

Goal 2: Provide effective customer-oriented immigration benefit and information services

Objective 2.1: Improve timely processing of immigration benefits

USCIS is fundamentally transforming the delivery of immigration services while continuing to adjudicate millions of applications and petitions each year. We strive continuously for efficient and high quality service delivery within an environment of unpredictable demand for USCIS services. Increases in workload necessitate sound business processes along with a workforce and organizational structure that can quickly react to prevent processing delays.



Over the past two years, we have made significant improvements in the processing of immigration benefits. We essentially eliminated existing case backlogs, reduced the processing time for Nicaraguan and Central American Relief Act Section 203 and asylum applications from 16.23 months to less than 4 months, and reduced the processing times for most types of appeals under the appellate jurisdiction of Administrative Appeals Officers. To maintain this standard of service, USCIS has worked to streamline security check processing, while still vigilantly protecting national and public security interests.

In July and August 2007, USCIS received 2.5 million applications and petitions for immigration benefits. This record number was double the normal volume. During fiscal year 2007, we received 1.4 million naturalization applications, which is more than the number of naturalization applications filed in fiscal years 2005 and 2006 combined. In response, USCIS redoubled efforts to identify streamlining opportunities and to significantly increase staffing to handle this dramatic increase in caseload, while never compromising the integrity and security of the adjudicative process. In the future we remain committed to making improvements in processing times and service delivery across the spectrum of applications and petitions.

To support quality and timely decision making, our officers use the online resources such as the Adjudicator's Toolbox and the Asylum Virtual Library, which provide the most up to date legislative, regulatory and reference information. To ensure that we continue to provide timely and quality services and to allow adjudicators to focus their attention on the parts of a case where their expertise is most needed, we will:

- Re-engineer intake, pre-adjudication processing, and risk analysis of applications to ensure that a case is "decision ready" when it reaches an Adjudications Officer.
- Regularly review and update operational policies, processes, forms, instructions, and procedures to improve both efficiency and consistency.

- Use forecasting and planning tools to best manage workload to provide efficient and effective service delivery to our applicants and petitioners.
- Continue to staff Service Centers, the National Benefits Center, Field Offices, and Application Support Centers to be able to quickly respond to fluctuating workloads.
- Proactively track field office utilization and performance data to identify opportunities to improve efficiency and cost effectiveness.
- Improve the production and delivery of USCIS cards and documents to improve customer service and reduce the risk of identity theft and fraud.
- Train Adjudications Officers to effectively and efficiently administer the new naturalization exam.
- Assist adjudicators in making timely and accurate decisions by providing electronic access to criminal and national security check information from within DHS, the Department of State, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Objective 2.2: Use innovative approaches to provide information resources and services to eligible individuals and entities, including the general public

We are committed to broadening the resources and tools available to individuals, agencies and other entities seeking immigration benefit related information. We also continuously strive to improve customer service and agency efficiency by ensuring that we provide timely, consistent, and accurate information to our customers.

We have expanded E-Verify, formerly the Basic Pilot Employment Eligibility Verification Program. This Internet-based program provides employers with the tools and technologies to verify that newly hired employees are authorized to work in the United States. We will continue to work with the Social Security Administration to enhance E-Verify to accommodate the upcoming influx of new employers who will use the verification program. Through the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program, USCIS will continue to assist other federal, state, and local agencies and licensing bureaus to maintain the integrity of their own benefits programs by serving as a source of accurate and timely immigration related information about whether a person is eligible to receive benefits through their programs. USCIS will serve as a good partner and a reliable source of accurate and quality information.

We have expanded the USCIS Office of Communications, enhancing our capability to provide external and internal communications and to conduct media and community relations events. We will continue to explore uses of new media applications to best share information with our customers.

We will broaden our capability to provide eligibility, status, and historical information to authorized individuals, industry, government agencies, as well as private and public entities. We will expand our digitization initiative for immigration records, enabling us to more efficiently share critical data with other federal agencies. We will also leverage USCIS production and information storage capabilities to support identity management efforts across government agencies. In order to better serve our stakeholders, we will:

- Develop comprehensive communications and public outreach plans, highlighting our accomplishments and ensuring that our employees, our stakeholders, and the general public understand who we are, what we do, how we work, and how our roles and responsibilities fit within the context of DHS.
- Enhance strategic communications efforts, including town hall meetings, to ensure that the general public are appropriately engaged and informed.
- Proactively work with members of Congress and congressional staff to provide meaningful information and respond to Congressional inquiries in a timely, accurate, and professional manner.
- Leverage available and new technologies and media to ensure that stakeholders are provided with timely, consistent, and accurate information.
- Engage USCIS employees, customers and stakeholders to help deliver compelling messages that reach our diverse audiences.
- Leverage existing and new channels of available assistance, including the USCIS website, multi-lingual publications, National Customer Service Center (toll-free call center), and face-to-face appointments, making it easier for new and existing customers to get useful information when they need it.
- Expand immigrant settlement and integration resources to immigrants through free distribution of *Welcome to the United States: A Guide for New Immigrants* to all new lawful permanent residents.
- Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of our delivery mechanisms, seek feedback on our efforts, and adjust our communications strategy accordingly, to ensure that our communications are timely, useful, understandable, and meaningful.
- Provide a direct connection to USCIS for members of the United States Armed Forces through the USCIS Military Help Line, a toll-free service to assist with immigration and naturalization services and information.



- Enhance status verification programs (the E-Verify and SAVE Programs) to respond timely and reliably to the needs of employers and other federal, state, and local government agencies, including licensing bureaus.
- Assist customers through the increased availability of translation services.
- Increase our ability to respond to information requests, such as those made under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), in an appropriate and timely manner.

Objective 2.3: Foster a customer-centered, scalable approach to service delivery

USCIS will adopt a customer-centered approach to service delivery, which will provide a clear, consistent, and universal picture of each customer in order to guide risk assessment, adjudication of benefits, as well as providing the basis for a more rigorous analysis of business operations. Our customers will benefit from the government's common understanding of his or her needs and eligibility. USCIS will achieve this with new resources generated through the recently implemented fee schedule, which will provide appropriate funding to address national security requirements and customer service needs. The new fee structure will facilitate the ongoing modernization of our business infrastructure to be more customer-centric, flexible and scalable. Under our Transformation Program, we will convert paper-based processes to electronic-based business processes.

Both USCIS and our stakeholders will benefit as we change business processes and develop integrated technology services that will enable us to create a holistic view of each customer, their current application and history through a single interface. Initial steps in achieving our vision of the future have been taken through a proof of concept based on the Inter-country adoptions process. Furthermore, USCIS is piloting the digitization of records related to benefit applications to modernize the way we access historically paper documents and share those same documents with our partner agencies. As the Transformation Program progresses, we will deploy capabilities that will enable our customers to use a common, consistent, and familiar interface to file an application, submit supporting documents, make appointments for interviews or biometrics, track the progress of their case, and get consistent information regardless of where they live, what they file, and which office actually processes their case.

To become a model of customer-centered service that is more easily able to deal with the ebb and flow of applications, we will:

- Continue to engage customers and stakeholders in developing strategies for improved service delivery.
- Expand assessments of customer satisfaction with USCIS, our products and services.
- Promote, facilitate and expand the electronic filing of applications, scheduling of appointments, and submitting changes of address.
- Simplify the submission of applications by customers regardless of form type and jurisdiction.
- Create paperless adjudications and leverage electronic data exchange to reduce the physical transfer of paper files and evidence.
- Acquire the services of a systems architect to support the creation and implementation of an integrated operating environment that will enable transformed business processes and technology services to agilely and securely support the adjudication of immigration and citizenship benefits.
- Incrementally implement the transformed business and technology services, beginning with capabilities supporting the adjudication of citizenship-related benefits.



“There is no more precious possession today than United States citizenship. A nation is no stronger than its citizenry. With many problems facing us daily in this perplexing and trying era, it is vital that we have a unity of purpose—to the end that freedom, justice, and opportunity, good will, and happiness may be assured ourselves and peoples everywhere.”

Harry S .Truman