

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-18-268](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

International trade and travel to the United States is increasing. On a typical day in fiscal year 2016, CBP officers inspected nearly 1.1 million passengers and pedestrians and over 74,000 truck, rail, and sea containers at 328 U.S. land, sea, and air ports of entry, according to CBP. To help meet the increased demand for these types of CBP services, since 2013, CBP has entered into public-private partnerships under RSP and DAP. The RSP allows partners to reimburse CBP for providing services that exceed CBP's normal operations, such as paying overtime for CBP personnel that provide services at ports of entry outside normal business hours. The DAP enables partners to donate property or provide funding for port of entry infrastructure improvements.

The Cross-Border Trade Enhancement Act of 2016 included a provision for GAO to review the RSP and DAP. This report examines: (1) how CBP approves and administers RSP and DAP agreements, (2) the status of RSP and DAP agreements, including the purposes for which CBP has used funds and donations, and (3) the extent to which CBP monitors and evaluates program implementation. GAO reviewed partnership agreements and data on program usage. GAO also interviewed CBP and partner officials at 11 ports of entry selected based on a mix of port of entry and agreement types.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that CBP develop an evaluation plan to assess the overall performance of the RSP and DAP. DHS concurred with the recommendation.

View [GAO-18-268](#). For more information, contact Rebecca Gambler at (202) 512-8777 or gamblierr@gao.gov.

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U.S. PORTS OF ENTRY

CBP Public-Private Partnership Programs Have Benefits, but CBP Could Strengthen Evaluation Efforts

What GAO Found

Within the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) uses criteria and follows documented procedures to evaluate and approve public-private partnership applications and administer the Reimbursable Services Program (RSP) and Donations Acceptance Program (DAP). For example, RSP applications undergo an initial review by CBP officials at the affected ports of entry before they are scored by an expert panel of CBP officials at headquarters. The panel evaluates RSP applications against seven criteria, such as impact on CBP operations. Similarly, DAP proposals are evaluated by CBP officials against seven operational and six technical criteria, such as real estate implications. Further, if the proposal involves real estate controlled by the General Services Administration (GSA), CBP and GSA officials collaborate on DAP selection decisions and project implementation. To administer the RSP and DAP, CBP has documented policies and procedures, such as standard operating procedures and implementation frameworks. For example, CBP uses a standard procedure to guide the process for RSP partners to request services and to provide reimbursement. For DAP projects, CBP, GSA (if applicable), and partners follow an implementation framework that includes a project planning and design phase.

The number of public-private partnerships is increasing, and partnerships provide a variety of additional services and infrastructure improvements at ports of entry. From fiscal years 2013 through 2017, CBP selected over 100 partners for RSP agreements that could impact 112 ports of entry and other CBP-staffed locations, and the total number of RSP partnerships doubled from fiscal year 2016 to 2017. According to CBP, since partners began requesting reimbursable services in 2014, CBP has provided its partners nearly 370,000 officer overtime hours of services, which led to over \$45 million in reimbursed funds. As a result, CBP inspected an additional 8 million travelers and over 1 million personal and commercial vehicles at ports of entry. Similar to the RSP, the number of DAP partnerships more than doubled from fiscal year 2016 to 2017, and totals 16 projects that impact 13 ports of entry as of November 2017. The donations include improvements, such as the installation of new inspection booths and equipment and removal of traffic medians, and are intended to support over \$150 million in infrastructure improvements.

CBP uses various processes to monitor and evaluate its partnerships, but could benefit from establishing an evaluation plan to assess overall program performance. For example, CBP conducts regular audits of RSP records to help ensure that CBP bills and collects funds from its partners accurately, and uses guidance, such as the DAP Implementation Roadmap, to identify and monitor project milestones and tasks. However, as of November 2017, CBP had not developed an evaluation plan—which could include, among other things, measurable objectives, performance criteria, and data collection plans—to assess the overall performance of the RSP and DAP, consistent with Office of Management and Budget guidance and leading practices. Given CBP's staffing challenges and anticipated growth of the RSP and DAP, an evaluation plan could better position CBP to further integrate evaluation activities into program management.