

Exporting Australian Information & Communications Technologies (ICT)

Your Step-by-Step Guide



Australian Government
Australian Trade Commission



Exporting Australian ICT

Australia is well known globally as a source of innovative technologies. This high level of innovation plays a significant role in the Australian information and communications technologies (ICT) industry's strong growth potential and its integration into ICT supply chains around the world.

There are many pathways to international success and each company needs to evaluate their options and choose appropriate strategies. This booklet provides a seven-step path to global markets for Australian ICT exporters:

- Step 1: Getting started**
- Step 2: Select your target market**
- Step 3: Develop your market entry strategy**
- Step 4: Refine your marketing collateral**
- Step 5: Get ready to visit**
- Step 6: Seal the deal and grow the business**
- Step 7: Set up an office overseas**

We encourage exporters and potential exporters to follow these steps as they embark on their journey.

At all times, we recommend exporters reach out to the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade), state governments, relevant industry associations and trusted advisers who can help you make sound business decisions that support your global strategies.

About Austrade

The Australian Trade Commission – Austrade – is the Australian Government's trade and investment development agency.

Through Austrade's global network, we assist Australian companies to succeed in international business, attract productive foreign investment into Australia and assist international buyers to locate and identify Australian suppliers.

For Australian exporters, we have a comprehensive mix of information and customised services to help you do business with overseas markets and understand foreign regulations and business practices. We provide a wide range of services, including:

- Assistance in refining your export strategy
- Connecting you with trading partners
- Developing tailored business visit programs.

Austrade also administers the Australian Government's [Export Market Development Grant](#) scheme which provides financial assistance for aspiring and current exporters.

For more information contact Austrade:

Phone 13 28 78 | Web austrade.gov.au | email info@austrade.gov.au

Step 1: Getting Started

Doing business overseas

Like all companies, ICT exporters can follow some basic steps to help them get ready for their international engagement. Preparation up-front will deliver benefits in the long-term and help you assess your options and strategies.

If you are just starting to export, visit the [‘How to Export’](#) pages on Austrade’s website for some tips and advice including developing an export strategy and market research.

We also recommend that you complete Austrade’s online training modules to learn about successful exporting. These modules are available through the Austrade website under ‘Export’ and cover a range of topics to help new exporters prepare for their export journey.

Born Global

Many Australian technology-based businesses are ‘born global’ – that is, the Australian market for their technology is limited and so to build the business, the company needs global engagement from its inception.

The internet provides a platform to engage with global customers almost immediately so setting up your internet site to attract interest from around the world is critical for born global firms. There are many guides and consultants that can help you do this, and using search engine optimisation tools effectively will help drive new traffic to your website. Some exporters are also using social media to extend their reach. To help you set up your website for a global audience, refer to Austrade’s [exporting online](#) toolkit.

Australian companies also have the advantage of an active local community of multinational ICT companies. Whilst final decision making can be left to head office back home, initial inquiries and engagement in Australia may open doors at a multinational’s headquarters for you. Approach the local offices directly or join networking groups that attract these target customers.

If you are a Microsoft ISV, register your software on the [AIIA Buy Australian Software Portal](#) and connect to Microsoft’s programs to explore their channel programs.

One of the most important pieces of advice we can provide to born global companies is to seek guidance and local mentors in Australia and overseas. The industry is bursting with Aussies who have worked or are currently working overseas. Seek out these people and ask for advice. Learn from their mistakes and adjust your plans accordingly.

Above all, don’t rush into deals too quickly – do your due diligence on customers and only move when you are truly satisfied with the outcome.

Protecting your core asset – your technology

It is essential that Australian technology firms invest in intellectual property (IP) protection strategies. Innocent discussions early on may unwittingly jeopardise or compromise your core IP assets so seek professional advice from day one!

Every time you make a presentation or distribute descriptive documents of any kind, you have made a public disclosure of your IP. To protect your IP, have all interested parties sign a non-disclosure

agreement (NDA) before they see or hear any information about your product. Arrange for the NDA to be signed before the meeting to save time.

To develop an IP protection strategy, there are a range of sources to turn to for assistance during your early stages:

- [IP Australia](#) – get up to speed with various trademarks, patents and other forms of IP protection as well as read up on how to develop IP strategies for Australia and international markets;
- Law firms – many of the leading law firms in Australia specialise in IP protection and provide insights and publications on their websites;
- Technology industry groups and state government networks – IP is a popular topic for industry seminars and events so attend these to learn from experts and others about developing successful IP protection strategies. IP lawyers involved with these groups can often offer some free introductory services as well;
- The Australian Information Industry Association ([AIIA](#)), the industry peak body, offers some guidance and services to assist ICT companies build their IP rights portfolio;
- [The World Intellectual Property Organization](#) (WIPO) is one of the 16 specialised agencies of the United Nations that administers 23 international treaties dealing with different aspects of IP protection in 179 member nations. Research and download some WIPO free publications on IP protection in various markets.

Nothing beats sitting down with a qualified IP lawyer and mapping out your IP strategy. Make sure your lawyer is fully conversant in international IP issues prior to their engagement to ensure your strategy reflects your exports goals.

Upon request, Austrade can provide exporters with introductions to legal firms that specialise in international IP protection. Our introductions may depend on your geographic location, technology specialisation, and target markets.

Regulations, export licences and permits, and sanctions

Exporting encryption products from Australia is regulated as a matter of international security, because Australia is a signatory to the [Wassenaar Agreement](#), along with 32 other countries.

If your technology falls into any of the categories below, you will need to apply for an appropriate export permit or licence from the [Defence Trade Control and Compliance](#) (DTCC) Section of the Department of Defence. Heavy penalties apply to anyone attempting to export controlled goods without a permit or licence.

The Defence and Strategic Goods List includes:

- Military and defence goods and technologies;
- Nuclear materials, facilities and equipment; and
- Dual-use goods and technologies, including some electronics, computer, telecommunications, information security sensors/lasers, navigation/avionics and marine-use products.

Exporters should also check whether the markets they are targeting are affected by bilateral or multilateral trade sanctions. To check the status of countries, visit the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade ([DFAT](#)) website.

Government support for ICT exporters

ICT exporters should familiarise themselves with assistance available through federal and state governments to help them participate in international events and conduct export marketing activities.

Austrade administers the Australian Government's [Export Market Development Grant scheme](#), which can be used to offset the costs of a range of eligible export marketing activities on an annual basis.

Some state governments also provide grants to exporters. Visit your state government's website to explore assistance they provide and how you can access their programs, which may include state-based mission and trade-show support.

ICT exporters are also encouraged to investigate other government programs aimed to increase the competitiveness of Australian businesses. Some relevant programs include:

- [Commercialisation Australia](#)
- [Enterprise Connect](#)

The Australian Technology Showcase (ATS) is a program available to local technology exporters delivered by the governments of New South Wales and Queensland. The ATS run regular workshops and activities designed to address the commercial needs of fast growing technology businesses, and in some cases, provide funding support to eligible companies for export marketing activities. The ATS website is used to showcase Australian technology globally and attracts interest from international customers and partners. Visit www.ats.business.gov.au to find out more about joining ATS.

Visit the [GrantsLINK Directory](#) to explore the full range of grants available to Australian companies.

Other considerations

ICT products and services usually require some level of sales or customer service. When considering export, think about how you might provide ongoing support to your partners and customers overseas:

- Can your existing support operations in Australia cope with overseas inquiries?
- Will you need to set-up local toll-free numbers that divert back to Australia?
- Do you need 24 hours a day support to accommodate different time-zones around the world?
- Can your overseas partner provide initial or Tier 1 customer support in-market?
- How will you keep your offshore partners abreast of new developments within the company and changes to the technology?
- What frequency will you need to visit your offshore partners to provide ongoing product training or join them on customer calls?
- Will your offshore partners be able to represent you at local tradeshow and events, and effectively promote your technology on your behalf?

The effort you put in up-front to addressing these requirements may help circumvent problems once your export business commences.

Step 2: Select your target market

Market Research

Conduct market research to confirm the countries that offer you the best export opportunities:

- Read through the [Austrade ICT market profiles](#) to help you research and select suitable markets;
- Attend local seminars and events to help you learn about various export markets. The Federal Government, state governments, bilateral chambers of commerce, and local ICT industry associations run a range of events in Australia that you can attend for free or low cost;
- Monitor or attend trade shows in Australia such as [CeBIT Australia](#) or around the world. Exhibiting can be expensive so why not just visit and walk the floor to check out your competitors and approach potential partners. This will help you to determine what localisation requirements you might face as well;
- Subscribe to industry newsletters to keep in touch with international trends and opportunities as well as research what other Australian companies are doing offshore. A good newsletter to follow is [The Rust Report](#) and the [Australian Information Industries Association](#) (AIIA) newsletter provides a good overview of sectoral issues, including international business;
- Analyse international leads you receive through your website to see whether any markets are attracting more interest than others;
- Talk to an Austrade adviser about market selection services available through Austrade.

Some markets offer easier access than others – this may be due to decreased regulation or common English-language parameters. New exporters are advised to select only one or two markets initially – spreading your resources too thin may hamper your ability to secure deals.

For further information on conducting [market research](#), visit the Austrade website.

Free Trade Agreements

Consider what benefits might arise from Australia's range of international free trade agreements (FTAs). In particular, those targeting the government market may find immediate benefits in markets such as the US and Singapore.

In January 2010, Australia signed its most comprehensive FTA – the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement.

Although now a little dated, the following publications may provide some insights:

- [Selling to Singapore Government – A Guide for Business](#)
- [Selling to the United States Government – A Guide for Business](#)

For more information on Australia's FTAs and those under negotiation, visit the [Austrade website](#) and the [Department of Foreign Affairs \(DFAT\)](#) website.

Localisation

Developers of software will need to take into account a range of country or cultural issues in their target markets. Changing your software to reflect other languages and cultural nuances is often referred to as localisation.

The changes you might need to make may include:

- Translation into various languages of your user interface and manuals;
- Compliance with local country regulations and laws;
- Adaption of monetary fields to reflect local currencies and taxes;
- Re-design of interface to increase usability in overseas markets, including consideration of images, colour-schemes and other aspects of visual identity.

Language is a clear issue in many markets. Exporters should not assume that English will be widely spoken. Local language is almost always necessary. Your attempts to incorporate local languages into your software will improve your success in the target markets as well as build rapport with your potential customers. For languages not based on the alphabet such as Mandarin and Japanese, double-byte capability must be built into your software design.

Translations must be undertaken by professional translators. Check with the National Australian Accreditation for Translators and Interpreters (NAATI) (www.naati.com.au) for a referral to a suitable translator. You can also contact SBS, who offer translation services in a variety of languages in Australia. Always have your translations checked by in-market locals with knowledge of your sector to ensure the translations read-well in their context.

User testing is recommended once you have beta versions of your translated software available. You will need to work with your local partners or potential customers to further refine usability before releasing to the market.

Remember, localisation takes time and resources to get right. If you are not prepared to localise your software, then consider markets similar to Australia such as New Zealand and Singapore as your first export destinations.

The US and UK are also popular markets for Australian ICT exporters. English is spoken and so localisation issues are reduced. However, the business cultures in both markets vary considerably from Australia and the distance and different time zones are a challenge for many exporters. Markets such as the US and UK require a sustained market entry strategy that typically includes the establishment of a local presence (see Step 7). If this step is beyond your means, choose markets closer to home that you can better manage out of your Australian base.

Step 3: Develop your market entry strategy

Options

Once you select the markets to target, develop a market-entry strategy.

Your strategy may vary between markets, depending on the local market and business culture. The options that you may consider are:

- Direct internet sales;
- Local channel partners such as agents, distributors, value-added resellers (VARs) and systems integrators (SI);
- Setting up your own sales or representative office in market;
- Partnerships or joint ventures with offshore entities;
- Licensing or OEM (original equipment manufacturing);
- Or any combination of the above.

Many exporters start with one model but over time and as sales progress, move to other models to reflect their changing market base and customer requirements. However, in the early stages, it is important to be clear about your preferred strategies as changing tact mid-way may send confusing messages to the market and your customers.

Partner brief

Austrade advises ICT exporters to develop a two-page brief outlining their 'ideal' business partner offshore. Your brief could include key characteristics of the partner such as:

- Geographic reach or territory;
- Product experience, industry experience and contacts;
- Access to sales force or dealer network;
- Language skills (you will need a partner that you can communicate with in English);
- Preferred types of reseller channels;
- Coverage of complementary software products but not your specific competitors;
- Attendance at particular conferences, exhibitions or trade events;
- Other factors that enable a good fit with your company.

Use your brief to help you, or those you engage, to research and target potential partners overseas. If you are looking to promote your search for a partner, you might adapt your brief for broader distribution or post it on your website so that potential partners know your interest.

Step 4: Refine your marketing collateral

Website

It goes without saying that your website will be the first port of call for potential customers and partners overseas. Refresh your web content before embarking on your offshore endeavours. Make sure your content is up-to-date and your design is polished and professional.

Some tips for your website can be found in Austrade's [exporting online](#) toolkit.

Brochures

Many ICT companies find an electronic brochure in PDF or multimedia format useful for overseas marketing activities. A brochure that provides some background on the company, your technology, and the solutions you offer can be conveniently attached to emails and circulated by others that you engage to assist in the promotion of your products or services. Again, a polished and professional design is essential.

Promote your success

You will gain credibility with potential partners and customers by presenting your experiences and success stories. Potential customers and partners will want to see that your technology is commercial and that you have some implementation experience.

The following materials can help you tell your story:

- **Reference Sites** – information about your existing customers. Remember if those customers are local Australian firms, provide a context, not just a name, eg ANZ, one of Australia's top four banks or Coles, a major supermarket chain across Australia;
- **Case studies or testimonials** will help demonstrate your commercial viability and should be written to illustrate the problem you solved for your customer;
- **White Papers** which are an academic-style document written by independent parties help you gain authority and provide a context to your technology, again illustrating the solutions you provide to customer problems;
- **Quadrants** produced by third-party research firms may help you differentiate your offerings and highlight your product/service's strength;
- **Quad Charts**, often used to approach US government bodies, provide a simple, straight-forward means to highlight who you are and what you do. Due to the limitations of space on Quad Charts, the process of developing a Quad Chart also forces you to refine your value-proposition and core messaging;
- **News and media** – any press coverage you have received may support your approaches.

From here on you need to present as an international company. All your marketing materials should be reviewed and adjusted with this in mind, e.g. add +61 country code to telephone numbers etc. Some ICT companies chose a dot.com URL to appear more international as well.

Translation

If you are targeting markets where English is not widely understood, do not assume that English marketing collateral is acceptable. It is highly recommended that you translate your key marketing brochures and materials, including your website, before you strategically target new non-English speaking markets. The [Export Market Development Grant](#) scheme may assist you in covering the costs of developing materials for export marketing purposes. Refer to Step Two for advice on finding translators.

The pitch

Lastly, don't forget to work on your sales pitch!

The way you physically present yourself to potential partners or customers overseas may make or break the deal. Develop 30-second and two-minute elevator pitches and rote learn these so that you are never caught unawares.

Join a pitching workshop where experts help you refine and improve your presentations. State governments and other industry bodies such as the [ANZATech Network](#) often run pitching workshops for technology companies.

Step 5 – Get ready to visit

Once you have established your market entry strategy, you will naturally want to visit that country to investigate the market first-hand. Prior to jumping on a plane, however, do some research to identify potential partners and customers. Use your existing networks to establish connections and leverage introductions to good prospects where you can.

Talk to Austrade

Well before your departure, discuss your trip with an Austrade adviser who may be able to assist with arranging:

- Additional research or assistance to help you prepare for your visit, including market research to help you better understand the market, parameters, regulations and potential partners;
- A briefing with an Austrade office overseas, or others in the market to receive local advice and guidance;
- Assistance from Austrade, or others in the market, to help you set-up a productive appointment program for your visit;
- Referrals to other services providers to address specific market concerns or provide expert advice on legal, financial or accounting issues.

Talk to an Austrade adviser by calling 13 28 78 or emailing us at info@austrade.gov.au

International Events

It is also wise to research upcoming industry exhibitions, conferences or events as timing your trip around these events can be beneficial. You may also consider:

- Joining an international trade mission to learn directly about market requirements through a structured program of group and individual appointments, as well as guided site visits and networking activities;
- Joining an Australian national pavilion at major trade shows globally and benefit from the critical mass of an Australian group, as well as the briefings, networking events and partner introductions delivered through Austrade in-market advisers and our partner network.

To find out about upcoming international events, visit [Austrade Events](#) as well as [subscribe](#) to Austrade's Export Update and Events Alerts. For more niche events, search online – make sure you identify and attend events that attract your target customer audience.

Doing business overseas and cultural tips

Before leaving Australia, read up on how business is conducted in the countries you plan to visit. There is a plethora of travel guides and country business guides available in book form or on the internet. Spend some time familiarising yourself with what to expect so that you don't inadvertently hinder your chances upon arrival.

Austrade [market overviews](#) provide business and cultural tips for visitors, as well as links to other useful websites. Country information is also available on the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [website](#).

Exporters are also recommended to visit www.smarttraveller.gov.au to check official travel advice regarding particular countries, including security concerns. You should also register relevant travel details once your trip plans are in place.

Building relationships overseas

Be patient because it may take several visits to secure a deal. If all goes well, plan a follow-up trip before too long. Remember, even high-tech business is based on relationships and despite our online society, these relationships largely develop through face-to-face engagement.

However, once positive connections are forged, video/web conferencing, webinars, Skype and other online tools can be used effectively to build and grow relationships overseas. In particular, more-and-more companies use online tools for product demonstrations and presentations. These tools can enable you to engage with more prospects and also showcase more of your Australian team and your expertise, as well as capability, without the inconvenience of long-distance travel.

All exporters must be prepared to commit the resources and time to further overseas travel if you want to succeed in export. The [Export Market Development Grant](#) scheme provides reimbursement for eligible export marketing expenses which may include the costs of international travel; support may also be available through your state or territory government.

For other tips on advice on preparing for an overseas business trip, visit the [Austrade website](#).

Step 6 – Seal the deal and grow the business

Due diligence

Your overseas visits will help you identify potential partners and customers. Whilst some companies may appear attractive, it is important to do some background checking or due diligence before signing agreements with these companies.

- Internet searches are a good starting point – not only check the website of the potential partner or customer but also third party sites such as news or media to gather other publically available material to help you understand the business further. [Google News Archives](#) is a good resource to use for background research on companies.
- Company databases and credit check service providers are available in most markets, but can sometimes be in the local language and will need to be translated for you. Talk to Austrade about possible local options in your target country and introductions we can provide to help you source background materials on your prospects.
- Visit local tradeshows or events where the prospect is exhibiting or participating to assess their marketing approaches and network connections.
- Speak to other partners or customers of your prospect to better understand their approaches to business and gauge their satisfaction with the engagement.

Contracts and legal considerations

A contract will need to be prepared to cement your relationship with the target company. Engage a lawyer with international business experience to help you develop a contract template that can be adapted to various markets.

Some considerations for partner and distribution contracts follow:

- **Exclusive vs non-exclusive** – this will depend on your target market characteristics. In larger markets, non-exclusive arrangements allow you to divide up the market into smaller and more manageable territories, or sector verticals.
- **Terms** – make sure your contract clearly articulates your expectations on the partner including what services or support you require them to deliver in-market, as well as what services or support you will provide from Australia. Spell out what aspects of marketing you will cover and what you expect of your partner.
- **Performance criteria** – include some indicative performance targets over set time periods (e.g. 12 months) as well as some consequences for non-performance. Many exporters land themselves in difficulties by signing open-ended contracts without specific goals – avoid this predicament by including targets up front and undertaking regular performance reviews with your partner to keep all on track.

If you are selling direct to your end-user, you may need a sales contract for that customer. Again, consult with your lawyers to prepare a standard contract that might be adapted once the negotiation commences. In some markets such as the US, product liability, after-sales support and taxation issues may need to be written into the contract and so a locally-based lawyer might be more appropriate for your purposes. Talk to Austrade about possible referrals to local lawyers.

When engaging with partners, you will need to consider the issue of localisation or market customisation. In some markets, you may prefer to develop your own localised version of your software in Australia. In some cases, it might be preferable to do this jointly with a local partner. If

you take this latter path, make sure that you have clear guidelines around the ownership of IP in the new localised product – we recommend that you consult with a lawyer before pursuing this option.

The Austrade website provides some further advice on [legal considerations](#).

Getting paid

Be explicit with your partner or customer about your payment preferences and negotiate a means that serves your business needs sufficiently.

Your contract should clearly articulate requirements around deposits, progress payments, and final instalments, or commissions and agency fees if appropriate.

Repatriation of funds from some markets can be complex and as a result you may need some professional advice on how best to do this. Austrade can refer you to local service providers upon request.

Also, talk to the Australian Government's export credit agency, [Export Finance and Insurance Corporation](#) (EFIC) about options they provide to reduce your international payment risks.

Visit the Austrade website for some guidance on [risk management](#) for export.

Sales support and training

Sales support and training are essential for a fruitful partnership.

Your partner's sales force must be confident selling your technology – they need the same sales training as your local employees and must be provided with sufficient tools and resources to present your technology to potential customers. Ideally, your ongoing sales support and training commitments will be written into your partnership agreement and reviewed regularly.

We recommend that you incorporate your partner's offshore sales force into your existing staff training programs through regular webinars and communications – keep them informed of upcoming software upgrades or patches.

Where appropriate, join the offshore sales team on customer calls to better understand customer requirements and also answer customer questions directly. If you are exhibiting at a tradeshow, have your partner's sales reps join you on your stand or if they have a stand, make arrangements to attend and support. These joint calls and activities can do much to build rapport and commitment with your partner, as well as help the partner adjust their own sales pitch to suit your technology.

If your budget allows, bring key partner sales people to Australia for further technical training and demonstrations. Have them visit some of your local customer sites to see the software in action. Have them spend time with your team to build personal relationships and friendships.

When things don't go to plan

Despite your best attempts, sometimes offshore business partnerships and customers don't work out. Regular performance reviews with your partners in-market will help sound any alarm bells before the situation gets too bad. Try to address any issues as soon as they are raised and make extra efforts to bring the situation back on track as fast as possible.

Often issues can be traced back to miscommunication. Language can be a major hindrance and in some cultures, your partner might have taken actions with the best intentions but without adequate consultation. There may have been some mistranslations and misunderstandings along the way so

using professional interpreters or experienced cross-cultural professionals will help you shed light on these issues and find solutions.

If you experience problems with an international partner, talk to Austrade about support available through our international network to help bring the parties together to discuss the issues and seek a resolution. Austrade may also be able to introduce you to local lawyers and other service providers to help proceedings.

Ultimately, not every situation can be recovered and fundamentally, your ability to enforce your partnership agreements will depend on the quality of your contract. For this reason, seek professional advice from lawyers with experience in your target market to help you formulate effective contracts that support your company's goals overseas and protect your assets in Australia.

Step 7: Set up an office overseas

A local presence is essential to the growth strategies of many Australian ICT exporters. A local office helps you present as a domestic firm and makes you more available to some of your prospective customers. It may streamline your sales and marketing efforts as your local team is more readily available to meet with prospects, network in the local industry, and support your existing customers.

Virtual office

Setting up overseas can be costly so many companies avoid this until sales are generated in the target market. If a direct local presence is necessary before sales, then consider virtual solutions including:

- Local toll-free numbers that divert back to your Australian call centre or sales representatives;
- Encouraging internet enquiries, that your team can answer overnight or take advantage of different time zones to respond;
- Utilising locally outsourced marketing support offices that take general enquiries and pass these back to you in Australia for follow-up;
- Working with your local partner to dedicate specific people in their team to your sales support (at your expense).

If you have an Australian team member that you wish to deploy overseas before you set up a registered office, explore the following options:

- Hot-desks supplied by foreign government investment attraction agencies;
- Serviced office facilities for permanent or ad hoc usage;
- Home-based arrangements – often a good temporary measure until the employee settles into the local industry and finds other options.

A soft market-entry strategy will help you refine your approach and extend your marketing budget. By limiting your up-front investment, you can change tactics and location easily or withdraw if opportunities fail to materialise in the desired time frame.

Establishing a local office

When you decide the time is right for a more permanent presence, you may seek to establish a local subsidiary. Each country has different requirements to register a business and it will be your priority to investigate what implications you will face and what type of company structure best suits your requirements. Consider the following:

- You may not be able to conduct business activities in some countries without registering your business with the authorities – if you do so without registration, you may be breaking the law;
- There may be different categories of companies that you can set up for different purposes and depending on the category, your trading activities may be restricted;
- A registered company generally implies local tax liabilities and also must comply with local laws and regulations;
- Visa requirements are more complex and a visa sponsor may be necessary for a registered company.

For these reasons and more, it is essential to seek professional advice from local lawyers and accountants. These advisers can help you evaluate your structuring options and complete your

application to register your company. In addition, they can often act as a company director if this is a local requirement.

Staffing your local office

At some stage, you will need to consider staffing your local office.

There are two options – send someone from Australia (ex-pat) or hire locally.

Considerations for sending ex-pat staff include:

- ICT entrepreneurs from Australia typically want to be at the forefront of their offshore expansion and travel themselves to the target market to conduct the business. Consider the impact on the domestic business by the absence of key personnel overseas – are there other directors in Australia who can take the reins?
- Whoever you decide to send offshore, you will still need to apply for work visas, unless you are sending a foreign national back to their home country. Work visas are not straight-forward so allow ample time before departure to have the visa processed. Do you have enough time?
- Remember that the visa may be directly linked to the type of company you set up. If your local subsidiary can sponsor your employees, then you need to register the company before applying for the visas. If the local subsidiary cannot provide sponsorship, you will need to identify other options locally. A registered immigration attorney or agent can help you identify the best approach for your situation. Seek an introduction to local service providers from Austrade or the country's investment agency if you need help.

You may choose to employ your own staff locally. Again there are some considerations:

- Like Australia, there are many options to find employees offshore such as recruitment agents, newspapers, online employment websites and word-of-mouth. A common source of foreign employees can be your partner, customers or competitors. Use your overseas trips to scout for talent amongst those you meet.
- In some countries, there will be cultural sensitivities around working for a foreign company. Experienced professionals may be reluctant to work for start-ups and newcomers. Being a registered company may improve your positioning with these prospects and give them an increased sense of comfort.
- The other consideration is salary. HR recruitment and research firms will offer you guidance on appropriate salaries for different skills and you can benchmark salary levels by looking up similar positions on online employment sites. Remember to factor in other benefits such as pension contributions or insurances to your salary calculations.
- As you will need to follow local labour laws, it is recommended that you engage an adviser or lawyer to help you work through these employment requirements. Seek an introduction to local service providers from Austrade or the country's foreign investment attraction agency if you need help.

Finance and tax

To operate your office, you will need to establish a local bank account. Unless you are a resident, this process can be quite difficult in some countries.

Check if your Australian bank offers retail banking services in your target market. Many Australian banks operate through Asia and can offer account services in offshore markets for their Australian clients.

Other global banks such as HSBC or Citibank have a range of account offerings that may suit.

In many countries, you will need to work with a domestic bank. In some markets, Austrade can introduce you to local banks that may work with Australian firms.

It is unlikely, however, that a foreign bank will provide you with loans without a long-term relationship and positive local credit rating. Any loans will most likely need to be arranged in Australia.

Depending on the nature of your offshore subsidiary, this entity may be prevented by law to receive payments from your local customers directly. Payments may need to be transferred back to your Australian HQ.

If you can receive payments locally, then you will face local tax issues such as withholding tax or GST-type point-of-sale taxes. You may also face some issues around repatriation of your profits to Australia so again, professional advisers are essential to helping you make sound decisions and avoid unnecessary liabilities.

Foreign government investment attraction agencies

Most sophisticated economies openly welcome foreign investors to their countries and offer support services and incentives to help foreign companies set up. Support can be available at the national, state, provincial or city council level. Finding out what support and incentives are available in your target markets can be very useful.

Austrade offices overseas may provide you with referrals to local agencies upon request.

The following organisations have offices in Australia, mainly Sydney, that assist Australian companies set up businesses in their nations:

JETRO (Japan External Trade Organisation)	www.jetro.go.jp/australia/
KOTRA (Korean Trade–Investment Promotion Agency & Korea Business Centre)	www.kotrasydney.org.au/index.jsp
UKTI (United Kingdom Trade & Investment)	ukinaustralia.fco.gov.uk/en/business/
IDA Ireland	www.idaireland.com/
Canadian Trade Commission	www.tradecommissioner.gc.ca/
UBIFRANCE - French Trade Commission	www.ubifrance.fr/australie
EDB Singapore	www.edb.gov.sg
InvestHK (Hong Kong)	www.investhk.gov.hk

For other markets, contact the local Embassies of your target market to see what assistance they can provide.

Resources and links

The following government and industry bodies support Australian companies to engage in international business:

Australian Technology Showcase	www.ats.business.gov.au
Australian Information Industries Association	www.aiia.org.au
Australian Interactive Media Industry Association	www.aimia.org.au
Women in Global Business	www.wigb.gov.au
ANZATech Network	www.anzatechnet.com

Other organisations can be found on the [Austrade website](#).

Get recognised

Industry awards are a good way to improve your company's recognition in the marketplace and attract some attention from the media. Accolades may also enhance your credibility in international business.

Some important awards for ICT exporters are:

Australian Export Awards – ICT Category	www.australianexportawards.gov.au
AIIA iAwards	www.iawards.com.au
AIMIA Awards – Export Category	www.aimia.com.au/home/awards
Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year	eoy.ey.com.au
BRW Fast 50	www.brw.com.au
Deloitte Technology Fast 50	www.deloitte.com/view/en_AU/au/industries/tmt/techfast/index.htm

Final considerations

We cannot ignore that taking your business to global markets will take time and money. It will take your managers away from their domestic operations and will require your firm to re-focus. Your journey needs the absolute support and commitment of all your employees.

You will make mistakes along the way – it is inevitable. However, we hope that through following our seven steps to export success, your risks and costs will be minimised and your journey worthwhile in the long-term.

We encourage you to reach out to those that are there to help. Start with Austrade but also contact your state or territory government, industry association and the offices of foreign governments in Australia. Importantly, reach out to industry mentors and learn from those who have been before you. A mentor with international business experience is essential – join networks where these introductions will arise. Don't be afraid to ask for help or ask questions.

Austrade research shows that exporting companies are more profitable, experience greater employee satisfaction, and are the most innovative firms in our economy. The Australian ICT sector is a great source of export income for Australia and continually enables us to showcase our innovation in world markets.

Take your first step and join the export journey so your company can join the many other Australian technology companies performing on the world stage. Read through some Australian [export success stories](#) to appreciate the journey others have taken.

The Austrade website provides a range of further information and online tools to help you develop your export strategy. New online learning modules also help you learn and develop skills to build your strategy. Visit www.austrade.gov.au/export to explore the information available to Australian exporters and start exporting now!