



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

U.S. Commercial Service and the American Trading Centers (ATC) Initiative

October 4, 2005

For public dissemination

Q What is the American Trading Centers (ATC) Initiative?

A The ATC Initiative is a formal collaboration (a Memorandum of Understanding was signed on July 11, 2005) between the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration (the parent organization of the U.S. Commercial Service) and the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT).

The ATC initiative enables the U.S. Commercial Service to offer U.S. companies greater access to more China markets including Dalian, Chongqing, Hangzhou, Harbin, Kunming, Nanjing/Jiangsu Province, Ningbo, Qingdao, Shenzhen, Tianjin, Wuhan, Xiamen, Xi'an/Shaanxi Province and Zhuhai.

How? The ATC fosters new relationships between U.S. and Chinese small and medium-size companies in these 14 key Chinese business centers in order to generate new opportunities for U.S. SMEs in the China market. Specific examples of this collaboration are:

- Shared and jointly prepared targeted Chinese market research and trade lead information;
- High-quality business matchmaking services for American exporters in 14 major business centers across China;
- Mutually-beneficial trade exhibitions and trade missions in the 14 Chinese business centers; and
- Dissemination of market opportunity information to American and Chinese business representatives to facilitate U.S.-China trade.

For more on the ATC initiative, visit www.export.gov/china.

Q Who is the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT)?

A The CCPIT, recognized as nongovernmental organization by the UN, comprises officials, enterprises and organizations representing various industrial and trade sectors in China. Its objective is to promote the development of economic and trade relations between China and other countries and regions around the world. The CCPIT admits promotes trade through its functions of information dissemination, consultation, exhibition, legal assistance, etc. For more information, visit: http://www.ccpit.org/static_ccpit/en/about.jsp.

Q What new services does this initiative offer my company?

A The services offered through the ATC network do not differ from the trade promotion support offered by the Commercial Service worldwide. This initiative makes it possible to broaden the geographic scope of our services while maintaining consistent service quality in China's vast and diverse business environment. CCPIT has agreed to follow Commercial Service standards in their entirety.

Q What is the difference in the assistance available from Commercial Service offices now located in five Chinese cities and through the ATC?

A The American Trading Center network in China does not consist of “brick and mortar” offices. This is a virtual network linking the U.S. Commercial Service offices in five U.S. diplomatic missions with the resources of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT).

The Commercial Service has hired American contractors, called Commercial Representatives (CRs), one at each of the five U.S. diplomatic missions, who travel to the ATC cities to introduce U.S. companies to local and regional officials and businesspeople, including decision makers for major-project procurement and trade-event organizers. In the 14 designated ATC cities, CCPIT’s international trade professionals serve as ATC points of contact. These professionals are counterparts to the CRs. The Commercial Service has provided training to CCPIT’s staff, whose work is reviewed by the CRs.

Q How can I determine which ATC location is most relevant to my product line?

A It is most useful to research the market first to determine the suitability of your product, rather than simply selecting a city. We also encourage all prospective U.S. exporters to use a self-assessment tool called “Are You China Ready?” at www.export.gov/china/assisting_us_exporters/areyouchinaready.asp. Also, city profiles and information on leading industry sectors can be found at <http://www.export.gov/china/atc.asp>

Q How do I request services at one of these 14 ATC locations?

A Once your company has determined that it may be useful to explore market opportunities further, consider a variety of services designed to assist U.S. exporters at www.buyusa.gov/china/en/programs.html. These services may be ordered through the U.S. Export Assistance Center (for the location nearest you, visit www.export.gov/eac/index.asp) or you can follow instructions within the program descriptions.

Q I understand that the CCPIT is a quasi-governmental entity. How can I be sure that my company’s business-proprietary information will be protected?

A CCPIT has agreed to follow Commercial Service standards in their entirety. These standards include rules of conduct applicable to all Commercial Service employees. Although the CCPIT professionals are not Commercial Service employees, under the terms of our agreement CCPIT has agreed to accept these service ethics.

Q How will the Commercial Service ensure uniform quality among these different locations?

A The American Commercial Representatives (CRs) are there to ensure that the quality of the market research, appointments, and other services meet the worldwide and China-wide Commercial Service standards. The training provided CCPIT staff is based on the best practices of our commercial specialists in China, and fulfillment of every service order will include direct involvement of the CRs. Finally, the services offered by the ATCs enjoy the same unconditional money back guarantee as all other Commercial Services products.

Q For a Gold Key (matchmaking service), I appreciated that a Commercial Specialist accompanied me to my meetings. Will this be offered at the ATC locations?

A In most cases, an employee of the Embassy or Consulate will accompany you to your meetings when they are arranged through the ATC network. This is to ensure quality control and to assist you with any additional issues that may arise during the provision of the service.

Q My company recently requested a Gold Key (matchmaking) service from CS China and was informed that we would have to wait several months. Can the Commercial Service offer faster service for the cities designated by the ATC Initiative?

A While our ATC network has added significant capacity to the overall Commercial Service program in many parts of China, given the resources of CCPIT at the local level and the anticipated increase in customer volume, the standard delivery lead time for Gold Keys remains at 6 weeks in China.

Q What “after sale” service can I expect from the ATC?

A Once the service is completed, you have the option of meeting with a Commercial Service employee, in China or at a domestic office, to discuss additional steps, and you are asked to fill out a client survey. As with all services provided by the Commercial Service, we offer a 100 percent unconditional money-back guarantee if the client is not fully satisfied.

Q Are there any U.S. restrictions on exports to China that I need to be concerned about?

A The United States does control the export of certain commodities and technology (knowledge) that can be applied to military as well as commercial purposes. Further information concerning U.S. export controls, including the role of the Bureau of Industry and Security in implementing the Export Administration Regulations, can be found at www.bis.doc.gov.