



Article 172

January 17, 2011

New Online Tool Helps Small Businesses Tap Into Global Markets

By John C. Woosley, New Mexico District Director, U.S. Small Business Administration

Technology and energy products, chili peppers, nuts, dairy goods and other farm products have topped the list of New Mexico's exports for the past few years, but the state has a vast untapped potential to sell more of its goods and services well beyond our nation's boundaries.

Nearly 96 percent of the world's customers live outside the U.S., and two-thirds of the world's disposable income is also found abroad, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. That makes exporting a wise choice for New Mexico-based small businesses that want to reach beyond the limited domestic market. That's especially true because New Mexico shares a border with old Mexico, which is itself a portal to the southern end of our hemisphere.

To help small-business owners overcome any intimidation they might feel about approaching the global marketplace, the Commerce Department and U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) developed an online tool called "Six Steps to Begin Exporting," accessible at www.export.gov/begin. It is the latest tool in the National Export Initiative toolbox to help entrepreneurs begin exporting.

"One of the main hurdles potential exporters face is their fear that exporting is too complicated. This six-step process addresses and dispels that concern", SBA Administrator Karen Mills said. "Across the administration, we continue to strengthen the tools and resources so we can be the best possible partner in helping small business owners grow their customer base beyond our borders and, in doing so, create new jobs here at home."

Get started

The process begins with a self-assessment to help potential exporters evaluate their readiness to engage in international trade. Other sections focus on training and counseling programs available to businesses; resources to create an export business plan; information on conducting market research; assistance in finding foreign buyers; and investigating financing for small business exports, foreign investments or other projects.

Upon completing the self-assessment, businesses receive a score indicating their level of readiness. Based on the score, the online tool identifies additional resources to match the specific needs identified. These resources include the SBA and its nationwide resource partners

SCORE (Service Corp. of Retired Executives – counselors to America’s small businesses), Small Business Development Centers and Women’s Business Centers, as well as the Commerce Department’s U.S. Export Assistance Centers, which provide individualized support.

Sandra Necessary is the Director of the U. S. Department of Commerce’s U. S. Export Assistance Center located in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Ms. Necessary may be contacted at (505) 231-0075 or via email at sandra.necessary@trade.gov or individuals may visit the center’s website at www.buyusa.gov/newmexico.

“This practical, interactive website is just the latest example of the commitment the Obama administration has made to helping American businesses — especially small businesses — sell more of what they make around the world,” U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke said. “Connecting America’s entrepreneurs and small businesses with new buyers and new markets abroad will help create jobs and spur sustainable economic growth.”

One facet of larger effort

This joint Commerce-SBA effort is among numerous efforts being undertaken by federal agencies to support the administration’s National Export Initiative, which calls for doubling U.S. exports and supporting 2 million jobs over the next five years. U.S. exports have increased nearly 18 percent this year compared to the same period in 2009.

For more information on export services for small businesses or to find local counseling and technical assistance resources, visit www.export.gov or www.sba.gov/nm, or call the SBA New Mexico District Office at (505) 248-8225.

Finance New Mexico is an initiative of the New Mexico Small Business Investment Corporation (NMSBIC) and its partners to assist individuals and businesses in obtaining skills and funding-resources for their business or idea. To learn more, go to www.FinanceNewMexico.org.

