

Recovery Act/Buy American Information Related to Substantial Transformation

GUIDANCE ON MANUFACTURED GOODS AND SUBSTANTIAL TRANSFORMATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AWARDS

Section 1605 of the Recovery Act states, “None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by this Act may be used for a project for the construction, alteration, maintenance, or repair of a public building or public work unless all of the iron, steel, and manufactured goods used in the project are produced in the United States.” The Office of Management and Budget’s (OMB) guidance on implementing this section defines “manufactured good” as a “good brought to the construction site for incorporation into the building or work that has been processed into a specific form and shape; or combined with other raw material to create a material that has different properties than the properties of the individual raw materials.” *See* 2 C.F.R. § 176.140(a)(1).

The OMB guidelines further define a “domestic manufactured good” as “a manufactured good that consists in whole or in part of materials from another country, has been substantially transformed in the United States into a new and different manufactured good distinct from the materials from which it was transformed. There is no requirement with regard to the origin of components or subcomponents in manufactured goods or products, as long as the manufacture of the goods occurs in the United States.” *See* 2 C.F.R. § 176.160(a).

We interpret, “Produced in the United States,” to mean that the production or manufacturing facility is physically located in the United States or its territories. The domicile of the parent company, subsidiary, distributor, or supplier is not relevant for determining compliance with the Recovery Act Buy American provision.

Substantial transformation has long been applied in judicial and administrative customs cases on labeling, national origin, and other Federal statutory requirements as the appropriate and effective way to identify where a good was manufactured. The courts have determined what constitutes substantial transformation on a case-by-case basis. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued guidance for its Recovery Act projects interpreting the substantial transformation test found at *Complying with ARRA Buy American Provisions for SRF-Funded Projects*, June 22, 2009 www.epa.gov/water/eparecovery . The following questions provided therein may be helpful to determine whether or not substantial transformation has occurred. It is likely that substantial transformation has occurred in the U.S. if the answer is “yes” to either (or a combination of) Question 1, 2, or 3 below:

1. Were all of the components of the manufactured good manufactured in the U.S., and were all of the components assembled into the final production in the U.S.? (If the answer is yes, then it is clearly manufactured in the U.S., and the inquiry is complete.)

2. Was there a change in character for use of the good or the components in the U.S.? (These questions are asked about the finished good as a whole, not about each individual component.)
 - a. Was there a change in the physical and/or chemical properties or characteristics designed to alter the functionality of the good?
 - b. Did the manufacturing or processing operation result in a change of a product(s) with one use into a product with a different use?
 - c. Did the manufacturing or processing operation result in the narrowing of the range of possible uses of a multi-use product?

If the answer is yes to any of 2a, 2b, or 2c, then the answer to Q.2 is yes.

3. Was/were the process(es) performed in the U.S. (including but not limited to assembly) complex and meaningful?
 - a. Did the process(es) take a substantial amount of time?
 - b. Was/were the process(es) costly?
 - c. Did the process(es) require a number of different operations?
 - d. Did the processes require particular high level skills?
 - e. Was substantial value added in the process(es)?

If the answer is yes to at least two of 3a, 3b, 3c, 3d, or 3e, then the answer to Q.3 is yes.

These questions all focus on manufacturing, processing, assembly, or integration of the components or subcomponents into a finished good. Design, planning, procurement, component production, or any other step prior to the process of physically bringing together the components into the item used in and incorporated into the Recovery Act project cannot constitute part of substantial transformation.

If the parts at issue are components (or subcomponents) of a larger manufactured good that is domestically manufactured, or substantially transformed, in the United States, then the Buy American Recovery Act requirement does not apply.

The responsibility for determining whether the parts are components of a larger manufactured good, and whether the good is manufactured in the United States rests with the Recovery Act financial assistance recipient. Recipients should consult with their own legal counsel concerning the basis for substantial transformation. Based on the requirements of the Recovery Act and OMB's guidance on the Recovery Act, DOE cannot approve or disapprove a Recovery Act recipient's determination that a manufactured good has been substantially transformed in the United States. However, DOE Contracting Officers may request additional information to support the credibility of the recipient's analysis of substantial transformation. It is the recipient's responsibility to ensure that all information and documentation that supports a substantial

transformation determination is accurate and complete and is retained for audit purposes. If recipients have reasonable doubt about the substantial transformation of a given manufactured good, and they believe that one of the exceptions outlined in the Recovery Act apply (such as domestic “nonavailability”), then the recipient may apply for a waiver based on that exception.