



# MINUTES

## Montana District Export Council

October 26, 2021

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### DEC Mission Statement

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The Montana DEC will **support Montana exporters** and **provide a collective Montana exporter voice** to advise on **export education** needs and disseminate education opportunities to its collective networks; and to **advise policy makers on export policies** under consideration and provide suggestions for future legislation.

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### DEC Member To-Do Items

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1. By November 12, fill out the [survey to determine the winter DEC meeting](#)
2. By November 19, fill out the [International Trade & Investment Survey](#)
3. By December 10, fill out the **DEC Member Information Survey** ([now online for your convenience](#))

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### Next Meeting

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Thank you to Barry for hosting us at Wood's Powr-Grip in Billings!

[Please indicate your availability for the Montana DEC winter meeting here](#), tentatively scheduled for **January or February**. More information, including the agenda, will be sent at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting.

**In person:** [TowHaul](#), Bozeman (tour to follow)

**Virtually:** via Microsoft Teams (link to be provided once dates are final)

#### Topics:

- Guest Speaker: Arizona DEC member to discuss subcommittees and roles
- DEC business
  - Overview of DEC member information survey
  - Mentorship examples
- Export Service Provider updates:
  - MWTC
  - MMEC
  - USCS spotlight on International Partner Search
  - ExportMT spotlight on trade missions
- Webinars & trainings

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## Attendees

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### Official DEC Members

*Official DEC membership, controlled by the US Department of Commerce, can be accepted in June in even-numbered years.*

Dianna – TowHaul, Chair

Joel – Ascent Vision, Vice Chair

Barry – Woods’ Powr Grip

Linda – PDT

Carey – US Commercial Service, Executive Secretary

Angie – Montana Dept of Commerce-ExportMontana

### Prospective DEC Members

*The Secretary of Commerce will approve prospective DEC members in December, to be on-boarded in the winter DEC meeting.*

Harold, Diversified Plastics

Latashia, Intertribal Agriculture Council

Jeff, R.L. Winston Rod

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## DEC Membership

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*DEC membership is comprised of volunteer exporters and service providers. Members are expected to participate in quarterly meetings (in person or virtually), offer guidance to export service providers, provide mentorship to exporters when called upon, and provide input on relevant international trade policies.*

DEC membership recognized fellow member Dianna Kegel and **TowHaul for their Manufacturer of the Year award**. Congratulations!

At the request of Dianna, please fill out the **DEC Member Information Survey** ([now online for your convenience](#)) by December 10. This information will be compiled and shared with DEC members in order to find collaboration opportunities and proper mentor connections.

In the DEC Member Information Survey, DEC members will be asked to **choose from 3 DEC subcommittee options**:

1. **Membership**: encouraging DEC participation and membership
2. **Education**: suggesting and preparing webinars and trainings for DEC membership and Montana exporters
3. **Trade Policy & Advocacy**: reviewing and recommending trade policies and advocating to appropriate parties

**Prospective DEC Members** will be appointed in December and participate in a New Member Orientation during the winter DEC meeting. Prior to official appointment, prospective DEC members can participate in DEC meetings as guests. Prospective members are:

- Clay Binford, Nomad GCS
- Jeffrey Evans, R.L. Winston Rod
- Eleanor Inglis, MSU Bozeman International Education Program
- Harold Pinkston, Diversified Plastics
- Latashia Redhouse, Intertribal Agriculture Council

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## National DEC

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The National DEC has called for the Montana DEC to support the STEP grant reauthorization, and DEC membership agreed. See the attached draft letter (Attachment 1).

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## DEC Success Story

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The DEC's support of the [US Commercial Service's RAISE program](#) has led Montana to be the #2 state for program usage. Barry provided a synopsis of his experience and success with the program, saving company time and money determining which international markets to (and not to) pursue.

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## Export Service Provider updates

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Export Service Providers provided updates:

- **MWTC:** Brigitta has requested that DEC members commit to filling out the [International Trade & Investment Survey](#). Information provided in the survey will help guide policy and funding decisions for Montana's exporters.
- **ExportMontana:** Angie provided an update on the STEP grant, officially awarded at \$754,000. Future planned activities include:
  - Hosting the [application](#) and [reimbursement request](#) online to save exporters time and hassle
  - Increasing limits to \$10,000 for all activities (up from \$6,000)
  - Allowing EXIM International Credit Insurance fees for reimbursement
  - Trade Shows: IWA Germany, EWF Germany, Exponor Chile, Alberta Gift + Home Show
  - Trade Missions: India, South Africa, Canada, Mexico, Japan, Taiwan, Central Europe
- **US Commercial Service:** Carey provided an overview of the International Company Profile service.

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## Webinars & Trainings

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The DEC will support the following webinar and trainings:

- Supply Chain Issues, November 2021
- There's more options than cash in advance, December 2021
- Export 101, April 2022

# ATTACHMENT 1

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## Draft Letter of Support for STEP Grant Reauthorization

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To Whom It May Concern:

We write to express our strong support for the State Trade Expansion Program (STEP) at the Small Business Administration and request that you support the reauthorization and full appropriation of \$30 million to better assist small business exporters.

The STEP grant program is a competitive grant allocated to States with the goal to increase the number of small businesses that export. According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, *only one percent* of small businesses in the United States export their product and service. The STEP program provides small businesses with the resources and confidence to begin to expand into international markets. These firms have used STEP to attend foreign trade shows and missions, participate in export training, and develop international marketing materials.

Since its creation in 2010, STEP has recorded over \$3.8 billion in exports from more than 12,000 small businesses in the United States. In FY19, \$18 million in STEP funding helped small businesses export over \$974 million in goods and services. This yielded a 54-to-1 return on investment. Moreover, STEP assisted nearly 3,000 small firms that have not exported before.

As you may know, state trade offices are on the front-line steering companies through the export process. They work closely with our federal partners to help small businesses identify foreign buyers and to secure the export sale. The STEP grant is vital to our joint mission to help more small businesses start or increase their exports. Specifically in Montana, the STEP grant has helped 700+ exporters with an ROI of \$561 million in new export sales.

The world is starting to open from the pandemic and exporting will be a key component in the economic recovery. We need to ensure small businesses have the resources to compete in the global economy, and STEP is a key to their success.

Thank you again for your continued commitment to small business exporters and for your public service. Please reach out ([dkegel@towhaul.com](mailto:dkegel@towhaul.com)) if you have any questions or need more information.

Sincerely,

Dianna Kegel, Chair

Montana District Export Council