



International Market Access Grant Program

Program Guidelines for Fiscal Year 2026	
Lead Division: Global Trade and Investment	
<input type="checkbox"/> New	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revised 7/1/2025
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grant	<input type="checkbox"/> Loan <input type="checkbox"/> Tax Credit <input type="checkbox"/> Technical Assistance

Introduction

Background Information: The International Market Access Grant (IMAG) program provides funding to support a business' specific export development and deployment strategy with WEDC staff providing technical assistance.

Program's Purpose: The IMAG program assists businesses in accelerating their export development plan, with better execution and lower financial risk.

The IMAG is unique among WEDC programs in that it provides direct assistance to individual businesses. The program is designed to be flexible and able to meet the business where they are in their export growth. The IMAG allows applicants to identify their own target market(s) and design their own export development project based on their businesses' identified needs, allowing businesses of various industries and sizes to benefit from the program.

By encouraging businesses to create their own customized plan and offering funding to support it, WEDC makes exporting accessible and valuable to businesses that need the support (i.e., small to medium size businesses). This is the only program in Wisconsin that provides financial assistance for exporting while remaining accessible to small and/or inexperienced exporters.

Eligibility Requirements

Eligible Applicants: IMAG applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be an established business operating in Wisconsin, and registered with the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions, for not less than one year that manufactures, processes, assembles and/or distributes a product or performs a service with a potential to be exported.
- Have significant export-related operations located within Wisconsin and provide economic benefit to the state (does not have to be headquartered in Wisconsin).
- Self-certify that at least 35% of the value of the product or of the service is composed of Wisconsin cost inputs. Program staff provide an Excel tool to help determine eligibility upon request.
- Have an annual gross revenue of less than \$100 million. This cap does not apply to businesses exporting Wisconsin-grown crops, dairy, or meat that are applying for IMAGs funded by the Wisconsin Initiative for Agricultural Exports.



Eligible Use of Funds: IMAGs can fund third-party costs for the following activities. Costs are only eligible to be applied to grant and matching fund expenses after WEDC approval.

Trade Shows/Missions: Assistance may be provided to attend a domestic trade show with significant international attendance, an international trade show, export-related conference, or other export-related international event. IMAG funds may not be used to pay for any cost to attend WEDC sponsored trade missions.

Marketing & Promotion: Assistance may be provided for translation of marketing materials for a targeted foreign market, design services, advertising, website development, and/or printing of advertising materials. IMAG funds may also be used for business/product/foreign trade zone certification, registration, intellectual property protection, and marketing within the foreign market.

Export Education: Assistance may be provided to support export-related conferences, seminars, meetings, webinars, and courses, including foreign language courses. These educational opportunities are for the business' staff who will be implementing the business' international export strategy. Educational courses and seminars also qualify. IMAG funds may not be used to pay for any cost to participate in ExporTech™.

Consulting Services: Assistance may be provided for services with WEDC's network of contracted authorized trade representatives, business matchmaking services, the Gold Key program, or other export- related consultants.

Matching Funds: Applicants must provide matching funds equal to 30% of the IMAG funds awarded.

Available Incentives

FY26: \$1,115,000 Total Funds consisting of:

\$1,000,000 WEDC Funds.

\$115,000 in DATCP Wisconsin Initiative for Agriculture Exports funding for businesses exporting crops, dairy and meat.

Award Sizes: Applicants who are ExporTech™ graduates may receive up to \$30,000 per award while applicants who are not ExporTech™ graduates may receive up to \$10,000 per award.

Awards per Applicant: Applicants may receive one award per fiscal year. Applicants who are ExporTech™ graduates may receive no more than six IMAGs over their lifetime, while Applicants who are not ExporTech™ graduates may receive no more than three IMAGs over their lifetime.

Activities and Expected Outcomes

Assist 44 businesses.



Impact: The goal is to provide flexible export assistance both in terms of technical expert support and financial support to become successful intentional exporters, which has a positive impact on both the business and their local community. Expected outcomes are measured in terms of sales made, contacts generated, barriers reduced, and usefulness of the grant in furthering their strategy.

Metrics: As a business development program, performance reporting metrics for IMAG are focused on measuring future export capacity. IMAG program metrics include the following list, and each project will include one or more of these metrics in its reporting requirements depending on the project's specified use of funds.

- Leads Generated
- Plans Completed
- Leverage – Total

Application Guideline

Timeline: The IMAG program application window begins July 1, 2025, and ends October 31, 2025. If there are remaining funds a second application round will be held from February 1, 2026, to March 15, 2026.

Review Considerations: WEDC may take the following into account when considering an IMAG award:

- The extent to which the applicant business is export ready.
- The extent to which the applicant business' proposed project(s) are aligned with the applicant business' stated export strategy.
- The extent to which the applicant business' proposed project(s) represents activity that is new or unique for the applicant business or is unfeasible for the applicant business without funding assistance.

How to Apply: An interested applicant should contact a WEDC GTI Grants Manager to determine if their project is right for the program. Upon review of the project, and alignment with eligibility criteria, an applicant will be invited to submit their application through Network Wisconsin.

Award Process: The completed application will be assigned to a WEDC underwriter and go through WEDC's awards administration process.

Performance Reporting: Recipients must submit a performance report documenting project completion and any other contract deliverable.

WEDC annually selects awards on a sample basis for an audit. All backup to the performance report and financial records are required to be maintained by the Recipient for a period of at least three (3) years after the last performance report is due.

WEDC may impose additional reporting requirements to evaluate project performance and to ensure compliance with contract deliverables.



Helpful Information

Definitions:

"International market" – a country other than the United States, its states or territories, or any tribal nation within its geographical borders.

"Target market" – an international market identified by an applicant as the primary focus of their export development efforts.

Revision History

Program Inception – Fiscal Year 2012

- 10/1/2017: Eliminated federal STEP funding as available funding source.
- 7/1/2019: Established limits on the number of grants per applicant; added eligibility requirement for IMAG applicants; clarified performance reporting requirements.
- 7/1/2020: Temporarily eliminated match requirement due to COVID-19 pandemic. clarified Incentives and Available Funding.
- 7/1/2021: Clarified eligible activities.
- 7/1/2022: Clarified eligible activities.
- 7/1/2023: Added gross revenue cap of \$100 Million for businesses.
- 7/1/2024: Updated program name; eliminated the Collaborative Market Access Grant from the program.