



Doing Business In THE U.S. AND UK

Resources for Small Businesses



U.S. Small Business
Administration

RESOURCES FOR U.S. SMALL BUSINESSES

Exporting to the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom (UK) offers dynamic trade and investment opportunities as one of the largest destinations for U.S. goods exports and the largest market in the world for U.S. service exports. Thanks to our common language, minimal trade frictions, and business-friendly environment, the UK presents an attractive choice for U.S. small business exporters.

American small and medium-sized businesses—including women-, minority-, and Native American-owned small businesses and small businesses in underserved communities—can take advantage of a range of U.S. government services and free business counseling to help you begin or expand your sales to the United Kingdom. Exporting can help your business reach new customers, increase resiliency, and improve competitiveness.

Use this checklist to guide your planning. It includes many online tools and resources to help you research international markets and learn about exporting mechanics, but in-person assistance is also available, as are competitive awards to help small businesses succeed in the international marketplace. Local trade counselors can guide you through every step outlined in this brochure and help turn your export strategy into sales.

1 Check your export readiness

Exporting is a great strategy to grow a business, but to grow smartly and purposefully, you must dedicate time and resources. An initial assessment of your exporting needs and capabilities should be your first step.

Online Resources:

Export Readiness: <https://www.trade.gov/learn-how-export>

SBA ASCENT “Growing Globally”: <https://ascent.sba.gov/>

2 Develop an export plan

Once you’ve determined exporting is right for your business, the next step is to develop an export plan assessing your opportunities, constraints, and goals. Use the export plan to create specific objectives, decide on implementation schedules, and mark milestones of your success. It can also motivate your team to reach goals. Free business counseling services, data and analysis are available to help you develop or refine an export plan. Your export plan should also consider how you will protect your intellectual property assets.

Online Resources:

Develop An Export Plan: <https://www.trade.gov/develop-export-plan>

SBA Export Plan Resources: <https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/grow-your-business/export-products/international-sales/develop-your-export-plan>

3 Conduct market research & plan your market entry strategy for the UK

Start by doing research on the UK market. Free market research is available through Country Commercial Guides, Market Intelligence Reports, and your local Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

To get a complete picture of demand for your product, look at both U.S. export statistics and the UK's import statistics for the past few years and explore developments in your industry and e-commerce.

Internet shopping is extremely popular in the UK, so it should be part of your market research. A full overview of e-commerce considerations is included in the UK Country Commercial Guide. There is also an e-Commerce Guide for U.S. Small Businesses to Sell Online in the UK. Researching trends and trade flows of the products that you sell may help you assess your market opportunity.

Commercial Service trade specialists, SBDC business counselors, SCORE volunteer mentors, and advisors at USDA State Regional Trade Groups and MBDA Business Centers can provide one-on-one counseling to help you develop an effective market entry strategy for the UK.

Online Resources:

Conducting Market Research: <https://www.trade.gov/conducting-market-research>

UK Country Commercial Guide: <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/united-kingdom-ecommerce>

USDA's UK Exporter Guide and Analysis:

<https://www.fas.usda.gov/regions/united-kingdom>

eCommerce Guide for U.S. Small Businesses to Sell Online in the UK:

https://ustr.gov/sites/default/files/IssueAreas/Small-Business/eCommerce_Guide_for_US_Small_Business.pdf

Small Business Development Centers: <https://www.sba.gov/tools/local-assistance/sbdc>

SCORE: <https://www.score.org/>

USDA State Regional Trade Groups: <https://www.fas.usda.gov/state-regional-trade-groups>

MBDA Business Centers: Develop An Export Plan:

<https://www.trade.gov/develop-export-plan>

4 Research UK tariffs & taxes

To determine the total price you need to quote for your goods and services, you will need to know the associated trade costs, including the commodity code for your goods. The commodity code will determine the UK duty rate. Requesting an advance ruling from the UK on your product's tariff classification can ensure predictability in its treatment at the border and increase your accuracy in the price you quote. Additionally, most goods and services in the UK are subject to a 20% Value Added Tax (VAT). U.S. entities exporting goods and services, including digitally, should review their VAT responsibilities and register for the UK VAT whenever required. U.S. citizen expats in the UK should also review the terms of the U.S.-UK tax treaty.

Online Resources:

Harmonized System Codes: <https://www.trade.gov/harmonized-system-hs-codes>
Working Out Your UK customs value:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/working-out-the-customs-value-of-your-imported-goods>

UK VAT Rates: <https://www.gov.uk/vat-rates>

Apply for a UK Tariff Ruling: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-an-advance-tariff-ruling>

U.S.-UK Tax Treaty: <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/international-businesses/united-kingdom-uk-tax-treaty-documents>

5 Ensure compliance & export documentation

Knowing and following the applicable laws and regulations in the United States and the UK is essential to your success. The UK's Step by Step guide to importing helps identify what goods require a license or certificate and what labeling, marking, and marketing rules apply.

Online shopping is popular in the UK, and there are specific rules for online and distance selling, as well as data protection laws. Additionally, if you will be moving goods through Northern Ireland additional rules apply. If you haven't already, determine if your product needs a U.S. export license. Most products don't need one, but it is your legal responsibility to obtain one if necessary.

Ultimately, it is critical that your business maintains records of both the steps taken to trade compliantly and of the appropriate documentation. For the UK market, this includes but is not limited to records of commercial invoices, customs paperwork, including the UK Import VAT Certificate, as well as any licenses and certificates required. Creating, following, and refreshing an export compliance program will help your small business ensure compliance and proper record retention policies.

Online Resources:

Comply with U.S. and Foreign Regulations: <https://www.trade.gov/comply-us-and-foreign-regulations>

SBA Trade Tools “Know the Laws and Regulations”: <https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/grow-your-business/export-products/international-sales/know-import-export-laws-regulations>

UK Country Commercial Guide: <https://www.trade.gov/united-kingdom-country-commercial-guide>

U.S. Export License: <https://www.trade.gov/us-export-licenses-navigating-issues-and-resource>

Importing Goods into the UK: Step by Step: <https://www.gov.uk/import-goods-into-uk>

UK Online and Distance Selling Rules: <https://www.gov.uk/online-and-distance-selling-for-businesses>

Trading and Moving Goods In and Out of Northern Ireland:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/trading-and-moving-goods-in-and-out-of-northern-ireland>

Data Protection: [https://www.gov.uk/data-](https://www.gov.uk/data-protection#:~:text=The%20Data%20Protection%20Act%202018%20is%20the%20UK%27s%20implementation%20of,used%20fairly%2C%20lawfully%20and%20transparently)

[protection#:~:text=The%20Data%20Protection%20Act%202018%20is%20the%20UK%27s%20implementation%20of,used%20fairly%2C%20lawfully%20and%20transparently](https://www.gov.uk/data-protection#:~:text=The%20Data%20Protection%20Act%202018%20is%20the%20UK%27s%20implementation%20of,used%20fairly%2C%20lawfully%20and%20transparently)

6 Determine shipping options

Shop around for the best shipping rates. Different companies have different rates and available services. Research the most cost-effective way to get your goods efficiently, securely, and legally to your UK customers.

Be sure to familiarize yourself with Incoterms, a set of internationally accepted terms spelling out which party is responsible for various costs and details throughout the shipping process such as freight, insurance, duties and taxes, customs clearance and documentation.

Consider working with a freight forwarder, who can advise on freight costs, port charges, costs of special documentation, insurance costs and the freight forwarders' own handling fees. They may recommend packing methods that will protect the merchandise during transit or can arrange to have the merchandise packed at the port or put in containers. Freight forwarders may also reserve the necessary space on a vessel, aircraft, train or truck. For e-commerce, your company may want to consider selecting an online order fulfillment service. The cost for these services is a factor that should be included in the price charged to the customer.

Online Resources:

Shipping and Logistics: <https://www.trade.gov/navigate-shipping-and-logistics>

Incoterms: <https://www.trade.gov/know-your-incoterms>

7 Find foreign buyers & partners in the UK

Typically, U.S. companies enter the UK market through distribution, franchising, or licensing agreements, or through direct foreign investment. Most of the sales and advertising techniques used in the United States are used in the United Kingdom, although companies are advised to work closely with their UK partners to account for any local differences. All advertising to consumers and business must comply with UK marketing and advertising regulations and codes of practice. Trade shows are a great way to present your products and services to a wide audience, generate trade leads, and meet potential buyers or partners. Grants may be available to minimize costs. You can also find and establish relationships with business partners with customized services provided by the International Trade Administration, such as Initial Market Check, International Company Profile, Gold Key Service, international partner search, or single company promotion. Depending on your sales channel, the first point of contact between you and your customer may be online, in which case you should develop a global web presence and a digital strategy.

Online Resources:

Customized Services: <https://www.trade.gov/services-current-exporters>

E-Commerce and Digital Strategy: <https://www.trade.gov/ecommerce>

Trade Shows: <https://www.trade.gov/trade-shows>

STEP Grants: <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs/grants/state-trade-expansion-program-step>

USDA State Regional Trade Groups: <https://www.fas.usda.gov/state-regional-trade-groups>

USDA Market Access Program:

<https://www.fas.usda.gov/programs/market-access-program-map>

8 Get paid & finance your exports

Access to capital, financing, and concerns about getting paid are often cited as reasons many U.S. companies do not export. However, many U.S. businesses are not aware of or do not take advantage of U.S. government and private export financing and insurance programs to offset risk.

As with any business transaction, due diligence is essential. While favorable payment terms are important, U.S. companies should consider all available financing options to be as competitive as possible. Many UK importers carefully consider their purchases and may seek special payment arrangements. Normal practice is for payment to be made on open account, payment in advance, letter of credit, or documentary draft. UK buyers will typically ask for credit on 60-, 90-, or 180-day terms, depending on what is accepted practice in the industry. Normal precautions in dealing with a first-time customer should be exercised, and safeguards instituted wherever possible, until a good relationship has been established with the customer.

Research methods of payment and work with your bank for financing and insurance solutions. Financing options offered by U.S. government agencies like the Small Business Administration (SBA) and the Export-Import Bank of the United States (ExIm) can help you offer competitive payment terms and mitigate the risk of non-payment. The SBA has export finance managers who can provide counseling and training on export financing options and ways to mitigate non-payment risk. In addition, SBA works with banks across U.S. States and Territories to offer tailored export finance solutions through SBA's International Trade Finance Programs. ExIm has export finance and insurance programs to ensure you get paid, and the attractive payment terms can make your product more competitive in the UK.

Online Resources:

Trade Finance Guide: <https://www.trade.gov/trade-finance-guide-quick-reference-us-exporters>

SBA Exporting Finance Products: <https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/grow-your-business/export-products/international-sales/sba-export-products>

SBA Export Finance Managers: <https://www.sba.gov/local-assistance/export-trade-assistance/export-finance-managers>

ExIm Export Solutions: <https://www.exim.gov/what-we-do#by-need>

9 **Resolve trade issues**

No one can anticipate every trade question or contingency. When issues arise, it is easy to contact a trade specialist for help or to report a trade barrier online. U.S. government trade experts will determine whether those barriers violate any trade commitments and identify strategies to address them.

The Small Business Administration offers assistance to facilitate U.S. small business trade and investment, as well as overcome a wide variety of trade regulation and trade finance challenges. U.S. small businesses can contact the inquiry point toll-free at +1 (855) 722-4877 or by email at international@sba.gov.

Online Resources:

Locate a Trade Specialist: <https://www.trade.gov/commercial-services-offices-us>

Report a Trade Barrier: <https://www.trade.gov/office-trade-agreements-negotiation-and-compliance-tanc>

SBA Trade Tools: <https://www.sba.gov/tradetools>

10 Get started today

By following this checklist, you can set your company on the path to growth by doing business in the United Kingdom. To learn more about the benefits of exporting and to work on your export strategy, find local trade assistance and schedule an appointment today.

Find Local Resources

SBA Local Assistance: <https://www.sba.gov/local-assistance>

U.S. Export Assistance Centers: <https://www.trade.gov/commercial-services-offices-us>

Minority Business Development Agency Export Centers:

<https://www.mbda.gov/page/mbda-specialty-centers>

USDA State Regional Trade Groups: <https://www.fas.usda.gov/state-regional-trade-groups>

Women's Small Business Resources & Export Assistance

Online Resources

SBA's [Office of Women's Business Ownership \(OWBO\)](https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/grow-your-business/women-owned-businesses)

<https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/grow-your-business/women-owned-businesses>

Helps women entrepreneurs through a national network of Women's Business Centers (WBCs). WBCs seek to level the playing field for all women entrepreneurs by offering free business counseling and mentoring, and low-cost training.

Find your local WBC

<https://www.sba.gov/local-assistance>

Additional Resources for Women Entrepreneurs and Women-Owned Businesses

ASCENT

<https://ascent.sba.gov/>

ASCENT is SBA's latest free digital e-learning platform geared to help women entrepreneurs grow and expand their businesses, including preparing and recovering from disasters, strategic marketing, financial strategy development, and growing globally.

The Women's Global Trade Empowerment Program

<https://www.trade.gov/womens-global-trade-empowerment>

The International Trade Administration (ITA) provides this platform to women businesses to help them gain the necessary skills to build an export strategy and develop international business connections.

Enterprising Women of Color Initiative

<https://www.mbda.gov/enterprising-women-of-color>

The Minority Business Development Agency's (MBDA) Enterprising Women of Color (EWOC) focuses on supporting minority women entrepreneurs and increase employment opportunities.

National Women's Business Council

<https://www.nwbc.gov>

NWBC is a non-partisan federal advisory council which provides access to webinars, data and public meetings as the U.S. government's only independent voice for women entrepreneurs.

SBA's Business Guide for Women

www.sba.gov/women

For additional information on resources.

Export Assistance for Women Exporters: Business Counseling

Business Counseling

SBA Trade Tools

www.sba.gov/tradetools

Trade Tools is a one-stop shop for identifying resources across the U.S. Government for small business selling internationally, including exploring opportunities in other markets, learning about U.S. trade agreements, and exploring programs and services for small businesses who want to go global. It is available in English and Spanish. SBA's OIT also provides free counseling to help small businesses export. Contact the toll-free trade hotline at 1-855-722-4877 or international@sba.gov.

Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs)

<https://americassbdc.org>

In addition to WBCs, women-owned small businesses can also access no-cost business counseling and low-cost training from SBA's SBDCs.

Find your local SBDC: www.sba.gov/sbdc

Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)

www.score.org

Through a network of 10,000 dedicated volunteers, SCORE provides business mentoring and most services at no cost.

Find a mentor specialized in your area of focus

[https://www.score.org/content/search-mentor?f\[0\]=content](https://www.score.org/content/search-mentor?f[0]=content).

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)

<https://www.mbda.gov/>

The U.S. Department of Commerce's MBDA's national network of MBDA Business Centers, Specialty Centers, and Grantees offer customized business development and industry-focused services for minority business enterprises.

U.S. Commercial Service

<https://www.trade.gov/commercial-services-offices-us>

The International Trade Administration's network of U.S. Commercial Service offices are located in more than 100 cities across the United States. They are staffed by international trade specialists who can help you develop an export strategy. Some locations include Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM) and SBA trade finance specialists. To find a location near you for free counseling or fee-based customized services sell your products and services to the United Kingdom and other export destinations <https://www.trade.gov/commercial-services-offices-us>.

State Regional Trade Groups

<https://www.fas.usda.gov/state-regional-trade-groups>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture supports four non-profit regional groups focused on assisting small businesses of agricultural products export, by providing training; analysis of export opportunities; trade shows; and support for international marketing.

Export Assistance for Women Exporters: Online Resources

Online Resources

SME Trade Financing

<https://www.sba.gov/about-sba/sba-locations/headquarters-offices/office-international-trade/sba-export-products>

SBA's loan portfolio features a variety of export financing products that provide lenders with up to a 90 percent guaranty, and can cover things like day-to-day operations, advance orders with suppliers, and refinancing existing debts.

Find your local SBA Export Finance Manager: <https://www.sba.gov/local-assistance/export-trade-assistance/export-finance-managers>

Additional solutions are offered through EXIM:

<https://grow.exim.gov/small-business-overview>

Export Solutions

<https://www.trade.gov/export-solutions>

ITA's export solutions website helps U.S. exporters develop an export plan, conduct market research, and learn about export mechanics. create successful international sales strategies and provides additional online training and resources for companies.

E-Commerce Solutions

<https://www.trade.gov/ecommerce>

assistance with improving your global online presence and digital strategy

Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Grant

www.sbir.gov

The SBIR program is highly competitive and encourages domestic small businesses to engage in Federal Research/Research and Development (R/R&D) with the potential for commercialization.

Native American Small Business Resources & Export Assistance

Online Resources

SBA's Office of Native American Affairs (ONAA)

<https://www.sba.gov/about-sba/sba-locations/headquarters-offices/office-native-american-affairs/office-native-american-affairs-resources>

Supports the prosperity of American Indians, Alaska Natives and Native Hawaiians entrepreneurs, offering training and technical assistance, including Entrepreneurial Empowerment Workshops through ONAA partners

<https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/grow-your-business/native-american-owned-businesses#section-header-2>

Export Assistance for American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Exporters: Business Counseling

Business Counseling

SBA Trade Tools

www.sba.gov/tradetools

Trade Tools is a one-stop shop for identifying resources across the U.S. Government for small business selling internationally, including exploring opportunities in other markets, learning about U.S. trade agreements, and exploring programs and services for small businesses who want to go global. It is available in English and Spanish. SBA's OIT also provides free counseling to help small businesses export. Contact the toll-free trade hotline at 1-855-722-4877 or international@sba.gov.

Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs)

<https://americassbdc.org>

In addition to WBCs, women-owned small businesses can also access no-cost business counseling and low-cost training from SBA's SBDCs. Find your local SBDC: www.sba.gov/sbdc

Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)

www.score.org

Through a network of 10,000 dedicated volunteers, SCORE provides business mentoring and most services at no cost.

Find a mentor specialized in your area of focus

[https://www.score.org/content/search-mentor?f\[0\]=content](https://www.score.org/content/search-mentor?f[0]=content).

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)

Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA)

<https://www.mbda.gov/>

The U.S. Department of Commerce's MBDA's national network of MBDA Business Centers, Specialty Centers, and Grantees offer customized business development and industry-focused services for minority business enterprises.

U.S. Commercial Service

<https://www.trade.gov/commercial-services-offices-us>

The International Trade Administration's network of U.S. Commercial Service offices are located in more than 100 cities across the United States. They are staffed by international trade specialists who can help you develop an export strategy. Some locations include Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM) and SBA trade finance specialists. To find a location near you for free counseling or fee-based customized services sell your products and services to the United Kingdom and other export destinations <https://www.trade.gov/commercial-services-offices-us>.

State Regional Trade Groups

<https://www.fas.usda.gov/state-regional-trade-groups>

The U.S. Department of Agriculture supports four non-profit regional groups focused on assisting small businesses of agricultural products export, by providing training; analysis of export opportunities; trade shows; and support for international marketing.

Export Assistance for American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Exporters: Online Resources

Online Resources

SME Trade Financing

<https://www.sba.gov/about-sba/sba-locations/headquarters-offices/office-international-trade/sba-export-products>

SBA's loan portfolio features a variety of export financing products that provide lenders with up to a 90 percent guaranty, and can cover things like day-to-day operations, advance orders with suppliers, and refinancing existing debts.

Find your local SBA Export Finance Manager: <https://www.sba.gov/local-assistance/export-trade-assistance/export-finance-managers>

Additional solutions are offered through EXIM:

<https://grow.exim.gov/small-business-overview>

Export Solutions

<https://www.trade.gov/export-solutions>

ITA's export solutions website helps U.S. exporters develop an export plan, conduct market research, and learn about export mechanics. create successful international sales strategies and provides additional online training and resources for companies.

E-Commerce Solutions

<https://www.trade.gov/ecommerce>

assistance with improving your global online presence and digital strategy

Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Grant

www.sbir.gov

The SBIR program is highly competitive and encourages domestic small businesses to engage in Federal Research/Research and Development (R/R&D) with the potential for commercialization.

Rural America's Intelligence Service for Exporters (RAISE)

<https://www.trade.gov/raise>

The U.S. Commercial Service operates a Rural Export Center, which provides American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-owned companies in rural areas with one-on-one market intelligence from a team that curates customized industry-specific insights and contacts. RAISE market intelligence can help identify target markets, deliver in-depth country reports, and develop a potential partner list. The Rural Export Center also offers website globalization training and services for rural businesses.

Our Vision

Create the conditions for economic growth and opportunity for all communities.

Our Mission

MBDA is the only federal agency solely dedicated to the growth and global competitiveness of minority business enterprises.

What We Do

Expand MBE access to capital, contracts and markets
Service MBEs through our national network of programs
Operate as a clearinghouse for MBE data and research
Lead all federal agencies in promoting MBE growth and economic equity

State of Minority Business Enterprises

There are more than 9.7 million minority-owned businesses in the United States

- Employing more than 9.4 million people
- Generating more than \$1.8 trillion in revenue annually

The Minority Business Development Act of 2021

The Minority Business Development Act of 2021 was signed into law as a part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This historic legislation:

- Makes MBDA a permanent federal agency.
- Increases programs and outreach to the nation's 9.7 million minority-owned businesses.
- Authorizes MBDA to mobilize all federal agencies to promote MBE growth and economic equity.