

Centers of Excellence and Expertise (United States)

1. Description of initiative

As part of CBP's efforts to protect U.S. economic competitiveness, CBP is transforming trade processing to find efficiencies for both CBP and the Trade community. Leading the way in these efforts are CBP's Centers, which provides "one-stop processing" for the Trade community using a team of industry-focused CBP experts located virtually nationwide.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, CBP established four industry-specific Centers:

- The Electronics Center in Long Beach, CA;
- The Pharmaceutical, Health & Chemicals Center in New York City;
- The Automotive & Aerospace Center in Detroit; and
- The Petroleum, Natural Gas & Minerals Center in Houston.

In FY 2013, CBP will create six new Centers:

- The Agriculture & Prepared Products Center;
- The Apparel, Footwear & Textiles Center;
- The Base Metals Center;
- The Consumer Products & Mass Merchandising Center;
- The Industrial & Manufacturing Materials Center; and
- The Machinery Center.

The Centers bring all of CBP's trade expertise to bear on a single industry in a strategic virtual location. They are staffed with numerous trade positions using account management principles to authoritatively facilitate trade. Virtual teams of CBP trade disciplines report to the Center, but will not physically move from their current duty locations. Importers are not asked to change their current supply chains. Imports will continue to arrive at the ports that best meet the needs of the trade community. Instead, CBP will leverage technology to link trade personnel from throughout the country by industry sector in order to more efficiently manage resources and effectively segment risk.

The Centers continue CBP efforts to increase uniformity of practices across ports of entry, facilitate the timely resolution of trade compliance issues nationwide, and further strengthen critical agency knowledge on key industry practices.

2. Impact of initiative

The Centers of Excellence and Expertise (Centers) represent CBP's expanded focus on "Trade in the 21st Century," transforming customs procedures to align with modern business. The Centers are virtual organizations that bring all of CBP's trade expertise to bear on a single industry in a strategic location. The Centers serve as a single point of processing for participating importers in a particular industry. By having the Centers focus on industry-specific issues, CBP is able to provide tailored support to unique trading environments. Centers also serve as resources to the broader trade community and to CBP's U.S. government partners. Center personnel answer questions, provide information and develop comprehensive trade facilitation strategies to address uniformity and compliance concerns.

By redirecting work involving participating importers to centralized, industry-specific locations, ports of entry will be able to more effectively focus resources on high-risk shipments and importers that may pose a danger to U.S. border security, harm the health and safety of consumers, or violate U.S. trade laws and intellectual property rights critical to our nation's economic competitiveness. In turn, the approach to trade processing facilitated by the new centers will reduce transaction costs for the trade community, facilitate legitimate trade through risk segmentation, increase agency expertise and deliver greater transparency and uniformity of action within a given industry.

3. Relevant private agencies and industry groups involved in your national or international initiatives/practices

Customs Operations Advisory Committee (COAC), CBP working groups with the trade community