



USCIS Strategic Plan

2008-2012



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services



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and Immigration
Services**

December 2007

Director's Message

It is with great pride that I introduce the 2008-2012 strategic plan for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). This strategic plan emphasizes USCIS' progress from its original role as a new component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to our present standing as a progressive and respected contributor to a coordinated homeland security effort. We have accomplished much over the last five years. Yet much more remains to be done – our country faces many challenges related to immigration.

A well-managed, modern immigration system is fundamental to maintaining our national and economic security. USCIS must be ready to face any challenge that presents itself. Whether it is the changing demographics of our customers, fluctuating and unpredictable demand for immigration services, new kinds of security threats, legislative mandates, or the tragedy of a man-made or natural disaster, we must be prepared to respond effectively. Vigilance will guide our actions, our decision-making, and the processes we use to enhance and modernize our infrastructure and operations.

As an agency, we must remain committed to providing excellent service and promoting the strength and diversity of America as a nation of laws, a nation of immigrants, and a land of opportunity. Every year, USCIS plays a fundamental role in welcoming and helping integrate into our society hundreds of thousands of new immigrants. We should never take for granted the value and precious benefits of United States citizenship, nor the critical responsibilities associated with it.

To prepare effectively for our future challenges and opportunities, we must recruit and retain first class employees. I am committed to investing in our most valuable resource – USCIS' workforce. I view each individual, from our newest hire to our most seasoned employee, as a leader in the immigration arena. My expectations for USCIS staff are high and so is my commitment to providing the necessary tools and training to sustain USCIS as a high performance organization. In addition, I recognize the need to prepare employees and infrastructure for potential catastrophic incidents, both natural and man-made, in order to continue to fulfill our mission in a time of disaster.

In the development of this strategic plan, USCIS has evaluated the agency's strengths and weaknesses, and established ambitious, yet realistic, goals and priorities while always considering the world around us. In that spirit of focused determination, we stand ready to achieve our mission.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emilio T. Gonzalez". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Emilio T. Gonzalez,
USCIS Director

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Plan Purpose



The USCIS Strategic Plan provides a roadmap for the organization, identifying who we are, where we want to go, and at a conceptual level, how we will get there.

As a component of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), has developed this document as a strategic framework to integrate our key mission objectives, future plans and priorities, organizational improvement initiatives, and prudent resource management. By providing a full spectrum depiction of our organization's direction and priorities, and by aligning this document with specific USCIS mandates outlined in the Homeland Security Act, the Strategic Plan demonstrates and guides our critical role within the DHS mission.

and Structure



Our Plan includes the following sections:

- **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 its components, and other federal agencies.
- **Strategic Plan Framework** – Our Strategic Plan describes our long-term strategic direction in broad terms. The plan provides the integrated planning context for other USCIS initiatives, such as the business transformation plan, human capital strategy, management improvement plans, and the development of new immigration programs.
- **Strategic Goals and Objectives** – USCIS' Strategic Plan is organized around six goals, which are comprised of strategically integrated sets of verifiable objectives. The objectives are supported by actionable strategies, and include a discussion of accomplishments that build the foundation for continued improvements and implementation efforts. These were developed by cross-functional teams to avoid compartmentalization and to facilitate coordination and partnering within and beyond the organization.

Our Environment

Context for Strategic Planning



An important aspect of the strategic planning process is to gain an awareness and understanding of the environment in which we operate. One of the greatest challenges to strategic planning at USCIS is the ability to forecast accurately the demand for our services. This variable affects both the nature of our workload and fee revenue. World events and the global economy affect our international migration projections, while U.S. economic and political conditions influence domestic interests in immigration, which in turn fuel shifts in federal immigration policy. In assessing our environment, two broad categories of influences emerge as opportunities and challenges for USCIS.

Globalization and its many facets, and the changing demographics of the United States due to immigration are factors that USCIS must consider in long-term mission planning.

Globalization

Globalization affects the economy, demographics, civil society, and security of the United States. An effective and secure immigration system is basic to balancing the challenges and opportunities globalization presents. The United States must recognize it is a highly coveted destination for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and continue to honor its tradition as a nation that values family reunification, promotes economic opportunities, and offers a safe haven to those in need.

For USCIS, this means weighing carefully security and humanitarian concerns and obligations, while also maintaining efficient and effective day-to-day operations so the benefits of immigration can be realized. USCIS is at the forefront of meeting the demand for immigration services, and must be prepared to adapt to changing environments and unpredictable and fluctuating volumes of applications over time.

In the face of the globalization that is transforming our world and as we seek to honor our common civic values and history as a land of opportunity and economic strength, the United States must be prepared to meet internal and external security threats. Events unfolding continents away

may fundamentally impact our basic security. Political conflict, catastrophic infectious diseases, and other natural or man-made disasters can create a climate that facilitates terrorism and persecution, and fuels mass migration both legal and illegal – we must be ever vigilant in the battle against efforts to misuse our immigration system. Catastrophic events within the United States, both natural and man-made, may also fundamentally affect our security. This potential requires effective preparation and mitigation responses to ensure uninterrupted performance of USCIS mission essential functions.

The ability to respond to globalization's many challenges and opportunities requires a wide range of productive partnerships. Integrating immigration, national security, and globalization requires interagency and multilateral coordination of U.S. diplomatic, military, intelligence and law enforcement efforts, and a capacity to act, adapt and react quickly.

USCIS must work effectively not only as a component of DHS, but also with other federal agencies, state and local governments, the private and independent sectors, and other countries. Understanding and influencing public policies relevant to a changing society is a critical task for USCIS and the federal government as a whole. USCIS must be part of broad-based efforts to define and implement an integrated agenda that offers effective long-term solutions to immigration-related issues.

Challenges

- Individuals and organizations intent on harming the United States have become increasingly sophisticated in their methods of gaining illegal entry to this country. USCIS recognizes the need to reduce minimize and mitigate the risks naturally inherent in any immigration system. Necessary background checks should be completed effectively and efficiently, working with our partner agencies to achieve optimal immigration security processes.
- USCIS workload is unpredictable and determined largely by factors beyond our control, including manmade or natural catastrophes around the world. Given this basic challenge, we must develop resilience to ensure timely responses while maintaining the integrity of the adjudicative process.
- A wide variety of motivations create the potential for some individuals to attempt to exploit our immigration system for nefarious purposes. Detecting identity and benefit fraud requires astute policies and procedures along with immediate access to accurate, verifiable data. USCIS is striving to improve our verification tools and interfaces with law enforcement agencies and other public and private entities authorized to verify immigration status, while safeguarding the privacy of individuals.

Opportunities

- Technological advances make possible and economically viable an expanded use of biometric data for identity verification. In partnership with the US-VISIT biometric screening program, we are implementing steps to improve identity management and authentication by ensuring that individuals who may pose a security risk to our country are identified in a timely manner for appropriate action.
- Intra and inter departmental cooperation, part of the purpose of establishing DHS, allows new opportunities for effective mission enhancement. We are in the process of creating a more efficient system for background checks that includes coordination with other agencies to improve the screening process and ensure that only eligible individuals are granted benefits.
- We recognize that a shared sense of civic commitment and understanding of civic values among immigrant populations could help promote and maintain the common good and strengthen our nation. This increased focus on fostering a sense of civic values and rights and responsibilities can reduce risks posed through potential radicalization of segments of the population who may otherwise feel alienated.
- We recognize the significant and ongoing global demand for the opportunities the United States provides to immigrants. To accommodate this demand, we are striving to become a proactive provider of immigration services by using standardized processes and modern technology to facilitate the work of immigration officers and to ensure consistency of adjudicative decisions.

Changing Demographics

The United States has a long history of welcoming immigrants from across the globe. Through the years, there have been ebbs and flows in immigration levels, with some eras described as “great waves” of immigration. Currently, the United States is again experiencing high levels of immigration. Increasing immigration affects the population, demographics, and economy of the United States. It also requires a coordinated federal, state, local, and community-based response to settlement and integration issues. Increases in immigration directly impact workload for USCIS, because of our responsibility for the management of immigration and citizenship benefits.

Immigration is a major contributor to the population growth of the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, it took only 39 years – from 1967 to 2006 – for the United States population to increase by an estimated additional 100 million people with legal immigrants and their offspring constituting a major portion of this increase.¹ The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the share of the U.S. population that is foreign-born rose from 5 percent to 12 percent between 1967 and 2006.² Over the last ten years, the United States has welcomed an average of 900,000 new legal immigrants each year.³ Undocumented immigrants, who enter the country illegally, or enter legally but overstay their visa, also contribute to population increases.



Today's immigrants represent more than 180 different countries of origin.⁴ In recent years, immigrants from Latin America and Asia have significantly outnumbered immigrants from Europe, who were the predominant group in the past. For example in 1960, the leading country of origin for the foreign born was Italy, and in 2006 that country was Mexico.⁵ Along with increasing numbers and diversity, immigrant settlement patterns are changing. Past immigrants tended to settle in major urban areas in California, New York, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, and Illinois.⁶ In addition to these areas, new immigrants are now relocating in record numbers to non-traditional immigrant receiving communities in states such as Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Minnesota, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Utah.⁷ Through all of these changes, the United States must work to ensure its tradition as a civil and cohesive society that honors the rights of all individuals and fosters an understanding and appreciation for the common civic principles outlined in our country's founding documents.

Policymakers will need to consider the dynamics of immigration as they reexamine existing programs and design new programs. Although the regulation of immigration to the United States is the responsibility of the federal government, state and local governments and the private sector play a fundamental role in the social, economic, and civic integration of immigrants. Along with our partners, USCIS will be at the forefront of defining solutions and implementing changes in the immigration system.

Challenges

- The phenomenon of immigration is complex and multifaceted. It affects everyone in the United States in both obvious and subtle ways. Assessing impacts and selecting policy options are different even among experts. The current immigration debate is vulnerable to exploitation of this complexity and the potential for misunderstanding our immigration system. We at USCIS strive to do our part to provide useful information to educate the public and policy makers about the complexities of the immigration system in a manner that addresses their issues and concerns.
- As we adopt greater use of technology to improve efficiency, service, and security, we are aware that these changes affect our customers directly as well. Some customers may lack the computer skills and literacy to interact with the agency. We understand that the modernization of our benefits system should not result in an undue burden on applicants and that the support should be available where required.
- There is a lack of public consensus on the ideal U.S. citizenship characteristics. We recognize that a sound integration program, based on our common civic principles and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, is a cornerstone that could limit the potential of marginalization, “balkanization”, and possible radicalization of segments of immigrant populations.

Opportunities

- While the primary focus of the USCIS mission is the granting of benefits to allow non-citizens to stay in the United States, we recognize that their presence and status is a matter of mission interest to many other public and private organizations. We are in the process of reengineering E-Verify, previously named the Basic Pilot Employment Eligibility Verification System, to improve the accuracy and availability of immigrant status information for employment verification purposes.
- The recent nexus of economic, homeland, and national security interests has provided a foundation upon which USCIS is engaged in an unprecedented re-engineering of the way it carries out its mission. We are seeking to modernize and transform our business processes and to ensure our staff have access to the information, technology, templates and procedures they need to make accurate and timely decisions and to communicate in a consistent manner with our customers even in times of increased workload.
- USCIS leadership recognizes that the complexity of the immigration mission, the importance of that mission to the country, and the modernization of its business processes all demand a highly talented and dedicated workforce. USCIS is committed to recruiting and investing in employees to create and sustain the capability necessary to carry out its mission. We are creating an operational and organizational structure to support the workforce of the future USCIS, with an emphasis on training, leadership development, and integrity.

Stakeholder Engagement



USCIS has a responsibility to be aware of and appropriately respond to the needs and concerns of our stakeholders. Not only must USCIS know our stakeholders, but we must also understand how they judge our success so we may engineer and communicate in the best way possible new or revised approaches to accomplishing our mission.

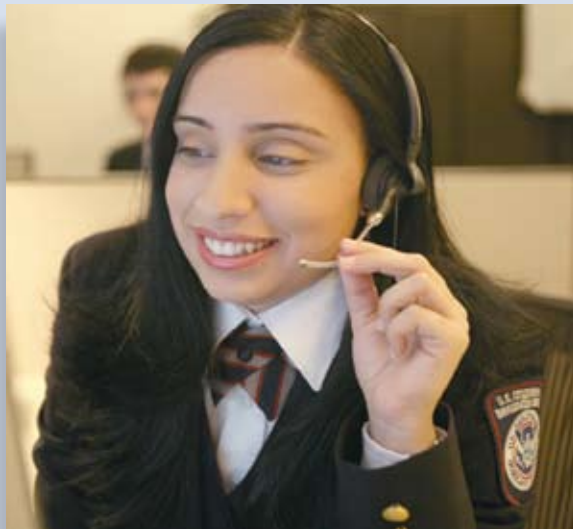
The impact of immigration reaches across and into all of America, on an individual, family, employment, and institutional level. As such, our stakeholders range from the general public, to individual USCIS customers and employees, DHS and other federal departments, Congress, as well as to employers, businesses, schools, and community organizations.

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 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 rights and responsibilities.

Between stakeholders, there often exist divergent positions on sensitive policy issues and choices, operational priorities, and the value or impact of the immigration process. Our goal is to understand and actively consider these various perspectives as we develop long-term plans and implement new policies and programs. We are engaged in an ongoing dialogue at various levels with our stakeholders. A key vehicle for communication to external stakeholders, such as community-based organizations, advocacy groups, adult educators, ESL instructors, faith-based organizations and state and local officials is the USCIS Community Relations program. The Community Relations program consists of 18 Community Relations Officers located across the country who establish and maintain collaborative relationships with external stakeholders that work directly for the immigrants seeking benefits from our agency. The Community Relations program facilitates monthly national stakeholder meetings in Washington, D.C.

A key vehicle for federal stakeholder collaboration is the Task Force for New Americans, a federal interagency task force established by President George W. Bush to enhance and coordinate government-wide immigrant integration initiatives. We are engaging our federal partner agencies to support our Transformation Program through the Federal Stakeholder Advisory Board. We also are engaging stakeholders through roundtable discussions and other events on topics of mutual concern, such as the location of new USCIS offices. We foster productive and active relations with Congress. In addition, we work closely with the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman and other components of DHS.

A Day in the Life of USCIS



Each day **USCIS fulfills its promise** to provide accurate and useful information to our customers, to adjudicate immigration and citizenship benefits, to detect and defer benefit fraud, and to promote awareness and understanding of United States citizenship. With a network of 250 Field Offices, Application Support Centers, Service Centers, the National Benefits Center, Asylum Offices, the National Customer Service Center, and Forms Centers, USCIS interacts with customers and adjudicates applications and petitions for a range of benefits including employment authorization, advance parole, asylum and refugee status, adjustment of status, and naturalization and citizenship.

Every year, USCIS receives approximately six million immigration applications and petitions for legal review and adjudication. Each day, in offices worldwide, **USCIS provides dynamic, efficient service.** We take this responsibility very seriously.

On any given day, the 16,000 USCIS federal and contract employees:

- ★ Process 30,000 applications for immigration benefits;
- ★ Issue 6,000 Permanent Resident Cards (green cards);
- ★ Adjudicate 200 refugee applications;
- ★ Adjudicate 230 asylum applications; and
- ★ Naturalize 3,000 new civilians and 27 new citizens who are members of the United States Armed Forces.

USCIS serves a vital role in protecting the security of our nation.

To meet this responsibility, we daily:

- ★ Conduct 135,000 national security background checks, including collection of 11,000 sets of fingerprints at 129 Application Support Centers.

Additionally, USCIS responds to 41,000 phone inquiries, assists 12,000 customers who visit one of our 87 local offices, and provides information to more than 200,000 customers who visit our website, USCIS.gov. Our constant effort to deliver high quality service drives us to thoroughly screen and process applications, render timely decisions, and provide accurate information. We honor our commitment to public service through dedication to our mission of welcoming new immigrants and citizens and preserving the integrity of the immigration system.

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

Strategic Plan Framework

USCIS' goals, objectives and action strategies form an integral, and yet distinct part of the DHS mission. Our Strategic Plan adheres to three mission themes identified in the DHS Strategic Plan— Prevention, Service, and Organizational Excellence. Thus, the DHS Strategic Plan provides a context for our own direction, as USCIS continues to fully support DHS's 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 a living document. Our strategic goals, objectives and strategies are 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 requirements or environmental changes, as well as to account for our own progress toward our mission.

USCIS Vision: USCIS 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.

USCIS Mission: USCIS 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.

Core 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, USCIS 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.

Vigilance

In this era of increased global threats and national security challenges, we will remain mindful of our obligation to provide immigration service in a manner that strengthens and fortifies the nation. We will exercise a holistic approach to Vigilance as we perform our mission. We will carefully administer every aspect of our immigration mission so that new immigrants and citizens can hold in high regard the privileges and advantages of lawful presence in the United States.

Goals and Objectives

Definitions

Achieving our goals is only possible when the different elements of our organization are engaged and acting not as separate or compartmentalized entities, but as partners working toward a common outcome. The USCIS Strategic Plan is organized cross-functionally, and not by office, initiative, program, or product line. Our framework observes the following definitions:

Goals are statements of broad direction or purpose that identify an outcome or outcomes to be achieved.

Objectives describe the steps necessary to achieve goals. Each objective is supported by past and anticipated accomplishments and incorporates meaningful action strategies.



As The Declaration of Independence demonstrates, immigration is an issue that dates back to our Founding Fathers.

“He has endeavoured to prevent the Population of these States; for that Purpose obstructing the Laws for Naturalization of Foreigners; refusing to pass others to encourage their Migrations hither, and raising the Conditions of new Appropriations of Lands.”

Goal 1: Strengthen the security and integrity of the immigration system



Objective 1.1: Enhance the security of the United States by ensuring that immigration benefits are granted only to eligible applicants and petitioners

A secure immigration system depends on the vigilance of every USCIS employee. To ensure the immigration benefits system fully supports our national security, we have planned and implemented improvements in several operational areas.

As part of USCIS' broad effort to modernize the agency, we have undertaken business transformation initiatives, including the conversion of the current mix of legacy infrastructure and paper-based business processes

to electronic-based business process. This transformation will provide improved security and integrity throughout the business process by establishing and verifying the identity of individuals, applying advanced risk assessment tools to combat identity and benefit fraud, and enhancing data sharing with partners to ensure timely, relevant immigration information. Realization of this future transformed environment will significantly help close security gaps inherent in the current business process.

As part of the Transformation Program, we are piloting, in cooperation with the DHS US-VISIT biometric screening program, biometric-based enumeration to uniquely identify applicants and petitioners. We will link these unique enumerators in our automated systems to other applicant documentation, which will preserve an applicant's identity for future identification, verification, and benefits processing purposes.

To further strengthen security, we have implemented an Intelligence Program that is consistent with the DHS National Intelligence Plan. To ensure that our officers have useful and updated information to support quality decision making, we have developed the online Adjudicator's Toolbox, which provides ready access to legislative, regulatory, and fraud information, and other reference materials. There is also an Asylum Virtual Library, a searchable electronic library that contains relevant policy and procedures documents as well as country of origin information. It serves as the source for all basic information asylum staff require to carry out operational functions and conduct quality adjudications. These resources allow USCIS employees to focus efforts on maximizing timely service for eligible customers while preventing ineligible applicants from obtaining benefits. We will also continue to perform law enforcement background checks on all persons seeking immigration benefits to ensure that individuals

who pose a threat to our nation are not granted immigration or citizenship benefits. To further promote the integrity of the immigration system, we will:

- Link all biometrics to a unique enumerator to ensure that each applicant is uniquely identified.
- Ensure that all fingerprint checks are completed and no adverse information received prior to the granting of immigration benefits.
- Enhance our Fraud Detection and National Security (FDNS) operation by deploying additional personnel and utilizing technology.
- Make ongoing improvements to the Fraud Detection and National Security Data System that will enhance our effectiveness in resolving issues with background checks and other national security and public safety concerns.
- Increase staffing for USCIS legal counsel for litigation support to ensure due process and the ability to address legitimate concerns in a timely manner.
- Develop templates for use in litigation and issue tracking to ensure the consistency and timeliness of issue resolution.
- Enhance interagency information-sharing mechanisms that ensure USCIS has access to all relevant information maintained by the U.S. government when making benefit decisions.

Objective 1.2: Deter, detect, and pursue immigration-related fraud

As USCIS strengthens and improves the systems it uses to provide immigration services, it remains committed to preventing and detecting all types of fraud. We will increase staffing and technology-based resources for our FDNS Division and expand the resources FDNS uses to perform site visits for fraud prevention and detection purposes. FDNS has completed reports and identified various trends of immigration fraud, and we will build upon these efforts to increase our ability to identify and track fraud. We will enhance efforts to train adjudicators to recognize fraud. As fraud is detected, we will promptly act to inform our law enforcement partners as necessary, and to implement methods to effectively counter any threats presented.

We have established standard operating procedures to facilitate collaboration between USCIS and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in the joint effort to combat benefit fraud and detect persons seeking immigration benefits who pose a threat to national security and public safety. We will continue to work with ICE and refer suspected cases of immigration fraud for investigation and possible prosecution (pursuant to the standards of acceptance set by prosecuting authorities). We have also completed the integration of our asylum process with the DHS US-VISIT biometric verification program.

Our anti-fraud strategies will be:

- Replace Permanent Residence Cards (Form I-551) issued prior to 1989 and that do not contain expiration dates to reduce the incidence of fraud.
- Enhance USCIS' effectiveness in obtaining information from law enforcement and intelligence agencies that may influence or address concerns about national security or public safety involving persons seeking immigration benefits.
- Develop tools that help officers better recognize various types of fraud, thus improving USCIS' effectiveness in detecting and combating immigration benefit fraud.
- Develop tools that enhance communications and help officers take appropriate action in cases where there are indicators of a national security or public safety concern.



- Implement methods to analyze fraud reactively, as well as identify emerging fraud trends in a proactive manner.
- Conduct Benefit Fraud and Compliance Assessments aimed at identifying and analyzing the volume, types, and causes of benefit fraud committed, and potential solutions.
- Pursue development of the technology needed to better support anti-fraud and security-check related operations. This includes a case management system that captures the data necessary to measure performance and the analytics needed to identify and flag known fraud indicators and track fraud and national security cases from referral to completion to ensure all instances of fraud are captured.
- Reengineer aspects of the Fraud Detection and National Security Data System to improve security check processing to safeguard against individuals and entities that may seek to defraud our nation's immigration system.
- Provide guidance and coordinate the revocation of benefits for individuals who have fraudulently obtained benefits, are identified as a threat to national security or public safety after a benefit has been granted, or are otherwise no longer qualified to hold benefit status.
- Continue to train FDNS staff to analyze and identify fraud patterns and trends and to document evidence of fraud as part of our fraud fighting efforts.

- Continue to train staff to document the status and results of national security vetting and adjudicative activities, and establish procedures for evaluating systemic vulnerabilities that could be exploited.
- Design a system that, as necessary, allows for efficient policy and procedural changes when a systemic vulnerability or widespread fraud activity has been detected.
- Establish mechanisms to ensure individuals who have fraudulently obtained benefits, represent a national security threat, or are otherwise no longer qualified to receive benefit status, are appropriately processed and referred for prosecution and/or removal from the United States.
- Proactively share actionable fraud-related information with other appropriate federal agencies.

Objective 1.3: Identify and share immigration-related information with partners

USCIS recognizes its critical role within DHS in support of our nation's security and understands that this responsibility requires serving as a useful resource to its strategic partners. USCIS has devoted significant resources towards strengthening its automated systems so we can securely exchange digitized information with appropriate government entities. USCIS will continue to ensure accurate and current information about a person's immigration status is electronically available as needed by agencies entrusted to protect the public and safeguard the nation.

To help protect the security of the nation and support the mission responsibilities of our partners, we will:

- Review and improve standard and secure operating procedures to govern the exchange of digitized security information to ensure the privacy of our customers is safeguarded at all times.
- Increase the ability to share immigration related information electronically in order to enable our partner agencies to achieve their mission.
- Proactively identify the information needs and issues of common concern for our partners, including federal, state, and local agencies through regular meetings of collaborative bodies such as the Transformation Program Federal Stakeholder Advisory Board.
- Proactively share information and collaborate with other DHS components and agencies in accordance with law and regulation.

Objective 1.4: Integrate security precepts with immigration adjudication processes

USCIS fully recognizes its responsibilities as an integral part of our national effort to secure the United States from dangerous people, including terrorists and other criminals. We must carefully screen all individuals seeking immigration benefits to identify those who pose a risk to national security and public safety and prevent them from exploiting the immigration system.

We also are responsible for ensuring the security and integrity of USCIS employees. To coordinate all aspects of security management, USCIS created the Office of Security and Integrity (OSI) to support the integrity of the immigration processing system through active management of personnel security functions. Personnel security is a fundamental requirement for guaranteeing the proper one to one balance as the correct service reaches the correct individual. USCIS ensures that personnel undergo required background checks before beginning employment and that security clearances are granted only to the appropriate personnel. Additionally, OSI – working with the Office of Information Technology (OIT) – ensures the agency’s critical automated systems and infrastructure are protected, that automated systems are not used for malicious or unlawful purposes, and that resources are properly used to achieve the agency’s mission. If security incidents or breaches occur, USCIS investigates and documents any such events and applies the appropriate corrective measures. Our security strategies include:

- Ensuring the appropriate background checks are performed for those tasked with adjudicating applications and petitions, as well as for those performing related functions.
- Safeguarding information and assets across the USCIS enterprise through education and by conducting defensive activities to identify and analyze internal and external threats.
- Efficiently performing personnel security background checks for hiring, employment retention, and security clearance granting purposes.
- Continuing to emphasize the proactive usage of sound operations security measures, including protecting sensitive and classified documents and access to automated systems.
- Investigating all allegations of employee misconduct, corruption, and fraud that are not subject to investigation by the DHS Inspector General to improve the integrity of our processes.

“The bosom of America is open to receive not only the Opulent and respectable Stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all Nations and Religions; whom we shall welcome to a participation of all our rights and privileges, if by decency and propriety of conduct they appear to merit the enjoyment.”

George Washington



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

Goal 3: Support immigrants' integration and participation in American civic culture

Objective 3.1: Enhance educational resources and promote opportunities to increase understanding of U.S. civic principles and citizenship, including its privileges and responsibilities

USCIS' civic education resources assist immigrants through each step of the journey towards citizenship. We will continue to reach out to immigrants with educational materials when they first become permanent residents, as they become eligible for naturalization and as they become new citizens. Materials for immigrants in the process of becoming citizens will seek to foster a deeper understanding of United States history and learn to identify with the basic civic values that unite us as Americans. As appropriate, we will make materials targeted toward newly arriving immigrant groups available in their native languages, and will provide materials for the classroom that are written at appropriate levels for limited English speakers.



Educating immigrants in American civic values requires close collaboration between USCIS and public and private organizations and other non-profit and service providers. Building upon our work under the President's Interagency Task Force on New Americans, we will continue to expand our network of local and national stakeholders, including government partners at the federal, state and local levels, community and faith-based groups, adult educators, and the private sector. We will also form

partnerships with community organizations to encourage volunteerism among both U.S. citizens and new immigrants. To ensure that immigrants receive the educational resources to understand the roles and responsibilities of citizenship, we will:

- Enhance our public outreach efforts and build an infrastructure to ensure nationwide promotion and dissemination of our materials, including web-based electronic training modules, and regional training sessions.
- Conduct new civics training for adult educators who teach immigrants to ensure they are equipped with a consistent message about the importance, responsibilities, and rights associated with citizenship.
- Continue to develop and disseminate complementary teaching resources to assist teachers and other service providers, including classroom materials written at levels appropriate for limited English speakers and online resources such as the *U.S. Civics and Citizenship Online: Resource Center for Instructors*.

- Develop new civics-focused educational resources for immigrants, adult educators, community organizations and public libraries, and ensure these materials accurately communicate the values of our nation and foster the sense of pride and commitment properly associated with citizenship.
- Partner with the Government Printing Office, the Institute of Museum and Library Services and state library systems to broadly distribute grants of educational products and publications.
- Continually update our *Welcome to the United States: A Guide for New Immigrants* publication to ensure the currency of the information provided and expand the number of available language translations.
- Enhance our website to become a source of information for immigrants and the organizations that serve them.

Objective 3.2: Continue to ensure that the naturalization process is a meaningful experience and leaves a positive, indelible impression

Citizenship through naturalization is the ultimate privilege of our immigration system. We will continue to ensure that the process of naturalization is infused with opportunities for civic learning and clearly demonstrates the honor and importance associated with the status of United States citizenship. We have already worked to improve the naturalization test to better prepare new citizens to exercise the rights and fulfill the responsibilities of citizenship. We will also continue to strive to conduct naturalization ceremonies in a manner that leaves a lasting impression and capture the hope and optimism each new citizen offers. To promote citizenship for those serving in the military, we will continue to make military naturalization a high priority.

To ensure that the naturalization process is meaningful, we will:

- Use the revised naturalization exam, from test preparation through to the interview, as an instrument of civic learning that promotes a lasting knowledge and respect for the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- Continue to disseminate *The Citizen's Almanac* to all new citizens at naturalization ceremonies.
- Continue to honor the service of non-citizen members of the U.S. Armed Forces through domestic and overseas military naturalization ceremonies.
- Develop a standardized naturalization ceremony program for use in all our field offices that communicates a consistent message of the significance of the event in the lives of our new citizens.
- Seek additional opportunities to hold special naturalization ceremonies at historic and uniquely American sites across the United States in partnership with the National Park Service.

Goal 4: Promote flexible and sound immigration policies and programs

Objective 4.1: Contribute to development of clear, comprehensive, and effective policies related to immigration and citizenship issues

As the recognized authority on immigration programs and processes, USCIS plays a leading role in the formulation and development of policies and recommendations related to immigration and citizenship issues. Our partnership with the Congress is critical to this objective. Over the past several years, we have been actively involved in helping shape the Administration's immigration reform agenda.



USCIS staff has particularly emphasized the need for thoughtful legislation concerning any proposed temporary worker program, a broad-based employment eligibility verification system, and due process protections. We continue to work within the Administration as requests are made for changes to laws that would improve programs and remedy known problems.

We will continue to work closely with our partner agencies across the federal government to develop policies and programs based on our expertise and experience in immigration-related matters. To increase our ability to support clear, equitable and well-informed policy positions, we will:

- Continue to conduct timely research and analysis, and develop papers and proposals to inform decision-makers on issues of concern to USCIS.
- Initiate dialogue with and use feedback received from domestic and international stakeholders, including the public and private sectors, to inform our positions regarding the impact of current and proposed immigration and citizenship policies.
- Strive to ensure that our policy decisions on cross-organizational issues are complementary and consistent with those of our partner federal agencies and in accordance with our nations' international agreements.

Objective 4.2: Ensure the integrity, effectiveness, and responsiveness of USCIS programs

USCIS is committed to improving, harmonizing, and streamlining operations, including our program rules, business processes, and procedures. This requires an active and ongoing exchange with internal and external stakeholders and a constant evaluation of operational demands and long-range program goals. By incorporating mission alignment, quality assurance and program compatibility into program review and design, we can better ensure that immigration services are being delivered efficiently and effectively. Program evaluations and customer satisfaction surveys are useful tools we will use to measure outcomes and to guide implementation.

To increase our ability to achieve this objective, we will:

- Ensure the alignment of regulatory initiatives with agency strategic priorities by implementing a clear and consistent regulatory and policy management, planning, and reporting process that promotes effective monitoring of, and accountability for, all major regulatory initiatives and projects.
- Streamline the process for filing appeals and motions to facilitate the timely resolution of errors and unforeseen adverse consequences.
- Ensure that our transformed business processes are based on sound immigration policy research and analysis.
- Strive to ensure the timely and complete distribution and maintenance of all USCIS internal and external guidance and directives to ensure compliance.
- Continue to learn from internal and external reviews and audits, including those conducted by the Government Accountability Office and the DHS Office of the Inspector General, in support of a continuous improvement approach to performance and accountability.

“America’s welcoming society is more than a cultural tradition, it is a fundamental promise of our democracy. Our Constitution does not limit citizenship by background or birth. Instead, our nation is bound together by a shared love of liberty and a conviction that all people are created with dignity and value. Through the generations, Americans have upheld that vision by welcoming new citizens from across the globe—and that has made us stand apart.”

George W. Bush



Goal 5: Strengthen the infrastructure supporting the 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.

To date we have made significant strides in achieving this goal. We hired a Chief Information Officer and are expanding our Office of Information Technology staff to increase the oversight of our Information Technology (IT) infrastructure and continue to plan to meet the agency's Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA) goals. We established a Senior Management Council to oversee the conduct of all internal control work within USCIS. We were one of the first DHS components to implement this critical step in the internal control process. We also created an annual process that integrates planning, performance reporting, and budget execution to meet the President's Management Agenda. To document critical communications, as well as major decision-making processes, we established the Office of the Executive Secretariat.

To ensure our continued ability to deliver against this objective, we will:

- Enhance and refine the processes and systems that support the deliberations and decisions of our executive decision-making body, the USCIS Senior Review Board.
- Complete the implementation of a corporate clearance process that ensures the complete and thorough vetting of key documents, such as agency planning documents, position papers, regulatory modifications, and immigration policy proposals, by appropriate parties before presentation to executive decision makers.
- Ensure that all agency programs are aligned with specific agency-level objectives in order to maintain the line of sight for all program activities.

- Ensure that our acquisition strategy is responsive, proactive and effective, and uses standardized acquisition processes that promote competition, innovation and choice.
- Continue to create and execute an integrated, mission-focused IT strategy that will deliver IT infrastructure tools and processes for mission-critical and emergency technology support.
- Continue the development of secure, flexible, scalable IT capabilities while operating and maintaining the infrastructure and tools necessary to accomplish the USCIS mission.
- Ensure that all IT acquisitions are in compliance with the USCIS and DHS enterprise architecture and maximize productivity while being responsive to changing needs.
- Ensure that our IT solutions meet agency critical needs and support statutory changes, even as those requirements evolve in the future.
- Increase use of performance-based contracts and Inter-Agency Agreements (IAA) to enable USCIS to focus on results and reward good performance.
- Enhance use of clearly defined metrics for mission performance and management of new initiatives.

Objective 5.2: Enhance the organization’s ability to support the mission in changing environments

In order to ensure our ability to successfully deliver on our mission, USCIS must be able to rapidly respond to environmental changes, particularly significant fluctuations in workload, new statutory mandates, and unforeseen events that impact our nation and the populations we serve. We will continue to develop a more flexible and responsive enterprise that allows USCIS to adjust and scale our operations. We are committed to strengthening our customer service capabilities, and providing for the safety and security of our employees by providing a flexible, adaptable, and responsive organizational structure. Further, we are developing and communicating emergency management plans that will ensure the continuity of mission essential functions and ensure minimal disruption to USCIS operations during local, regional, and national emergencies, including man-made or natural disasters.

We have begun optimizing our field structure to better support mission delivery, including locating our offices at sites more convenient to our customers and developing a new full service facility model that co-locates USCIS functions and includes a branded design that will provide a recognizable and unique look to all field offices. As part of this initiative, we recently completed the reorganization of USCIS’ domestic field structure from three to four regions, adding a new Southeastern Regional Office in Orlando. We opened state-of-the-art facilities for the Nebraska Service Center and the District Offices in Omaha, Atlanta, and San Francisco.

To ensure we are able to provide the flexibility needed to address future contingencies, we will:

- Expand the use of workload-forecasting tools to effectively inform USCIS resource deployment plans.
- Improve technology and staffing for performance and investment data analysis to optimize efficiency and cost effectiveness.
- Continue to leverage a mix of full-time, part-time and term employees, as well as outsourced resources, to enable USCIS to meet our fluctuating staffing needs more efficiently and effectively.
- Expand frameworks for intra-agency, inter-department, and inter-government coordination on crosscutting issues to support our mutual ability to function as an integrated immigration enterprise.
- Prioritize facilities requirements to maximize customer service, remedy current space limitations, and support operational flexibility to address fluctuating workloads. USCIS will renovate or replace nearly 40 facilities over the next three years.
- Realign our overseas offices to meet our changing global commitments.
- Develop and implement a robust Emergency Preparedness Exercise, Test and Evaluation Program across the agency.
- Provide Continuity of Operations/Emergency Preparedness personnel with basic equipment and a 24/7 communications and alert capability.

Objective 5.3: Manage financial resources strategically, including revenue, expenditures, and capital investments

We are committed to improving USCIS governance and performance to ensure that resources are well managed. We will monitor program performance and the costs incurred to attain specific levels of performance, and through close collaboration between the USCIS Office of the Chief Financial Officer and the other agency components, we will conduct long-range planning, budgeting, and performance reviews. To build a secure financial basis, we completed the first comprehensive fee review in 10 years.

We will continue to enhance and streamline the integrated USCIS planning and performance management processes with our budget formulation and execution activities to improve the effectiveness of our decision-making and financial management. We will improve our financial accountability by ensuring that we can rely on accurate, meaningful financial and performance information, delivered in a timely manner. We will continue to work with the Office of Management and Budget and DHS to better report and track our financial information.

Specifically we will:

- Broaden our financial strategy to ensure that we manage USCIS' financial resources in a responsible, cost-effective manner.
- Develop a capital planning and investment control process that allows for a comprehensive review of investments and the data that supports the requests.
- Ensure that all budget requests are formulated to implement this Strategic Plan, and that our business plans use performance data to drive resource allocation decisions.
- Implement annual operating plans that use sound assumptions that are complete and fully vetted throughout the organization.
- Develop and/or customize automated tools to improve asset and expenditure tracking, facilitate financial management, and enhance fiscal accountability.
- Strengthen the financial management line of business within USCIS, including enhancing internal controls over financial reporting and operations and ensuring USCIS does not contribute to DHS financial audit material weaknesses.

“Everywhere immigrants have enriched and strengthened the fabric of American life.”

John F. Kennedy



Goal 6: Operate as a high-performance organization that promotes a highly talented workforce and a dynamic work culture



Objective 6.1: Strengthen the strategic management of human capital, including recruiting, hiring, and career development

Any organization, regardless of industry, is strongest and most effective when it is able to recruit and retain well-qualified, highly motivated employees. At USCIS, we remain committed to building a team that is focused on achieving our mission and exceeding customer expectations with ingenuity, resourcefulness, and integrity. These values define our corporate culture and the comprehensive human capital strategy that guides the implementation of a wide range of

innovative recruitment, retention, and employee development and recognition programs. By providing a logical path of career development and rotational opportunities, we will strive to ensure that USCIS staff now and in the future will have the right mix of job related training and experiences to build a robust cadre of leaders poised to succeed in our current and future operating environment. Our human capital strategy will:

- Continue to promote the alignment and integration of our human capital systems, policies, and priorities with DHS and USCIS missions, goals, and performance outcomes.
- Design and implement a workforce recruitment program that attracts diverse, high caliber candidates.
- Implement career path and succession management programs that provide opportunities for mobility and advancement within USCIS.
- Promote and communicate an agency-wide culture of equal employment opportunity and inclusion, as demonstrated by our hiring and promotion practices.

Objective 6.2: Foster a culture of integrity and responsibility

At USCIS, we strive to uphold the highest ethical and professional standards as we effectively execute the duties and responsibilities entrusted to us. Our senior leaders and managers set an example by exhibiting a high standard of conduct that permeates all levels of the organization and promotes both integrity and efficiency in the delivery of services to the public. We will continue to reinforce the concept that responsibility starts with each individual, and culminates in a corporate culture of integrity and responsibility.

We will entrust our managers with resources and authority, and hold them accountable for achieving specific program objectives. We will also 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. To achieve this objective, we will:

- Institute regular ethics and integrity training and information sharing through presentations and online self-study applications.
- Supplement and reinforce this training and awareness with clear policies that define professional responsibility and identify clear consequences for improper conduct.
- Combine individual and organizational performance expectations with a set of balanced performance goals.
- Promote an environment where managers, supervisors, and employees can communicate directly and clearly about performance measures and expectations.
- Use performance management best practices to improve our performance appraisal process and performance work plans and regularly evaluate progress towards the achievement of our goals.
- Recognize high-performers and create an environment that promotes employee contributions to mission improvement and enhances employee satisfaction.

Objective 6.3: Sustain a culture of continuous learning and development



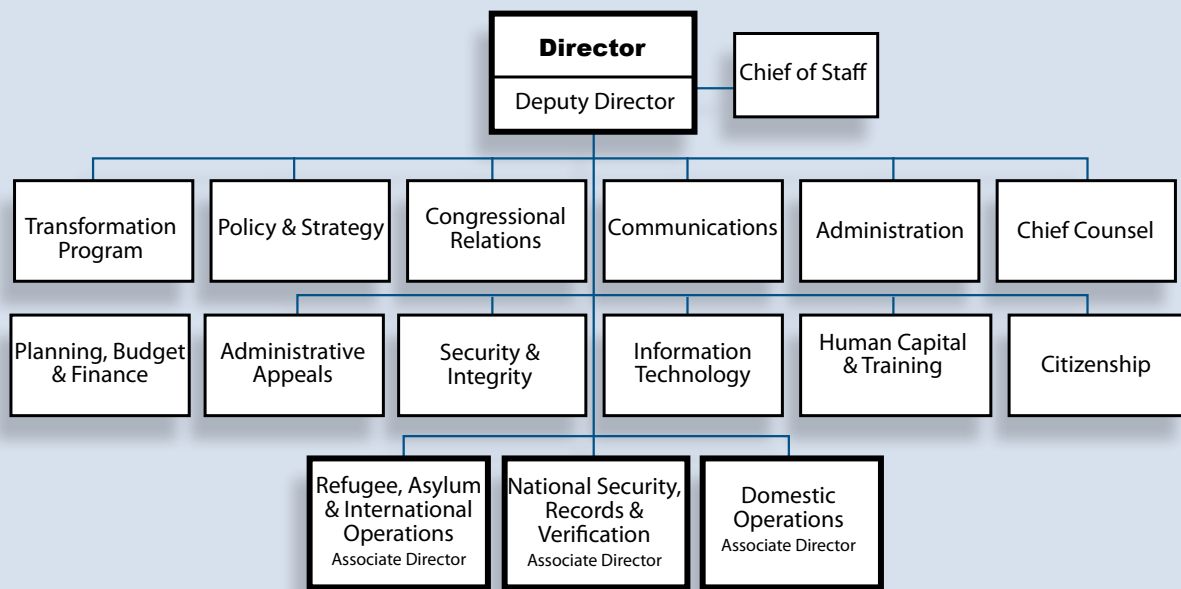
USCIS cares greatly about maintaining and enhancing the vibrancy of its workforce. We will continue to foster organizational and individual growth and achievement by promoting continuous learning through training and career development opportunities. We view this as an investment with a high return and 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 reinforces the value we place on this aspect of our culture, performance work plans for individual employees and managers will include clear expectations regarding continuous learning and knowledge sharing. To help us develop a workforce with the right skills and experience that can continue to fulfill the USCIS vision and mission well into the future, we will place a strong emphasis on both structured and unstructured learning opportunities that support effective leadership development and succession planning.

We will:

- Link training, information technology, and workforce planning to accurately deliver and measure the success of training and career development.
- Expand our central repository for laws, policies, and standard operating procedures to include best practices and other pertinent information by creating, structuring, archiving, and sharing our valuable institutional knowledge and making it readily available to employees when and where they need it.
- Apply new technologies to replace outdated training delivery modes while retaining best practices of traditional training.
- Strive to increasingly deliver training to the workplace on a real-time basis, linking training more closely to its job application and in response to changing needs.
- Improve funding of online training opportunities available through the EDvantage online learning management system, to support personal and professional training.
- Continue to expand and improve the quality and availability of employee training and development programs through the USCIS Academy programs, including enhanced Supervisory Training, Advanced Immigration Studies training, the completely redesigned Basic Officer Training program, and the financial support provided to our employees through our Back-to-School program.

Organizational Chart



Domestic Map



WESTERN REGION

LAGUNA NIGUEL

District 20

Seattle
Anchorage
Portland
Spokane
Yakima

District 21

San Francisco
San Jose
Fresno

District 22

Sacramento

District 23

Los Angeles
San Bernadino
Santa Ana

District 24

San Diego

District 25

Phoenix
Las Vegas
Reno
Tucson

District 26

Honolulu
Hagatna, Guam

CENTRAL REGION

DALLAS

District 12

Detroit

District 13

Cleveland
Cincinnati
Columbus
Indianapolis
Louisville

District 14

Chicago
Milwaukee

District 15

Kansas City
Des Moines
Omaha
St. Louis
St. Paul

District 16

Dallas
Oklahoma City

District 17

Houston

District 18

San Antonio
Albuquerque
El Paso
Harlingen

District 19

Denver
Boise
Helena
Salt Lake City

SOUTHEAST REGION

ORLANDO

District 8

Atlanta
Charlotte
Charleston

District 9

Miami
Charlotte Amalie
San Juan

District 10

Tampa
Jacksonville
Orlando
West Palm Beach

District 11

New Orleans
Ft. Smith
Memphis

NORTHEAST REGION

BURLINGTON

District 1

Boston
Manchester
Portland
Providence

District 2

Buffalo
Albany
Hartford
St. Albans

District 3

New York City

District 4

Newark
Mt. Laurel

District 5

Philadelphia
Pittsburgh

District 6

Baltimore

District 7

Fairfax
Norfolk

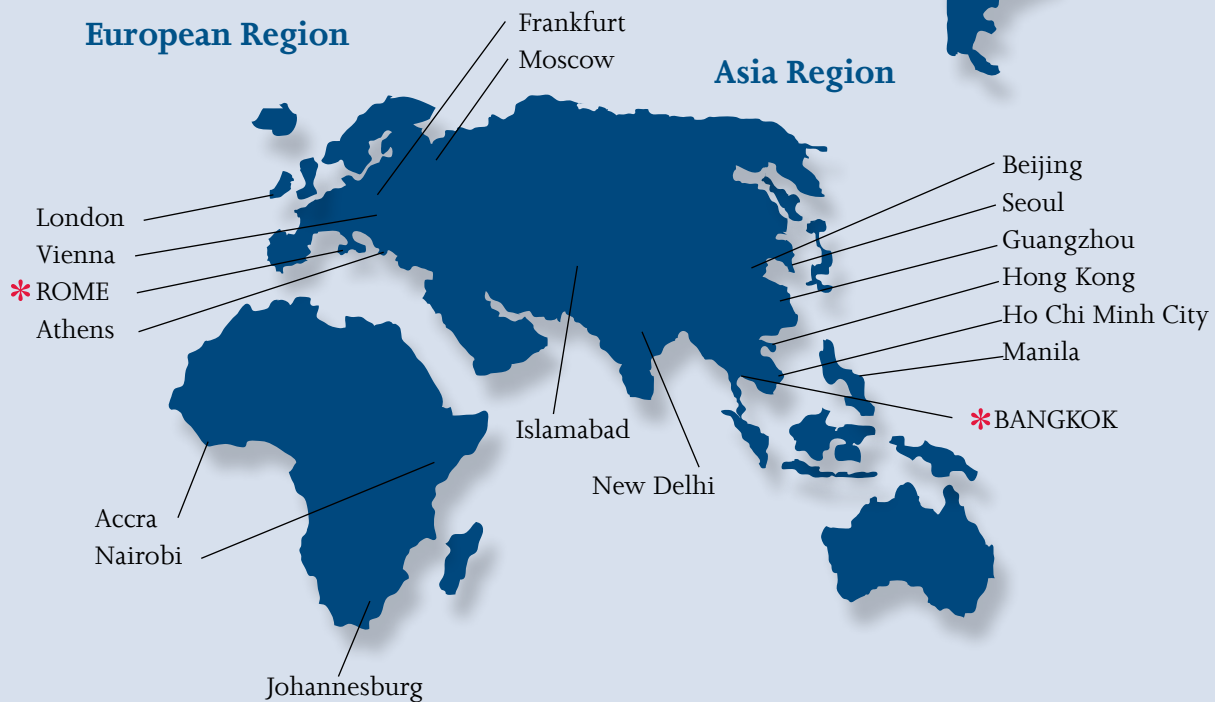
* Washington, D.C.
USCIS Headquarters

International Map

Americas Region



European Region



Asia Region

* USCIS International District Offices

End Notes for Our Environment: Context for Strategic Planning Section

1. U.S. Census Bureau, Facts for Features, Special Edition, 300 Million, 8/9/06, p 1
2. U.S. Census Bureau, Facts for Features, Special Edition, 300 Million, 8/9/06, p 2
3. DHS Office of Immigration Statistics, 2006 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, p 5, Table 1
4. DHS Office of Immigration Statistics, 2006 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, p 28, Table 10
5. U.S. Census Bureau, Facts for Features, Special Edition, 300 Million, 8/9/06, p 2
6. DHS Office of Immigration Statistics, 2006 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics , p 16, Table 4
7. The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways, The Living Census Series, The Brookings Institution, February 2004, p 5



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