

Recommendations for Integrating Single Window Portals in North America

The Advisory Committee on Supply Chain Competitiveness recognizes the great progress made during the past year by Customs and Border Protection and the Border Interagency Executive Council to develop and implement the International Trade Data System, also known as the Single Window Initiative in the United States. Likewise, we applaud CBP's efforts to reach out to Canada and Mexico through multiple initiatives to simplify the movement of goods across our mutual borders. With the goals of accelerating U.S. Single Window development and furthering the interoperability of U.S., Canadian, and Mexican systems, we put forth the following recommendations. The pages noted below are based on the background paper, titled "Export-Import Automation and the North American Trade Portal."

Proposed Immediate Recommendations for Successful Implementation of the United States' ITDS Single Window

1. In order to ensure successful implementation, immediately recruit and designate a full-time, dedicated industry subject matter expert with extensive prior experience in system design, development and deployment of single windows to oversee and coordinate the work by Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) and the participating government agencies on its ITDS Single Window Strategy Planning Group and assist in Single Window life cycle planning and best practices transfer. (See page 9-11 in background paper for rationale)
 - a. This industry subject matter expert should immediately work with all agencies to have one unified, clear and agreed upon understanding of the definition of scope, work plan activities, and deliverables which should then be communicated to all government and industry stakeholders to properly set expectations, explain agency priorities and define "success".
2. To help inform companies on the progress made with the development of the Single Window initiative, have the White House provide a comprehensive work plan and status report by June 2015 to share the progress made, what resources are still needed, and what institutional challenges need to be addressed to make the deadline. This work plan and progress report should be followed by a robust ITDS communication and education plan from the project team to share updates with all impacted stakeholders on, at least, a quarterly basis.

Proposed Recommendations for a North American Trade Portal

1. Develop a North American Trade Portal – a software solution that would provide a single access point to the Canadian, Mexican and United States' Single Windows and some degree of data sharing and unified processing among those systems, eliminating the repeated submission of duplicative data that takes place today for trans-border shipments.

2. Create a Regional Trade Portal Advisory Group of technology experts under Customs and Border Protection Border Interagency Executive Council's (BIEC) External Engagement Committee to study and advise CBP on developing more interoperable Single Window systems with Mexico and Canada. This Ad hoc BIEC working group would participate in two forums, the Beyond the Border Initiative (Canada) and the High Level Economic Dialogue (Mexico), and encourage solutions for the Customs agencies in the three different countries to resolve issues relating to the non-compatibility of the countries' Single Window systems.

3. Have the BIEC Regional Trade Portal Advisory Group debrief CBP on technology strategy options and work with CBP to convene a *Regional Trade Portal Action Group*, composed of technical experts from CBP and their governmental counterparts from Canada and Mexico to establish a work plan and timeline to define a formal, synchronized approach to cross-border trade data and processes. (See pages 10-12 of the background paper for types of challenges to address)
 - a. Have the *Regional Trade Portal Action Group* decide upon the set of operating standards most appropriate for a phased-in approach to regional inter-operability, ensuring compliance with the World Customs Organization "open" data exchange standards. (See pages 14-15 of the background paper)

 - b. Have the *Regional Trade Portal Action Group* build a "sandbox" proxy server and middleware pilot project that can develop/demonstrate inter-operability between the national single windows. *A sandbox is a non-production environment for testing purposes that does not disrupt the overall integrity of the live system.* (See pages 14-15 of the background paper)

4. It is important that the work on developing the North American Trade Portal be conducted simultaneously and in tandem with the US ITDS Single Window to ensure that technology requirements for North American interoperability are considered and implemented during development. This will avoid unnecessary delays and costs of having to re-work the US system or change it after it has been completed.