



Highlights of [GAO-08-915](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The Export-Import Bank (Ex-Im) provides loans, loan guarantees, and insurance to support U.S. exports, and its support for small businesses has been a long-standing issue of congressional interest. Most recently in 2006, Congress required Ex-Im to develop, and GAO to review, performance standards for Ex-Im's assistance to small businesses, especially those owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals and by women.

In response to the mandate, GAO evaluated the extent to which Ex-Im's standards address the functions referred to in the Export-Import Bank Reauthorization Act of 2006's (2006 Reauthorization Act) requirement for performance standards; how well Ex-Im is measuring its achievement of the standards, including those related to small businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals and by women; and Ex-Im's use of performance information to improve operations and results.

What GAO Recommends

This report recommends that Ex-Im establish performance standards for functions not currently addressed, revise several current measures to include measurable targets and time frames, and take steps to establish a measure for financing for small businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals and women.

Ex-Im concurred with GAO's recommendations.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-915](#). For more information, contact Loren Yager at (202) 512-4128 or YagerL@gao.gov.

EXPORT-IMPORT BANK

Performance Standards for Small Business Assistance Are in Place but Ex-Im Is in the Early Stages of Measuring Their Effectiveness

What GAO Found

Ex-Im's small business performance standards address most, but not all, functions referred to in the 2006 Reauthorization Act. Ex-Im developed 28 performance standards for its assistance to small businesses, ranging from providing excellent customer service to increasing outreach. We found that Ex-Im has performance standards relevant to most of the legislative functions, but the standards do not directly address some functions. For example, none of the standards directly addresses the function calling for increased outreach to businesses employing fewer than 100 employees. In addition, the standards address only some aspects of several functions.

Ex-Im's performance measures generally address attributes of successful performance measures, such as clarity and linkage to goals, but 11 out of 27 measures lack targets and time frames to help decision makers evaluate progress toward meeting the performance standards. Additionally, Ex-Im has no measures to assess progress toward some standards. For example, while Ex-Im has established a measure for outreach to small businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals and by women, it has no measure for monitoring progress toward its performance standard for increasing the amount made available to finance their exports. Ex-Im officials reported challenges to developing measures for financing exports by these businesses, such as the difficulty of obtaining reliable data.

Ex-Im is in the early stages of compiling and using small business performance information. As an example of using this information to improve small business operations, Ex-Im officials cited raising limits on financing amounts for Letters of Credit, a type of guarantee, when customer feedback indicated an issue in that area. However, we found such examples are limited and Ex-Im has instituted few practices to date to ensure that small business performance information is used effectively. We previously reported on several practices that agencies can apply to enhance the use of performance information in management decisions, including improving the usefulness of performance information. To improve the usefulness of performance information, Ex-Im recently centralized its data analysis functions and is beginning to implement a new data reporting system; however, Ex-Im has no systematic processes in place for collecting, analyzing, and disseminating small business performance data.