



# State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) Questions and Answers

## STEP 11 – Fiscal Year 2023

1. **Can two (or more) states who are located in the same region, combine forces to create a larger booth presence at trade shows? For example, could Oregon, Washington and Idaho create a Northwest Pavilion which would encompass three individual state booths located within the pavilion?**

That would be fine from a legal perspective, provided they clearly tracked the costs for each participant in the joint effort and those costs met the usual standards of reasonableness, etc.

2. **In regard to the STEP Project Director and time management, “A Non-Federal entity STEP Project Director must devote 50% of his/her time, to the STEP project. The Director may divide his/her time across both STEP years to meet the minimum 50% requirement.” Can the STEP Project Director devote more than 50% of their time?**

Yes, the STEP Director can devote 50% or more time towards the grant. For clarification, speak with your program manager if awarded.

3. **In regard to submitting the Key Personnel Résumés and Position Descriptions attachment, do all individual resumes have to speak about international trade/export assistance or can they discuss and highlight the individuals’ work on grant management/finance/treasury functions as they support the STEP grant?**

The resumes of key personnel should reflect their work within the international and export arena. Staff should be able to display how they contribute to the STEP grant.

4. **Does the Position Description documentation need to come from a State Civil Service Department/Personnel Office or can that document be created by STEP grant management? Additionally, any details regarding Position Descriptions would be helpful, such as length and expanding on what key highlights the SBA is looking for to review?**

The position descriptions should come from the HR department reflecting the duties staff members will perform.

5. **In Grants.gov, the system does not allow us to add the full Opportunity Package ID number. The field doesn't allow enough characters for a complete entry. Would you please share guidance for navigating this issue?**

STEP does not run their system, so it is best for you to reach out to Grants.gov helpdesk. Identify the issue to them and they should be able to resolve this issue you are having.

6. **Are eligible small business concerns classified under "Educational Services" sector eligible to apply for STEP 11 funding?**

Under allowable statute activity guidance, utilizing number 9. Other Export Initiatives, found on page 6, this request could be considered and should be clearly explained how the small business will utilize the STEP funds.

7. **Will SIDO training courses for states be considered an eligible activity to include on our application? If so, what is the maximum amount of funding allowed?**

The SIDO training will be allowable for one grant cycle at the rate of \$2,500.

8. **The SBA set the expectation of voluntary demographic questions in its leadership of tracking demographic information in economic development programs (e.g., lending, disaster, and innovation programming). However, the current STEP reporting system doesn't offer that functionality to report those applicants who choose to opt out of providing demographic information. Can SBA orient the NOFO and STEP reporting system to acknowledge voluntary refusal of demographic information from applicant respondents?**

The STEP Program will take this under advisement.

9. **Is there a cap or what is the percentage of the grant that can be used on the allowable expense of trade data subscription services for the states such as WISER Trade? Does the expense come from matching funds?**

The STEP Program no longer has caps in place. The grantee can formulate their own caps on trade data subscription services. These can be funded using Federal or non-Federal funds.

10. **The Technical Proposal template includes five sections under Table of Contents – “Introduction, Exporting Experience, Directly Benefit ESBCs, Collaboration, Financial Assistance Plan”. However, the FY2023 Instructions 2023 Clearance includes five sections – “Introduction, Exporting Experience, Project Design, Financial Assistance Plan and Data Collection & Measurement of Outcomes”. There is another set of Instructions for completing the Technical Proposal Template. Should we follow the template for sections to include or the Instructions Clearance?**

Utilize the Instructions Clearance