

U.S. Senate Committee for Small Business & Entrepreneurship

“Growing Small Business Exports, Growing U.S. Jobs” Hearing, June 18, 2014

TESTIMONY
Donald F. Tyler
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Good afternoon. Thank you, Senator Shaheen, for the opportunity to testify today. I am Don Tyler, Director of Corfin Industries, a company that has enjoyed significant growth in export sales over recent years as result of our participation in the STEP pilot program.

Corfin’s Robotic Hot Solder Dip and other services satisfy the electronic component preparation needs of high-reliability systems such as missiles, space satellites, and implantable medical devices. While these industries are well-established outside of the US, for the first twenty years in business, Corfin experienced very little non-domestic business. The only orders that came to us from outside of the US were from sub-contractors to our existing US customers.

Three years ago, cautiously encouraged by those few orders, we explored paths to actively selling into these markets. Unfortunately, the costs were high, as were the risks. Large trade shows, our best hope for reaching a sizeable portion of our target audience, are prohibitively expensive to a small company. We considered collaborating with other US small businesses with a common goal and willingness to share expenses, but that required a major commitment of resources to identify and coordinate with these other businesses and dismissed as impractical.

Corfin turned to New Hampshire’s International Trade Resource Center and the US Commercial Service’s local office. They not only educated us on the skills necessary to break into markets outside the US, but Corfin received matching funds through the STEP pilot program to realize affordable marketing opportunities.

Corfin’s STEP-funded participation in air shows in the UK, France, and Singapore and Gold Key Service introductions and translation services through the US embassies in Munich, Rome, and Tokyo have provided the jump start necessary to gain a foothold in these markets and grow independently.

The success of our international sales encouraged us to become charter members of the New Hampshire Aerospace Defense Export Consortium (NHADEC) last year, another STEP Grant recipient. The Consortium provides great value in all matters related to exporting, including speakers on customs issues, education on changes to ITAR, and marketing opportunities. The growing membership in NHADEC is a great indicator of growing global impact of NH businesses.

Today Corfin's non-domestic sales is a significant component of our overall growth. International sales increased from less than two percent of our overall revenue three years ago to over twelve percent today, all while expanding overall revenue almost 30%. The non-domestic growth corresponds to twenty-two additional full-time employees; a direct result of the STEP grant funding.

I'm pleased to report that Corfin will be exhibiting at the Farnborough UK Air Show next month without the benefit of the STEP funding. I enthusiastically support the STEP UP for American Small Business Act for the perpetual opportunities needed by small American businesses to reach global markets and grow their American workforces.

This is a program that works.