

Commercial Diplomacy, Investment, & Export Promotion

A Survey of Federal Programs



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Reference Guide
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Glossary

Abbreviation	Agency
Commerce	U.S. Department of Commerce
DFC	U.S. International Development Finance Corporation
DOD	U.S. Department of Defense
DOE	U.S. Department of Energy
EXIM	Export-Import Bank of the United States
Labor	U.S. Department of Labor
MCC	Millenium Challenge Corporation
State	U.S. Department of State
SBA	U.S. Small Business Administration
Treasury	U.S. Department of the Treasury
USACE	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USTDA	U.S. Trade and Development Agency

Overview

The White House and Congress are confronting mounting headwinds to U.S. global leadership. Emerging economies are growing more rapidly than advanced economies, market preferences are shifting, and state-backed competition is intensifying. A government apparatus that prioritizes commercial diplomacy, accelerates international investment, and promotes U.S. exports is necessary to level the playing field for U.S. firms engaging in global markets. As a result, policymakers are refreshing their toolkit to ensure that U.S. economic leadership is well positioned to endure and expand, create more economic opportunities at home, and strengthen American influence abroad.

In support of these efforts, the Council's reference guide compiles the largest programs currently operating across more than a dozen federal agencies in the international investment and export space. It organizes existing programs into four categories of federal capacity, though some programs could fit comfortably across one or more categories:

Commercial Diplomacy and Market-Making

These programs expand market opportunities for U.S. businesses through market intelligence, matchmaking services to find trusted partners and buyers, and/or direct advocacy for the interests of U.S. businesses in international markets. They may also offer high-level technical assistance to foreign governments to improve financial stability in overseas markets. These programs do not engage in significant overseas grant-making or financing.

Project Preparation and Economic Assistance

These programs support the development of large projects overseas through feasibility studies, technical assistance, consulting, and other support, enabling U.S. exports and procurement contracts. They also provide grant-based assistance to promote economic growth and accelerate market development.

Infrastructure and Project Finance

These programs support the development of specific infrastructure or other projects that American firms are participating in. Assistance and finance support may include large grants or financing and de-risking tools, such as loans, loan guarantees, and insurance products.

Export Finance

These programs directly facilitate U.S. exports by providing financing and de-risking products to American exporters as well as to foreign private sector importers and foreign governments that purchase U.S. goods and services.

Federal Programs At-A-Glance

	Commercial Diplomacy and Market-Making	Project Preparation and Economic Assistance	Infrastructure and Project Finance	Export Finance
Commerce	X			
DFC		X	X	
DOD	X			X
DOE	X			
EXIM				X
Labor	X			
MCC			X	
State	X	X	X	X
SBA	X			X
Treasury	X	X	X	
USACE		X		
USDA	X			X
USTDA		X		

Commercial Diplomacy and Market-Making

Department of Commerce (Commerce)

- Commerce's International Trade Administration (ITA) offers several programs to match, and otherwise assist, U.S. businesses with partners in foreign markets. These programs include International Partner Search, Gold Key Service, International Company Profile background checks, Single Company Promotion services, Trade Missions, and Trade Events.
- The Advocacy Center aids U.S. businesses in winning procurement contracts from foreign governments and Multilateral Development Banks.
- ITA provides market intelligence reports on countries and industries and Country Commercial Guides.

- The Foreign Commercial Service operates out of U.S. embassies and consulates overseas to advocate for and facilitate U.S. exports of non-agricultural products.

Department of State (State)

- The Office of Commercial and Business Affairs leads the State Department's efforts to advance American prosperity by helping U.S. companies compete for and win contracts in foreign markets.
- The Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs publishes Investment Climate Statements that provide country-specific information on the business climates of more than 160 countries and economies. These statements support the Department of Commerce's Country Commercial Guides.
- U.S. embassies house Economic Sections that conduct bilateral economic diplomacy and promote trade and investment. State Department Foreign Service Officers coordinate with other agencies' overseas personnel, including the Foreign Commercial Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, and Department of the Treasury.

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

- USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) facilitates U.S. agricultural exports by providing market intelligence to exporters and identifying export opportunities.
- FAS works with foreign governments to establish international standards and enforce the rights of U.S. exporters.
- FAS supports the administration of foreign food aid.

Department of Energy (DOE)

- DOE's Office of International Affairs (IA) engages in diplomatic outreach to promote the competitiveness of the U.S. energy industry in foreign markets, including by facilitating energy cooperation agreements and efforts to lower foreign technical and regulatory barriers to imports of U.S. energy technologies and services.
- IA coordinates engagement between foreign governments and the DOE national labs.

Small Business Administration (SBA)

- U.S. Export Assistance Centers, located throughout the U.S., support American small businesses who want to export. They offer educational tools, low-cost training, and free business consulting to help evaluate and plan entry into foreign markets.

- The State Trade Expansion Program provides grants to states and territories that help U.S. small businesses export products and services. Grants can be used for a variety of purposes, including export education; participation in foreign trade missions, export trade show exhibits, or relevant educational workshops; international marketing products and campaigns; and website globalization and e-commerce.

Department of the Treasury (Treasury)

- The Office of Technical Assistance (OTA) offers support to foreign governments that may create new opportunities for U.S. investment and exports. OTA helps foreign finance ministries and central banks build capacity, stabilize banking systems, develop capital markets, improve their domestic investment climate, and reform infrastructure procurement policies to support competition and favor bids from cost-competitive, high-quality foreign providers.
- The Financial Attaché program posts Treasury employees in select embassies and other overseas facilities to build and maintain relationships with foreign central banks, finance ministries, and other financial institutions to advance U.S. economic and commercial policies.

Department of Defense (DOD)

- The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) engages governments overseas to create market opportunities for the sale of U.S. defense articles, services, and training.

Department of Labor (Labor)

- The Bureau of International Labor Affairs investigates and reports on labor abuses around the world, increasing the competitiveness of U.S.-made exports.

Project Preparation and Economic Assistance

Department of State

- Provides grant-based assistance across a range of programs to support economic growth overseas, creating more favorable conditions in which U.S. firms can compete. Historically, these programs have included the Economic Support Fund, Development Assistance, as well as other programs formerly administered by USAID. Grant-based assistance priorities at State have been developed over time with Congress; some earmarked priorities have included

support to build a macroeconomic foundation for growth, promote trade and investment, build foreign financial sector capacity, increase private sector productivity, develop workforces, and expand energy services.

- The Transaction Advisory Fund provides “rapid response” legal and consultative services to foreign governments for infrastructure projects for which American firms are well positioned to compete.

U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA)

- USTDA has a mandate to create U.S. jobs through supporting the export of U.S. goods and services. It does so by funding feasibility studies, offering technical assistance, and conducting comprehensive analyses to advance international infrastructure projects for which American firms are competing, from concept to financing and implementation.

U.S. International Development Finance Corporation (DFC)

- DFC offers technical assistance support for feasibility studies, front-end engineering design work, environmental and social impact assessments, transaction structuring, and other work.

Department of the Treasury

- Various Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) provide project preparation and economic support, primarily in developing countries. Treasury’s Office of International Affairs manages U.S. government engagement with these institutions, can influence their policies, and propose reforms.

U.S Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)

- The Interagency and International Services program provides technical assistance to foreign governments, international organizations, U.S. firms, and other entities for engineering projects, mostly on a reimbursable basis.

Other Capacities

- In addition to the above, there are several smaller agencies that provide assistance and support that can create market opportunities and more favorable operating environments for U.S. businesses. These include the African Development Foundation, the National Endowment for Democracy, and the Peace Corps, among other organizations.

Infrastructure and Project Finance

Federal agencies provide grant-based, financing, or de-risking support to develop overseas infrastructure and other projects.

U.S. International Development Finance Corporation

- DFC offers a range of financing and de-risking tools to mobilize private sector capital, including loans, loan guarantees, and insurance products.
- DFC can provide direct equity investments into funds, companies, and projects to advance economic development and U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)

- MCC provides grant-based support to finance large infrastructure projects in developing countries. MCC investments are intended to support development and create an enabling environment for private sector investment.
- MCC offers compacts (large, five years grants), concurrent compacts for regional investments (grants that promote cross-border economic integration), and threshold programs (smaller grants focused on policy and institutional reform).

Department of State

- Through authorities originally granted to USAID, State can provide sovereign loan guarantees (SLGs) to certain countries, currently including Small Island Developing State, Egypt, Jordan, and Ukraine. While a sparsely used tool, SLGs could be used to support large infrastructure and other projects.

Department of the Treasury

- The Office of International Affairs leads U.S. government engagement with MDBs and IFIs, negotiating institutions' policies surrounding investment and procurement for large projects, including for infrastructure.
- The Office of International Affairs can provide loans and loan guarantees to certain IFIs and MDBs to unlock financing for infrastructure projects worldwide.

Export Finance

Several agencies provide financing and de-risking tools to enable the export of U.S. goods and services.

Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM)

- EXIM facilitates the export of U.S. goods and services by offering U.S. exporters a range of financing and de-risking products, including export credit insurance, loans, loan guarantees, working capital support, and supply chain financing.
- EXIM facilitates the export of U.S. goods and services by offering foreign importers a range of financing and de-risking products, including foreign currency guarantees, loans, loan guarantees, and structured finance.
- EXIM can also provide financing support for critical imports to the U.S. The Supply Chain Resiliency Initiative aims to increase the supply of critical minerals for U.S. manufacturers.

U.S. Department of Agriculture

- The Foreign Agricultural Service provides credit guarantees to encourage financing of U.S. agricultural exports and relevant infrastructure improvements that facilitate foreign imports of U.S. agricultural products—mainly in emerging economies.

Department of Defense

- DSCA, in coordination with the State Department, executes foreign military financing (FMF) assistance, enabling select countries' governments to purchase U.S. defense articles, services, or training.

Department of State

- The Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (PM), in coordination with the DSCA, provides FMF financing to select countries. While DSCA executes the transactions, PM determines FMF policy and manages associated funding.

Small Business Administration

- SBA offers a range of export financing tools for small businesses, including Export Express loans, Export Working Capital loans, and International Trade loans.

Other Programs

This reference guide describes the largest and most impactful programs across the federal apparatus, but a host of other programs similarly support the effort to create overseas market opportunities for American firms. There are a host of “domestic-facing” federal programs that play an important role in developing next-generation technologies, securing supply chains, and fostering domestic industry to enable exports. These include the research and development programs at DOE and the National Science Foundation; financing and investment through DOE’s Loan Program Office, DOD’s Office of Strategic Capital, and the Defense Production Act; mapping of key resources by the U.S. Geological Survey at the Department of Interior; tax and trade policy by Treasury and the U.S. Trade Representative; and dozens of other agencies, programs, and policy tools.