

International Office Services

Agent/Distributor Search

Once you have decided that a market is worth pursuing, you need to decide upon a sales strategy. Will you be selling through wholesalers and distributors? Will you be using agents or manufacturers' representatives? Using in-country resources and their networks of local contacts, the Department of Commerce's International Offices can search out potential business contacts for your firm.

Our International Office will research the market to find contacts handling your products or similar products. They use the information you supply to contact these local companies on your behalf. They will follow-up with each of the contacts and determine if there is serious interest in representing your product. Those companies voicing interest are then asked to complete a questionnaire on their company that provides information such as the markets to which they sell, total sales, customers they target, number of employees, length of time in business, payment preferences, technical expertise, warehousing capabilities, other U.S. products they represent, etc. This information is forwarded to you for review.

The International Office will also arrange appointments for you in the market with companies who meet the criteria you have set for an agent or distributor and are interested in working with you. Expect from three to eight appointments over a two to three day period with each appointment lasting from one to two hours. You will need to travel to the foreign company's place of business for these appointments. In some cases, this may mean traveling to other cities in the country to meet with the best candidates.

The Department prefers not to conduct searches unless you are willing to travel to the market. In our experience, 80% of the companies who travel to the market sign a distributor or sales agreement within 6 months. Conversely, less than 30% of companies who choose not to travel to the market are successful in finding the right partner. However, if you cannot travel to the market right away, we can develop a list and pre-qualify the candidates upon request. You can make other arrangements to interview the candidates either at your facility, at a trade show, or through teleconferencing.

Searches are priced per market and per product. Searches in Europe are conducted on a single country basis. In Canada, separate searches are conducted in eastern and western parts of the country. Searches in China are conducted by region:
Northeast (Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning provinces)
North (Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia provinces)
East (Shanghai, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Shandong, Anhui, Jiangxi, Fujian provinces)
South (Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Guangdong, Guangxi, Hainan provinces)
Southwest (Chongqing, Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou provinces)
Northwest (Tibet, Sha'anxi, Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai, Xinjiang provinces)

Agent/Distributor Search cost \$550 per search. If you would like an Agent/Distributor Search within 90 days of the completion of a Market Overview Study in the same market, the cost is \$450 for the second service. As a general rule, allow 4-6 weeks before the work can be started. From that start date, 6-8 weeks are needed to complete the project. This is a general estimate only. Some work may not require as much time and may be started sooner depending on the country and the workload. Others may take longer than noted depending on the difficulty of the project and available information sources.

The Department of Commerce subsidizes this research in international markets. The State of Wisconsin believes that the growth of exports is critical to businesses in the state. Therefore we have contracted with high quality consultants and through a contracting mechanism have been able to substantially reduce the cost of services to you.