



March 28, 2011

Executive Summary

Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations (RAIO) Directorate External Stakeholder Meeting

Background

On March 2, 2011, the RAIO Directorate and the Office of Public Engagement hosted a stakeholder engagement to discuss adjustments to the RAIO Directorate. During the session, Steve Bucher, RAIO Deputy Associate Director, discussed RAIO's objective of strengthening cohesion between its three divisions by developing directorate-level functions. These functions will allow for more integrated planning, guidance, and management of knowledge assets, and will better position RAIO to take advantage of increased information resulting from the larger, USCIS-wide Transformation. Mr. Bucher also provided an overview of these organizational adjustments and outlined plans for the transition, as well as addressed questions and concerns from stakeholders.

Overview

Mr. Bucher opened the meeting by stating that RAIO has been, and continues to be, very dedicated to its core mission of providing protection, humanitarian, and other immigration benefits and services to individuals throughout the world. The Directorate recognizes that it serves highly-vulnerable populations with unique needs, and that it must balance those needs with Agency plans to move toward a more integrated operating environment. This new environment, also known as USCIS Transformation, will provide new opportunities for paperless adjudication, account-based customer management, and improved analytic capabilities. Mr. Bucher emphasized that the new capabilities provided by Transformation will provide greatest benefit when utilized in a cross-organizational manner.

RAIO's current organizational model emphasizes benefit-specific staffing, planning, performance, and training. However, RAIO faces challenges that cut across the Directorate that would be more effectively addressed in an integrated manner. These common challenges include:

- Complexity of protection and humanitarian benefits.
- Fraud and national security risks related to the unique populations we serve.
- Workload shifts and fluctuations over which RAIO has no control.
- Logistical and operational challenges associated with overseas deployments.

Therefore, the primary focus of RAIO's recent efforts has been to improve its ability to work in a more unified manner while retaining many of the important features of RAIO's legacy structure.

Timeline of Changes

In 2009, RAIO began planning by holding a series of workshops with Directorate leadership and managers from across the divisions, including domestic and overseas field offices. During these sessions, a basic overarching design was developed. RAIO then held a series of additional workshops with more than 30 Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) from the divisions to create a detailed organizational design. Finally, the RAIO Senior Leadership Team reviewed the proposed design and made final adjustments.

Implementation began during the summer 2010 with creation of a Transition Team. Steve Bucher led this team, which also had representation from across RAIO divisions, to manage and oversee the implementation process. RAIO anticipates full deployment in the next 18 months.

For additional information regarding the planning and implementation phases of the redesigned organizational model, please see the timeline presented at the end of this summary.

New Directorate-Level Units

One important milestone in this effort is the development of new directorate-level units. The expectation is that these new units will work collaboratively with the three divisions to help facilitate a more integrated approach to the Directorate's work.

- **Performance Management Unit**

This unit is led by Michael Valverde who oversees three branches: Performance and Planning, Quality Management, and Training. Performance and Planning manages the development and ongoing monitoring of strategic and performance plans so that they align with each other and the overall objectives of the Directorate.

The Training Branch, headed by Joyce Stadnick, facilitates a shared knowledge and skills base for all RAIO staff through a Directorate-wide training program. This program will address common issues to all three divisions and provide officers a broader understanding of the benefits adjudicated by RAIO. Mr. Bucher stated that it is believed that this will allow the Directorate to be better able to meet the challenge of workload variability. RAIO plans to complete development and provide first delivery of RAIO Officer Basic Training by summer/fall 2011. The new RAIO Officer Basic Training will not replace benefit-specific training and will continue to look at ways to collaborate with community-based organizations and external stakeholders on specific curricula and lesson topics.

The Quality Branch establishes and manages a directorate-wide program for quality excellence. Led by Heidi Bryan, the branch is currently piloting quality standards developed in FY 2010. They are working with the divisions to develop annual quality priorities; establishing consistent quality standards and quality review methods; and managing ongoing monitoring of quality reviews.

- **Research Unit**

The new Research Unit will subsume the Asylum Country of Origin Research Section (COIRS) and will continue to be led by Leroy Potts. This unit was established at the directorate level in fall 2010 and will expand the COIRS to support the entire RAIO community.

- **Knowledge Management Unit**

This unit manages RAIO virtual and physical libraries as well as the coordination of RAIO external communications (e.g., website, Congressional correspondence, and newsletter). The Knowledge

Management Unit will support the entire RAIO community and make it easier for all RAIO staff to find the information they need.

- **Fraud Detection National Security (FDNS) and Information Sharing Unit**

James Chiang leads the FDNS and Information Sharing Unit which oversees consistent application of USCIS policy and procedures concerning the detection of fraud and the protection of national security. This unit will enable a coordinated approach to RAIO fraud detection and national security related issues.

In addition to the abovementioned units, additional staff has been hired to support integrated policy development. Led by Lori Gill, these policy staff liaise with USCIS Office of Policy and Strategy and report to the RAIO Deputy Associate Director.

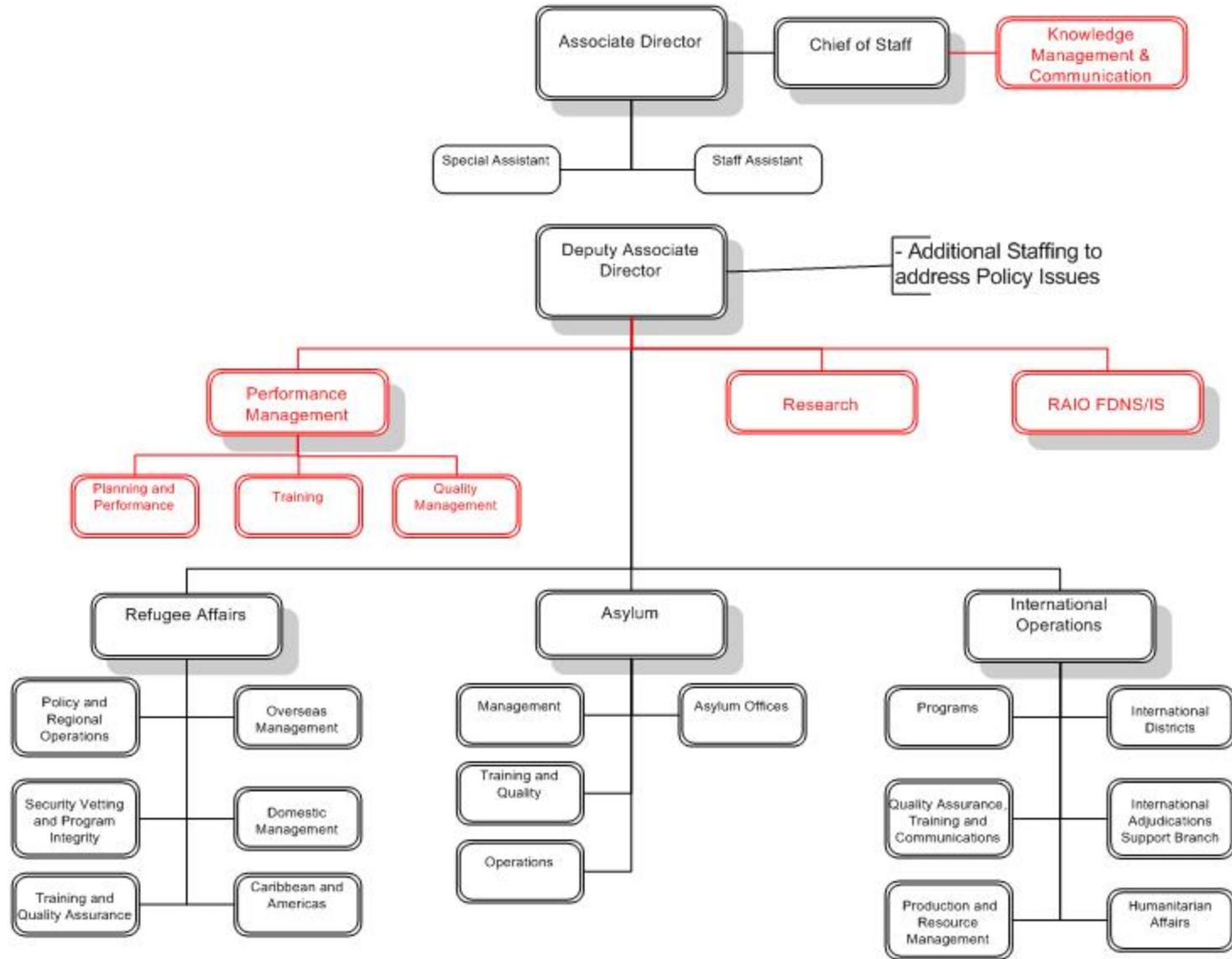
Please note a visual representation of the updated RAIO organization is available at the end of this summary.

How the Changes will Affect the Stakeholder

RAIO continues to review measures the Directorate can take to strengthen service delivery to the populations they serve. This new structure does not change USCIS commitment to these populations, but rather positively impacts and streamlines operations at RAIO headquarters. Highlights of the updated organizational model include:

- All new officers will attend a RAIO Basic training course and division specific modules. This will provide officers with consistent and comprehensive guidance about work done by RAIO, and will build on already strong training programs.
- All officers will have access to country of origins information informed by a directorate-level research strategy.
- All RAIO personnel will be able to access information they need through an expanded Virtual Library.
- All RAIO divisions will benefit from increased coordination, guidance, and support in FDNS related matters.
- All divisions will apply consistent quality standards and review procedures.
- RAIO will be in a better position to manage with the greater consistency and flexibility that the transformed automated environment will enable.

Updated RAIO Organization



Timeline



Planning Phase

Spring – Fall 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strategic discussion about aligning RAIO with Transformation and achieving greater integration leads to high-level design for new HQ units
Fall 2009 – Winter 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Detailed design for new HQ units developed
Spring 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Design for new HQ units approved

Implementation Phase

Summer 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transition Team to manage and oversee implementation created
Fall 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• RAIO Research Unit established• RAIO Performance Management and FDNS/IS Chiefs hired• RAIO Virtual Library released
Winter 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• RAIO Training and Quality Chiefs hired• RAIO Knowledge Management and Communication Chief hired• RAIO Policy analyst hired
Remainder of 2011 – 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete development and provide first delivery of RAIO Officer Basic Training (anticipated summer/fall 2011)• Complete deployment of new units