**NWX-US DEPT OF COMMERCE**

**Meet SBA’s Exporter of The Year**

**September 24, 2020**

**1:00 pm CT**

Coordinator: (Welcome) and thank you for standing by. Today's conference is being recorded. All participants are currently in a listen only mode. I would now like to turn the call over to your host, Wendy Peebles. Thank you, you may begin, Wendy.

Wendy Peebles: Thank you operator. My name is Wendy Peebles. I'm the lead outreach coordinator, Economic Management Division for the Census Bureau. I’m very happy to have all of you on the line today and I'm pleased to be hosting the webinar for the Small Business Administration with Michele Schimpp Deputy Associate Administrator for International Trade, along with her team of experts, and the SBA Small Business Selection for the Exporter of the year.

 We have an informative webinar planned that will provide valuable resources to help you expand your business operations globally. Allow me just to go over a few items before we begin. As the operator mentioned, the webinar is being recorded. At the end for the webinar today, we would like for you to submit your questions to oit@sba.gov. Again, that's oit@sba.gov and we will respond to your questions at the end of the webinar. Approximately 10 days following the webinar, the materials will be posted to the Census Web site.

 At the end of the webinar, we ask that you complete the evaluation form by clicking on the button. Your feedback is important to us. So, please share your thoughts as it aids in planning additional webinar content. And I think we're ready to begin I'll turn it over to Michele at SBA.

Michele Schimpp: Thanks, Wendy and hello, everybody. Thanks so much for joining us today. We're really pleased to celebrate SBAs 2020 Small Business Exporter of the Year. And we hope that you hearing their story will help motivate you to pursue your path to global success through sales. For those of you who don't know it, this is National Small Business Week and for my office, the Office of International Trade this is the highlight of the week, actually the highlight of the year celebrating the Exporter of the year.

 And so we want to take advantage of this opportunity also to make you aware of the support that SBA can offer as you face business challenges and aim to pursue new opportunities. We really encourage small businesses to take advantage of the support that's available from the Federal, state and local governments because we need more than ever to emerge from this current crisis strong. And we're committed to being a valuable resource to you. So let's take a look at the agenda for today's webinar. Next slide please.

 Great, so I'm Michele the deputy among SBAs Office of International Trade or OIT hence the email address oit@sba.gov. In a moment, our Associate Administrator for International Trade Loretta Greene, is going to introduce and interview the 2020 Exporter of the year Nick Nicholas of Genesis Water Technologies, Inc. Super, super glad to be able to welcome Nick and Loretta to this call.

 Next, then I'll come back and give you some highlights of key support that we can offer to current or aspiring exporters. And then I'm going to turn it over to Mary Hernandez who is our SBA Export Finance Manager based in Miami, and she's going to talk to you about financing solutions for exporters and businesses in global supply chains. Then finally, we're going to take your questions that you can submit at any time to oit@sba.gov. And we will be able to address those questions at the end.

 And if for some reason you've got a more specific question then for this webinar we may not answer it live, but we'll reach out individually to respond to you. Next slide please. So, this webinar is to announce and celebrate the Exporter of the year. I just wanted to let you know a little bit about that award. We've really had some interesting companies win over the past few years. I last year's winner was EarthQuaker an Ohio company founded by a musician named Jamie Stillman.

 He has started some bands with very interesting names. Maybe you've heard of them The Party of the Helicopters, Fringe Candidate, The Teeth of Hydra, Harriet the Spy or New Terror Class. Jamie took his music experience to global success in exporting effects pedals for musicians and a business focused on effects pedals. Another favorite among recent winners was the Baby Elephant Ears out of Minnesota.

 This was a company started by a mother of four Alicia Overby, and she created Baby Elephant Ears to combat a health challenge that was faced by one of her own children, infant neck strainAnd so now based on her own problem, her solution now has helped babies and parents around the world. So really anybody is eligible, that has used one of SBAs resources to get to receive the award, but you have to meet the criteria such as growing your business through exporting, creative marketing, overcoming challenges, and of course, taking advantage of SBAs resources.

 And then finally, just seeing how competitive this is, each of SBAs 68 district offices make a nomination, and then our 10 geographic regions, select one to come forward to my office, and then our office selects the national winner. So, with that brief overview, let's meet our 2020 SBA Exporter of the year. I'm going to turn the mic over to Loretta Greene SBAs Associate Administrator for International Trade to introduce and chat with Nick. Next slide.

Loretta Greene: Great, thank you, Michele. I am so happy to be with you today. And thrilled to be introducing in introducing SBA 2020 Small Business Exporter of the year Genesis Water Technologies Inc. Genesis Waters Technology is an award winning leader in specialized drinking water and wastewater reuse solutions. Genesis assists industrial and commercial clients, as well as municipalities and governments with their drinking water and wastewater challenges with emerging water contaminants and water scarcity. I am pleased to welcome Genesis technical director Nick Nicholas.

 In this role, Mr. Nicholas has coordinated and led a global team of technical professionals in designing, engineering and building water and wastewater treatment system solutions for industrial, commercial and water utility clients within the USA and across the world. Nick thank you so much for joining us. Next slide.

Nick Nicholas: Thank you.

Loretta Greene: I will pose a few questions for Nick. Hey, how you doing Nick? I will pose a few questions for Nick to help him tell his story. If you have additional questions for him, please email those to oit@sba.gov. Nick, before we get started with questions, please tell us about your company?

Nick Nicholas: Sure, and thanks Loretta. Yes, as you previously mentioned Genesis Water Technologies is an award winning leader in water and wastewater treatment solutions focused on two target clients which would be our industrial, commercial clients and our water utility clients. The company is based in Maitland, Florida with offices in Philippines covering Southeast Asia in Kampala, Uganda covering Southern Africa, and in Santiago, Chile covering South America region. Our company solutions are composed of three essential functional areas.

 The first one is going to be our process engineering optimization services. And those are geared toward optimizing and existing water and wastewater treatment processes. Our industrial and water utility clients to save their money, enhance their sustainability goals and meet regulatory compliance. Additionally, we have our modular treatment solutions. Those treatment solutions are basically designed to be integrated to be utilized in new plant construction and our optimized specialized treatment medians (unintelligible) water disinfection products, so that rounds out Genesis and we can discuss further.

Loretta Greene: Okay. Well, I am so impressed with your global footprint with all the offices you have around the world. How did you come to be nominated for SBA Exporter of the year?

Nick Nicholas: That’s an interesting question. I came to be nominated for the SBA Exporter of the year award through our local SBDC office in Orlando. Jill MacLaughlin, the International Trade specialist at the SBDC Orlando mentioned to me that she would think that Genesis would be a good candidate for this particular nomination for SBA Exporter of the year. So, we decided to pursue it, to work on the application she submitted it, and the rest is history.

Loretta Greene: Wow, all right. When did you start exporting why and how?

Nick Nicholas: So, companies started exporting in 2009 and that was based on an inquiry that we received from a client in Saudi Arabia. However, exporting has always been in our company's DNA since my dad, the Founder of Genesis Water Technologies, had seen the great need and opportunity abroad to tackle the issues of water pollution and water scarcity, and how to address these particular issues with GWT Solutions. So, in 2012 we wanted to formalize our export strategy so, we looked to an SBA STEP grant and this allowed us to formalize theexport strategy that we have and have grown to today.

Loretta Greene: Excellent. What has your global business meant for your company?

Nick Nicholas: Well, global business is very important to GWT. And this is why we have taken advantage of several opportunities available to us abroad. And in fact, over 40% of GWT sales is through export-related activities so, it definitely does mean a lot to our company.

Loretta Greene: Okay. What has been your greatest challenges for global success and how did you overcome them?

Nick Nicholas: That's a good question. Some of our greatest challenges have been in planning, in finding qualified local partners in the targeted countries that we wanted to expand to and in financing. And to a lesser extent, the local market compliance issues. I would say each one of these would be the key challenges that we faced in overcoming these export related challenges. So, what we've done based on these challenges is we took advantage of several resources, resources, through SBA, resources through local EDC which is enterprise Florida and through the offerings through the US Commercial Service. Each one of these offerings allowed us to overcome these particular challenges.

Loretta Greene: I mean, when I see that you export to over 43 countries, I can see that you have you've had plenty of challenges along the way. One thing I think will be really interesting is that we have a few pictures from your company and we can go through them now. Next slide.

Nick Nicholas: Definitely. Yes, this particular picture, thanks Loretta, is of women at a water tank, water tanker, these particular women are actually waiting due to the water scarcity pandemic in India. They're waiting for water. Now, what we do at Genesis is provide drinking water solutions to communities to municipalities to water utilities. So, people like these do not have to wait for clean safe water. Next slide.

Loretta Greene: Wonderful.

Nick Nicholas: Now, this particular picture is wastewater discharging into a bay and so this either industrial wastewater or municipal wastewater comes out of the same discharge piping and if you look at the surrounding environment being damaged due to the pollution. So, what Genesis Water Technologies does as well, in this particular application is provide clean water, clean water solutions to this industrial wastewater problem. So, water can be either reused or can be utilized for industry or for utilities, eliminating this particular issue and its impact on the environment.

Loretta Greene: Excellent.

Nick Nicholas: Next slide great. Now, in this particular picture is showing one of our process optimization engineering services, so in this particular application, what we're doing is we're assisting water utilities and industrial clients to optimize their existing treatment processes to meet their particular goals of lowering their overall operating costs, while meeting their sustainability goals and ever changing regulatory requirements. Next slide.

 So this particular picture is an illustrative of one of our industrial clients. We tend to work along with the oil and gas industry. And this petrochemical refinery would be in one of those particular clients. So, what we do is provide them with innovative waste water treatment and reuse solutions to meet their particular needs, and meet their discharge requirements safely.

Loretta Greene: Fascinating.

Nick Nicholas: Thank you. Now, in this particular slide, is a reverse osmosis examination system. So, what this particular system would be utilized for and what we engineer and design these for is to provide drinking water, typically to coastal communities to combat the effects of water scarcity, and these systems are also used to enable industry users to use their water as well both in saving money and enhancing that water resource. Next slide.

Loretta Greene: Great pictures Nick. Thank you so much for sharing.

Nick Nicholas: Thank you very much.

Loretta Greene: We're going to move and answer people questions. Yes, it's wonderful. How has COVID-19 affected your business?

Nick Nicholas: A great question. COVID-19 has had a big impact on our business. Andin our client base due to capital budget freezes and delays as our clients were facing their challenges themselves. So, what we've done as a result of COVID-19 is basically pivot to reach our clients in different ways. So, we have enabled a deeper digital marketing footprint as we weren't able to meet face to face with clients or go to trade shows, we developed this digital marketing footprint to be able to connect with them in real time sharing, particular information that was valuable for them on and, you know, suitable at the same time.

Loretta Greene: Excellent. What I mean, what I think of all of the challenges that we have going on across the globe with COVID and that water solutions is directly related to these challenges. I mean, it's just so wonderful that you are Exporter of the year and was shows that even before COVID began.

Nick Nicholas: That’s right.

Loretta Greene: So, what are you seeing in foreign markets these days is business picking up?

Nick Nicholas: So, essentially what we're seeing in foreign markets is things are starting to open up abroad in several different countries throughout the world. However, what we're seeing in certain regions, they're opening quicker than others. For instance, we're seeing, you know, quicker recovery in Western Africa versus countries in Western Europe, which surprised us, but it seems to be the case. It's interesting.

Loretta Greene: Yes, it is. So, what do you expect for 2021? Has COVID changed the way you will do business in the future?

Nick Nicholas: Yes it definitely has, you know, what we'll expect in 2021 is a shift back to growth as we reach this new normal period, after this COVID pandemic.

Loretta Greene: But you mentioned a new normal, what does that mean to you and your company?

Nick Nicholas: So, what that means is that COVID has definitely changed things in how companies run, how companies operate, potentially how they market to different clients and due to this, we basically had a different approach now to outreach to different clients use different marketing strategies, you need to continue to be nimble and to adapt and that's the name of the game.

Loretta Greene: Yes, evolving is the name of the game, right?

Nick Nicholas: That's right. That's right. And that can evolve.

Loretta Greene: Yes. And finally, what advice do you have for other US businesses that are considering global market opportunities?

Nick Nicholas: So, that, that's when we take a look on the summary points.

Loretta Greene: Oh, should we go to the next slide?

Nick Nicholas: Yes, so these are particular key success factors that we’ve seen in considering global markets. I mean, we want to focus on partners that you are working with. That’s key, your local partners, local channel partners, distribution partners in countries, those are going to be your key eyes and ears in a particular local market. So you want to make sure that they're reliable and trustworthy, and that they're the right partners, for your firm, to go to the next level. The next key success factor would be to understand and appreciate key market factors. So, in this case, in our case, it was a global water crisis.

 We knew that this particular crisis has been evolving. And it's basically one of the key market factors that drive our particular client base to do things. So, pay attention to key market factors is another key success factor that we saw. Tapping into available resources, this I brought up a little earlier, but tapping into available resources would be your resource team. And your resource team basically is your SBA SBDC offices, your US Commercial Service, your Enterprise Florida or State Commerce Department, those particular resources in addition to U.S. ExIm Bank and the other export financing through SBA are going to be key to tap into those resources to take advantage of these opportunities.

 And then lastly, is to respond to the times. So, as we've all been in this COVID era, we know that you know to be nimble and to be adaptable and evolve is the key as we discussed, to respond to the times is one of the key success factors as well as you look to expand overseas. And then to learn more about DWT now you can visit our Web site, which is genesiswatertech.com where we have all our resources, everything that you need to take the next steps in water sustainability and water safety.

Loretta Greene: Great, great. Thank you so much Nick, for sharing your story. We really appreciate it. And congratulations again, not only for your export success, but also for doing good in the world. You make us all proud. I’m going to now turn.

Nick Nicholas: Thank you, thank you very much.

Loretta Greene: Perfect. Next slide. Thanks Nick.

Nick Nicholas: Thanks.

Michele Schimpp: Great. Thank you, Nick and Loretta. Amazing Nick work. I mean, I know how important it is access to safe drinking water and what a huge developmental issue it is especially for the world's poor. So, again, so very proud that SBA has been able to be associated with your outstanding work. Just a reminder, we're already getting some questions in for your Nick, but we're going to hold them till the end, send them in at oit@sba.gov. So, Nick shared some of his experience working with us and our resource partners. I want you to know how you can tap those as well.

 I want to start with one key statistic. Did you know 95% of the world's consumers live outside of the U.S. and still only a very small percentage of our 30 million US small businesses are actively focused on selling to those 95% of the world's consumers? Maybe enough businesses don't know that exporters are truly more financially stable, they expand faster and they create higher paying jobs than non-exporters. And also as Nick explained, exporters are more resilient because they reduce their dependency on a single market.

 So, we at SBA often are asking ourselves why aren't more small businesses exporting? We know that they face really sort of three consistent obstacles. They either don't know where to start. They believe that the regulatory environment is too complex, or they find it difficult to finance global sales. So, as you'll see, fortunately, SBA has solutions to each with business intelligence, grants and financing. And I'm going to have this, the rest of this presentation just briefly makes you aware of each. Next slide, please.

 So, our newest service, which has gotten a lot of increasing attention of late is what we’re calling our Fast Track services. Here a U.S. Small Business will meet privately with a SBA senior trade and our technical lead to discuss what your business's unique challenges are, and identify the potential resource solutions either that we have available at the SBA or other government agencies. This business counseling will give you faster access to accurate information, we can guide you on eligibility requirements and give you insights on how you maximize the relevant federal and state resources for your business's recovery and resilience.

 And then we'll make those warm referrals to you so that you meet the individuals behind those services. You know and we know that COVID-19 only increased the pressures on businesses to pivot and address a lot of unknowns and risks. So, it's our job to figure out to let you know how to navigate the myriad of resources that are available. That's our expertise. So, with so many issues that only you can confirm to the business owner, please do rely on us to shorten the research cycle for you and to speed recovery.

 It's very easy, you can either call us to schedule a Fast Track Service or you can email us at international@sba.gov we'll respond within 24 hours on weekdays for requests for an appointment. Next slide, please. Secondly, I want to make sure that you're familiar with the State Trade Expansion Program, which is a partnership between the SBA, and U.S. states and territories to help small businesses to export. These are grants that are given to businesses to find new markets, and to expand sales in current markets.

 Last year alone, we helped about 6,000 businesses with 18 million in grants across 44 states and territories. And in the coming days, we're about to announce our 2020 awards to 48 different states worth $19 million. These businesses that get these grants last year reported nearly a billion dollars in export sales attributable to the work that they did with support from STEP. So, the kinds of programs you could take advantage of, you could engage in a training workshop like Export Tech, you could participate in a virtual trade mission or trade show or when things open up, physically be present for those and have the travel paid by the STEP grants.

 You could obtain the different kinds of costs associated with the services to enter a new foreign market. Identify the markets that are particularly promising. We can do business matchmaking searches and international partner searches and cover those costs. Are you thinking of translating your Web site potentially to attract foreign buyers or optimizing the Web site so that it pops up first in Google searches? Or are you thinking about a digital marketing campaign? These are all eligible costs and uses of STEP funding.

 So, find out if your state or territory participates by visiting sba.gov/step and if they're not on that list today, you may want to check it out in a couple of days when we update that list with the fiscal year 2020 award. And at this point, I'd like to introduce Mary Hernandez to discuss how we can help you address your business's financial needs for trade. Over to Mary and next slide. Thank you.

Mary Hernandez: Thank you, Michele, and good afternoon, everyone. It's truly a pleasure to be part of today's Exporter of the year celebration, and to have the opportunity to share some financing strategies that can help your small business achieve global success. I'm one of 21 Export Finance Managers located across the US. I'm based at the Miami US Export Assistance Center where I'm co-located with colleagues from the US Commercial Service, and ExIm Bank, partners that Nick mentioned earlier.

 We each provide complimentary programs and services to help U.S. exporters, from international marketing intelligence to risk mitigation to protect you against non-payment by your foreign buyers, and financing, which is what I do. Now, although SBA isn't a direct lender, we partner with banks across the country by guaranteeing the loans that you apply for through a bank. This is especially helpful when applying for export financing, which banks may not offer conventionally. So, an SBA guarantee helps small businesses obtain the capital they need to capitalize on international sales.

 But, it's also important to know that SBA can work with your lender to help you overcome financing challenges you may be experiencing as a result of COVID-19. Whether it's canceled or reduced credit insurance coverage, a reduction in lines of credit or working capital lines, which creates further problems when your foreign buyers are asking for extended terms. Maybe your foreign buyers are demanding performance guarantees on advance payments, or you may be experiencing supply chain issues because of extended payment terms from OEMs. SBA can help you and your lender mitigate all of these issues. Next slide, please.

 SBAs export loan products, help small businesses meet a wide range of financing needs, not only for direct exporters, but also for indirect exporters. Indirect exporters are those businesses who sell to other U.S. businesses and they in turn export their products, also known as supply chain. And in fact, our export loans are helping businesses achieve roughly $2.3 billion in sales per year. So, here we have a quick snapshot of SBAs export loan programs.

 Export Express allows for quick access to capital for businesses that need financing up to $500,000. You can actually apply for a line of credit prior to finalizing an export sale, or even before visiting a foreign market. Getting your financing lined up ensures that adequate financing is in place before you agree to contract terms. And as you grow your international sales, you can then use the Export Working Capital Program or EWCP to fulfill specific export orders by covering your cost of goods or financing foreign receivables and export inventory via revolving lines of credit up to $5 million.

 The International Trade Loan can help a company that has been affected by foreign competition and needs to retool or expand to compete better to better compete. It can also help existing firms that want to begin or grow their international sales. Next slide. These examples further show the value of these loans, which is to provide you a competitive edge as you seek out new customers and or service existing clients.

 So, rather than requiring advanced payments from your customers, you can offer payment terms that make you more competitive through the use of an EWCP line of credit, supported by your foreign receivables and export inventory as collateral rather than depleting your current cash resources. You can use an Export Express loan to proactively market your products or services to foreign customers. In other words, export development activity and International Trade Loan can help in the purchase of machinery or equipment to expand your export capacity and meet the growing demand for your product.

 And if you do ask for your foreign buyers for a down payment or advance payments, they may require standby letters of credit to guarantee or protect that advance payment. So EWCP or Export Express loans can support requests for standby LCs. And in my last slide you'll see how SBA can provide the financial support you might need to reshore the production of your products.

 That may entail expanding or building production facilities and warehousing for export, building new supplier networks, creating in house design and prototyping capabilities, maybe even a change in ownership or consulting and professional services, intellectual property protection. So, as you've heard, SBAs export loans are very flexible and are designed to cover most short term or long term costs to help your small businesses achieve global success. And on that note, I'll turn it back to Michele.

Michele Schimpp: Thanks so much, Mary. So, at this point, we just want to wrap up and take your questions. So first, to find out more about SBAs international trade resources you can either search call or stay informed. The first link there if you were persuaded by what Mary had to offer and want to talk to one of her colleagues around the country or her you can visit sba.gov/international and find Mary’s equivalent closest to you. If you want to find out if your State offers State Trade Expansion pPogram grants.

 Again, visit this URL [www.sba.gov/step](http://www.sba.gov/step) to find out who your contact person is. If you want to find a General SBA District Office or another one of our resource partners this handy on our sba.gov Web site, you can just backslash local assistance to find the resource near you. Or if you prefer to call or email us in our office we're happy to set you up with Fast Track assistance figure out how to navigate complex trade situations etcetera.

 And finally, and if you want to stay informed and know about future webinars and to get our newsletter please just go to sba.gov/newsroom. Next slide please. But there's as you all know too a lot of Federal agencies exists to help small businesses trade. Trade.gov is complete Export Assistance portal brings together resources from agencies across the U.S. Government and it has everything from market research to trade leads, tariff information and trade events, and some really interesting new virtual and digital assistance tools.

 Www.stopfakes.gov can make it easy to find information on protecting your intellectual property rights, both at home and if you're trading abroad. The Export Import Bank credit insurance is a great tool to protect against political and commercial risks like foreign buyers defaulting on payments and other things. State Department, we have put in the link here because they regulate the export and import of defense articles and services.

 So you may be interested in exporting a service that requires a product or service that requires an export license, or a license exemption. And finally our hosts for today's call is the Bureau of the Census, which has wonderful resources to businesses exploring global markets. They are the experts that collect, compile and disseminate official U.S. export and import statistics. With the COVID-19 pandemic their interactive data hub is able to help decision makers understand the social and economic impact of the pandemic.

 The Census Business Builder is a whole suite of services with demographic and economic data in a simple to access format that you can use for business planning and market analysis. And finally, the Global Market Finder is an interactive tool you can use to identify potential export markets and to visualize commodity exports globally next slide. All right. So, this is where you can sign up if you want to know more.

 And we're going to start to take questions. So, please do submit atoit.sba.gov. Hopefully, Nick, you're still here because our first question asked, we have two questions. The first is do you export to Nigeria? Just an easy yes or no. And then do you have any favorite stories of your trade and travel experiences?

Nick Nicholas: Yes, first question. Yes, we do export to Nigeria, and actually local partner, their main office is in London, but they have their satellite office is Lagos. So, any sort of inquiries etcetera we runn through them and we can get them in touch if that's needed. And the second thing in regard to funny stories, there are some, some funny stories always, always seem to surround like idioms of customs in different countries. And, as always, we always, I always found that interesting, going abroad and different business practices.

 And more than one just, you know, in you know, changing this happened major, but it was a similar thing where we gave the other business card, and then you know, there's a custom of bowing and the card has to have language on both sides of the card. And in the first time, I was in Asia I was just blown away by just a different way of doing business and respect there. But funny story that you take with you from Asia to Africa to I don't know, Western societies.

Michele Schimpp: That's great. That's great. I love the pictures. And I know that bow with the two you have to put both hands on your card is here. Yes, a real show of respect which I think it's wonderful. Yes, Mary, we've got a question for you in terms of just clarification. So, what program would a business use if they needed to retool their production facilities? Let's say to, they're an exporter and they've got you know, COVID related social distancing or other reasons that they've got to retool their facilities.

Mary Hernandez: Right. So, probably the International Trade Loan for fixed assets, right, if they need to purchase equipment, to be able to retool and pivot, you know, like, Nick said that he had do. So the international trade loan maybe the best option, but I would definitely reach out to your lender or reach out to one of the export finance managers to discuss your specific needs, and we can definitely point you in the right direction.

Michele Schimpp: Awesome, thank you so much. Nick, another one for you. How has COVID affected shipping and logistics? Because not only you provide services you’re a manufacturer and any strategies or advice do you have to offer for a company dealing with the shipping and logistics challenges?

Nick Nicholas: Yes. So, in this case, we actually found it quite interesting the shipping and logistics overseas as we working with various freight forwarders and upon getting quotations for perforations via sea overseas, we found that the prices on freight shipments had almost much increased daily. And that was due to the freightliners, basically adding surcharges COVID-related surcharges for cleaning of their vessels, cleaning of their ports, et cetera. So, that's another thing to look out for when quoting a particular client, is to make sure that your freight forwarder had included the COVID-related surcharges to the shipping cost because that can definitely hurt you if you're not aware of that.

(Steve): Michele, unmute.

Michele Schimpp: Thanks, Steve. Yes, Mary, we were asked about debt relief and whether or not debt relief would be extended and fair. I don't know if you have any insights into this. Debt relief is that provision in the Cares Act that allowed that any SBA existing loan or a new loan that was entered into before the 27th of September, the first six payments would be covered by the SBA principal interest and fees. As far as I know, it requires Congressional action and none has been taken but Mary, any insight?

Mary Hernandez: That's the same information that I have currently.

Michele Schimpp: Okay, great. Thanks. I got a question about whether I'm going to answer a couple myself. One is can government export resources help identify distribution channels for companies product? Absolutely, I think that would be a perfect reason to sign up for a Fast Track Service. And similarly, there's a business interested in exporting but curious about what types of items might lend themselves for exporting for a new exporter. And again the Fast Track Service would be exactly where you need to go in because we got your email, we'll reach back out and see if you want to schedule a consultation.

 Another question was about US, Mexico, Canada agreement. And what kinds of benefits there were for businesses. You know, SBA was really, really pleased to be at the table during the negotiations representing small business interests. And then there are a number of achievements that are really beneficial. So, there are things like simplified procedures for clearing goods through customs. And both the Mexicans, Canadians together made commitments to make their information available online. If you haven't already looked SBA built out our Web site for exporters it’s called tradetools@sba.gov.

 And then we were just engaging with the Mexicans and Canadians to get their links as well. The USMCA eliminated a local presence requirement for cross border service providers so that small businesses don't no longer need to incur the burden of opening up a foreign office in those countries. Canada lowered their de minimis levels for trade substantially and then there are a number of other benefits. So, please do if you can't find the answers on our Web site, or you want to learn more, talk to us here at international@sba.gov.

 Let's see, already took care of a couple of these others. Mary, I'm wondering if you could tell us what advice you give businesses in terms of identifying market opportunities that may be opening up post COVID?

Mary Hernandez: Yes, so that's where I would pull in partners with the US Commercial Service. And we regularly have joint Zoom meetings or conference calls because I think it's a good idea to talk to all of the resource partners, because they can help not only identify markets that are opening up, but if you need the financing, to help you fill some of those orders or need to mitigate your risk through credit insurance with ExIm Bank. So I would suggest that you reach out to one of the export finance managers because we each work with our counterparts at the U.S. Commercial Service, and ExIm Bank, and we can definitely help link you to that information.

Michele Schimpp: And do you see in your experience, we've got a question. Oh, I see this is for Nick thanks, not Mary. Nick, do you partner with distributors around the world or do you work with sales representatives and sell directly to end users or and or do you do government contracting, contracting with government?

Nick Nicholas: Typically, what we do is a - encompasses on our local partner. Basically, their local partner has both a dual role both as a business development, sales representatives, but also as an implementation partner on taking care of the installation of particular systems and doing the after sale service for end users both at the governmental level as well as the private sector. So, basically, our local partners have a dual role in that sense.

Michele Schimpp: Terrific. Thank you very much.

Nick Nicholas: You’re welcome.

Michele Schimpp: Another question is, this is an interesting question Nick. Have you ever encountered a situation with bribery and how you deal with a sort of less than transparent business environment and part of your transaction?

Nick Nicholas: Yes, so as a U.S. company, basically you’re relegated to the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, that binds all U.S. companies. So, that's one thing that we're bound by. So, we do have, in essence of transparency in how we work and we've had, we have seen that yes bribery is definitely a concern, especially with governmental contracts. And in certain cases we actually had different concerns that were expressed at the Federal level dealing with other countries that were having their companies are participating in bribery or other such concerns.

 So it's something you have to watch out for, and something that you're here you're bound by, but it's important in playing business right in. And you should be dealing with the right people.

Michele Schimpp: That's super, super great morning and reminder to people. Thank you very much on that. There was a question about whether or not we would how people to get copies of the PowerPoint. And please do if you would like to receive one, just send us an email at oit@sba.gov and we'll send you one. All righty, I think there's also an important resource and number of these questions are sort of again, how do I know where to get started and we've provided a lot of online resources. But I want to also be sure to underscore that SBA partners with entities caused the Small Business Development Centers.

 And they are business counselors free, there are 900, around the US that many, most of them are expected to have international trade counselors, as experts focused on helping businesses navigate this. So, if you would like to find the Small Business Development Center close to you, it's the sba.gov/local-assistance where you can find some. They're super helpful. Let’s see. I guess this is another good question that came in for Nick. Nick, what motivated you and your firm to look globally back when you spend exporting? I think you said 2009, what were the first key steps you took and was the idea of selling abroad met positively by on the company or did you have to convince them?

Nick Nicholas: And so essentially, exporting was in the DNA of the company from the founder, my dad, he initially looked at the opportunities abroad, and there are any issues abroad and found that that's where he wanted to focus most of his initial effort. So, that's how exporting came natural to our company and was not something that needed to be introduced. So, and from that point, there was basically mentioned in 2012, with the creation over their focus to export marketing strategy through the SBA and we were able to not have the right resources in our hand, have the right direction to solidify that effort going forward.

Michele Schimpp: Fantastic. Yes, the water and sanitation issues resonate so much more internationally than they do here. And it's just, again, wonderful to see that we're just taking are terrific technical and manufacturing expertise and seeking those customers overseas. We had a question by a company that export software to hospitals in Mexico that is looking for advice on how the Free Trade Agreement affects what some of the buyers in Mexico are saying. I think we better answer this because this is one of those Fast Track Services and refer to our trade policy specialist to get back to you on this.

 So, Jorge, please do expect to response sometime soon. And let's see, handling is another good technical question is, do we our area is not to help importers of chemicals. You know, we can, we are aware of tariffs and often help small businesses who are affected by tariffs to make their voices heard. But our main purpose is export promotion and so that's for the person who asked the question about importing of chemicals.

 And again, we welcome any additional questions from the team. We're coming up on two minutes from the hour. And I think we have another question. Oh, I see. Thank you. I guess somebody clarified that the question on the chemicals was for Nick. Nick, do you import chemicals or do you purchase them in the countries where you are? And then how do you handle the regulatory issues?

Nick Nicholas: I would say it's country by country. So, instead of our specific, say for instance, our (unintelligible) which is a liquid chemical or on (Gin Queen) which is our new disinfection knife that we introduced just recently, we actually went through NSF, which is the U.S. basically a regulatory body for chemicals. And there's a certification called Certification 60 and that particular designation allows us to export the particular chemical onto over 30 different countries, and this was a similar certification in recognizing that certification.

 So that's how we've done it on the export side if there's additional chemicals that are required locally, they're purchased locally from locally accredited vendors.

Michele Schimpp: Fantastic, fantastic. And that would be a category since the certifications are often things that STEP grants can cover to the cost associated. So, with that, I do we're at the top of the hour, and I am going to thank our colleagues at the Bureau of the Census and turn it back over to Wendy.

Wendy Peebles: Okay, great. Thank you. Yes, thank you to all the presenters today. Great webinar special thanks to SBA and the team of experts and for all the resources that you provide a lot of great resources and also want to give congratulations to Nick Nicholas again of Genesis Water Technologies Incorporated for being the Exporter of the Year. There were a number of great takeaways and strategies that will provide it to help you cope during the pandemic as well as for expanding your business operations globally.

 So thank you again, for everyone who has joined the webinar today. You may visit the Census Web site for additional upcoming outreach events. That link should have been provided during the chat. And just want to say thank you stay safe until the next time. Thank you. This completes the webinar.

Coordinator: This concludes today's conference. All participants may disconnect at this time. Speakers please stand by for transfer to the post conference. One moment speakers.

END