


routinely hears from field office staff that many suggestions forwarded by staff to headquarters are ignored.

Immigration Information Officers, adjudicators, and other employees are often not getting information about changes to procedures or receiving accurate data. This lack of communication and coordination hinders their capability to provide accurate information to the customer and complete cases in a timely manner. This is particularly difficult for IIOs who are the front line employees expected to know the answers to difficult questions. As noted by one IIO, immigration attorneys and consultants often know about legal and procedural changes before IIOs have the information or instructions from USCIS headquarters. The result is delay, additional expense, frustration, and hardship for the customer.

RECOMMENDATION AR 2007 -- 13

The Ombudsman recommends that the USCIS budget for each headquarters element include sufficient funds for detailed visits with field office and service center line and supervisory staff to enable headquarters to better understand the needs of these offices. 

In AR 2006 – 07, the Ombudsman recommended that USCIS incorporate into its ASC contract the ability to use the underutilized ASC staff in co-located facilities to assist field office operations. USCIS rejected this recommendation in its 2006 Annual Report Response (at p. 15):

USCIS has been expanding the role of the ASCs. A prime example is that the ASCs are being used to assist with the process of renewing [green cards]. However, it is important to ensure that the ASCs remain tightly focused on their core mission of identity verification and biometric collection. USCIS does not plan to modify contracts to allow local USCIS managers to individually assign other forms of work not described specifically in the Statement of Work.

The Ombudsman reiterates the concerns identified previously and again suggests that USCIS reconsider its position in the interest of efficiency and good government.

3. USCIS Relations with Stakeholders and Other Government Agencies

Meaningful coordination and communication is essential between USCIS and other relevant government agencies and employer groups, yet it is lacking.

USCIS personnel who handle records have expressed concern to the Ombudsman about the poor adherence to file handling procedures by CBP and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). While training in NFTS and records handling procedures were provided to CBP and ICE, continuous training is necessary. USCIS and the customer would benefit greatly from regular communication and coordination with other such entities.