



2024 NADEC Annual Export Conference
Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the District Export Councils

“Engaging with Our Friends & Neighbours”

Jonathan Szucs, 2024 NADEC Chair, opened the 2024 NADEC Annual Spring Conference. “This year we are celebrating 50 years of the District Export Councils. During this past half century, the DECs have risen from small groups of exporters to 61 DECs across the country containing over 1,000 members. While we reflect on the past, we must also look to the future. We will be talking to and working with some of our oldest trading partners as we all look to the future of exporting,” said Szucs.

As NADEC Chair, Szucs reflected on this momentous occasion of the formation of the District Export Councils fifty years ago and on his tenure on the NADEC Board of Directors. “Over these past eight years I have watched the NADEC and local DECs transform into what we see today. I have witnessed countless hours of mentorship given to our SMEs. I have seen great webinars, conferences and information sheets created to help our exporters. I have seen what makes the DECs and the United States great.”

Jonathan thanked the Board members of the NADEC for their tireless support. “They are the only group that I know that can take a 24-month strategic plan and complete it in 13 months. Then they turn and look at me and go what do you have for us now. I can tell you that the NADEC will continue to evolve over the next 50 years, and I look forward to seeing what the next board does after my departure.”

Jonathan called on ***Bill Cummins, Member, 2024 EXIM Council on Small Business and Vice Chair, Alabama District Export Council***, to provide an update on the results of the NADEC Survey ([NADEC Needs You! | National Association of District Export Councils \(usaexporter.org\)](https://usaexporter.org/na-dec-needs-you/)) on the Impact of the Export-Import Bank of the United States – the official U.S. Government Export Credit Agency (ECA). EXIM Bank is up for reauthorization in 2026 and provides a critical financing tool for America’s exporters. The survey results can be viewed in the link below.

[SURVEY RESULTS](#)

NADEC recommends the following actions for the EXIM Bank to include sufficient number of experienced staff to implement these actions.

1. EXIM be made a permanent organization. The risk of reauthorization is incongruous with the agency's mission and commitment to its clients and stakeholders.
2. The Congressionally-imposed default cap of 2.0 percent which leads to more conservative underwriting practices needs to be increased to at least 4.0 percent (or deleted and left to the management of the EXIM Board of Directors) to enhance the overall competitiveness of EXIM and U.S. exporters.
3. EXIM needs to compete 'at the speed of business.' Credit underwriting requests are time sensitive and slow results lead to U.S. exporters potentially losing sales to foreign competitors.
4. Improvement of the Congressionally-mandated Program on China and Transformation Exports.
5. EXIM should be focused on supporting ALL industries to level the playing field for U.S. exporters.

Jonathan also expressed NADEC's great appreciation to the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, Washington, DC for being the **NADEC Conference Platinum Sponsor**. He invited ***Jawaher Al Mheiri, Head of Economic Policy and Affairs, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates***, to make special remarks.

Opening Plenary

Conversation on Trade & Export Opportunities with the UK included a candid discussion with our very special guest – ***James Roscoe MVO, Deputy Head of Mission to the USA, British Embassy*** and ***NADEC Board Member and Trade Policy Committee Co-chair, Luke Lindberg***. Following are some key take aways from the discussion.

1. The U.S & U.K. have a tremendous opportunity to increase trade relations post-Brexit. The Trump Administration was negotiating an agreement, but the Biden Administration has put it on hold it until after the election.
2. The bipartisan Senate UNITED Act is a great starting point for negotiations, as it provides USTR with Trade Promotion Authority to move forward a deal. But currently, the bill is at a standstill.
3. In the meantime, the U.K. continues to invest in the trade relationship by advancing state-level Memorandums of Understanding to build momentum and progress at the sub-national level.

Friendshoring and the Re-orientation of Export Markets & Supply Chains

This program was moderated by NADEC's ***David Day, the Co-Chair of the Trade Policy Committee***. Participants included:

- [Kenneth Yap](#), Commercial Counselor, Philippine Embassy, Washington, D.C. (Also, holds the rank of Special Trade Representative (Assistant Secretary) at the Philippine Department of Trade and Industry)
- [Jawaher AlMheiri](#), Head of the Economic Policy and Affairs at the UAE Embassy in Washington D.C.
- [Emanuel Adam](#), Executive Director and Chief Trade and Policy Officer, British American Business Council

This panel was designed as a follow-on to the opening plenary. The Friendshoring program built upon the issues discussed in the plenary session that were focused upon the opportunities and the need for the United States private sector to consider the need to encourage the movement of its supply chains and investment to like-minded allies and friends, rather than China.

As a segue, the Friendshoring discussion started with opportunities and new developments for U.S. exporters looking at markets in both the UK and the EU. Among the comments made by **Emanuel Adam** was the encouragement for the NADEC to continue to work on behalf of the 61 DEC organizations around the country to continue its discussions with the UK government looking set up an improved private sector-to-private sector trading relationships and not waiting for formal trade negotiations to resume between the 2 respective governments.

Ms. AlMheiri, on behalf of the UAE, underscored the unusual trade position that her government has taken vis.a.vis trade. Essentially, the UAE has set itself up as the Free Trade gateway to not only the Middle East, but a number of countries in Asia (i.e. Singapore, New Zealand and others), Latin America (Chile, for instance) and negotiations are currently underway with several countries and trade groups, including the European Union, Japan, China, Korea, Australia, Pakistan, India, Turkey, and the Mercosur member countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay). She described an unusual export strategy for U.S. companies to use the UAE as an export hub, thereby taking advantage for the UAE's vast network of free trade agreements and trading partners.

Mr. Yap discussed three new trade developments that have recently come into play with our oldest ally in Asia. First, foreign ownership of businesses in the Philippines has been revised upwards from its former 40% limit to 100% now. Second, the recent Trilateral meetings in Washington between the U.S., Japan and the Philippines unveiled a new series of incentives for American firms in what is called "the Luzon Economic Corridor," partially focused on electronic and computer chip manufacturing. Finally, there was a discussion of a new law working its way through the Philippine legislation called the "Self-Reliance Defense Program" or "SRDP." This new legislation looks to incentivize the development of defense-related or dual-use manufacturing to enhance the local defense industry. It also enables the Philippine government to invest in defense-related technologies and firms.

The final portion of the Panel's discussion centered around the U.S. Defense Production Act and the proposal made by the current Administration to include both Australia and the UK as "domestic producers" within the meaning of that law. Currently, the only foreign country that enjoys such status is Canada. The concept here would be to enable companies in those countries to enjoy investment and procurement from the U.S. Department of Defense with the add-on that U.S. exporters could participate in those new supply chains.

Friendshoring - Argentina and South America

The Friendshoring discussion continued with a focus on **Argentina and South America**.

Panelists included:

- **Maria Cameroon**, Deputy Director for Latin America and The Caribbean for US Department of Commerce
- **Ambassador Dr. Ricardo Lozano**, Board of Directors Thomas Greg & Sons (UK/US)
- [Alejandro Hernandez](#), Director Thomas Greg & Sons (UK / US)
- [Mariano Parlato](#), Senior Advisor True North Corporation (USA)
- Panel Moderator [Peter C Jones](#), CEO Jones Equity Fund LLC (USA)

Argentina is the 3rd largest economy in Latin America. In 2023 exports from US to Argentina totalled \$11.1 Billion with key sectors being fuel oils, nuclear reactors, and general machinery. 2023 exports from Argentina to US was \$5 Billion, primarily comprised of processed foods, beef, corn, and soy beans.

Argentina under previous administrations has had export restrictions on repatriation of profits for US Exporters selling into Argentina. It has been difficult for US companies to do business in the region unless special payment arrangements are made via local distributors via a third-party country.

Currently, Javier Milei, the new President of Argentina as of December 2023 is privatizing the government and creating policies that facilitate the import/export of goods and services to Argentina; thereby, making it easier for US companies to export to the country and have their profits or payments repatriated in USD.

Argentina has now become a new marketplace for US companies who may have stopped exporting to the country. Also, for US exporters wishing to enter a new marketplace, it was advised to do your homework and use a reputable local agent or distributor for market entry. US and Argentina political relations are at an all-time high. There is also oil & gas opportunity at the Vaca Muerta region for oil drilling production for US oil companies that are medium size. China continues to be a competitor to US companies in the region.

While EXIM Bank does not provide letter of credit bank guarantees or credit risk insurance in the region, other US government agencies and the private sector do provide some risk mitigation tools. Other countries in Latin America view Argentina's new open policies attractive, like Colombia, Mexico and Brazil, and are looking to export to the country. These countries can also be competitors to the US companies.

Export opportunities for US companies are financial services, agricultural machinery, and AG tech, consulting, specialized cyber security software, general manufacturing machinery, AG chemicals, nuclear technology and reactors, oil & gas equipment and technology. The US Commerce department has a full staff to assist US exporters in Argentina with the full range of services for market research, gold key services, advocacy and B2B/B2G engagement.

US-EU Marketplace - Aluminum and Steel - EU Carbon Board Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and Global Arrangement on Sustainable Steel and Aluminum (GASSA)

Panelists included:

- [Richard Grana](#), Impex-EMC Company, KY DEC – *Moderator*
- [Daniel P. Matthews](#), Director for Industrial Competitiveness, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative
- [Jonathan Szucs](#), Advanced Superabrasives, Inc., NC DEC
- [James Haynes](#), Rohlig USA, OH DEC

This panel discussion delved into the key points raised in the Center for American Progress article [‘Trade Beyond Neoliberalism: Concluding a Global Arrangement on Sustainable Steel and Aluminum.’](#) including the implications of the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and Global Arrangement on Sustainable Steel and Aluminum (GASSA). Understanding these policies is crucial as they have the potential to significantly impact the US-EU marketplace, making it urgent for SMEs to stay updated. For instance, CBAM is designed to apply the same carbon costs to imported products as are incurred by installations operating in the EU in covered sectors. EU-authorized declarants representing importers of certain goods will be required to purchase and surrender CBAM certificates for the embedded emissions of their imported goods.

The panel discussed the relationship between the Trump administration’s imposed tariffs on EU steel and aluminum products and the EU’s retaliatory imposition of duties on various US products. This includes differences in the development of the US GASSA proposal and the EU CBAM policy. It's important to note that the EU’s CBAM is in the implementation stage until in January 2026. SMEs that use these products are encouraged to read the article and keep abreast of these policies during this formulation before the January 2026 date upon which CBAM fees will be levied. Separately, the approach USTR is considering with respect to GASSA is being carefully considered and formulated, giving confidence in the USTR negotiating process. Some planning considerations are the possible multiple types of inventories and product of origin tracking paperwork.

Another question to be considered is the potential impact of GASSA and CBAM on the economic rise of China and other nonmarket-oriented states, (think excess capacity concerns, dumping, and subsidization) and how this may affect global trade dynamics. Also, keep in mind the role and activities of state-owned enterprises in these sectors compared to our US private companies.

A chart embedded in the above-mentioned article (see link below) demonstrates the current carbon production release in manufacturing these steel and aluminum products globally.

TRADE BEYOND NEOLIBERALISM: CONCLUDING A GLOBAL ARRANGEMENT ON SUSTAINABLE STEEL AND ALUMINUM

<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/trade-beyond-neoliberalism-concluding-a-global-arrangement-on-sustainable-steel-and-aluminum/#:~:text=On%20October%2031%2C%202021%2C%20the,is%20produced%20using%20conventional%20manufacturing>

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT ON CBAM IMPLEMENTATION FOR IMPORTERS OF GOODS INTO THE EU

https://taxation-customs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-11/CBAM%20Guidance_EU%20231121%20for%20web_0.pdf

The 2024 NADEC Annual Conference Luncheon Keynote was provided by Deputy Secretary of Commerce Don Graves

DEPUTY SECRETARY REMARKS CAN BE VIEWED HERE

<https://www.commerce.gov/news/speeches/2024/05/remarks-deputy-secretary-commerce-don-graves-national-association-district>

“Tête à tête” with the Small Business Administration (SBA)

NADEC Chair Jonathan Szucs and SBA Deputy Administrator Dilawar Syed engaged in a conversation about what’s on the horizon for small business trade assistance.

As some background, [SBA Deputy Administrator Dilawar Syed](#) was a tech entrepreneur that focused on AI and Healthcare. He left the private sector so that he could give back to a country that welcomed him with open arms as he is an immigrant from Pakistan.

The SBA feels that exporters have a unique opportunity to expand their exports. Emerging technologies like AI, microprocessors, services, and other industries offer great opportunities for exporters. Emerging markets such as Africa and the realignment of supply chains also gives SME exporters a unique opportunity.

The SBA is working on new programs to streamline several processes for SMEs to utilize SBA’s portfolio of products. STEP grants are still a major program that SMEs should be utilizing regularly. A small grant can go a long way in assisting exporters.

The SBA feels that the diversity of cultures, ideas and other key factors allow the U.S. entrepreneur to have a leg up on foreign competition. Just the mixing of ideas allows for more innovative products and services to be produced.

SBA Resources for SME Exporters

[Dan Pische](#), National Director of Trade Finance, U.S. Small Business Administration and [Hernan Mayol](#), ITFA Board Member discussed the new SBA Working Capital Pilot Program (WCP) developed as part of the 7(a) Loan Program. The WCP will provide 75% guaranteed lines of credit up to \$5 million that can support both domestic and international transactions. This program gives lenders greater flexibility to structure comprehensive loan solutions for clients.

The following PPT provides more details on the WCP and other SBA resources to assist small business exporters.

[INTRODUCING THE WORKING CAPITAL PILOT PROGRAM](#)

Advocating for SME Exporters

SME Exporters Panel included:

- [Karen Wyman](#), NADEC Secretary & Granite State DEC – *Moderator*
- [Adam Boltik](#), NH Dept of Business & Economic Affairs, Office of Intl Commerce and Granite State DEC
- [Bill Cummins](#), EXIM Small Business Council and Alabama DEC
- [Will Garrity Binger](#), Small Business and Economic Policy Advisor, Office of Senator Shaheen (NH)
- [Meredith West](#), Staff Director, U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship

The panel highlighted the SBA & EXIM programs designed to help small/medium exporters to export. Detailed discussion focused on the STEP Grant program and how beneficial it's been for exporters. The panel also discussed the upcoming reauthorizations of EXIM and the STEP program and the importance of companies letting their Congressional representatives know their usefulness to exporters. Advocating for small business is important for trade as almost 98% of exporters are small- to medium-sized companies.

Roundtable Discussions

A series of Roundtable Discussions were held concurrently focused on trade issues, industry sectors, and country markets south of the border. Discussions were led by exporters/specialists in each industry and country sector and NADEC board/DEC members and U.S. Department of Commerce (USDOC) officials with special expertise on the topic.

Cybersecurity:

In the past few years, cybersecurity has become a buzzword for businesses – in 2024, everybody knows that cybersecurity is important, but do we really understand what cybersecurity is and why we should care? The roundtable discussion at the 2024 NADEC conference looked at cybersecurity as a comprehensive approach addressing digital, social, and physical threats. As exporters, our client lists, facilities, and trade secrets are assets that can become targets for cyberattacks, data breaches, ransomware attacks, physical security breaches, and social engineering threats. Attackers can exploit weak points to access and steal our information. Roundtable participants, which ranged from cybersecurity firms, educational institutions, and insurance firms had a vigorous and engaged discussion regarding best practices and more importantly...how to collaborate and generate additional business (and exports), with follow up conversations currently ongoing.

Export Controls Update:

Topics covered included:

- AUKUS
- Turkey boycott
- Proposed increase in DDTC registration fees
- Israel escalation

- Potential AI regulations
- More BIS Post-Shipment Verifications
- More China rules

Supply Chain Strategies and Managing Freight Forwarders & Export Carriers:

The management of the export supply chain is an important factor in U.S. companies succeeding in foreign business development. Logistics, trade compliance, freight, service providers and carriers ... are all integral components of the global supply chain.

Developing best practices, sustainability, resource development and skill set training are key factors in managing the export process. Some key discussion points:

- The supply and demand factor ... How does that impact export logistics?
- Pricing and delays escalated through the Pandemic ... we are we now?
- How does export trade compliance play into export business development and operations?
- What resources are available to support U.S.-based exporters?
- How do we access capable freight forwarders and service providers?
- How do we negotiate competitive freight pricing?

Discussion focused on all the current list of disruptions in the supply chain from the Red Sea, Panama Canal, Ukraine/Russia War and the rising escalation of freight pricing across the board. We also discussed the imbalance of trade in the world and the offset of capacity and demand in global carriers and infrastructure resources. A robust discussion included the issues associated with railroads in the USA being a huge bottleneck and causing serious delays in cargo movements. Our two guests from the DOC recognized the problem and advised it was being looked at by the DOT and other government agencies, including their office.

Artificial Intelligence:

We discussed various bots (ChatGPT, Bard Gemini, MS Pilot, Perplexity) and experience with the outcome from these well-known bots. There was considerable discussion on whether the data was real/good/useful and could be trusted. One suggestion was to ask the same question of multiple bots and compare the answers. There was also discussion of the legal aspects of using AI. Some law firms use it widely, some prohibit its use.

Aerospace/Defense:

Issues discussed included:

- Labor - how the UAW strike affected GM Defense and how a future UAW strike could affect AM General, Navistar Defense, and/or Oshkosh.
- Protectionism - a Bundeswehr attorney prevented American tactical wheeled vehicle manufacturers from competing for a joint Germany/Netherlands Armies' project, despite the Netherlands favoring US manufacturers and their lower pricing.
- Workforce issues – industry-specific training groups have emerged, to include for robotics
- Supply chain issues – ongoing since COVID

- FMS process – reform of the Pentagon’s very slow Foreign Military Sales (FMS) process. SME’s can take advantage of FMS. A 3-day FMS “how to” course is being offered to SMEs.
- Advocacy Center – an example was provided on how AM General utilized the US Dept. of Commerce’s Advocacy Center to win a contract in Serbia, for which China, Russia, and Turkey competed.
- Foreign Derived Intangible Income (FDII) and IC-DISC are programs by which exporters can save taxes on foreign revenue. The IRS classifies 300,000 US companies as exporters, but only around 5,000 take advantage of these programs: FDII -Only applies to S Corporations; IC-DISC - If your company exports at least \$2 million per year, then the separate bookkeeping that is required is worth it.
- Farnborough International Air Show – AUSA has an entire section there for state international trade offices. \$2,500 per company is the cost to have a shell scheme under the AUSA tent.

Critical Minerals/Rare Earths:

Critical minerals and rare earths have become a major component of our national security and economic security strategy over the past few years as the demand for critical minerals used in electronic components has increased. Every business uses chips and batteries in some capacity, whether it is as a component of computers or cell phones, or as a manufacturing component in something such as a drone or industrial equipment.

The discussion for the critical minerals and rare earths roundtable looked at working with allies such as the Philippines to stockpile such essential technological components to prevent the potential for limited access to such materials. Growing tensions with China and Russia could lead those countries, which currently dominate the extraction of such materials, to limit or cut off American business access to critical minerals.

To mitigate America’s supply risk of rare earths and critical minerals, we need to look beyond US to Canada and especially South America where China is very active investing in mining properties and companies. There has been a lot of talk but little action by the USG in moving this dangerous vulnerability. Permitting and environmental issues in the US are the biggest handicap. It will take many years to even partially rebuild our industrial base which was largely shifted to China, so the best bridge is USG and private stockpiling.

The USG should also consider signing off take agreements with junior miners around the world to lock up future potential production. This is a strategy the Chinese and Japanese are already executing while America is complacent. We urgently need a USG/private initiative to spur investment and a breakthrough on cleaner ways to refine and process rare earths and strategic minerals. This is a low cost/high reward strategy.

The issue of critical minerals and rare earths will be particularly important for NADEC to monitor and track. While many of us do not deal with mining and extraction of rare earths, all of us will be affected in the event of any geopolitical event affecting access to critical minerals and rare earths. As such, it would be to our benefit to monitor any developments and look for opportunities to encourage the creation of a strategic stockpile of such materials, either within the government or private sector (or similar strategies).

Chile/Colombia:

Both countries generated great interest. Several questions were discussed around the leftist governments and their relationship to foreign business. Participants seemed to desire more information on SBA Grant and Loan programs. The participants were aware of the loan and not the grants.

Chile: Lots of interest around doing business in the mining area of Chile vs. Santiago. Participants desired more information on that region of Chile.

Colombia: Lots of interest in taking advantage of the four major cities in Colombia. The participants did not know much about the informal or SME economy in Colombia and how to sell to that sector.

Mexico:

Real SME/business interest in Mexico with 20 plus participants by the end of session. There was genuine interest in how USMCA might impact exporters as it goes forward (about to come up to the review period). There was also interest in China's activities in Mexico and how they are circumventing US law by setting up companies in Mexico.

Mexico has developed its own sophisticated manufacturing base that leaves some US exporters with no real market. What this means is an American product no longer has dominance simply because it is American. This reflects a fundamental change in Mexico which only a decade or so ago lacked this manufacturing capacity (and possibly a more nationalistic sentiment since AMLO). For those US companies that want to export to Mexico, they will need much more sophisticated market analysis to be competitive.

Other subjects discussed included nearshoring, friendshoring, MXP strength, labor benefits, cartels, violence, and the next election in Mexico.

Uruguay:

Uruguay is one of the better kept secrets in South America and Steven Olson, from Commerce, did a great job enlightening our round table. Uruguay has the highest GDP per capita of all South American countries. It is strategically located next to Brazil and Argentina and is a conduit for goods into that region. The country has 3.5 million people and has a center-based political climate that is business friendly. Uruguay has large agricultural areas, and they grow most of their own food with the ability to export food goods. Uruguay should be looked at as a stable country that is a gateway into these markets and some of the biggest South American countries.

Other roundtable discussions included **Agriculture, Brazil, and Guyana.**

Following the Roundtable Discussions were several DEC-focused panel discussions.

Trade DNA – Engaging Students, Our Future Exporters

Panelists included:

[Jim Anderson](#), North TX DEC - *Moderator*
[Dominic DiCamillo](#), CIBER, Ohio State University
[Bill Harazin](#) - North Carolina DEC
[Joan Laureano](#), Puerto Rico DEC
[Eddy Sumar](#), California Inland Empire DEC

Jim Anderson, North Texas DEC, moderated the panel introducing the pathway to the Trade DNA website (<https://www.usaexporter.org/trade-dna/>) as a resource encouraging the audience to find the "[Start the Conversation](#)" button on the site which leads to a pathway of fresh resources designed to engage students and educators from middle school through university. Anderson concluded the session asking the rhetorical question "how is your DEC engaging students?"

Joan Laureano, Puerto Rico DEC said that Puerto Rican university students are seeking and wanting education related to exporting products from Puerto Rico. Eddy Sumar, Inland Empire DEC spoke about his "Atomic Model" challenging California students beginning as early as middle school and focusing on high school. Eddy says that engagement by educators in California is a step-by-step, one-by-one approach where locating topic-interested teachers and principals is the key to engagement success. Bill Harazin, North Carolina DEC, spoke about the origins of the idea of Trade DNA. Dominic DeCamillo, Ohio State University spoke about Centers for International Business Education and Research (CIBER) and how his university approaches student pathways for education in international business.

DEC Strategic Recruitment, Engagement, and the Next Generation

Panelists included:

[Brenda Stelly](#), Louisiana DEC - *Moderator*
[Bill Edwards](#), Vice Chair, Southern California DEC
[Christine Everett](#), Indiana University, Kelley Global, Indiana DEC
[Dan Usher](#), Chair, Georgia DEC

The panel discussion focused on DEC member recruitment, engaging members, and the next generation of members.

Recruiting new members:

The DEC Executive Committee must regularly reach out to its members, partners, sponsors and USEAC to ask for potential new members while communicating the ideal profile of a DEC member. Recruitment is ongoing throughout the year, not only during official nomination window. Consider prospective new members as 'Friends of the DEC' first to get to know each other. We must create greater awareness of DEC in each district. This could include holding events with topics that will appeal to various diverse groups.

Export accelerators work with partners to initiate new accelerators or piggy-back on existing accelerators to identify potential new members or friends. Recruiting rural members can be accomplished by hosting programming (virtual or in-person) that includes rural exporters and service providers. You can invite them to become 'Friends of the DEC.' Host programming that lowers

barriers to participation. Virtual events are especially good to attract a larger and more diverse attendance that creates awareness of the DEC. As an example, one DEC co-hosts Exporter Roundtables with more rural chambers of commerce to raise awareness of DEC, understand/discuss exporter topics and to recruit.

DECs can diversify membership by asking members and partners to recommend a diversity of candidates - geographic, age, gender, race, industry, exporter/service provider, entrepreneur/corporate, etc.

Engaging members:

The DEC Chair and Executive Committee set the tone/culture of each DEC and lead by example. You need to show members what is expected of all members. The DEC Executive Committee should reach out to each member to share needs/opportunities for engagement and understand how each member wants to engage. Create active committees with strong leaders. Choosing the right topics for programs is critical to engage members and recruit new members/friends. Facility tours have been popular and successful in engaging members. DECs have been successful co-hosting programs including all partners/resources on one webinar.

Be sure to set clear expectations regarding engagement. For example, each DEC member must attend at least 50% of the annual DEC meetings. To those not engaging, ask how they want to engage OR if they want to remain a DEC member. They can become a 'friend.' Dropping off the DEC frees up a spot on the DEC for a new member.

Host programs that add value to most members. And have some fun while helping exporters!

Next Gen - Recruiting and engaging them

Set expectations among members, friends and partners that we want to include younger members. Invite them to events! Invite them to become 'Friends of the DEC.' Add them to the DEC mailing list and reach out individually to invite them.

Host events that are fun, more casual and provide networking opportunities for younger prospects. Look beyond the C-suite. Seek and identify younger 'movers.' For example, '30 under 30' and '40 under 40' engaged in international business. To recruit younger members, host programs that will attract and add value to younger prospective members and friends. Should DECs open membership to recent college grads? Consider engaging interns who may or may not evolve into future members.

Helping DECs Grow! – All were in agreement that NADEC should continue this type of breakout at future meetings. **DECs need to learn from each other!**

Where the Trade Winds are Blowing

[Diane Farrell, Deputy Undersecretary for International Trade, International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce](#) outlined for following trade priorities for the Biden Administration:

Administration Trade Priorities

- The Federal Government is making historic investments in our nation's competitiveness — boosting innovation, strengthening domestic industries, and driving the growth of quality jobs.
- Through landmark legislation, the Government is making targeted investments totaling over one trillion dollars to double down on U.S. industries and technologies for the future — from climate solutions to semiconductors.
- The Federal Government is deepening economic ties with like-minded partners to strengthen our mutual resilience, counter coercive influences, and protect our national security. We've launched new commercial and investment frameworks in fast-growing regions, including the Indo-Pacific.

Indo-Pacific

- With 60 percent of the world's population, this region is projected to be the biggest contributor to global economic growth over the next 30 years.
- Our Indo-Pacific partners have a critical role as we address some of our most complex commercial challenges: strengthening supply chain resilience; protecting critical technologies and promoting U.S. leadership in innovation; laying the groundwork for a successful clean energy transition; and harnessing the world's digital transformation to benefit our economies, societies, and workers.
- And, of course, we're continuing to break new ground with the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity.

China

- Over nearly half a century of relations, the U.S.-China relationship has become one of the world's most consequential. China is our third largest export market, directly supporting an estimated 750,000 American jobs. And in turn, our private sector has helped shape China's development.
- To be clear: we do not seek to de-couple from the Chinese economy. We're seeking to work together to address global challenges and to maintain a commercial relationship in line with U.S. values and goals.

Western Hemisphere

- In the Western Hemisphere, the United States is the top trading partner for over two-thirds of the hemisphere. And we trade more with countries in this region than anywhere else.
- We continue to expand our reach, opening a new office in Georgetown, Guyana in 2023 and leading a trade mission this year to Colombia, Costa Rica, and Panama — specifically designed to meet the exporting needs of US. Small and medium-sized businesses, including those founded, led, operated or owned by women.
- Trade Winds 2025 will be in Sao Paulo, Brazil. I am happy to share that the dates will be April 7-9, 2025, with pre and post mission stops in Colombia, Uruguay, Argentina, and Chile. If you've never attended a Trade Winds- its everything we do well- matchmaking, market entry counseling, networking, business intelligence- all together in one event that has tremendous results. In fact, over the 14-year history of Trade Winds, we've facilitated more than \$3.4 billion in export sales!

Middle East and Africa

- In the Middle East, ITA is spotlighting U.S. companies as critical partners in global energy and climate conversations, underscoring that the private sector is essential to the transition to a cleaner future.
- Across Africa, ITA is committed to partnering with the U.S. private sector and our African counterparts on a broad array of commercial issues: from trade to expanding opportunities for Africa’s young people. In fact, ITA looks forward to opening new Foreign Commercial Service offices in Côte d’Ivoire and Zambia to double down on our trade and investment relationship across the continent.
- The U.S.-Africa partnership is crucial to amplifying the continent’s transformation across several sectors: clean technologies, health care, climate-smart agriculture, and creative industries — to name a few.

Europe and Eurasia

- In Europe and Eurasia, ITA is tackling next-generation challenges through the U.S.-E.U. Trade and Technology Council, which is working to align transatlantic approaches across issues including export controls, secure supply chains, and artificial intelligence.
- Throughout Europe and Eurasia, we’re continuing our solidarity in response to Russia’s war of aggression — helping allies meet near-term energy needs and plan for long-term energy security, as well as preparing to support Ukraine’s reconstruction.

Equity, GDEI

- We continue to prioritize targeted outreach to U.S. businesses in underserved communities — including diaspora communities — to help them compete and win in global markets. As part of our Global Diversity Export Initiative (GDEI), we’re meeting these businesses in their own communities, helping scale the next generation of innovation, maintaining global competitiveness, and ensuring that more businesses from underserved communities benefit from the potential of exports.
- Throughout the year, we are continuing to offer our “Building Bridges to Global Markets” event series – that brings in-person exporting expertise to underserved communities around the United States.

SelectUSA

- In addition to our trade promotion programs like Trade Winds, we are charged with attracting foreign direct investment into the U.S. We do this throughout the year through our network globally, but our signature event is the SelectUSA Investment Summit.
- At last year’s event: We had almost 5,000 participants, including economic development organizations across all 50 states. We had delegations from over 80 countries.
- For 11 years running, the U.S. has been the number one destination for foreign investment globally.
- The 2024 Investment Summit will be June 23-26, at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center, National Harbor, Maryland and more can be found at selectusasummit.us.

A New Era of the U.S. & Foreign Commercial Service

- You may recall that last year we asked the DECs and our trade partner community across the country for help to shape the future of the U.S. Commercial Service.
- Based on what we heard, we are implementing some exciting improvements and advancements in the services that we provide U.S. businesses. Broadly, these initiatives can be categorized into two main areas: 1) facilitating access to export information that our clients value most and 2) implementing service enhancements for our clients.

AWARDS PRESENTATIONS

- **NADEC Thomas Norwalk Trade Advocate Awards** - The National Association of District Export Councils presented the 2024 Thomas Norwalk Export Advocate of the Year Award to: **Senator Jeanne Shaheen (NH)** and **Senator Joni Ernst (Iowa)** in Recognition of their Exemplary Actions & Distinguished Service on Behalf of Export Businesses Across the United States of America. The awards were accepted on their behalf by Will Garrity Binger, Small Business and Economic Policy Advisor, Office of Senator Shaheen (NH) and Meredith West, Staff Director, U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business & Entrepreneurship where Senator Ernst serves as the committee's Ranking Member.
- **Executive Secretary of the Year Award was presented to George Tracy**, nominated by the Georgia DEC. George has been instrumental in facilitating Company Outreach, finding Innovative Solutions to facilitate trade and providing Strategic Management for the Georgia DEC.

More details can be found here:

<https://www.usaexporter.org/executive-secretary-of-the-year/>

- **The Hawai'i Pacific Export Council (HPEC) was named "DEC of the Year"** based on its outreach to exporters, programming, and community engagement. HPEC's win highlights its strong performance among sixty other councils across the country.

DEC Chair Dave Erdman expressed his gratitude for the honor, "This recognition is a testament to our volunteer board for their hard work and dedication, as well as the innovative efforts of our entire team for our work with our stakeholders and partners in Hawaii and across the Pacific."

"HPEC's success stems from its commitment to fostering a robust export environment," he continued. "Through targeted programs, workshops, and one-on-one mentoring, HPEC has empowered island businesses to navigate the complexities of international trade, ultimately driving significant export growth."

Here's a link to the article highlighting the 2024 DEC of the Year -

<https://www.usaexporter.org/dec-of-the-year/>.

The following Trade Resource Tables were available during the NADEC Conference:

[U.S. Department of Commerce](#)

- [Advocacy Center](#)
- [AI & Cybersecurity](#)
- [ITACs & Industry Engagement](#)

- [Services](#)
- [Supply Chain](#)
- [Travel & Tourism](#)
- Western Hemisphere

[EXIM Bank](#)

[SBA](#)

NADEC Networking Reception

Day One of the NADEC Annual Export Conference concluded with a **Networking Reception** giving all attendees the opportunity to network with our speakers, resource representatives and fellow attendees to discuss trade issues and ways to engage with the District Export Councils!

Capitol Hill Day - Day Two of the Conference

Capitol Hill Day - featured the **Special Legislative Training Session** led by **Luke Lindberg**, Co-Chair of the NADEC Trade Policy Committee. The objective of the NADEC Capitol Hill Day is to increase awareness and understanding among members of Congress regarding the importance of exports to the U.S. economy, including the significance of securing new and improved market access.

This session included:

- Presentation of business trade policy priorities by the [U.S. Chamber of Commerce](#), [John Murphy](#), Sr Vice President & Head of International, U.S. Chamber of Commerce & [Isabelle Icsó](#), Sr Director, International Policy, U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- Presentation of state trade policy priorities by [SIDO](#), [Andy Karellas](#), Executive Director, State International Development Organizations (SIDO)
- Presentation of international affairs policy priorities by [USGLC](#), [Alex Grant](#), National Outreach Director, U.S. Global Leadership Coalition

NADEC outlined the top priorities for Trade Policy to share with our Congressional Representatives. **Market Access is our #1 issue.**

1. Kickstart a 21st Century trade agenda to support American workers

- I. Increase Congressional support for USTR to actively negotiate new trade agreements by passing Trade Promotion Authority (e.g. UNITED Act);
- II. Leverage the bipartisan U.S.-Mexico-Canada agreement as a template for new agreements; and
- III. Enforce provisions of existing trade agreements that are harming American companies (WTO reforms, rules of origin, foreign trade barriers)

2. Secure American industry, supply chains, and overseas national interests

- I. Implement CHIPS & Sciences Act in an expeditious and responsible manner;
- II. Secure key inputs, like critical minerals & rare earths, fertilizer, pharmaceuticals, and broadband infrastructure in partnership with America's neighbors and allies; and

- III. Increase funding for the Department of Defense and strategic American foreign operations like U.S. Agency for International Development, Millennium Challenge Corporation, and the Development Finance Corporation.

3. Level the playing field for American exporters

- I. Increased funding for U.S. Commercial Service;
- II. Reauthorize the STEP Grant program; and
- III. Reauthorize the Export-Import Bank of the United States.

John Murphy and Isabelle Isco with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce provided the **U.S. Chamber's "2024 and Beyond Congressional Priorities"**

- **Pass a Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) bill (expired 2020)**
 - o GSP provides duty-free access to the U.S. market for select goods.
 - o More than half of U.S. imports under GSP are raw materials, parts and components, or other inputs relied upon by U.S. companies to produce goods in the United States for domestic consumption or export.
 - o GSP saves the average small business beneficiary between \$100-200,000 annually.
 - o Reauthorization on a fully retroactive basis will provide U.S. businesses with certainty needed to take full advantage of the program.
- **Pass a new Miscellaneous Tariff Bill (MTB) (expired 2020)**
 - o This program temporarily eliminates tariffs on select imported materials.
 - o The U.S. International Trade Commission leads a rigorous vetting process to ensure that products proposed for tariff relief are not made in the U.S. or are unavailable in sufficient quantities to meet U.S. manufacturers' needs.
 - o The program enhances the competitiveness of American companies and ensures that U.S.-made products can compete in both domestic and foreign markets.
- **Pass the Medical Supply Chain Resiliency Act (new)**
 - o Would enable the U.S. to negotiate trade agreements with trusted trade partners and allies around the world to shore up our critical medical supply chain.
- **Renew the African Growth and Opportunity Act (expires 2025)**
 - o Trade preference program that provides duty-free access to the U.S. market for most exports from eligible sub-Saharan African countries.
 - o Currently 49 beneficiaries.
- **Reauthorize EX-IM Bank (expires 2026)**
 - o Outline the important role EX-IM plays in key states/districts ahead of program's expiration on Dec. 31, 2026.
- **Pass Trade Promotion Authority (expired 2021)**
 - o Grants "Fast Track" authority the executive branch when certain criteria are met to facilitate negotiation and implementation of free trade agreements.

The NADEC Legislative Training Session concluded with an informal networking lunch, encouraging the DEC Regions to network. Following the lunch, DEC members were encouraged to meet with their State's Congressional Representatives and/or staff members to better inform them on the importance of trade and trade legislation to our businesses and to our nation. A handout with the NADEC talking points was provided.

The 2024 NADEC Board of Directors expresses their deepest appreciation to our sponsors that make this important annual event possible!

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AND thank you to all our speakers, facilitators, attendees and resource partners for making this event a Big Success! We look forward to seeing you again in 2025!