

USCIS

Accomplishments

USCIS' first years as a new agency have been extremely productive. We have continued to evolve as a critical component of DHS and have made significant progress in meeting our goals and objectives. We will continue to build upon these accomplishments as we meet the goals and objectives outlined in this Strategic Plan. Our achievements have resulted in operational and organizational improvements that provide the foundation for continued enhancements. Following are highlights of achievements to date:

- To enable USCIS to effectively fulfill its multi-faceted immigration services and national security duties and obligations, we completed the first comprehensive fee review since 1998 and implemented a new fee schedule that fully recovers our actual operational costs.
- While improving service and security and within an environment of unpredictable demand for our services, USCIS drastically reduced its existing immigration benefit backlog and achieved a six-months or better average processing standard for nearly all immigration applications received prior to July 2007. With the exception of cases delayed for reasons outside USCIS control, such as those waiting for a response from the customer, USCIS almost entirely eliminated its net backlog of existing cases.
- In partnership with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), we reformed name check processing to improve protection of national and public security interests. This agreement will ensure both agencies work together in a manner that increases security and decreases delays with the security checks required for immigration case processing.
- To combat fraud and criminal activity and respond effectively to national security threats, USCIS established the National Security and Records Verification Directorate (NSRV). Within NSRV is the Fraud Detection and National Security Division, which has hundreds of officers committed to detecting and deterring immigration and benefit fraud, resolving background check hits, and addressing other national security concerns. NSRV works with intelligence and law enforcement agencies to develop and implement policies, procedures, and strategic partnerships to ensure that identifying national security threats remains an integrated feature of the adjudicative process.
- USCIS created the Refugee Corps and expanded the Refugee Affairs Division (RAD) to support resettlement for at-risk refugee populations worldwide, while simultaneously combating fraud and ensuring the integrity of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. In fiscal year 2007, USCIS officers traveled to 69 countries and interviewed refugee applicants from 70 countries. RAD officers in Washington, D.C. support the overseas operations through policy development, training and quality assurance, and anti-fraud and national security efforts.

- We revised the naturalization exam to improve civic content and to make the test an instrument of civic learning for immigrants. Naturalization applicants will now have a uniform, consistent experience nationwide.
- USCIS conducted special naturalization ceremonies for members of the United States Armed Forces in locations across the world, and as directed by Congress, waived processing fees to make it easier for qualified military personnel to become citizens.
- We guided the interagency efforts of the Federal Task Force on New Americans to coordinate immigrant integration efforts and resources across the federal government.
- We developed an educational DVD for immigrants entitled, *A Promise of Freedom*, which focuses on the history and founding of the United States, the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and the importance of immigration in shaping the country.
- USCIS launched a digitization initiative for immigration records to modernize the way we share documents with our partner agencies and reduce the transfer of paper-based files.



- USCIS expanded its E-Verify program (formerly the Basic Pilot Employment Eligibility Program) by hiring additional employees to service more employers and to more efficiently determine employment eligibility. This expansion included strengthening our partnership with the Social Security Administration and working closely with employers to inform them of E-Verify system features and process requirements.
- We introduced a model office concept to transform our district and field offices into standard full-service, community-based customer processing facilities. The new customer-centric buildings will contain all the resources necessary to efficiently process the full range of immigration benefits, including incorporating application support centers. It will greatly enhance the level and efficiency of services USCIS provides by increasing opportunities to conduct interviews, answer customer questions, and conduct on-site naturalization ceremonies, all in one location.
- We incorporated biometric checks against the US-VISIT biometric screening program data into the asylum and Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act Section 203 adjudication processes. This gives USCIS Asylum Officers access to more than 80 million biometric records to assist in verifying an applicant's identity and claims.
- USCIS created a Transformation Program Office (TPO), reporting to the Deputy Director, to oversee the modernization of immigration and citizenship benefits business processes. The TPO has fused modern technology concepts and capabilities with an understanding of existing immigration process challenges to develop long-term plans and short-term projects to streamline and improve immigration services in the future.

- To ensure that USCIS' financial resources are managed effectively and efficiently, USCIS appointed its first Chief Financial Officer (CFO). The CFO is responsible for agency budget, finance and accounting, and annual planning activities. The CFO also oversees agency performance measures, investment reviews, internal controls, and application receipting (lockbox) operations.
- In 2006, we hired a Chief Information Officer (CIO) to strategically direct and monitor information resources and ensure that security and privacy mandates are satisfied while providing employees with state of the art technologies and tools. The CIO provides information management advice and policy recommendations, develops and maintains information systems, and evaluates and reports progress on developing agency information technology systems.
- USCIS created the Office of Security and Integrity (OSI) to align and enhance existing functions related to the integrity and security of USCIS staff and facilities.

- USCIS created the USCIS Academy, an ambitious training and workforce development program, which significantly expands and improves employee training and career development opportunities. This includes the complete redesign of the Basic Officer Training Program with a hands-on practicum to allow new officers be fully productive as soon as they arrive in their home offices from training.



- To better balance the agency's workload and personnel among the USCIS field offices, we realigned our field management structure into four regions to improve mission performance and customer service delivery. We also realigned our domestic field jurisdictions to more conveniently locate USCIS offices for our customers.
- The Parole and Humanitarian Assistance Branch, formerly under the auspices of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of International Affairs, was transferred to USCIS. This transfer empowers USCIS to administer the Cuban and Haitian Entrant Program, the Moscow Refugee Parole, and the Humanitarian Parole programs.
- USCIS consolidated emergency management functions and responsibilities to form the Office of Emergency Management and Safety. This office ensures that employees are protected, that property and vital records are protected from damage or destruction, and that USCIS is able to continue the performance of its essential functions during unexpected emergencies and/or catastrophic events.
- We completed our web migration to improve online access to agency services, and we created an online case referral process to support customers in timely problem resolution.

- USCIS created the Office of Equal Opportunity and Inclusion (OEOI) to help USCIS maximize its ability to maintain and leverage diversity, be inclusive, and provide equal employment opportunities to all employees and job applicants. Prior to this, Equal Employment Opportunity services were provided by ICE.
- USCIS created the Office of the Executive Secretariat to oversee agency clearance and decision-making processes and ensure quality and timely written responses.



“American citizenship is a high estate. He who holds it is the peer of kings. It has been secured only by untold toil and effort. It will be maintained by no other method. It demands the best that men and women have to give. But it likewise awards its partakers the best that there is on earth.”

Calvin Coolidge