



[U.S. SBA awards Territory almost \\$330,000 through federal program for small business export initiative, export program applications available for local small businesses](#)

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CHARLOTTE AMALIE, St. Thomas, USVI - Percival E. Clouden, Chief Executive Officer of the Virgin Islands Economic Development Authority (VEDA), announces that the U.S. Small Business Administration has awarded the U.S. Virgin Islands a State Trade and Export Promotion (STEP) grant in the amount of \$322,498. In September 2012, the U.S. Virgin Islands received this second round of STEP funding. Last year was the second time the Territory applied for and was awarded the STEP grant to assist qualified local small businesses with exporting their products and services to foreign markets.

The STEP program is a three-year pilot program trade initiative that is designed to help small businesses grow, increase their exporting activities, and raise the value of the products and services of small business exporters. Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr. has designated the VIEDA to administer the STEP program in the Territory.

For small business owners who are interested in applying to participate in the STEP program, application forms are now available in both districts at the offices of the V.I. Economic Development Authority, the Small Business Administration (SBA), and the Small Business Development Center (SBDC). Application forms are also available online at www.usvieda.org. Documents that must accompany completed STEP application forms are 1) a most recent business license, and 2) a Letter of Good Standing from the Office of the Lt. Governor's Division of Corporations and Trademarks. The deadline for submitting completed applications with supporting documentation is February 6, 2013.

"This Administration is grateful for the STEP grant award that the Territory will receive for a second year. My Administration and the VIEDA continue to recognize that our local small businesses can increase their sales and grow their business through export-related activities. Our unique products and services that reflect our culture can continue to be introduced within the global marketplace through the STEP program and our local small businesses," said Governor John P. de Jongh, Jr.

A total of 20 eligible local small businesses in the Territory participated in the STEP program in the first year. The VIEDA will continue to utilize the resources of local and federal government, along with the private sector, to assist local small businesses so they can export their product and services to potential foreign buyers.

"Once again, we are extremely appreciative of this award. The STEP program can greatly assist our local small business owners in their goals to attract foreign buyers for their unique products and services. The VIEDA, in partnership with the deJongh / Francis Administration and the U.S. SBA, looks forward to continue seeking and accepting several opportunities that will help to ensure the success and growth of our local small businesses, particularly through foreign markets," said CEO Percival E. Clouden.

Complete applications, along with the required supporting, can be hand-delivered to the VIEDA's office in St. Thomas at No. 5055 Norre Gade or at No. 116 King St., Frederiksted, St. Croix. Applications can also be sent by fax to 777-8399, or via e-mail to nmarchena@usvieda.org.

For questions about STEP applications, please contact Nadine Marchena Kean, STEP Project Coordinator or Tamra Graham, at 340.714-1700. Funded in part through a grant award with the U.S. Small Business Administration.

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