

Government Support for Exporters

Business Information Factsheet

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Introduction

Businesses throughout the UK can access a variety of government support initiatives to help them enter or develop new export markets.

This factsheet provides information about government support for UK traders who are planning to export their goods and services. It explains where they can get local advice about trading internationally and outlines the main support services for exporters. It also covers financial support for overseas trade visits, access to export finance and insurance, and includes details of training courses for UK exporters.

Support for exporters in the UK

The Department for International Trade (DIT) is the government agency that provides support to UK-based exporters to help them succeed in international markets.

The DIT has local offices throughout England, with International Trade Teams that can provide expert face-to-face advice and practical support to local firms wanting to grow their business overseas. The DIT provides an online search tool to help users locate their nearest DIT office (www.contactus.trade.gov.uk/office-finder).

Help to identify export opportunities and risks

Trade specialists

The DIT has a network of trade specialists who help exporters at all stages to benefit from the DIT's international network. Firms can get help with finding international contacts including buyers, agents and distributors, as well as access support to prepare for a trade show or overseas market visit. Costs are based on the time required to deliver the work. Go to www.gov.uk/overseas-customers-export-opportunities/trade-specialist-help for further information.

Aid Funded Business

The DIT's Aid Funded Business service helps UK firms of any size and turnover find out how to supply goods and services to international aid agencies. To be eligible, firms must have experience of exporting and at least three years' audited accounts. Costs vary according to the level of support given by the network, and the scope of events or missions. Firms will be told about any charges before using the service. Go to www.gov.uk/guidance/aid-funded-business for more information.

High Value Opportunities

The DIT's High Value Opportunities (HVO) programme helps UK firms to identify large-scale procurement projects and bid for contracts in other countries. Firms of all sizes and levels of exporting experience can apply. Go to www.events.trade.gov.uk for more information about current high value opportunities.

Business opportunity alerts

Exporting is Great provides a database of export opportunities for UK firms. The database provides information on more than 1,500 business opportunities at any one time. These cover a range of sectors, and include public and private sector contracts and projects. UK firms can also register with Exporting is Great to receive international sales leads. Go to www.exportingisgreat.gov.uk for more information.

Directory of Exporters

UK firms seeking export opportunities can join the DIT's Directory of Exporters. The directory connects UK business owners with contacts from around the world. Potential buyers from global markets can also search the directory for firms and suppliers located across the UK. Go to <https://find-a-buyer.export.great.gov.uk> for more information.

Overseas business risk guides

The DIT and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) regularly publish overseas business risk guides, which provide detailed information on potential risks when trading in almost 100 different countries. Go to www.gov.uk/government/collections/overseas-business-risk for further details.

Support for overseas trade visits

Trade Access Programme

The DIT's Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP) provides grant funding for firms to attend certain overseas tradeshows. Grants range from £500 to £2,500 depending on the location of the event and whether or not the firm is attending as part of a group. Go to www.gov.uk/guidance/tradeshow-access-programme for further details about TAP eligibility criteria.

Sector-specific support

Music Export Growth Scheme

The Music Export Growth Scheme allows small and medium-sized music labels, distributors and management firms to apply for grants ranging from £5,000 to £50,000, to market UK music projects overseas. Applicants will be expected to part-fund the project themselves and must provide detailed plans of how they intend to use the grant. Go to www.bpi.co.uk/news-analysis/music-export-growth-scheme for further information.

E-Exporting Programme

The DIT's E-Exporting Programme helps UK retailers and brands export their products overseas via e-commerce. This scheme helps retailers that are new to selling online, as well as those that are already selling online, but need help with specific issues or support to sell on multiple platforms. Firms are allocated an e-commerce adviser and can receive advice on issues such as setting up on e-marketplaces, identifying opportunities and developing an international online strategy. Go to www.gov.uk/guidance/e-exporting to find out more about this programme.

Support for exporters in Scotland

In Scotland, local advice on international trade is provided by DIT partner organisations Scottish Enterprise (www.scottish-enterprise.com/services/do-business-outside-scotland) and Scottish Development International (www.sdi.co.uk/export-from-scotland). Both organisations can provide expert face-to-face advice and practical support to Scottish firms wanting to grow their business overseas.

International Market Research Service

Scottish Enterprise's free International Market Research Service undertakes overseas market research on behalf of new and existing exporters in Scotland. It can help firms decide whether to export to a new market, identify customers and competitors, and understand global market trends. Go to www.scottish-enterprise.com/services/do-business-outside-scotland/international-market-research/overview for more information.

Overseas market support

Scottish Enterprise enables exporters at all stages to benefit from Scottish Enterprise's international network. Firms can get help with finding international contacts, establishing business relationships overseas and identifying export opportunities. Eligible firms can apply for financial assistance with up to 50% of total project costs. Go to www.scottish-enterprise.com/services/do-business-outside-scotland/overseas-market-support/overview for further information.

Market entry support

Scottish Enterprise provides incubator spaces in the United States and South East Asia to help Scottish firms expand into these markets. Firms can rent competitively priced office space in Boston, Houston, San Jose and Singapore. In-market experts and advisers are based in each of the offices to provide on-site export advice and support. Go to www.scottish-enterprise.com/services/do-business-outside-scotland/market-entry-support/incubator-offices for further information.

Support for overseas trade visits

Scottish Development International leads delegations of new and existing Scottish exporters to major international trade shows. Firms may be eligible for financial support towards travel and accommodation costs. Go to www.scottish-enterprise.com/services/do-business-outside-scotland/funding-to-attend-trade-shows/overview for further information.

Make it to Market Grant

Scottish Enterprise provides grant funding for firms to prepare a new or existing product or service for international markets. Grants range from between £2,000 and £5,000 up to a maximum of 70% of total project costs. Go to www.scottish-enterprise.com/services/do-business-outside-scotland/make-it-to-market-grant/overview for more information on the eligibility criteria.

Support for exporters in Wales

In Wales, local advice on international trade is provided by DIT partner organisation Business Wales (<https://businesswales.gov.wales/zones/export>). Business Wales can provide expert face-to-face advice, training and practical support to help firms start exporting and expand into new markets.

Help to identify export opportunities

Business Wales runs a range of free training courses and workshops to help firms develop an export strategy, select the best export market, create a market entry strategy and understand export procedures, regulations and logistics.

Business Wales also enables exporters at all stages to benefit from its international network. Firms can get help with identifying potential customers, agents or distributors, conducting market research and advice on local trading conditions and regulations. Business Wales will also help firms arrange face-to-face meetings with potential customers, as well as attend the meetings to provide support if necessary. Eligible firms can apply for financial assistance with up to 75% of total project costs.

Go to <https://businesswales.gov.wales/zones/export/how-we-can-help/support-export-guide> for more information.

International Trade Development Programme

The International Trade Development Programme helps firms of any size to grow their business through export. New and existing exporters across Wales can get help with developing an export strategy and creating a market entry strategy, as well as advice on financial considerations and export procedures. Go to <https://businesswales.gov.wales/zones/export/how-we-can-help/support-export-guide> for more information.

International Trade Opportunities Programme

The International Trade Opportunities Programme enables new and existing exporters of any size to benefit from Business Wales's international network. Firms that have identified their target market and are now looking for export opportunities can get support to identify and arrange face-to-face meetings with potential customers and access advice on local trading conditions and regulations. Eligible firms can apply for financial assistance with up to 75% of total project costs. Go to <https://businesswales.gov.wales/zones/export/how-we-can-help/support-export-guide> for more information.

Wales Business Network

Wales Business Network connects firms in Wales with contacts and potential customers in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The network provides a directory of new and existing exporters that are already doing business across MENA or have expressed an interest in doing so. Firms in Wales can search the directory for opportunities and potential contacts. Go to <https://businesswales.gov.wales/networkmena/doing-business-mena-region> for more information.

Support for overseas trade visits

Business Wales runs a series of trade missions and exhibitions every year that help new and existing exporters showcase their products and services, make business contacts and identify customers. Eligible firms can apply for financial assistance with up to 50% of total project costs. Go to https://businesswales.gov.wales/sites/business-wales/files/Export%20Brochure_English_LR.pdf for more information.

Support for exporters in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, local advice on international trade is provided by Invest Northern Ireland (www.investni.com/support-for-business.html). Invest Northern Ireland can provide expert face-to-face advice, training and practical support to firms wanting to grow their business overseas.

Help to identify export opportunities

Invest Northern Ireland supports firms to develop an export strategy. Firms can access help to identify export markets, conduct market research, create a market entry strategy and connect with potential customers. Go to www.investni.com/support-for-business/develop-an-export-strategy.html for more information.

Export workshops

Invest Northern Ireland runs a series of workshops that new and existing exporters can attend to develop their export skills. The workshops provide practical advice and guidance on a range of export issues, including export risks, best practice, export procedures and financial considerations. The workshops cost £75 per person to attend. Go to www.investni.com/support-for-business/develop-export-skills.html for more information.

Support for overseas trade visits

Invest Northern Ireland runs a series of trade missions and exhibitions every year that new and existing exporters can attend to showcase their product or service, make new contacts and identify potential customers. Eligible firms can apply for financial assistance with up to 50% of the cost of the airfare for the visit, as well as £75 per night towards accommodation costs. Go to www.investni.com/support-for-business/take-part-in-market-visits.html for more information.

Trade Accelerator Plan

The Trade Accelerator Plan supports firms in Northern Ireland to start exporting and expand into new markets. Existing and first-time exporters can access support and funding to attend meet-the-buyer events, trade missions and exhibitions. Go to www.investni.com/trade-accelerator-plan.html for more information.

SOLEX

The SOLEX programme provides assistance to exporters based in Northern Ireland to help them exhibit at approved trade shows outside Northern Ireland where Invest Northern Ireland does not have a presence. Eligible firms can apply for financial assistance with 50% of the costs of their visit up to a maximum of £2,000. Go to www.investni.com/solex.html for further details about SOLEX eligibility criteria.

Training for UK exporters

Developing export skills

The **DIT** provides training events, conferences and webinars to help UK exporters develop their skills and knowledge of overseas markets. Go to www.events.trade.gov.uk for more information about events and webinars.

Local Chambers of Commerce run training courses in business and exporting skills at locations across the UK. Further details are available on request from local chambers. Go to <http://exportbritain.org.uk/training.html> for details.

The Institute of Export & International Trade (IOE&IT) runs a range of courses on exporting, including one-day courses such as An Introduction to Exporting, International Business Essentials, and International Documentation and Customs Compliance. These run regularly in locations including London, Peterborough and Glasgow. Go to www.export.org.uk/training for further details.

Exporting, customs and VAT

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) runs a series of free webinars about common exporting issues, customs and VAT for exporters. The webinars cover the export process, record-keeping, finding commodity codes, and other customs and VAT issues. Go to www.gov.uk/guidance/help-and-support-for-international-trade and www.gov.uk/guidance/help-and-support-for-vat for further details.

Export finance and insurance

The majority of UK exports are sold on credit, and exporters often have to accept deferrals in payment of up to 180 days, depending on credit terms. Exporters may also be exposed to the risk that they will not receive payment at all. Exporters can overcome these problems by obtaining finance and insurance from their bank or a credit insurer, but those that cannot get help from commercial sources may receive support from the Government.

UK Export Finance (UKEF, also known as the Export Credits Guarantee Department) is the UK Government's export credit agency. UKEF services are commonly used by larger firms and established exporters. UKEF can provide lines of credit to facilitate the purchase of UK exports by overseas buyers, and credit insurance policies to cover UK exporters against the risk of non-payment by overseas customers. UKEF can also provide overseas investment insurance, which covers exporters for losses resulting from political events in a country they do business with.

The UKEF Direct Lending Facility provides export credit loans directly to overseas purchasers of goods and services supplied by UK exporters. There is no lower limit, but exporters enquiring

about loans of £5 million or less should contact UKEF, as another scheme may be more appropriate. Go to www.gov.uk/direct-lending-scheme for details.

Go to www.gov.uk/government/collections/exporting-find-out-if-we-can-help for details about all UKEF products and services.

Go to www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-export-finance-quick-links for answers to frequently asked questions.

Hints and tips

- The GOV.UK website provides a range of information for UK exporters. Go to www.gov.uk/browse/business/exports for details.
- Local DIT International Trade Teams provide free expert advice for exporters.
- Exporters can sign up for business opportunity alerts from Exporting is Great.
- Exporters can attend DIT training events.

Further information

BIF208 A Guide to Export Documentation

BIF225 An Introduction to Getting Paid by Overseas Trade Customers

BIF238 A Guide to Methods of Entering Export Markets

BIF318 Choosing and Using a Business Translator

BIF396 Choosing and Using a Freight Forwarder

Useful publications

'DIT Teams in the English regions: helping companies export and grow overseas'

Department for International Trade (DIT)

Website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukti-teams-in-the-english-regions

Useful contacts

The Department for International Trade (DIT) is the government agency responsible for promoting UK export trade.

Tel: (020) 7215 5000

Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-trade

UK Export Finance (UKEF) is the UK's export credit agency, providing government support to exporters.

Tel: (020) 7271 8010

Website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-export-finance

Business Wales provides information and advice about exporting from Wales.

Tel: 0300 060 3000

Website: <https://businesswales.gov.wales/zones/export>

Scottish Enterprise is a partner organisation of the DIT, providing specific support to firms in Scotland.

Tel: 0300 013 3542

Website: www.scottish-enterprise.com/services/do-business-outside-scotland

Scottish Development International works in partnership with Scottish Enterprise to deliver advice to exporters in Scotland.

Tel: 0300 013 2734

Website: www.sdi.co.uk

Invest Northern Ireland provides export advice to firms based in Northern Ireland.

Tel: 0800 181 4422

Website: www.investni.com/support-for-business.html

ExportSavvy works in partnership with the DIT to deliver advice and support to exporters across the UK.

Website: www.exportsavvy.co.uk

'Export for Prosperity' is an online resource including news and information about exporting issues and opportunities. It is published in association with the DIT.

Tel: 0333 344 1350

Website: www.exportforprosperity.com

Open to Export is a DIT-backed online community supporting small and medium-sized UK exporters.

Website: <http://opentoexport.com>

The British Chambers of Commerce provide information, support and training for exporters.

Tel: (020) 7654 5800

Website: www.exportbritain.org.uk

The Institute of Export & International Trade (IOE&IT) is a professional membership body representing anyone involved in exporting and international trade.

Tel: (01733) 404400

Website: www.export.org.uk

The British Exporters database is a resource providing links to agents and exporting opportunities.

Tel: (0117) 214 0877

Website: www.exportuk.co.uk

The British Exporters Association (BExA) is a trade body representing UK exporters and organisations that support them. It publishes free PDF guides for UK exporters.

Tel: (020) 7222 5419

Website: www.bexa.co.uk

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Cobweb Information Ltd, Unit 9 Bankside, The Watermark, Gateshead, NE11 9SY.

Tel: 0191 461 8000 Website: www.cobwebinfo.com