



Small Business Development Centers
Helping businesses start, grow, and prosper.

The Wharton School
 University of Pennsylvania
 3819-33 Chestnut Street
 Suite 325
 Philadelphia, PA 19104

(215) 898-1219
www.pasbdc.org

CONTACT

Kelly Cofrancisco
 (215) 746-6474

kcofran@wharton.upenn.edu

February 27, 2013
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pennsylvania SBDC Aims to Grow Small Business Exports on Trade Mission to Panama and Colombia

SBDC Locations

- Bucknell University
- Clarion University
- Duquesne University
- Gannon University
- Indiana University of Pennsylvania
- Kutztown University of Pennsylvania
- Lehigh University
- Lock Haven University
- Penn State University
- Saint Francis University
- Saint Vincent College
- Shippensburg University
- Temple University
- University of Pittsburgh
- University of Scranton
- The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania
- Widener University
- Wilkes University

PHILADELPHIA, PA – The [Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers](#) (SBDC) are partnering with the [Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development](#)'s (DCED) Center for Trade Development and the [U.S. Commercial Service](#) to embark on a trade mission to Panama and Colombia from June 23-29, 2013 for small Pennsylvania businesses.

“Free Trade Agreements with Panama and Colombia represent a great opportunity for Pennsylvania’s businesses,” said Pennsylvania SBDC State Director Christian Conroy. “We encourage businesses with export potential to attend this trade mission to expand their sales through entering these two growing markets.”

The mission is partially funded through a State Trade and Export Promotion (STEP) grant from the U.S. Small Business Administration to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development’s Center for Trade Development. The goal of STEP is to increase the number of small businesses that are exporting and raise the value of exports for those companies already selling abroad. The Pennsylvania SBDCs are contributing to the goals of this project through developing market guides to the Colombian and Panamanian markets, delivering educational programs on export opportunities to these markets for Pennsylvania small businesses, and coordinating the June trade mission.

“With small businesses accounting for almost half of Pennsylvania’s private-sector employment, creating new opportunities for small business growth is an important part of Governor Tom Corbett’s job creation strategy,” said Department of Community and Economic Development Secretary C. Alan Walker. “In partnership with the state’s small business development centers, the upcoming trade mission to Panama and Columbia will create new sales opportunities for our small businesses.”

“With 96 percent of the world’s population living outside of the United States, we’re working to ensure that our small business community has the resources to be able to compete globally,” said U.S. Small Business Administration Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Natalia Olson-Urtecho. “Our export loan programs enable small business owners to take advantage of foreign market growth opportunities and connect with international buyers by helping them learn where to start and how to succeed.”

(MORE)

Panama is the second largest free trade zone in the world, with a logistics and distribution hub to Asia and the Americas through the Panama Canal. In 2011, Panama ranked first for highest growth in Latin America with a growth rate of 8 percent. Panama signed a Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. on October 31, 2012. U.S. products and services in high demand include agriculture, automotive, building products, computers and peripherals, construction equipment, electrical power systems, financial services, franchising, port and shipbuilding, security and safety equipment, education and telecommunications equipment.

Colombia's economy has been growing at an annual rate of 5 percent for the past four years, and Pennsylvania exports to the country have grown 138 percent from 2005-2010. In 2011, Columbia signed a Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. and the European Union providing preferential or zero tariffs for U.S. products and services. U.S. products and services in high demand are oil and gas machinery, environmental, transportation and infrastructure, construction and mining equipment, telecommunications equipment, information technology, military equipment, automotive parts, electrical power systems, food and beverage processing, package equipment, medical equipment and education.

Since May 2012, The Pennsylvania SBDC has operated under a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\) with the U.S. Commercial Service](#) to increase awareness among small businesses about exporting and the tools and resources both organizations provide to help them succeed. Under the MOU, the Pennsylvania SBDCs and U.S. Commercial Service's network of worldwide offices work together on marketing, educational programs and events leveraging both entities' expertise to help make U.S. businesses—and particularly small and medium-sized, Pennsylvania based firms—more export savvy. In 2012 alone, the Pennsylvania SBDC has helped its clients grow their exports by more than \$45 million.

“This trade mission is a perfect example of seamless federal-state cooperation where Pennsylvania businesses stand to benefit from the depth and breadth of resources offered by the U.S. Commercial Service and the SBDC network,” said U.S. Commercial Service Mid-Atlantic Regional Director Joe Hanley. “Our U.S. Commercial Service staff in Pennsylvania, Colombia and Panama are excited to work with the Pennsylvania SBDCs to help Pennsylvania companies increase their export sales and grow jobs back here at home.”

The Pennsylvania Global Access Program (GAP), which is supported by the STEP grant, will cover up to \$5,000 in reimbursable expenses to attend the trade mission for qualifying small businesses. Companies with export potential are encouraged to learn more about the trade mission by attending an information session in their area or contacting their local SBDC directly. Upcoming Panama and Colombia trade mission seminars are listed below:

- [Duquesne University SBDC, Pittsburgh, PA – February 28, 2013, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.](#)
- [Kutztown University SBDC, Harrisburg, PA – March 14, 2013, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.](#)
- [St. Francis University SBDC, Loretto, PA – March 14, 2013, 1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.](#)
- [St. Vincent College SBDC, Latrobe, PA – March 15, 2013, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.](#)

The deadline to register for the trade mission is March 28, 2013. Interested companies are encouraged to attend an information session or [download the event flyer and participant registration form](#) for more details. Online registration and payment is available through Duquesne University SBDC's website at www.duq.edu/sbdc. Questions may be directed to Brent Rondon at rondon@duq.edu or (412) 396-5670.

(MORE)

The trade mission is made possible through the collaboration of the U.S. Small Business Administration; U.S. Commercial Service; Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, Center for Trade Development; and Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers.

###

About Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)

The Pennsylvania Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) supports the economic development of Pennsylvania by providing entrepreneurs and small businesses with individual consultation, comprehensive education and information necessary to help their businesses start, grow, and prosper. SBDCs deliver consulting services and educational programs through a network of [18 locations](#) across Pennsylvania. SBDC consultants work with small business owners and entrepreneurs in confidential, individualized sessions to help them with issues including new business development, shaping a business plan, investigating funding opportunities, and much more. For more information on the Pennsylvania SBDC services and impact, please visit www.pasbdc.org.