

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-13-644](#), a report to the Chairman, Committee on Small Business, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In 2010, the President launched the NEI with the goal of doubling U.S. exports over 5 years. More than 2 decades ago, Congress directed the President to establish the TPCC to provide a unifying framework for federal efforts in this area. Among other things, Congress directed the TPCC to assess the appropriate levels and allocations of resources and develop a government-wide strategic plan that identifies federal export promotion priorities, reviews current programs in light of these priorities, and proposes to the President a federal trade promotion budget that supports the plan. Congress also required the TPCC to submit annual reports to Congress describing the required strategic plan.

This report assesses the extent to which the TPCC compiles and reports information on how federal export promotion resources are aligned with export promotion priorities. GAO reviewed the laws governing the TPCC and good practices for interagency initiatives, analyzed TPCC budget data and documents, and interviewed TPCC secretariat and Office of Management and Budget staff.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that TPCC (1) develop and distribute guidance for member agencies on what information they should provide the TPCC on the resources they spend on export promotion activities; and (2) report in its National Export Strategies on how resources are allocated by agency and aligned with the strategy's priorities. The TPCC secretariat agreed with our recommendations and stated it plans to take steps to address them.

View [GAO-13-644](#). For more information, contact Kimberly Gianopoulos at (202) 512-8612 or gianopoulosk@gao.gov.

July 2013

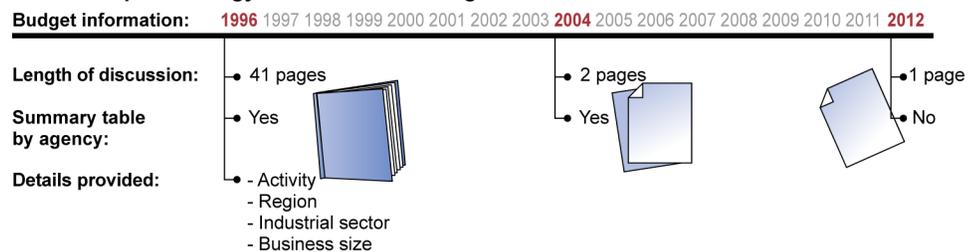
EXPORT PROMOTION

Better Information Needed about Federal Resources

What GAO Found

The interagency Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee (TPCC) neither reports nor compiles information on how federal export promotion resources align with government-wide priorities. As a result, decision makers lack a clear understanding of the total resources dedicated across the country and around the world by TPCC member agencies to priority areas, such as increasing exports by small- and medium-sized businesses. GAO has previously reported that effective national strategies should address costs and has found shortcomings in the committee's response to the budget-related portions of its mandate. While the TPCC's National Export Strategy reports issued since initiation of the National Export Initiative (NEI) outline government-wide priorities and progress in achieving them, they do not discuss how resources are allocated in support of these priorities. Despite the current emphasis on export promotion as a high-priority goal, recent strategies have provided less information on budget resources than have previous strategies, as shown below. The TPCC last publicly reported a summary budget table in 2008. TPCC secretariat officials acknowledged that the TPCC agencies currently place little emphasis on displaying or discussing agencies' resources in the National Export Strategy.

National Export Strategy Presentation of Budget Information



Source: GAO analysis of Trade Promotion Coordinating Committee information.

The TPCC last compiled high-level data on member agencies' budget authority in 2011, but this information is not useful for assessing resource allocations. To be useful, data should, among other things, be consistent and sufficiently complete for the intended purpose. However, the TPCC's data are inconsistent across agencies and not detailed enough to facilitate an understanding or comparison of how resources are allocated among priorities. TPCC agencies do not use a common definition of export promotion, so it is unclear why some agencies are included in the TPCC's data and others are not, and the TPCC's data are not current. Although agency accounting systems and budget processes differ, which presents challenges, clear guidance for agencies on what information they should provide the TPCC could improve the quality of the data. Without better information on agencies' export promotion resources, decision makers cannot determine whether the federal investment in export promotion is being used effectively or make informed decisions about future resource decisions.