

USCIS Strategic Plan

Securing America's Promise



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

The background of the entire page is a faded, semi-transparent image of the United States flag, showing the stars and stripes. The text is overlaid on the right side of the flag.

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U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Director's Message

It is an honor to present the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Strategic Plan. This Plan is the roadmap for where our organization intends to go and what we intend to achieve over the next ten years. This Plan is strategic in both scope and purpose, and charts the course toward our agency goal to "Secure America's Promise as a Nation of Immigrants." The Plan itself is a living document – it will evolve as necessary – but it sets a clear, consistent direction for USCIS to better position our organization to make the right decisions today while adapting to the needs of the nation in a changing world.

At USCIS, we have covered much ground in the past two and a half years since our establishment as part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Our combined efforts have created a professional organization that stands as a model of success for DHS and for government at large. We have made significant and measurable progress toward improving customer service, eliminating the application backlog, and enhancing national security; however much more remains to be done. The Strategic Plan provides the necessary guidance and direction for realizing USCIS' future potential and overcoming the challenges we face.

As an immigrant, I am grateful to be able to give back to my adopted country by providing our customers at USCIS with high-quality and cost-effective service. It is the goal of every one of our more than fifteen thousand employees to administer our national immigration laws with processes that are efficient, convenient and secure. To do that, we are fundamentally transforming the delivery of our immigration services while continuing to serve close to seven million applicants annually. In these efforts, we remain ever mindful of our responsibility to honor our historic traditions of welcoming lawful immigrants and we support that ideal by keeping America's doors open, but well guarded.

The opportunity for social equality, for economic independence, for a brighter future; these are the beacons that have attracted people throughout history and from every part of the world to become Americans. Their contributions have enriched the fabric of our society, formed the ideal of the American dream and helped to shape a nation built upon the deep foundations of morality, pillared by codes of justice, with a roof of freedom and liberty overhead. With the Strategic Plan as our blueprint, we will ensure that the spirit of every citizen, both native-born and naturalized, can be harnessed to drive the next chapter of our great American story and continue our historic legacy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eduardo Aguirre Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Eduardo Aguirre Jr.

Director

United States Citizenship and
Immigration Services



Executive Summary

As a component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), has developed this document as a framework incorporating pre-existing planning resources, key mission objectives, and organizational growth elements. By providing a full spectrum depiction of our organization's direction and priorities, and by aligning this document with specific USCIS priorities outlined in the Homeland Security Act, the Strategic Plan demonstrates our critical role within the DHS mission.

Structure

The USCIS Strategic Plan comprises a roadmap for the organization, identifying who we are, where we want to go, and at a conceptual level, how we're going to get there. Our Plan includes the following sections:

- **Vision, Mission, and Values** – Our Vision, Mission, and Values are the foundation for all that we do. They define us as an organization and shape how we set and achieve our goals.
- **Context for Strategic Planning** – Effective strategic planning requires an understanding of the context in which we operate. This context encompasses the social, economic, political and environmental factors that influence and shape our organization, our relationship with our many and diverse stakeholders, and our relationship with DHS and other agencies within the Department.
- **Themes, Goals, Objectives and Strategies** – USCIS' Strategic Plan is organized around three mission themes, also shared by DHS – *Prevention, Service and Organizational Excellence*. Our agency goals, objectives and strategies are associated with each of these themes, and were developed by cross-functional teams to avoid compartmentalizing and facilitate partnering within and beyond the organization.
- **Strategic Plan Framework** – Our Strategic Plan describes our long-term strategic direction in broad terms, it provides the integrated context for other USCIS planning initiatives, such as the business modernization plan, human capital strategy, management improvement plans, and program development.

“Allow me to express my happiness at being a naturalized citizen in the greatest country in the world... It’s an honor and a privilege.”



Daniel A. Daniel, Sudan
Naturalized U. S. Citizen

Vision, Mission, and Values

At USCIS we value the responsibility to uphold our time-honored American traditions of welcoming those individuals seeking freedom, liberty and an opportunity for a better life. Our vision demonstrates what we have the potential to become and to achieve, and our mission clarifies our purpose. Our core values serve as guiding principles in our efforts to effectively fulfill our day-to-day mission and realize our long-term vision of success.

Vision

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will strengthen America’s future by becoming a customer-focused innovator of benefits processing, a catalyst for citizenship education, instruction and outreach, a recognized and credible source of useful information, and a leading contributor to the security of the United States.

Mission

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will secure America’s promise as a nation of immigrants by providing accurate and useful information to our customers, granting immigration and citizenship benefits, promoting an awareness and understanding of citizenship, and ensuring the integrity of our immigration system.

Values

Integrity

We shall always strive for the highest level of **Integrity** in our dealings with our customers, our fellow employees, and the citizens of the United States of America. We shall be ever mindful of the importance of the trust the American people have placed in us to administer the nation’s immigration system fairly, honestly, and correctly.

Respect

We will demonstrate **Respect** in all of our actions. We will ensure that everyone we affect will be treated with dignity and courtesy regardless of the outcome of the decision. We will model this principle in all of our activities, with each other, our customers, and the public. Through our actions, this organization will become known as an example of respect, dignity, and courtesy.

Ingenuity

As we meet the challenges to come, we will strive to find the most effective means to accomplish our goals. We will use **Ingenuity**, resourcefulness, creativity, and sound management principles to strive for world-class results. We will approach every challenge with a balance of enthusiasm and wisdom in our effort to fulfill our vision.



Context for the Strategic Plan

Our Environment: Opportunities and Challenges

Understanding the business environment in which we work is important in order to provide a context for USCIS' strategic planning. A frank and thorough assessment of our strengths and weaknesses, as well as the opportunities and challenges we face, equips us with an ability to plan effectively for our future.

As a customer oriented organization, one of the greatest challenges to strategic planning at USCIS is the ability to accurately forecast the demand for our services. This variable affects both our fee revenue and resource allocation planning. World events and dynamics global economy affect our international demand projections, while shifts in federal immigration policy, domestic politics and U.S. economic conditions, influence domestic demand.

Currently, we receive more than 5 million applications per year, for over 50 types of immigration benefits. Increases in workload during the past decade contributed to the emergence of a backlog of applications awaiting decision, a problem that we are committed to eliminating by the end of FY 2006.

Parallel and related to our backlog elimination efforts, new initiatives to modernize our business practices and upgrade our information technology infrastructure have been launched. Our goal is to transform our current paper-based data systems into a modern, world-class digital processing resource that

will enhance customer service, better prevent future backlogs, improve USCIS efficiency with expanded electronic filing and strengthen national security. These new initiatives will also help us meet customer expectations for on-demand information and immediate real-time electronic service over the Internet.

Like many Federal agencies, we anticipate steep retirements among our leadership and most experienced staff in the next five to ten years. We must take a strategic view of our human capital situation, and in particular, focus on succession planning, targeted recruiting, and integrated training to ensure USCIS continues to have the right people ready to serve.

Funding support from fee revenue will help finance IT modernization projects, new personnel training and increased customer support programs. USCIS also benefits from partnerships with public and private stakeholders that help us to accomplish our mission, particularly in customer service initiatives and new program development.

USCIS placement within DHS provides our agency with a strong mandate, and a clear mission focus. We benefit from opportunities to partner with the private sector and other DHS components to fulfill our unique responsibilities. DHS' shared services initiative also provides us the potential to utilize agency resources and acquire better quality service.



Our Stakeholders

Key to USCIS' success is our ability to be informed of the needs and concerns of its stakeholders. Stakeholders are people, groups, or organizations that are impacted by USCIS' work, have influence over it, or have a stake in its successful completion. Not only must USCIS know its stakeholders, we must also understand how our stakeholders judge our success in order for us to know how to engineer and communicate new or revised approaches to accomplishing our mission.

USCIS is exceptional in the diversity of its stakeholders. Immigration touches in some fashion most of America, individually and institutionally. As such, our stakeholders range from the general public, to individual USCIS customers and employees, to our department, the Congress, as well as employers, businesses, schools and community organizations. *Figure 1* depicts the constellation of stakeholders that we recognize as important to our success.

Our stakeholders' interests and influences are wide-ranging and include the integrity and security of the immigration system; the adequacy and utility of our resources; the

Figure 1

A **Stakeholder** is defined as any person, group, or organization that is impacted by your organization's work, has influence over it, or has a stake in its successful completion.

Community Based Organizations

Congress

Contractors

Department of Homeland Security

Foreign Governments

Government Organizations

Judiciary Branch

Labor Unions

Legal Community

Media

State and Local Governments

Taxpayers

Think Tanks/Expert Community

USCIS Customers (Petitioners and Beneficiaries)

USCIS Employees

White House/Administration/OMB

outcome of individual applications; and the role and impact of immigration on our economy. Many of our inter-government stakeholders also share our interest in improving customer service and agency efficiency and promoting a greater awareness of Citizenship.

Within particular stakeholder categories, there often exist divergent positions on sensitive policy choices, operational priorities, and the value or impact of the immigration process. Our goal is to analyze and understand these perspectives so that we can shape our strategic planning to mirror our stakeholders' myriad needs and interests.



Theme: *Prevention*

Goal 1 Ensure the security and integrity of the immigration system

Objective 1.1

Ensure that benefits are granted only to eligible applicants and petitioners

A secure homeland depends on the integrity of our immigration system. We will employ a program of comprehensive quality assurance and security measures to ensure that benefits are granted only to eligible individuals.

To accomplish this, we will ensure that law enforcement (background) checks are conducted on all persons seeking immigration benefits. To prevent identity fraud, we will capture and store biometrics tied to a unique enumerator for all applicants to USCIS for immigration benefits, in effect freezing an identity for future identification and verification. We will continue to improve and issue tamper-resistant immigration benefit documentation.

We will implement an automated background check system that will integrate criminal and national security checks with our benefits application processing systems, so that all background check requests and responses are tracked and stored. To ensure we have the most current information about customers' eligibility, we will explore options to enable

alerts from law enforcement and intelligence agencies about customers whose criminal or national security status changes.

To maintain maximum levels of efficiency for all USCIS customers, we will develop a fraud referral process that identifies and refers suspected cases of fraud to a specialized cadre of immigration officers with expertise in fraud detection. This process will allow our adjudicators to provide more responsive service to eligible customers and minimizes the risk of adjudicating benefits based on false information. We will further enhance our quality assurance measures and implement case and supervisory review and post-decision review processes.

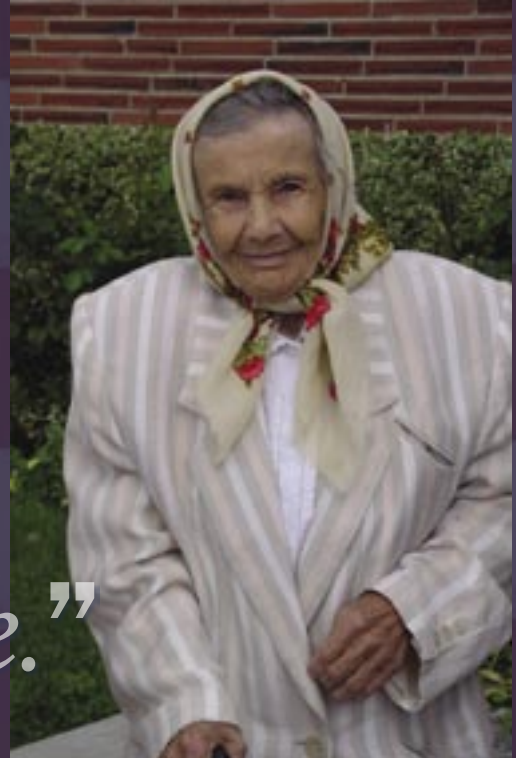
Objective 1.2

Deter, detect, and pursue immigration benefits fraud

In coordination with DHS and other Federal agencies, we will combat immigration benefit fraud through our Office of Fraud Detection and National Security (FDNS). We will continue to train our FDNS staff to analyze and identify fraud patterns and trends, and document evidence of fraud for administrative action. We will continue to implement fraud detection measures in our Service Centers, field offices, and Refugee

“America is my peaceful refuge.”

Pelageya Ilchenko, *Russia*
Naturalized U. S. Citizen



and Asylum programs and train our adjudications staff to proactively identify fraud/security profiles while considering an application.

We will develop a national fraud database and software that will enhance our ability to analyze fraud reactively as well as identify fraud in an automated, proactive manner. We will apply techniques such as data mining and pattern recognition to proactively identify potential cases of misrepresentation or fraud earlier in the adjudications process. For instance, every new application will be automatically searched against known indicators of fraud. More accurate and robust fraud research will improve our adjudications process.

We will refer all suspicion of immigration fraud to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) for investigation and possible prosecution (pursuant to the standards of acceptance set by prosecuting authorities). We will proactively refer illegal and other wanted aliens to enforcement entities for prosecution and/or removal from the United States. To ensure the pursuit of fraud, we will track all fraud cases from referral to completion.

Objective 1.3

Identify and communicate immigration-related information to partners in support of DHS strategic goals

To obtain information and intelligence critical to the DHS mission, USCIS will maintain standard and secure operating procedures to govern the exchange of digitized security information with appropriate government entities. Additionally, USCIS will ensure that accurate, up-to-date information about an individual's immigration status is electronically available to other agencies in support of their missions.

One mechanism we will use is the Open Source Information Network, an intelligence community intranet for the exchange of sensitive but unclassified information with outside agencies in a secure environment. For instance, we will provide timely and accurate information relating to individuals in removal proceedings. Based on patterns of recognized fraudulent behavior, we will also identify entities exhibiting potentially fraudulent behavior and proactively share actionable information with other appropriate Federal agencies to pursue.

We will ensure that accurate and up-to-date information about an individual's immigration status is electronically and securely available to other agencies in support of their missions. We will make certain that the right applicant receives the right benefits in the right amount of time, while preventing the wrong applicant from obtaining our benefits.



Theme: *Service*

Goal 2 Provide efficient and customer-oriented immigration benefit and information services

Objective 2.1

Achieve and maintain timely processing of immigration benefits

By the end of FY 2006, USCIS will eliminate the current backlog of pending applications and will sustain a national cycle time average of six months or less for all applications. Working with our stakeholders, we will identify, pilot and implement business practice improvements and innovations to prevent backlogs from recurring, and will strive to continuously improve processing times. We will regularly review and update our operational policies, processes, forms, instructions, and procedures to improve both efficiency (e.g., eliminate redundancies or unnecessary steps) and consistency and automate steps to allow adjudicators' to focus their attention on the parts of a case where their expertise is most needed. We will implement pre-processing of applications at a centralized facility to ensure that a case is "decision ready" when it reaches an adjudicator, thus reducing the number of continued cases. We will strive continuously for efficient and effective service delivery thereby providing exceptional value for the fees paid by our applicants and petitioners.

We will continue to staff our Service Centers, National Benefits Center, local offices and Application Support Centers to be able to quickly respond to fluctuating workload. Our Asylum Officer Corps and our new Refugee Officer Corps will enable us to leverage specialized resources, including professional interpreters, to deliver timely and accurate provision of legal protection to individuals who have been persecuted and displaced.

Objective 2.2

Provide information resources and services to appropriate individuals and entities

By providing timely, consistent, and accurate information to our customers, we will reduce the frequency of repeated, redundant applicant contact with USCIS employees, thus improving agency efficiency. Through multiple channels of available assistance, including the USCIS website, toll-free call center (National Customer Service Center), and face-to-face appointments; USCIS will make it easier for our customers to get the information they need, when they need it.

Rather than awaiting customer requests, we will proactively and automatically provide helpful information or documents



*“This is a great country,
because the opportunities
are only limited by your
determination and faith.”*

Wilford Young, *Honduras*
Naturalized U. S. Citizen

to applicants and other customers at appropriate junctures. For example, we will notify customers when their employment authorization document is about to expire. We will notify customers of their potential eligibility for additional benefits and provide them with a pre-printed, pre-populated application.

We will provide timely immigration status information electronically to authorized public and private customers. For employment authorization these include participating employers through the Basic Employment Verification Pilot Program. USCIS will also enhance status verification programs and FOIA requests to better respond to other government agencies and employers. We will work proactively with members of Congress and congressional staff to provide meaningful information and respond to Congressional inquiries in a timely, accurate and professional manner.

We will also provide unique information resources and services to new customers. For instance, we will leverage our production and information storage capabilities to create a new biometric credentialing facility for DHS and implement consistent and consolidated methods for biometric collection and storage to perform background checks of DHS employees and contractors. We will broaden our capability to provide resources and tools to individuals and agencies seeking historical and genealogical information, such as records of arrival into the United States.

Objective 2.3

Foster a customer-centered approach to service delivery

We will deploy technology, such as our new case management system and electronic filing, to enable our customers 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, whom they contact, or which office actually processes their case. To make it easier for customers to file an application, change their address, schedule an appointment, or submit supporting documentation electronically, we will expand self-service options. We will support customers in timely problem resolution by creating an online case referral process. In addition, we will increase the use of direct mail, allowing customers to file all applications to a single address, regardless of form type or jurisdiction. We will also promote, facilitate and expand the electronic filing of applications and locate our offices at sites more convenient to our customers.

To improve our customer service, we will use our customers' data to provide a comprehensive view of an individual's history of applications, inquiries and other

transactions with USCIS. Thus, we will be able to re-use applicant data and eliminate the need for customers to provide information they have already submitted. For example, generating all immigration documents from the first set of biometrics collected will obviate the need for customers to be re-fingerprinted.

We will continue to engage customers and stakeholders in developing strategies for improved service delivery and consider our customers' needs when reviewing our processes and procedures. We will continue to assess our customers' satisfaction with USCIS, our products and services.

Objective 2.4

Develop seamless, IT-supported processes that efficiently support immigration benefits adjudication and information sharing.

We will develop integrated technology and information systems that will benefit both USCIS and its stakeholders. Integration will give USCIS the capability to create a holistic view of a customer's current application and record history through a single interface.

We will implement an enhanced case processing system to provide our adjudicators with the information and expert support they need for accurate decision-making. Electronic access to criminal and national security check information from within DHS, the Department of State, US-VISIT, and the FBI will assist adjudicators in making timely and accurate decisions. Our case processing system will provide us the flexibility to assign cases to the first available adjudicator, regardless of jurisdiction, enabling us to shift workload across the nation to address peaks in application processing demands.

We will create paperless adjudications and leverage electronic data exchange to reduce the physical transfer of paper files and evidence. USCIS will make digitized information available through secure connections for the purpose of paperless adjudication, identity verification, customer service, case management, and management report generation.

Goal 3 Increase understanding of citizenship and its privileges and responsibilities

Objective 3.1

Enhance educational resources and promote opportunities to support immigrants' integration and participation in American civic culture

Our citizenship education resources will target immigrants at two key points during their journey toward becoming American citizens; when they first become permanent residents and later when they are eligible to begin the formal naturalization process. Materials for aliens in the process of becoming citizens will seek to foster a deeper understanding of United States history and civics. We recognize the importance of providing organizations that serve immigrants with tools to help in the classroom. To this end, we will develop complementary teaching resources to assist teachers and other service providers. As appropriate, we will make materials targeted toward newly arriving immigrant groups available in their native languages, and we will provide materials for the classroom that are written at appropriate levels for limited English speakers.

Using the resources of our field Community Liaison Officers and our communications team, we will enhance our public outreach efforts and build an infrastructure to ensure nationwide promotion and dissemination of our materials. We will enhance our website to become a primary source of information for immigrants and the organizations that serve them, and we will use radio and print public service announcements to promote awareness of our products. Our outreach will include establishing a robust network of local and national stakeholders, which includes our government partners at the Federal, State and Local levels, community and faith-based groups, adult educators and the private sector. Recognizing that integration takes place at the local level, our Community Liaison Officers will work closely with local public and private organizations and other service providers.

“Being an American citizen represents freedom of speech, thought and action without fear of being punished.”

Sonia Florez, *Peru*
Naturalized U.S. Citizen
USCIS employee



Objective 3.2

Make the naturalization process more meaningful

Citizenship through naturalization is the ultimate privilege of our immigration system. We will ensure that the process of naturalization represents the honor and importance associated with the status of United States citizenship. We will redesign the naturalization test to make it a more substantive, standardized and fair examination that better prepares new citizens to exercise the rights and meet the responsibilities of citizenship. We will also improve the quality and standards of naturalization ceremonies held in the United States and abroad and refine our military naturalization procedures to support and promote the citizenship of those serving in the military and those who lost their lives in service to our nation.

Goal 4 Ensure flexible and sound immigration policies and programs that meet the needs and obligations of the nation, including our international treaties on humanitarian protection and trade

Objective 4.1

Effect the formulation of clear, and well-informed national immigration and citizenship policies

As the national authority on immigration policy and related issues, USCIS fulfills a leading role in the formulation and development of policies and recommendations related to immigration and citizenship issues. To increase our ability to support clear, equitable and well-informed policy positions, we will conduct research and analysis, and develop papers

and proposals to inform decision-making. Feedback received from domestic and international stakeholders, including the Department of State and other Federal agencies, will help to shape our positions regarding the impact of current and proposed immigration and citizenship policies. In coordination with these Federal agencies, USCIS must ensure that our policy decisions are complementary and consistent on cross-organizational issues and in accordance with our nation's international agreements.

Objective 4.2

Ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and responsiveness of USCIS programs

USCIS continuously seeks opportunities to improve, harmonize and streamline the way we operate by periodically reviewing our program rules, business processes, and procedures. This commitment includes both listening to and involving key internal and external stakeholders. An effective improvement process also requires us to balance consideration of operational demands with long-range program goals. Our partnership with the Congress is critical to this objective, in requesting changes to laws that do not contribute to the achievement of our overall mission or of individual program activities.

By incorporating mission alignment, quality assurance and program compatibility in our approach to program review and design, we can work to ensure that the nation's immigration programs are administered efficiently and achieve the desired purpose. Program evaluations and customer satisfaction surveys are useful tools to measure these variables and ensure our programs are fulfilling USCIS' intent of fairly, honestly and correctly administering the nation's immigration system. Our participation in program reviews and financial audits conducted by the Government Accountability Office and DHS' Office of the Inspector General will also help to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of USCIS programs.



Theme: *Organizational Excellence*

Goal 5 Strengthen the infrastructure necessary to achieve USCIS' mission

Objective 5.1

Strengthen key management processes, systems, and administrative support activities, including our information technology infrastructure

Strengthening our key processes, systems, and support activities will facilitate mission success and enhance the timeliness, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Our management processes will meet or exceed performance goals and accountability standards required by legislation such as the Federal Managers' Financial Integrity Act and the Clinger-Cohen Act; presidential mandates such as the President's Management Agenda; and DHS guidance such as the Future Years Homeland Security Plan.

We will continue to enhance and refine the processes and systems that support the deliberations and decisions of our executive decision-making body, the USCIS Senior Review Board. We will define and implement a corporate clearance process that ensures the complete and thorough vetting of key documents, such as position papers and immigration policy proposals, by appropriate parties before presentation to the

Board. This will enable the Board to make the most efficient, effective and well-informed corporate decisions regarding strategic direction, budget, policy formulation, program design and delivery, and capital investments.

We will create an integrated, mission-focused information technology (IT) strategy that will provide for IT infrastructure tools and processes to support mission-critical functions such as adjudicative decision-making and fraud detection. Implementation of our IT strategy will generate greater operational efficiency and flexibility, and advance information sharing, teamwork, and communication across the organization.

Our acquisition strategy will proactively support changes in technology, mission-related activities, and customer and employee needs promoting competition, innovation and choice. To enhance responsiveness and effectiveness, we will improve and standardize acquisition processes across the organization. We will ensure accountability by developing and implementing clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders. We will continue to implement performance-based contracting to enable us to focus on results and reward good performance.

“This country is so great. When I came here in 1996, it was the first time in my life that I saw a computer. Now I manage twenty-eight data centers in the U.S. and three in Europe.”



Raman Sud, *India*
Naturalized U. S. Citizen

To ensure we get satisfactory, cost-effective administrative support, we will regularly monitor and assess the level of service given by our administrative support providers. For shared services obtained through service level agreements (SLAs), we will use data to assess how well our needs are being met, and re-negotiate SLAs as necessary and appropriate. For administrative support services provided in-house, we will seek feedback from our internal customers to assess their satisfaction with the services provided, and fine-tune our processes as required. We will periodically re-examine our needs, and consider whether a change in provider may be warranted.

To ensure minimal disruption to USCIS operations during local, regional, and national security emergencies, we will finalize and communicate to our employees a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) that provides procedures and guidance to ensure the continuation of essential functions during an emergency. The COOP will also ensure the protection of staff, facilities, equipment, data, vital records, and other mission critical assets and provide for the timely and orderly recovery from an emergency and resumption of full service to our customers.

Objective 5.2

Enhance the organization’s ability to support the mission in an environment of fluctuating workloads and new external mandates

Customer service at USCIS can be strengthened by a flexible, adaptable, and responsive organizational structure that adjusts to workload fluctuations and changing customer needs and/or legislative mandates. We will move toward an optimal field structure that best supports mission delivery — including locating our offices at sites more convenient to customers. We will successfully complete the transition of overseas offices from legacy Immigration and Naturalization Service to the Department of Homeland Security. We will establish frameworks for intra-agency, inter-department, and inter-government coordination on crosscutting issues.

We will develop a more flexible and responsive enterprise, which allows us to adjust and scale our operations. We will use workload-forecasting tools to inform our resource deployment plans. These tools will leverage a mix of USCIS full-time, part-time and term employees, as well as contractors, to enable us to meet our fluctuating staffing needs most efficiently and effectively. Our physical facilities plan will prioritize facilities requirements, address current space limitations and support operational flexibility to address fluctuating workloads.

Our information architecture plan will govern the acquisition of IT products that will maximize productivity while being responsive to changing needs. We will build secure, flexible, scalable IT capabilities while operating and maintaining existing IT infrastructure and tools necessary to accomplish our mission.

Objective 5.3

Manage financial resources strategically, including revenue, expenditures, and capital investments

We will improve the governance and performance of USCIS to ensure that resources are well managed and by knowing how well programs perform and the costs incurred to attain specific levels of performance. Our Planning/Budget Liaison Group will use a collaborative approach to accomplish our long-range planning, budgeting and performance reviews. We will continue to work with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and DHS to better report and track our financial information. We will continue to enhance and streamline our integrated planning and performance management processes with our budget formulation and execution activities to improve the effectiveness of our decision-making and financial management. Our programs will be aligned with specific agency-level objectives, our budget requests will be structured to implement this Strategic Plan, and performance data will drive resource allocation decisions.

We will study and implement a sound financial strategy to address how USCIS will become a primarily fee-funded organization. To improve our financial accountability, we will develop and implement automated systems that will expand our ability to collect, analyze and report meaningful and timely financial information in a variety of formats tailored

to individual needs. We will develop and/or procure and implement online tools to accurately track our assets and develop automated cost and forecasting tools to enable analyses of costs-to-serve and strategies for revenue generation and enhancement.

Goal 6 Operate as a high-performance organization and position USCIS as an employer of choice

Objective 6.1

Create and communicate a common understanding of USCIS' identity, roles and responsibilities

Building a high-performance organization and communicating to our diverse audiences with clarity and consistency will enhance our ability to increase understanding of our mission and our agency and to attract and retain a highly qualified and motivated workforce.

We will continue to refine our structure, ensure roles and responsibilities are clearly defined, and clarify reporting relationships in an effort to strengthen overall organizational performance, enhance workforce effectiveness, and create a shared sense of who we are as a unique and essential component of DHS. To position and sustain USCIS as a high-performance organization, we will build and nurture a culture that fosters creativity, efficiency, trust and open communication both within USCIS and across DHS.

“As an immigrant, I am grateful to be able to give back to my adopted country and provide a brighter future for new immigrants.”

Eduardo Aguirre Jr., *Cuba*
Naturalized U. S. Citizen
1st Director of U. S. Citizenship
and Immigration Services



To ensure that our employees, our stakeholders and the public understand who we are, what we do, how we work, and how our roles and responsibilities fit within the context of DHS, we will develop a comprehensive and integrated communications strategy to convey our identity, vision, mission and values. Our communications efforts will employ the use of an enhanced, user friendly USCIS website, e-newsletters and town hall meetings, print, radio, television and a variety of proven mediums to promote our message to the general public and the USCIS internal audience. We will ask our employees, customers and stakeholders to help deliver compelling messages that reach our diverse audiences. To ensure that our communications are useful, understandable, and meaningful, we will continually review our messages for consistency and currency, assess the efficiency and effectiveness of our delivery mechanisms, seek feedback on our efforts, and adjust our communications strategy accordingly.

Objective 6.2

Strengthen the strategic management of human capital, including human resource development and training

Our organization is strongest and most effective when we are able to recruit and retain well-qualified, highly motivated employees. At USCIS we are intent on building a team that is focused on achieving our mission and exceeding customer expectations with ingenuity, resourcefulness, and integrity. To this end, we will develop and implement, in collaboration with our shared services provider, a comprehensive strategic human capital strategy that establishes progressive human capital policies and procedures, and guides the implementation of a wide range of innovative recruitment, retention, and employee development and reward programs.

Our human capital strategy will promote the alignment and integration of our human capital systems, policies and priorities with DHS and USCIS missions, goals and performance outcomes. The strategy will address the design and implementation of a recruitment program that effectively targets high-performing, diverse candidates and the implementation of succession planning and career leadership development programs that demonstrate real opportunities for advancement within USCIS. We will also work to align our human capital strategy with the DHS MaxHR plan. Through the design of measurable performance standards for employee evaluations, training and professional development courses, employee assistance, health and wellness programs, we will recognize high-performers, maximize work performance, and improve employee satisfaction and agency morale.

Implementation of our human capital strategy will help draw exceptional candidates to our organization, enhance our workforce’s capabilities to perform mission-essential functions, and increase the retention of USCIS employees by providing a wide-range of career development and career progression opportunities. Additionally, our human capital strategy will strive to ensure that USCIS is staffed with the right mix of capable personnel to meet mission priorities and responsibilities, even in periods of uneven demand for our services.



Organizational Excellence *continued*

Objective 6.3

Foster a culture of integrity and responsibility

To ensure public trust and confidence in USCIS, we will foster integrity, strengthen management and employee accountability, and promote efficiency and effectiveness. We will rigorously evaluate and measure our performance and appropriately allocate resources to ensure effective stewardship of taxpayer dollars and fee resources paid by applicants and petitioners. We will entrust our managers with resources and authority, and hold them accountable for achieving specific program objectives.

We will uphold the highest ethical and professional standards as we execute the duties and responsibilities entrusted to us. We will establish clear policies that define professional responsibility, and will identify clear consequences for improper conduct. We will maintain and strengthen our organizational culture by ensuring that senior leadership and management understand the key role they play in building an ethical organization. Senior leaders and managers will model ethical behaviors, and through regular communication with subordinates, stress the importance of ethics in all that we undertake. Additionally, we will institute regular ethics training and information sharing via presentations and self-study.

We will combine individual and organizational performance expectations with a set of balanced performance goals and progress towards achieving these goals will regularly be evaluated. Based on the DHS MaxHR personnel system, we will redesign our performance appraisal process and performance work plans. The performance appraisal process will be the primary mechanism for affecting accountability, communicating clear expectations to employees and reviewing progress against appropriate measures that are actionable and within our employees' control.

USCIS will foster professionalism by insisting upon high standards of conduct that ensure accountability to the public. We will reinforce the concept that responsibility is individual rather than collective and individuals within USCIS will assume personal responsibility for our organization's actions. In collaboration with our shared services provider, we will proactively investigate and address allegations of employee misconduct, corruption, and fraud. We will ensure EEO laws and policies are enforced and communicated at all levels, and continue to refine our hiring and promotion practices to build a team that reflects the diversity of the American workforce.

“After 9/11 I thought it was my duty to help in the fight... it’s the best feeling in the world to know I am serving my country.”



Specialist Christian Rendon, *Columbia*

Naturalized U.S. Citizen

Pictured with USCIS Director Aguirre
at 1st Overseas Military Naturalization Ceremony
Bagram, Afghanistan, October 1st, 2004

Objective 6.4

Sustain an organization-wide culture of continuous learning and knowledge management

We will foster organizational and individual achievement by promoting continuous learning through training, career development and knowledge management within USCIS. We view this as an investment with a high return and believe that such a commitment enhances employee capability and motivation and increases the organization’s effectiveness in fulfilling its mission. To ensure that our investment will demonstrate the value we place on this aspect of our culture, individuals’ and managers’ performance work plans will include explicit expectations regarding continuous learning and knowledge sharing.

We will link training, knowledge management, information technology, and workforce planning to accurately deliver and measure the success of training and career development. This approach will blend new technologies to replace outdated training delivery modes while retaining best practices of traditional training. We will increasingly deliver training to

the workplace on a real-time basis, thus linking training more closely to its job application and in response to changing needs. To help us develop a workforce that can continue to fulfill our vision and mission well into the future, we will place a strong emphasis on learning opportunities that support effective leadership development and succession planning.

Knowledge management is a critical element of a continuous learning culture. Institutional information, in a useful form, must be readily available when and where our employees need it. To this end, we will establish procedures to better organize and manage USCIS knowledge resources and processes. Creating, structuring, archiving and sharing our valued information and expertise will expand our central repository for laws, policies, and standard operating procedures to include best practices and other pertinent information. We will gather appropriate documentation and seek our employees’ input to create information resources that are easily accessed so that, for example, adjudicators can quickly and accurately make decisions, and customer service representatives can correctly and consistently respond to inquiries. To encourage the ongoing use and currency of our shared knowledge, we will create clear incentives for contributing to, and drawing from, our store of knowledge.



Strategic Plan Framework

As an organization within the Department of Homeland Security, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services' goals and strategies are appropriately, our own. So, while our Plan supports that of DHS, it also reflects our unique context and priorities. USCIS' Strategic Plan is linked with three mission themes identified in the DHS Strategic Plan—*Prevention, Service and Organizational Excellence*. Thus, not only does the DHS Strategic Plan provide the context for USCIS' strategic direction, USCIS also fully supports the DHS vision and mission.

DHS Vision: Preserving our freedoms, protecting America... we secure our homeland

DHS Mission: We will lead the unified national effort to secure America. We will prevent and deter terrorist attacks and protect against and respond to threats and hazards to the Nation. We will ensure safe and secure borders, welcome lawful immigrants and visitors, and promote the free flow of commerce.

The USCIS Strategic Plan is also a living document—that is, the goals, objectives and strategies discussed are herein developed, implemented, evaluated, and updated through our ongoing business planning and annual planning processes. As we analyze our strengths and areas in which improvement is necessary, we will update our Strategic Plan to adapt to new stakeholders' requirements or environmental changes, as well as to account for our own progress toward our mission.

USCIS Vision: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will strengthen America's future by becoming a customer-focused innovator of benefits processing, a catalyst for citizenship, education, instruction and outreach, a recognized and credible source of useful information, and leading contributor to the security of the United States.

USCIS Mission: U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services will secure America's promise as a nation of Immigrants by providing accurate and useful information to our customers, granting immigration and citizenship benefits, promoting an awareness and understanding of citizenship, and ensuring the integrity of our immigration system.



“I’ll do anything
for this country.

I don’t think we should take for
granted what we have.”

Janice O’Gara, *Britain*
Naturalized U. S. Citizen

Themes, Goals, Objectives, and Strategies: Definitions

Achieving our goals is only possible when the different elements of our organization are engaged and acting not as separate and compartmentalized entities, but as partners working towards a common outcome. Thus, the USCIS Strategic Plan is organized cross-functionally, and not by offices, initiatives, programs, or product lines.

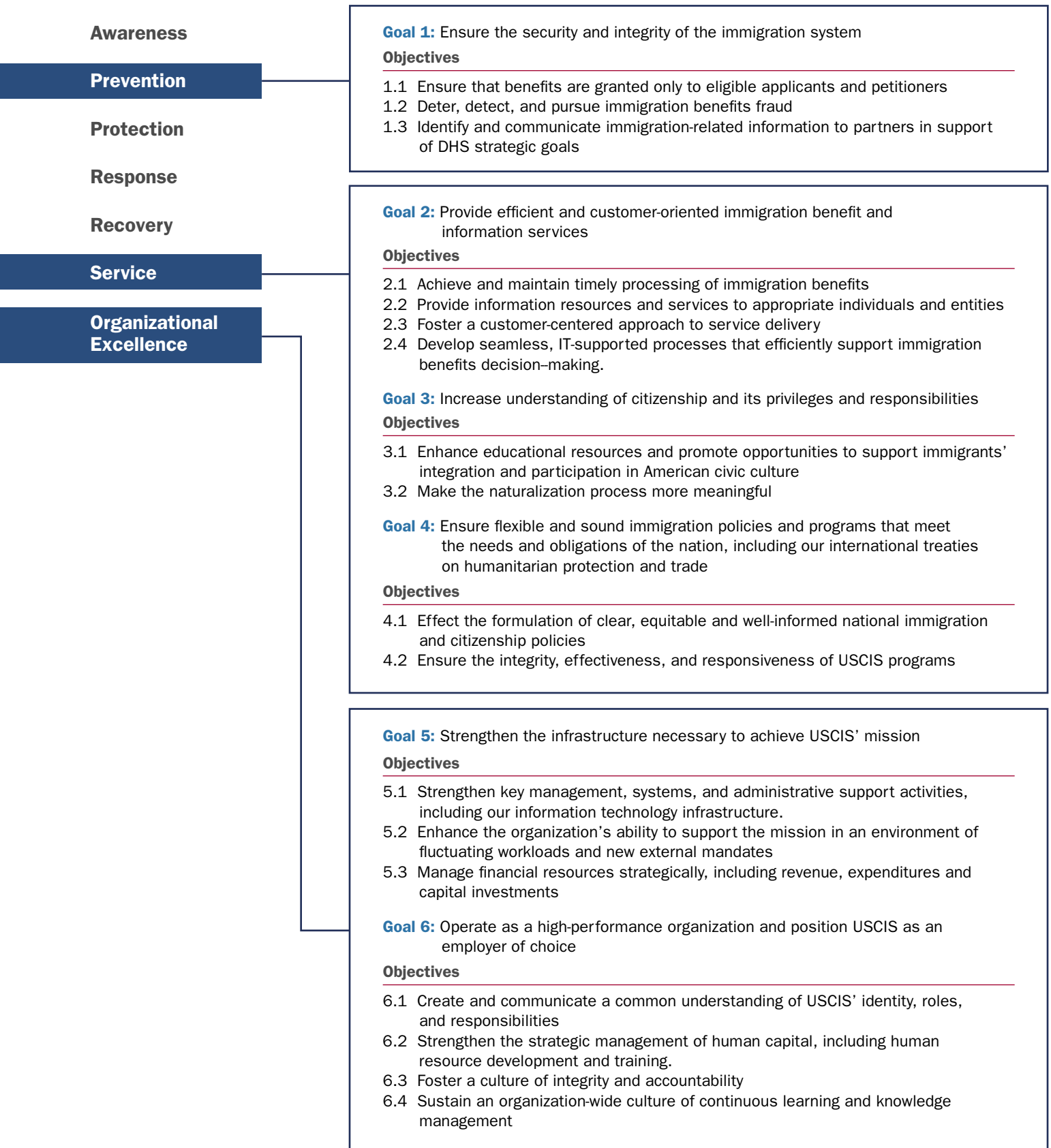


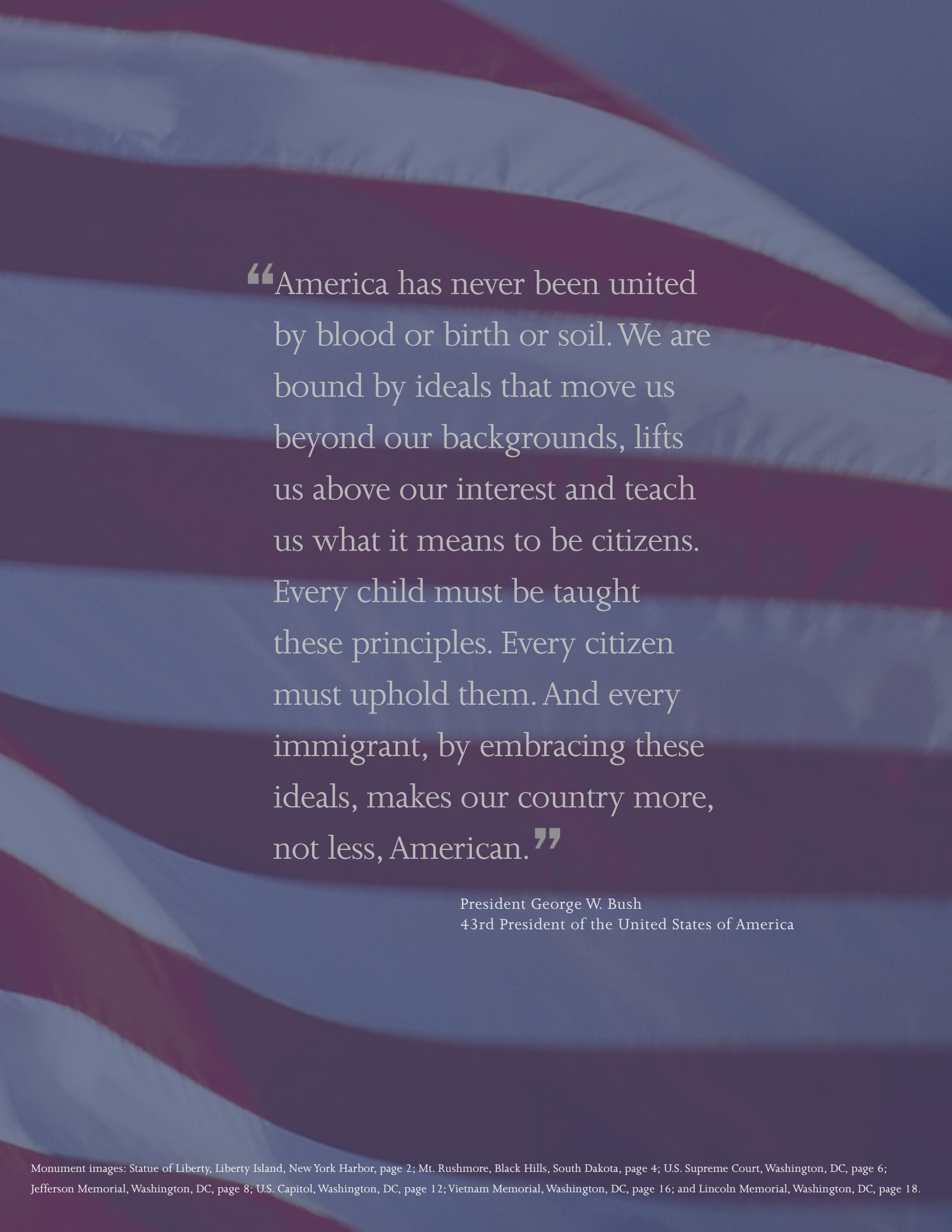
As depicted in **Figure 2** on page 20, our framework consists of the following:

- **Departmental Themes** link the DHS Strategic Plan with the USCIS Strategic Plan and provide a means of organizing goals, objectives and strategies.
- **Goals** are statements of broad direction or purpose, identifying some outcome that will be achieved.
- **Objectives** describe what USCIS intends to do to address goals. Each objective is supported by strategies, which describe a course of action and highlight key considerations for how goals and objectives will be achieved.

Figure 2

DHS Strategic Plan Themes/USCIS Strategic Plan Framework





“America has never been united by blood or birth or soil. We are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lifts us above our interest and teach us what it means to be citizens. Every child must be taught these principles. Every citizen must uphold them. And every immigrant, by embracing these ideals, makes our country more, not less, American.”

President George W. Bush
43rd President of the United States of America



U.S. Citizenship
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