



MARKET DEVELOPMENT COOPERATOR PROGRAM DISCOVER THE AMERICAN WEST

Millions of international visitors each year pass through hundreds of “gateway” communities to travel to the national parks, forests and other Federal and tribal lands that are predominate in the 13 Western states. Yet the small and medium businesses (SME’s), so characteristic of these rural communities, often lack the understanding of how to market their services in the international markets. As a result they fail to capitalize fully on the economic potential of these opportunities.

The “Discover the American West” three-year marketing program will educate the SME’s in selected gateway communities on marketing strategies to export their services to overseas buyers (tour operators), in many cases for the first time. Through specially designed workshops, training materials, and consultations, these SME’s will be encouraged to work collaboratively with other public/private sector suppliers in their communities to develop products (tour packages) that can be promoted and sold in the international marketplace.

The SME’s will participate in trade missions to selected overseas countries in cooperation with the individual state tourism offices, the U.S. Department of Commerce’s International Trade Administration/U.S. Foreign Commercial Service Travel and Tourism Teams, the VISIT USA Committees and the TIA international offices. Reciprocal familiarization tours by foreign tour operators to the gateway communities are anticipated. Based on research provided by the Office of Travel and Tourism Industries and ITA of the U.S. Department of Commerce and TIA overseas offices, marketing efforts will focus on two countries in Europe (U.K., Germany) and one in Asia (Japan), which are the traditional markets for WSTPC states. With the development of “new product” from the gateway communities through the training of small entrepreneurs (river rafting operators, outfitters, bread and breakfast owners, fishing and rafting operators, etc.) the “buyers” will be able to create new packages for their clients. Research will continue through the OTTI/TIA contacts to consider “emerging markets”, such as France, the Netherlands, and South Korea for consideration in years two or three of the grant.

This program has been designed specifically to achieve the main Market Development Cooperator Program objectives of developing, maintaining and expanding foreign markets by creating an innovative program of public-private sector partnerships to increase the number of SME’s that participate in export activities.

It is a unique cooperative effort, combining the expertise of experienced state tourism offices and their wide range of community and industry contacts with the resources of Federal land and tribal agencies, the research support of OTTI, and the export marketing skills of the ITA/U.S. Foreign Commerce Service representatives and private industry organizations.

Partners, in addition to the WSTPC State tourism offices, that will participate in this program, include the 11 Federal agencies with whom WSTPC has a Memorandum of Understanding, the Travel Industry Association of American (TIA), United Airlines, Best Western International Hotels and the National Alliance of Gateway Communities. Other private sector partners will be added.

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For information regarding the above activities, contact the WSTPC State Liaison Representative in each state.