


and career paths; (2) issued its first agency-wide policy for a uniform training curriculum standard for all courses as well as instructor certification for presentation and content; (3) implemented a leadership program for all grade levels, GS-5 through GS-15, and SES, that also fulfills a Homeland Security Act requirement for managerial rotation of leaders at grades GS-14/15;<sup>67</sup> (4) initiated a labor-management relations plan to engender mutual understanding and reduce tensions as the agency transforms its operations; and (5) included in the proposed fee rule Individual Learning Accounts based on individuals' career paths and employee development plans.<sup>68</sup>


Recruitment and training is as important as IT and financing in the USCIS transformation. To achieve the potential of these important initiatives, there must be continued and direct support from the USCIS Director. However, the position of Chief Human Capital Officer was downgraded from its initial SES rank to a GS-15 in the agency's first vacancy announcement following the retirement of the SES incumbent.

*RECOMMENDATION AR 2007 -- 16*

*The Ombudsman recommends that the Chief Human Capital Officer have a rank position equal to the Chief Information Officer and Chief Financial Officer. USCIS should establish the role as a career reserved SES position.* 

At present, training efforts and leadership programs appear to be pursued separate from career development and retention needs. The agency is providing off-the-shelf course offerings without a clear correlation to career development as career paths are not defined. Moreover, USCIS has multiple training needs: (1) mandatory training requirements (computer security); (2) training that is technical and related to the job currently assigned; (3) training required for the next job desired by the employee for career advancement; and (4) skills for general leadership.

*RECOMMENDATION AR 2007 -- 17*

*The Ombudsman recommends that USCIS ensure there is a comprehensive merger of core job career paths with necessary training requirements – mandatory, technical, and leadership – oriented to future needs and groups, as well as transparency from entry to executive levels.* 

During the reporting period, USCIS undertook a methodical review of job requirements and skill sets needed to adjudicate cases. The agency focused on redesigning the Basic Officer Training Course for adjudicators and set principles to provide real-time accuracy and a “blended approach” to training to make programs accessible through technology and classroom interactions.

<sup>67</sup> See 6 U.S.C. § 271(A)(4).

<sup>68</sup> See 72 Fed. Reg. at 4901.