

**COMMERCIAL CUSTOMS OPERATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (COAC)**  
**Government Report on: *Centers of Excellence and Expertise***  
**April 2016**

The establishment of the Centers of Excellence and Expertise (Centers) follows the extensive idea exchange with the Advisory Committee on Commercial Operations (COAC) and careful concept testing and validation both within U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and with the broader trade community. Centers have full operational authority to facilitate legitimate trade through more effective risk segmentation, improved enforcement efforts, and increased industry knowledge.

The full implementation of the following ten Centers of Excellence and Expertise covering the entire industry spectrum was completed in March 2016:

1. Agriculture & Prepared Products managed out of Miami Field Office;
2. Apparel, Footwear & Textiles managed out of San Francisco Field Office;
3. Automotive & Aerospace managed out of Detroit Field Office;
4. Base Metals managed out of Chicago Field Office;
5. Consumer Products & Mass Merchandising managed out of Atlanta Field Office;
6. Electronics managed out of Los Angeles Field Office;
7. Industrial & Manufacturing Materials managed out of Buffalo Field Office;
8. Machinery managed out of Laredo Field Office;
9. Petroleum, Natural Gas & Minerals managed out of Houston Field Office; and
10. Pharmaceuticals, Health & Chemicals managed out of New York Field Office.

All ten (10) Centers reached full operability in March 2016 through the transfer of all post-release trade functions and the permanent transition of Import Specialist personnel to the Centers.

A Centers of Excellence and Expertise Uniformity Working Group chaired by COAC members with representation by CBP and the trade community consulted on transparency matters involving uniform treatment and application of the trade policies and processes. This Working Group underscores the importance of a uniform deployment of trade strategies with an industry-focus and account-based approach as the Centers mature. The following areas were focal points for the recommendations:

- Facilitation and enforcement with other critical CBP functions such as cargo operations; fines, penalties and forfeitures; and regulations and rulings;
- Interaction with Partner Government Agencies; and
- Dissemination of informed compliance information and best practices.

The Working Group revisited the original COAC Centers concept in an effort to craft next level objectives to support effectiveness in meeting the program's initial goals. The COAC set forth recommendations that serve to further the maturation of the Centers and maximize the development of industry expertise.