

Tampa Bay Export Alliance to Lead Export Sales Mission to Dominican Republic in December

Two workshops will be held Sept. 22 to acquaint local companies with new business opportunities in Florida's fifth largest export market

TAMPA BAY, Fla. – Sept. 13, 2016 – The Tampa Bay Export Alliance (TBEA) today announced that it will lead an [export sales mission to the Dominican Republic](#) on December 5-8, 2016 to cultivate export opportunities for local businesses in the Caribbean market. The TBEA is a cooperative effort between Pinellas County Economic Development and the Tampa Hillsborough Economic Development Corporation created to help local businesses grow by increasing international export opportunities for their goods and services.

“Working with our partners at the U.S. Commercial Service, we will offer clients selected to participate in this mission expert counseling on their market entry and expansion strategy and an opportunity to connect with trade partners during personalized, one-on-one matchmaking sessions,” said Brent Barkway, International Business Development Manager at Pinellas County Economic Development.

The Dominican Republic (DR) is Florida’s fifth largest export market, and as such offers excellent potential for Tampa Bay companies interested in expanding overseas. American products and services enjoy a high reputation for quality, and due to the CAFTA-DR trade agreement, have a significant advantage over foreign competitors. Consumer attitudes, brand preferences, and buying patterns mimic those in the U.S., and many major U.S. franchises are present in the country.

The United States is by far the Dominican Republic’s largest trading partner, and its share of the consumer goods imported into the Caribbean island nation is estimated at 70 percent of the total.

Top sectors for U.S. exports to the Dominican Republic include air conditioning and refrigeration equipment; automobile parts and services; agricultural products; building products; hotel and restaurant equipment; medical equipment; renewable energy; printing and graphics arts equipment and supplies; safety and security equipment; and telecommunications equipment.

The strength of the trade relationship stems from the historic cultural and personal ties that many Dominicans have with the United States.

“Existing relationships and close geographic proximity make this market very attractive for Tampa Bay companies,” said Lorrie Belovich, Director of International Business Development, Tampa Hillsborough Economic Business Development Corporation. “The Dominican Republic is already an important trading partner for Port Tampa Bay, with direct container shipping connections provided by Zim and Mediterranean Shipping.”

Companies interested in exporting their products or services to the DR can submit an application to participate in the Gold Key package coordinated in collaboration with the U.S. Commercial Service. This package includes expert counseling on market entry strategies, personalized one-on-one matchmaker meetings with prescreened and prequalified buyers, agents, and importers, an English-Spanish interpreter and various networking events.

This mission will also include an opportunity to learn more about other Caribbean markets such as Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago and Haiti. Companies will receive a *regional* market assessment in advance and have the opportunity to speak with representatives from these neighboring countries.

Participation in the Gold Key program is limited to 10 companies and determined on a first come, first served basis once the companies are assessed and approved based on the suitability of their product or service for the market.

Eligible small and medium sized companies can also apply for a Gold Key/Matchmaker Grant from Enterprise Florida, which covers the majority of the Gold Key package registration fee.

Registration for the Dominican Republic Trade Mission is now open. For more information, please visit <http://www.tampabayexportalliance.com/dominican-republic-export-sales-mission>.

Companies interested in exploring export opportunities in the Dominican Republic are also encouraged to attend one of the “Doing Business in the Dominican Republic” workshops the TBEA is hosting on **September 22**. The workshops will provide an overview of major industry trends and business opportunities in the Dominican Republic and its Caribbean neighbors and share how local companies can benefit from entering or expanding into that market.

- Hillsborough County: Port Tampa Bay, 1101 Channelside Dr. Ste. 210, Tampa, 9:00 – 10:30 am. [Learn more and register here.](#)
- Pinellas County: St. Petersburg College Collaborative Labs, EpiCenter, 13805 58th St N, Clearwater, 33760, 2:00 – 3:30 pm. [Learn more and register here.](#)

Admission for the workshops is free, but registration is required.

About The Tampa Bay Export Alliance

[Tampa Bay Export Alliance \(TBEA\)](#) is a cooperative effort between Pinellas County Economic Development and the Tampa Hillsborough Economic Development Corporation, formed in 2014 to grow jobs and capital investment by increasing the international export of products and services within the bi-county area. The TBEA conducts joint export activities, such as seminars, trade events and trade missions, and supports the export-related growth initiatives of regional economic partners, including Tampa International Airport and Port Tampa Bay.

The Tampa Hillsborough Economic Development Corporation

The [Tampa Hillsborough Economic Development Corporation](#) is the lead designated economic development agency for Hillsborough County and the cities of Tampa, Plant City, and Temple Terrace. Established in 2009 as a partnership between the public sector and private corporate investors, the EDC works to develop and sustain a thriving local economy through the attraction, retention, and expansion of high-wage jobs and capital investment within targeted industry sectors. Locally, the EDC helps existing businesses access the tools and resources they need to succeed, now and in the future.

About Pinellas County Economic Development

[Pinellas County Economic Development](#) (PCED) works with existing businesses to encourage expansion

and seeks to attract new companies with high-wage careers to our community. Through investment tools, business classes, professional consulting services, trade missions to open new markets, and strategic partnerships, PCED fosters a pro-business environment and promotes the Ideal Business Climate of Pinellas County, Florida.