 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 will also be required to submit a narrative case study.

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.

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

The grant funds must be utilized by December 31, 2016. Companies may apply grant funds toward a service or activity that occurs any time in calendar year 2016, including expenses that occurred prior to the company's Grant Application submission.

WHAT IS THE FORMAT OF THE PITCH FEST?

Additional information about the pitch fest will be shared at a later date.

ARE PRIOR APPLICANTS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY FOR A 2016 GRANT?

Yes, businesses that submitted an application or received a prior award from the Metro Chicago Exports Grant Program in 2015 are eligible to apply for the 2016 program.

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

The single-round 2016 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 2016. The application period opens April 4, 2016 and closes May 27, 2016. Winners will be notified on or around July 11, 2016. Metro Chicago Exports Grant Program is not open on a rolling calendar basis.