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## Christie Administration Announces New Statewide Program To Expand Export Opportunities and Create Jobs for New Jersey Small Businesses

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### ***New Jersey State Trade and Export Promotion (STEP) Program to Provide Training and Export Assistance to New Jersey Exporters***

**Trenton, NJ** – Recognizing the role New Jersey's export industry plays in advancing the state's economy and creating jobs, Acting Governor Kim Guadagno announced during a speech today to the U.S. Commercial Service Global Business Forum in Atlantic City, a new statewide program to help small exporters gain better access to foreign markets against increasingly tough global competition. The New Jersey State Trade and Export Promotion (STEP) program, funded through a \$204,000 grant from the Small Business Administration's (SBA) STEP program along with state resources, will provide training and export assistance to eligible small businesses that are new to export, as well as those already selling their goods and services to other countries. The program will be administered by the New Jersey Business Action Center's (BAC) Office of International Business Development and Protocol over a one-year period.

"The New Jersey State Trade and Export Promotion program will equip small businesses with better knowledge and provide opportunities to promote their goods and services in the global marketplace. This program will strengthen New Jersey's small business sector, strengthen our job creation efforts, and spur new business opportunities for Garden State firms," said Acting Governor Kim Guadagno, who leads economic development efforts for the Christie Administration. "We know that New Jersey's small businesses offer goods and services that are competitive and marketable on a global scale. The Christie Administration plans to continue to work hand-in-hand with eligible small businesses so they can identify and take advantage of important export opportunities."

The STEP initiative is designed to increase the number of new small business exporters, increase the value of exports by existing small business exporters, and expand job creation and retention through export activity. Program funding will be available for training and assistance services to help bolster export opportunities for New Jersey companies including participation in international trade events, webinars and market identification projects. To be eligible for the program, a New Jersey small business must be owned or controlled by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals, women, veterans and/or, service-connected disabled veterans or rural small businesses. Small business enterprises that are new to the market of the People's Republic of China are also eligible.

This program furthers the Christie Administration's ongoing efforts to help New Jersey businesses grow and create new jobs. Since taking office, the Administration has announced a number of actions that will encourage new export opportunities including the investment of \$1 billion dollars into modernizing the Bayonne Bridge, and the new Office of International Business Development & Protocol in the Business Action Center hosting upwards of 30 different foreign delegations and trading partner events in New Jersey. New Jersey currently ranks 5th nationally in the number of small business exporters in the United States with 14,406 small business enterprises currently exporting.

The Business Action Center is within the Department of State and is part of the state's Partnership for Action (PFA). Led by Lt. Governor Kim Guadagno, the PFA is a three-pronged public-private approach to economic development and the starting point for all initiatives, policies and efforts to grow New Jersey's economy and create quality, sustainable jobs in our communities. The three elements of the PFA include the Business Action Center, which serves the business community as a one-stop-shop; the Economic Development Authority (EDA), serving as the state's "bank for business"; and Choose New Jersey, Inc. an independently funded and operated 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation created to help market the state as an ideal location for business.

For more information on BAC's Office of International Business Development and Protocol and the new STEP grant program, call the Business Action Center at (866) 534-7789.

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