

## STATE MANAGED EXPORT PROMOTION IN OKLAHOMA

DAVID L. NIXON  
WILLIAM M. PARLE  
HAROLD V. SARE  
Oklahoma State University

State Governments have always played a role in economic development management, but their entry into direct export promotion is fairly recent. Although state governments have increased their involvement in this area, little is known concerning the outcome of such efforts. This study reports and analyzes the findings of a survey of Oklahoma firms that have received state based export assistance.

**Traditionally, international economic management** has been the province of the federal government. A series of political and economic circumstances, however, has prompted state and local governments to become increasingly involved in international economic policy management. This development is of interest from a variety of perspectives.

At the macro-level, a substantial literature emphasizes the growing importance of new, international actors. This literature asserts that economic interdependence increases the level of international activity undertaken by previously domestic governmental structures. This in turn renders analysis and management of foreign policy by central bureaucracies more problematic (Manning 1977; Keohane and Nye 1989, Ch. 2; Czempiel 1989).

At the micro-level, the efforts of states to direct their economic development programs overseas have become well financed and are central to their overall economic vitality. The purpose here is to explore the pattern of interaction between Oklahoma's export promotion agency and the private sector firms it was created to assist. First, we examine the processes which have encouraged state-level export promotion efforts. Next, we discuss the existing research on state export promotion. We then present the results of our own survey research and discuss the implications of our findings for the state of Oklahoma and for

the operation of state managed export promotion in general.

## STATE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EXPORT MANAGEMENT

### EXPORT PROMOTION AMONG THE STATES

In 1959 the Governor of North Carolina made a trip to Europe to solicit foreign firms to invest in his state. Since that time states have become increasingly active in their economic relations with foreign nations. Concerned about job creation and retention, tax revenue growth, and enhanced economic competitiveness, state governments have diversified their activities to include substantial export promotion capabilities.

The slow economic growth of the 1980s has intermixed with increased global competition to encourage higher levels of state government involvement in export promotion. The performance of the American economy has become increasingly tied to its ability to export. In 1970 the share of America's GNP derived from exporting was 8 percent, by 1986 it had risen to 15 percent. Despite this increase, the U.S. share of world manufacturing exports was in decline, and by 1987 the U.S. trade deficit had reached a record \$160 billion (Erickson 1993). Despite action taken by the federal government intended to stimulate the economy and improve American export competitiveness (including, eventually, the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act of 1988) state governments were also moved to assume greater responsibilities for export promotion (Kline 1982; Luke et al. 1988, ch. 1; Archer and Maser 1989).

State governments may indirectly promote their exports in a variety of ways, such as taxation or regulatory policy (Posner 1984), and have done so for many years. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, states began to create programs and agencies designed directly to promote international sales of goods and services. These programs have experienced a strong and steady increase in their allocation of public funds. For example, it has been estimated that in 1984 state governments allocated an average of approximately \$200,000 to export promotion. By 1990 that figure had increased to approximately \$665,000 per state (Erickson 1993).

This rate of increase exceeds both the rate of inflation and the growth of total state spending. By the late 1980s export promotion budgets accounted for more than 20 percent of the state's overall economic development budget in Hawaii, Washington, Oklahoma, and Missouri (Kudrle and Kite 1989). Thus, state based export promotion efforts are rapidly becoming an integral feature of state governments' overall economic development strategy.

Some states, Virginia and Connecticut, for instance, have created fully independent export promotion organizations within their state Departments of Commerce. Alabama, California, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, and North Carolina have all employed an alternative organizational model for their export promotion organizations, an alternative based on the Oklahoma International Trade and Investment Division (OITI) (Luke et al. 1988, ch.7). The OITI is a formal partnership between the federal Department of Commerce and the Oklahoma Department of Commerce, where export promotion services are provided directly to Oklahoma businesses by state and federal personnel organized under Oklahoma leadership.

Export promotion spending has been categorized into several distinct activities by most states. These include providing information and educational services to potential exporters, engaging in overseas marketing activities, and providing financial assistance to potential state exporters (Archer and Maser 1989; Kudrle and Kite 1989; Erickson 1993). Thus, while all 50 states provide some of these services, there is substantial variation in both the mixture of export promotion services provided and in the organizational format which provides the services.

#### EXISTING RESEARCH

Limitations of the quantitative data regarding state exports and the relatively recent creation of export promotion arrangements have restricted study of these important new programs (Archer and Maser 1989; Erickson 1993). Nevertheless, some empirical examination of state export promotion agencies has been undertaken. Most of this work focuses on those factors that account for variation in states' export promotion. Accordingly, it has been hypothesized that:

- coastal and border states are likely to have larger than average state export promotion budgets (Kline 1982);
- states with high levels of unemployment will have higher than average export promotion budgets (Kline 1982);
- states with high levels of port activity have higher than average export promotion efforts (Egan and Bendick 1985);
- states with highly concentrated economies (low industrial diversification) tend to stimulate export promotion efforts in their less developed sectors (Pilcher and Proffer 1985); and
- states heavily dependent upon agriculture tend to have higher than average export promotion budgets (Pilcher and Proffer 1985; Archer and Maser 1993).

What has not been well documented, however, are the means through which, and the degree to which, state export agencies actually facilitate the internationalization of their respective business communities (Archer and Maser 1989; Erickson 1993). Econometric studies generally conclude that the structure of a given state's capital and labor stocks (rather than its levels of export promotion assistance) is the principal determinant of its export level (Feilke 1986; Coughlin and Cartwright 1987; Erickson and Hayward 1991). Systematic examination of the actual operation of export promotion agencies, then, becomes a matter of some interest. Indeed, one recent examination of states' efforts to measure the effectiveness of export promotion programs found that the lack of systematic appraisal, and over reliance upon "anecdotal" evidence of results, was generating a "backlash" among governors, legislators, and taxpayers (Kudrle and Kite 1989).

The present study is an attempt to address this research lacuna. Survey data are analyzed to measure the fit between services provided by a particular state's export agency (i.e., Oklahoma) and the services desired by that state's business community. The state of Oklahoma is a particularly good choice because its program has been so widely emulated. We have chosen to emphasize survey research techniques because the personnel and budgetary data regarding Oklahoma's export promotion efforts are already widely disseminated through the many comparative state studies cited above. Thus, we turn to an examination of the organization of Oklahoma export promotion.

#### OKLAHOMA EXPORT AGENCY

In the state of Oklahoma the agency charged with promoting international business is the Oklahoma International Trade and Investment Division of the state Department of Commerce. As mentioned above, the agency is organized as a cooperative venture with the U.S. Department of Commerce. This translates into an institution featuring a Division Director employed by the state who works in parallel with a District Director of the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration. The formal lines of authority for the bulk of the agency (including those of the state's four permanent overseas trade missions) are centered in the Office of the Division Director. Despite their semi-autonomous status, the federal District Director and his personnel are organized to provide support assistance for the line functions centered in the Division Director's Office (OITI Table of Organization 1993).

In 1989 Oklahoma exported products with a total value of \$1,638 million. By 1992 that figure had risen to \$2,256 million (MISER 1989-1992), a 72.6 percent increase. This increase greatly exceeded inflation for the period. Clearly,

international business is making an important, and growing, contribution to the state's economy.

States often defend their export promotion activities by indicating statistical correlations between their activities and increasing state export volumes without attempting to establish any causal links between cause and effect (Kudrle and Kite 1989; Erickson 1993). Even the academic literature often resorts to the use of raw budget data as an indicator of the efficacy of state export promotion efforts (see for example Archer and Maser 1993).

While interesting issues may be addressed through this approach, it is not self evident that higher budgets are tantamount to more effective promotion. Data presented here are intended partially to offset this difficulty by providing detailed descriptions of the intersection between export promotion services provided by the state and the pattern of their consumption by the business community of Oklahoma.

## DATA

The data for this study are derived from two sources, both of which are surveys. The surveys target similar populations. The first survey is the Oklahoma Department of Commerce's *Customer Satisfaction Survey Report: International Trade and Development Division*. This survey was conducted by the Research and Planning Division of the Oklahoma Department of Commerce and consisted of 120 questionnaires mailed to recent clients of the OITI. Two separate mailings were conducted, with 60 surveys mailed in each of the first two quarters of FY 1994. The response rate was 32.5 percent. The survey included a number of performance indicators, including industrial classifications, levels of export activity, and the effect of OITI's services upon the firms' work force. Both raw data and statistical summaries of this survey were made available to us by OITI.

The second survey was independently conducted by the authors between August and November 1993, a period contemporaneous with the state's survey. Our survey also sampled the client list of the OITI, but rather than breaking that list into quarterly mailings (as did the Research Division) we surveyed the entire list in one mailing. The list consisted of names and corporate addresses of the individual who had been the primary point of contact between their firms and the OITI. The list included all clients served between August 1991 and August 1993. We mailed 428 surveys and received 130 replies for a response rate of 30.4 percent. This survey contained questions designed to assess the level of utilization of OITI services by Oklahoma businesses and their general levels of satisfaction with those services.

As in any survey which achieves less than 100 percent response, one might be concerned with the external validity of these instruments. Important differences may exist between the firms which responded to the survey and the total population of firms which were surveyed. Given the modest response rates for both of these surveys this is a legitimate consideration. However, there is no indication that respondent firms significantly differ from the population of all firms surveyed on the potentially perturbing variables of firm size, industrial classification, and geographic location.

## FINDINGS

### PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

In the most basic terms it is important to know whether or not private sector firms find state-based assistance valuable. Among respondent firms 35.8 percent characterized their overall contact with the OITI as very helpful, and 56.9 percent found it somewhat helpful. Only 7.3 percent of firms said that OITI's efforts were not helpful, and no firm portrayed OITI contact as "detrimental." Thus, a vast majority of firms (92.7 percent) considered OITI efforts as generally beneficial. Still, much greater specificity is needed to determine the character of state-based, export assistance.

The next consideration in exploring the function of the OITI is to delineate the character of the firms receiving their assistance. Data from the OITI survey indicate that 65.7 percent of the firms it assisted are already engaged in exporting activity. The proportion of export activity, however, is a comparatively small proportion (less than 10 percent) of overall sales volume in the majority (63.1 percent) of the firms assisted.

As reported in Table 1 the two largest business categories measured by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) of firms assisted are industrial machinery (10.8 percent), and petroleum and refining (13.5 percent). This is hardly surprising in the energy intensive economy of Oklahoma. At 37.8 percent, the largest category of firms receiving OITI assistance was "other." This is an extremely diverse category which included such businesses as disparate as bathtubs and back-support belts.

It is somewhat surprising that a state which prominently features wheat and beef production, businesses in the food and kindred products category (SIC 20) received no assistance from the OITI. This is a point to which we will return later. For the moment, however, it is sufficient to note that OITI efforts are being directed toward a wide range of economic sectors and that most of those efforts

TABLE 1

**Business Classification of Client Firms**

| Classification  | Percentage |
|---|------------|
| Textile Mill (SIC 22)                                     | 2.7        |
| Fabric Apparel (SIC 23)                                   | 5.4        |
| Chemicals and Allied (SIC 28)                             | 5.4        |
| Petroleum, Refining, Related (SIC29)                      | 13.5       |
| Leather Products (SIC 31)                                 | 5.4        |
| Fabricated Metal (SIC 34)                                 | 5.4        |
| Industrial Machinery (SIC 34)                             | 10.8       |
| Electronic and Electrical Equipment (SIC 36)              | 5.4        |
| Measuring, Analyzing, Controlling<br>Instruments (SIC 38) | 8.1        |
| Other Manufactured Products                               | 37.8       |
| Total (N)   | 100        |

SOURCE: Authors' calculations based on data from OITI Customer Satisfaction Survey Report.

appear to be augmenting existing export activities rather than establishing new ones.

This latter point is not necessarily a discouraging finding. With assistance to firms which have an existing commitment to export, it is still possible to create new jobs and enhance the economy. In fact, 44.7 percent of respondents said that they undertook specific activities which increased the efficiency of their exporting activity after consultation with OITI. In addition, 13.1 percent of respondents expanded the range of products they exported, 21.0 percent enlarged the number of their export markets, and 15.8 percent increased sales levels in their current export markets.

In terms of the Oklahoma labor force, 15.4 percent of respondent firms report the creation of at least some new, permanent jobs within their firm as a direct result of OITI services. Retraining and retention of workers who would have otherwise been laid off was reported by 12.8 percent of participating firms and 20.5 percent reported fuller utilization of their work force.

On the basis of both sales and labor force performance indicators, it seems that notable economic returns are attributable to the activities of the OITI by its

clients. Any significant disjunction between the types of services desired by Oklahoma enterprises and the array of services maintained by the OITI, however, would have the potential to undermine the efficiency with which state revenues and resources are converted into economic benefits. Thus, in addition to estimating the types of firms receiving OITI assistance and estimating the effects of services upon client firms, it is important to explore the pattern of services provided by OITI and their use by Oklahoma's business community.

#### SERVICES OFFERED BY OITI

The OITI provides three basic sets of services: 1) informational and export education services, 2) direct export promotion, and 3) foreign investment and joint venture facilitation services (OITI Quality Map 1993). Though OITI places somewhat greater emphasis on joint venture facilitation than other states, its services are roughly consistent with those provided by other state-level export agencies (Kudrle and Kite 1989; Archer and Maser 1989; Erickson 1993).

The results of our survey indicate that all three primary service areas provided by OITI enjoy a fairly high usage rate (see Table 2). The service most often used by OITI client firms is general information support; direct export promotion is a close second. With both of these service activities we find a close fit between the proportion of firms exposed to the service by OITI and the number of firms utilizing the service. Only in the area of joint venture facilitation is there a large disjunction between services offered and usage. These findings indicate a reasonable degree of congruence between services provided and their pattern of use.

**TABLE 2**

#### **Firms' Contact With Oklahoma International Export Service**

| Service Area               | Percentage Services Used | Percentage Services Offered by OITI |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| General Information        | 73.5                     | 83.8                                |
| Export Promotion           | 61.0                     | 67.7                                |
| Joint Venture Facilitation | 26.6                     | 40.8                                |

SOURCE: Authors' calculations from survey.



We measure the degree of “fit” between the needs of Oklahoma’s business community and the activities of the state in each separate area of activity through a comparison of two different categories — Services Used and Services Offered. The Services Used category is reported as a percentage of respondent firms who participated in each activity. Services Offered is the percentage of respondent firms who reported having been contacted by OITI concerning that particular service. The Service Utilization Ratio is the Services Used divided by the Services Offered, multiplied by 100. It is possible that by using respondent recollections of the range of services offered to them by OITI we may understate the true range of services offered. After all, the impression made by merely hearing of a service may be less than that made by actually using a service. Nevertheless, any major discrepancies between OITI services and the needs of Oklahoma exporters should be traceable through this methodology. An alternative measure such as budget allocations made by OITI to each service category might be more accurate. Unfortunately these data are not readily available.

Tables 3, 4, and 5 provide a breakdown of activities associated with each general service area. The most heavily used service category is general informa-

**TABLE 3**

**General International Information Services**

| Service Activities                               | Percentage Services Used | Percentage Services Offered by OITI | Service Utilization Ratio |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Contact With Foreign VIPs                        | 11.5                     | 17.7                                | 64.9                      |
| Background Information on International Business | 30.0                     | 50.0                                | 60.0                      |
| Country of Region                                |                          |                                     |                           |
| Specific Information:                            |                          |                                     |                           |
| General  | 37.7                     | 54.6                                | 69.0                      |
| Political Climate                                | 23.1                     | 35.4                                | 65.2                      |
| Economic Climate                                 | 34.6                     | 44.6                                | 77.5                      |
| Currency Regulations                             | 20.0                     | 29.2                                | 68.4                      |
| Taxes  | 10.0                     | 16.9                                | 59.1                      |
| Corporate Ownership Regulations                  | 9.2                      | 10.8                                | 85.1                      |

SOURCE: Author's calculations from surveys.

tional support. Table 3 presents the specific activities associated with this service category. The table reveals a pattern of reasonably high levels of acceptance of OITI's informational services by Oklahoma firms. This acceptance is reflected not only in the percentage of firms who report using specific categories but also in the high degree of conformity between services offered to firms by OITI and utilization. The highest ratio of use to services offered is for corporate ownership regulations at 85.1 percent. The close fit between services brought to the attention of Oklahoma firms and their subsequent use by those firms indicates an appropriate mixture of services being provided.

The next most heavily utilized service area is direct export promotion. The offering and utilization data for these services are presented in Table 4. The values of offering and utilization scores for activities in this service area are,

TABLE 4

## Export Promotion Services

| Service Activities        | Percentage Services Used | Percentage Services Offered by OITI | Service Utilization Ratio |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Export Workshops          | 28.5                     | 53.8                                | 52.9                      |
| Marketing Seminars        | 22.3                     | 45.4                                | 49.1                      |
| Individualized            |                          |                                     |                           |
| Export Counseling         | 15.4                     | 23.8                                | 64.7                      |
| Overseas Trade Missions   | 23.8                     | 50.0                                | 47.6                      |
| Export Promotion Events   | 19.2                     | 40.8                                | 47.0                      |
| Receptions For            |                          |                                     |                           |
| Foreign Trade Delegations | 13.1                     | 29.2                                | 44.8                      |
| Producer Consumer         |                          |                                     |                           |
| Matching Services         | 14.6                     | 35.4                                | 41.2                      |
| Export Financing          | 6.2                      | 20.8                                | 29.8                      |
| Contact With              |                          |                                     |                           |
| Overseas Business Agents  | 15.4                     | 36.2                                | 42.5                      |
| Information Transfers:    |                          |                                     |                           |
| Trade Leads               | 25.4                     | 34.6                                | 73.4                      |
| Newsletters               | 8.5                      | 20.0                                | 42.5                      |
| Direct Mailings           | 5.4                      | 11.5                                | 46.9                      |
| Online Data Transfer      | 0.0                      | 5.4                                 | 0.0                       |

SOURCE: Author's calculations from surveys.

generally, somewhat lower than those recorded for informational services. This is consistent with our earlier finding that demand for these services is somewhat lower than it is for general information. Nevertheless, the ratio between firms offered export promotion services and firms which subsequently use the services is still robust.

The highest ratio of offering to actual use is 73.4 for trade leads. A “trade lead” includes such items as the names and product requirements of overseas purchasers. Clearly such information has value to firms positioned to sell the required products. This would account for its high proportion of use. The lowest ratio of service offered to use is in export financing, 29.8 percent. The specific export financing services provided by OITI are “financial expertise” and the administration of a federal export insurance program (Oklahoma Department of Commerce Assistance Guide, 1990). The comparatively low score generated in this service activity indicates that despite OITI’s aggressive efforts to expose Oklahoma firms to export financing assistance, little demand for this service exists.

The least heavily used service area is foreign investment and joint venture facilitation. Service activities in this area are designed, in part, to help Oklahoma firms increase their stock of overseas production assets rather than directly expand their local output. As the list of specific services presented in Table 5 illustrates, no service of this type is heavily promoted by OITI. Never-

**TABLE 5**

**Foreign Investment and Overseas Joint Ventures**

| Activities                              | Percentage Service Used | Percentage Services Offered by OITI | Service Utilization Ratio |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Joint Venture Partner Matching Services | 5.4                     | 10.8                                | 50.0                      |
| Contact with Investment Prospects       | 1.5                     | 4.6                                 | 32.6                      |
| Investment Information Services         |                         |                                     |                           |
| Laws and Administrative Rules           | 7.7                     | 7.7                                 | 100.0                     |
| Business Ethics Milieu                  | 5.4                     | 6.2                                 | 87.0                      |

SOURCE: Author's calculations from surveys.

theless, the solid ratio of client offering to utilization indicates that for some firms these services are meaningful. Thus, services that may foster business expansion but are not directly related to increased local production are provided by OITI but do not constitute a major component of effort.

## DISCUSSION

In general, the data depicting client firm profiles, industrial and labor performance indicators, and pattern of service utilization are consistent. They all point to an export promotion effort designed for, and directed toward, an industrially diverse mixture of small- and medium-scale Oklahoma exporters. The OITI delivers a range of services that are readily consumed by client firms with a reasonable amount of efficiency. We also find that OITI efforts are mostly directed toward the assistance of existing exporters in efforts to expand their activities rather than introducing new firms to the international market.

Some may object to this latter point by pointing out that a firm which is already exporting has internal incentives to expand its overseas activity. It will derive the profits from such expansions and thus should absorb the associated administrative costs rather than passing them on to the state. It is important to note, however, that the majority of firms employing OITI services are not large firms. The information and expertise required to expand into new export activities is a scarce commodity and, as such, is expensive. Furthermore, overseas business is inherently more difficult and entails greater risk than business conducted under the auspices of one central government. Further empirical evidence is required to confirm whether small firms could match their current, assisted, export performance if they were required to absorb such considerations alone.

Another potential area of difficulty presented here, is the low level of OITI assistance flowing to the food industry of Oklahoma. Recall that no firms in the food business (SIC 20) were present in the array of businesses receiving OITI assistance. According to the Oklahoma Department of Commerce's *Directory of Manufacturers and Processors* the state has over 400 food processing, value-added, agricultural companies. These firms produce products that range from "consumer ready" products such as canned vegetables, bottled juices, jellies and salsas to intermediary products like processed beef and pork, flour, and dry food mixes. One study of the export market activity of Oklahoma's value-added agricultural firms found that a crucial determinant of success in exporting was access to information regarding international financing, taxation, law, shipping, and documentation requirements (Charlet and Hennebery 1991). These are precisely the types of services provided by OITI, yet 89 percent of the Oklahoma

firms included in that study received these services from private consultants. In addition, Charlet and Henneberry (1991) found that 47 percent of the Oklahoma processed food firms in their study received direct export assistance from the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture.

Thus, although OITI delivers an appropriate mixture of services to its clients and makes a significant contribution to the state's export expansion, more could be done to improve the delivery of its services. A limited sample of two quarters may underestimate the number of SIC 20 firms served, but the use by food processing firms of private consultants and the employment of similar services provided by an alternative state agency indicates that a need for export assistance exists in this area. While the expense of private, export-promotion consultants among small SIC 20 firms may inhibit some firms from entering the export market, it is the use of the Department of Agriculture as an alternative source of export assistance which is most troubling. First, the provision of similar services by redundant state agencies is inefficient. Second, the literature suggests that in states where multiple state agencies promote exports, the difficulties of interagency coordination may decrease the achievement levels of exporting firms (Pilcher and Proffer 1985).

## SUMMARY

The recent increase in the level of export activity undertaken by states has generated interest at a number of levels. This study documents the pattern of service delivery and the character of the state's export promotion program within Oklahoma.

We have discovered that significant economic benefits are attributable to the export promotion effort within the state. Sales levels are increased, jobs are created and maintained, and new markets are penetrated by Oklahoma firms as a result of the state's efforts. We also find that the firms receiving assistance readily consume state services (particularly informational services) and that those services are efficiently delivered. The study also reveals certain limitations in the current export promotion effort. First, the state's export promotion efforts serve existing exporters more often than they are used to apprentice new export firms. Second, we find that important areas of the Oklahoma economy receive only marginal assistance from the state's principal export promotion agency.

Our data do not address the nature of other states' international activity, nor do they shed light upon the degree to which international activity by state governments will transform the international political economy or shape the U.S. foreign policy process. However, our findings indicate that Oklahoma is meet-

ing the challenges of the new global economy aggressively and effectively. While more can be done to develop the state's export potential, to the extent that the activity in other states is similar to that found in Oklahoma, it is probable that state governments can responsibly serve the interests of their economic constituencies, and therefore will likely continue to play a significant role in international economic management.

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