

2019-2021

# STRATEGIC PLAN

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services



U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services

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## FOREWORD

Long before I became Director of U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in October 2017, I knew USCIS employees to be committed and dedicated public servants. As Director, I have experienced our shared commitment to upholding the rule of law and ensuring the integrity of our nation's immigration system. USCIS' excellence relies on the dedication and expertise of the workforce and on the commitment of leadership to prioritizing both long-term investments in our people and infrastructure and the near-term need to strengthen the policies and programs that define our ability to faithfully execute our mission.

Based on the requirements of the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010, the USCIS Strategic Plan needed to be updated after a change in Administration. To ensure this update fully represented the USCIS workforce, operations, and mission, the Office of Policy and Strategy convened a working group of representatives from across USCIS to identify strategic goals, along with the objectives that will help USCIS achieve those goals.

While we have completed the process to develop this updated strategic plan, the important work to implement it is only beginning. The American people, through Congress, have entrusted USCIS to faithfully administer the legal immigration programs that allow foreign nationals to visit, work, live, and seek refuge in the United States. USCIS seeks to ensure that those who naturalize are dedicated to this country, share our values, assimilate into our communities, and fully understand their rights and meet their responsibilities as citizens of this great nation.

USCIS' senior leadership and I are committed to the effective implementation of the goals and objectives defined in our Strategic Plan. Doing so will result in a USCIS that serves our workforce, the American people, and our applicants and petitioners in an efficient, lawful, and transparent manner.

**L. Francis Cissna**  
Director, USCIS



**U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services**

**U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services administers the nation's lawful immigration system, safeguarding its integrity and promise by efficiently and fairly adjudicating requests for immigration benefits while protecting Americans, securing the homeland, and honoring our values.**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The updated Strategic Plan provides a framework for strengthening our administration of the nation's lawful immigration system and safeguarding its integrity and promise by efficiently and fairly adjudicating immigration benefits, while protecting Americans, securing the homeland, and honoring our values.

USCIS will focus on four strategic goals that emphasize the efficiency and effectiveness of core operational priorities and the continuous improvements we need to achieve quality organizational performance. We will drive progress through 14 supporting strategic objectives. These objectives focus on championing the workforce at all levels, continuing to enhance rigorous anti-fraud and risk mitigation measures to protect national security, operating as efficiently as possible as we examine and fairly decide the outcome of applications and petitions, and improving our digital environment. Our annual plans will address how we will implement the objectives, and we will monitor and assess our progress as part of our agency's strategic review process.



### **Strategic Goal 1: Strengthen our investment in an empowered workforce to better accomplish the agency's mission**

Empowering the USCIS workforce means we will champion our employees at all levels across the organization to meet challenges and achieve mission success. The USCIS workforce must become more nimble and broaden its expertise as we transition our processes from a paper-based environment to a digital environment. We must strengthen our capacity to learn and apply technology as our workplace footprints change and our workload fluctuates in volume and complexity. In particular, we must:

- Recruit, develop, and retain a diverse, highly-trained, and flexible workforce;
- Position our workforce to be more agile and successful in responding to change;
- Encourage collaboration and innovation so employees are more involved in decisions; and
- Recruit, develop, and retain strategic and forward-thinking leaders who will improve our performance and accountability.



### **Strategic Goal 2: Safeguard the homeland by deterring, detecting, and addressing vulnerabilities in the immigration system**

USCIS must employ and enhance rigorous security measures to safeguard our nation against immigration fraud and ensure that pathways to the United States are not exploited by bad actors and the organizations that sponsor them. By order of the President, our charge includes protecting the nation, its economy, and the American worker. To achieve this goal, we will continue to identify and mitigate known and unknown risks to the lawful immigration system, implement and enhance uniform vetting practices, and maximize internal and external information sharing to strengthen the integrity of the lawful immigration system.



### Strategic Goal 3:

#### Ensure fair and efficient adjudication of benefits and delivery of information

USCIS' core role in administering the lawful immigration system is adjudicating benefit requests. This responsibility includes determining an individual's eligibility for benefits and delivering appropriate documentation when we approve a request. As we perform this complex, high-volume work, we will embrace new and efficient ways of doing business to strengthen our capacity to issue consistent decisions in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies. We will continue to align federal regulations and USCIS policy to the nation's immigration laws as we administer and safeguard our immigration system. To achieve this goal, USCIS will optimize quality and timeliness throughout the benefit request adjudication process, improve satisfaction with delivery of information, and align agency infrastructure and resources to enhance the effectiveness of our operations.



### Strategic Goal 4:

#### Continuously improve key processes, programs, and systems

Our commitment to continuous improvement is a crucial factor in the success of our mission. We must continue to evaluate, streamline, and revise how we do business. We will transition to a digital environment to improve how we balance and process our work, share our data, and provide our services. This effort will be our highest priority, and we will advance the President's Management Agenda in information technology modernization, data governance, accountability, and transparency. We will:

- Transition from a paper-based environment to a digital environment;
- Improve data accessibility, information sharing, and workload management capabilities;
- Enhance efficiency and unity of effort to achieve mission requirements; and
- Strengthen risk management capabilities agency-wide.

<sup>1</sup>As used in this document, the term benefit request means "any application, petition, motion, appeal, or other request relating to an immigration or naturalization benefit." See 8 CFR 1.2.



***"I have made it my mission to give those we assist an opportunity for them to help themselves."***

- An employee at USCIS' Miami Asylum Office

# INTRODUCTION

## Who We Are

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), a component of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), oversees lawful immigration to the United States. Our workforce includes 19,000 Federal Government employees and contractors.

## What We Do

USCIS administers the nation's lawful immigration system. We manage a broad range of programs and process millions of immigration and naturalization benefit requests each year—we processed more than 8 million benefit requests in fiscal year 2018. We make decisions on requests in a timely, accurate, consistent, and professional manner, while safeguarding national security, public safety, and ensuring that U.S. workers are not adversely impacted.

USCIS processes more than 50 different types of benefit requests and ensures that only eligible benefit requestors receive immigration benefits.

## We Are Responsible For

- ✓ **Adjudicating benefit requests and petitions.** Our key adjudication efforts include:
  - **Citizenship and naturalization.** Individuals who wish to become U.S. citizens through naturalization submit their applications to USCIS. We carefully review each application, determine eligibility, process the application, and, if we approve the application, schedule the applicant for a ceremony to take the Oath of Allegiance. We also determine eligibility and provide documentation of U.S. citizenship for individuals who acquired or derived U.S. citizenship through their family members.
  - **Family-based immigration.** We manage the process that allows lawful permanent residents and U.S. citizens to bring certain relatives to live and work in the United States.
  - **Employment based non-immigrant and immigrant petitions.** We manage the process that allows individuals from other countries to lawfully work in the United States. Some of these opportunities are temporary and some provide a path to lawful permanent residence.
  - **Adoptions.** We administer the first step in the process by which U.S. citizens adopt children from other countries.
  - **Temporary visas for work, study, business, recreation, and cultural exchange.**
- ✓ **Humanitarian obligations.** USCIS administers a number of humanitarian programs and upholds U.S. law and international obligations by extending protections to refugees overseas and asylees in the United States.
- ✓ **Managing the E-Verify program.** We administer E-Verify, a tool that helps ensure a legal workforce by allowing participating employers to check online whether their new employees are eligible to work in the United States.
- ✓ **Deterring, detecting, and addressing vulnerabilities to the legal immigration system.** As an integral part of our adjudication process, we determine whether individuals or organizations requesting benefits pose a threat to national security, public safety, or the integrity of the nation's legal immigration system. Our work includes administratively investigating immigration benefit fraud, identifying and addressing internal risks and vulnerabilities to our programs, and sharing information and collaborating with law enforcement and other governmental agencies.
- ✓ **Promoting lawful immigrants' assimilation into American society.** We encourage lawful immigrants' understanding of U.S. civic principles and citizenship, including its privileges and responsibilities.

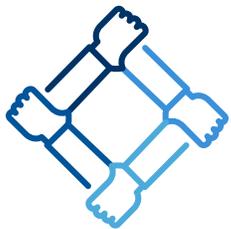
## Goal 1:

### Strengthen our investment in an empowered workforce to better accomplish the agency's mission

Empowering the USCIS workforce means that we will champion our employees at all levels and across the organization to meet challenges. The projected rise in employee retirements and attrition means that we must increase our pipeline of qualified candidates and ensure a seamless transfer of knowledge.



As we transition our processes from a paper-based environment to a digital environment, we must strengthen our capacity to learn and apply technology. Our workplace footprints are changing, and our workload fluctuates in volume and complexity. We must continually enhance the quality of our performance, and our workforce must become more nimble and broaden its expertise. Investment in our employees is our first strategic goal, because our present and future successes rely most upon our workforce.



#### Objective 1.1:

#### Recruit, develop, and retain a diverse, highly trained, and flexible workforce

USCIS' success in improving processes; delivering fair, consistent outcomes for applicants and petitioners; and enhancing internal support services depends on the talent of our workforce and our ability to attract and retain the most qualified candidates. Training, along with our workforce's varied demographic backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives at all levels and occupations, will strengthen our capacity to successfully transform.

#### Desired Outcomes:

- Improved culture: employee satisfaction with work experiences, the agency, and their jobs
- Reduced gaps in staffing
- Decreased cycle time from the classification of a job announcement to onboarding
- Training and employee development focused on strengthening leadership, improving processes, delivering fair and consistent outcomes, and providing quality services
- A diverse workforce, consistent with the overall civilian labor force, is reached and maintained

#### Progress Indicators:

- Reduced workload backlogs as proof that development and training for mission delivery and data-based decision-making is working
- Improved employee retention/attrition rates
- Decreased cycle time from classification of job announcement to onboarding
- Improved Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) program status (MD-715) by reducing barriers, identifying diversity, and implementing corrective action



## Objective 1.2:

### Position our workforce to be more agile and successful in responding to change

Agility helps individuals and organizations respond rapidly to address changes in requirements, opportunities, or conditions. We must prepare our workforce to understand and manage change. To be agile, we must position our infrastructure—including systems, facilities, budgets, and internal support processes—to enable change. To improve USCIS' agility in all areas, we must ensure that our training, communication, tools, and assignments are aligned to guarantee success as we undertake change locally and enterprise-wide.

#### Desired Outcomes:

- Managers and employees having a greater ability to navigate through transitions and challenges during change
- Effectively managing changes in workloads through the alignment of equipment, funds, and personnel
- Effectively implementing new policies and processes

#### Progress Indicators:

- Improved Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) scores
- Increased participation in USCIS mentoring and coaching programs
- Continued positive survey data during times of change



## Objective 1.3:

### Encourage collaboration and innovation to expand opportunities for employees to be involved in decisions

USCIS employees at all levels of the organization play an important role in helping the agency achieve its mission by developing innovative ideas. Collaboration in the design and execution of new approaches offers greater opportunity for creativity and engagement. Collaboration also allows employees to share in dialogue and contribute to decisions about our processes, policies, systems, work environments, and, ultimately, the outcomes of the services we deliver. In these ways and more, our employees will further improve USCIS' capacity to effectively administer the lawful immigration system.

#### Desired Outcomes:

- Employees are universally encouraged to propose creative solutions
- Improved employee engagement and job satisfaction
- Increased collaboration, knowledge, and information sharing

## Progress Indicators:

- Improved FEVS scores
- Increased number of viable suggestions from employees
- Increased availability and effectiveness of knowledge management solutions



### Objective 1.4:

#### **Recruit, develop, and retain strategic and forward-thinking leaders who drive agency performance and accountability**

As USCIS transitions from a paper-based to a digital environment, we need to ensure that our leaders and workforce are positioned for success. We must increasingly rely on an agile, motivated, and knowledgeable workforce and on leaders who can manage change effectively. We must conduct business with an agency-wide approach, and we must have leaders who are eager to try new methods and thrive in a multi-generational, digital, fast-paced environment. Many of our future leaders will come from our current workforce, so developing the necessary skills to drive performance is paramount.

## Desired Outcomes:

- Increased trust, respect, and good relations between managers and the workforce
- Improved strategic leadership at all levels of the organization
- Increased understanding of priorities and mission at all levels of the organization
- Improved ability of leaders to manage change, complexity, and uncertainty
- Stronger candidate pools for leadership positions

## Progress Indicators:

- Regular monitoring and review of progress regarding agency strategic plan goals and objectives
- Improved FEVS scores
- Reduced workload backlogs
- Agency-wide practice of succession planning/management

*“The Federal Executive Board’s recognition of our agency’s outstanding front-line leadership is a direct result of our employees’ sustained dedication and high performance at every level.”*

- A manager at USCIS’ Texas Service Center

## Goal 2:

### Safeguard the homeland by deterring, detecting, and addressing vulnerabilities in the immigration system

USCIS must employ and enhance rigorous security measures to safeguard our nation against immigration fraud and ensure that pathways to the United States are not exploited by bad actors and organizations that sponsor them. By order of the President, our charge includes protecting the nation, its economy, and the American worker.



### These requirements are established by directives, including:

- **Executive Orders**

- 13587, Structural Reforms to Improve the Security of Classified Networks and the Responsible Sharing and Safeguarding of Classified Information
- 13768, Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States
- 13780, Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States
- 13788, Buy American and Hire American

- **DHS Memoranda**

- Implementing the President's Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvement Policies, Feb. 20, 2017
- Enforcement of the Immigration Laws to Serve the National Interest, Feb. 20, 2017
- National Security Presidential Memorandum/NSPM-9, Optimizing the Use of Federal Government Information in Support of the National Vetting Enterprise, Feb. 6, 2018

- **DHS Guidance**

- Insider Threat Program

To achieve our goal, we will continue to strengthen existing approaches and design, implement, and monitor new procedures and programs using available resources. Examples include event-based vetting of applicants and petitioners and reinforcing DHS' person-centric identity management strategies by sharing biometrics. As we encounter new challenges, we will identify new opportunities to improve and strengthen our protocols.



### Objective 2.1:

#### Identify and mitigate known and unknown risks to the lawful immigration system

To fully protect the lawful immigration system, USCIS must systematically find, prioritize, and abate weaknesses and gaps that individuals or groups could exploit through a single event or persistent attacks. USCIS will improve our threat identification and assessment techniques, including fraud prediction modeling and data trend analytics. We will use the risks we identify to guide our revisions to policies and regulations. We are committed to ensuring that no one within USCIS' security threshold will use their authorized access to

harm our mission, resources, and personnel. We will protect against espionage, terrorism, unauthorized disclosure of classified national security information, and loss or degradation of departmental resources or capabilities.

### **Desired Outcomes:**

- Prioritized risks to the lawful immigration system continually inform agency-wide risk management
- Standardized and improved processes to act on threats
- Aligned policy and procedures to deter risk and threats to the immigration system
- Established procedures and lines of communication that effectively coordinate the intake of DHS and component insider threat cases according to insider threat protocols
- Enhanced ability to identify risks throughout the immigration lifecycle

### **Progress Indicators:**

- Establish a USCIS Insider Threat Plan and processes consistent with DHS requirements
- Expanded Site Visit and Verification Program based on results of ongoing and planned pilots
- Address high-priority regulatory loopholes
- Incorporate analytic capabilities across USCIS to detect unknown risks to the immigration system
- Event-based, continuous immigration vetting is fully operational for naturalization applicants and is expanded to include those filing with USCIS for lawful permanent residence
- Scoped immigration benefit reviews based on risk and gap analysis



### **Objective 2.2:**

#### **Implement and enhance uniform vetting practices**

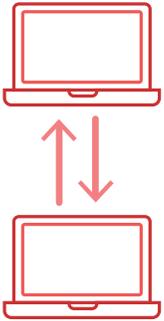
USCIS works worldwide to properly vet benefit requesters as we examine and adjudicate benefit requests. We will coordinate with the National Vetting Center as we standardize and expand our vetting activities and enhance the immigration system's integrity by reducing the opportunity for fraud and abuse.

### **Desired Outcomes:**

- Standardized, enhanced, and expanded vetting and background check processes
- Centralized pre-vetting in specialized units across USCIS
- Uniform vetting through optimized data services promoted agency-wide
- Improved efficiency and timeliness of vetting and resolution
- Strengthened integrity of the immigration system and deterrence of bad actors by reducing opportunities for fraud and abuse

## Progress Indicators:

- Employees are trained to perform enhanced vetting operations
- E-Processing risk and fraud services are leveraged across other USCIS case management systems



### Objective 2.3:

#### **Maximize internal and external information sharing to strengthen the integrity of the lawful immigration system**

USCIS will maintain and advance information exchange across the agency and DHS, and with federal, state, local, and foreign government partners protecting the homeland. We seek to minimize gaps and barriers to sharing information with authorized partners in compliance with information sharing governance procedures.

## Desired Outcomes:

- Enhanced information exchange across USCIS and with DHS components, as well as federal, state, local, and foreign government partners to address vulnerabilities of the immigration system
- Improved governance of information sharing by establishing standardized procedures and using consistent language in agreements
- Minimized gaps and barriers in information sharing across USCIS
- Fraud trends and patterns are shared throughout the agency to improve consistency of decisions regarding eligibility

## Progress Indicators:

- Deployment of field intelligence research capabilities to all applicable offices
- Intelligence reports are standardized across USCIS

*“I feel a strong sense of accomplishment. It feels good knowing that our collaboration paid off and everyone is united in wanting to crack down on fraud.”*

- An employee/expert witness in fraud prosecution at USCIS' California Service Center

## Goal 3:

### Ensure fair and efficient adjudication of benefits and delivery of information



USCIS' core purpose in administering the lawful immigration system is adjudicating benefit requests. This responsibility includes determining an individual's eligibility for benefits and delivering appropriate documentation when we approve a request. As we perform this complex, high-volume work, we will embrace new, more efficient ways of doing business to strengthen our capacity to issue consistent, sound decisions made in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies. We will continue to align federal regulations and USCIS policy to the nation's immigration laws as we administer and safeguard the lawful immigration system. To achieve this goal, USCIS will optimize quality and timeliness throughout the benefit request adjudication process, improve satisfaction with delivery of information, and align agency infrastructure and resources to enhance the effectiveness of our operations.



#### Objective 3.1:

#### Optimize quality and timeliness of all aspects of the benefits adjudication process

USCIS processes many different types of benefit requests and issues appropriate documentation when we approve a request. Our officers review the evidence and determine eligibility while guarding against fraud. To ensure that we direct our resources toward the greatest value, we will streamline processes and strengthen workload forecasting to address high-volume receipts and priorities. We will also expand the electronic intake and processing of forms. By managing quality performance, we will become more nimble and strengthen our capacity to process the more than 8 million benefit requests we receive annually as efficiently as possible.

#### Desired Outcomes:

- Enhanced consistency of work products across our adjudication system
- Continued deployment of electronic tools to manage adjudicative workload from intake through the processing lifecycle
- Agile use of staff resources to respond to workload surges and changing priorities
- Backlog reduction targets achieved and processing times improved
- USCIS culture defined by innovation and new ways of doing business

#### Progress Indicators:

- Harmonized adjudication training programs
- Increased percentage of online applications filed and adjudicated
- Measurably reduced backlogs
- Data-supported analyses are used to review the quality of adjudication decisions



## Objective 3.2:

### Improve satisfaction with delivery of information

USCIS provides a variety of information to the public, interagency partners, and Congress, such as data, tools, guidance, genealogy research, historical sources, and responses to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. We will continue to seek input from the public and promote awareness and use of our self-service information tools. In particular, we will improve and promote online tools that provide information and allow benefit requestors to securely manage and track individual benefit requests.

#### Desired Outcomes:

- Increased transparency about application procedures
- Expanded awareness of the naturalization process and responsibilities of citizenship
- Reduced inquiries and complaints related to wait times for services
- Increased completeness and accuracy of benefit requests filed online

#### Progress Indicators:

- Improved satisfaction rates for public services
- Reduced inquiries about the status of immigration benefit requests
- Reduction in incomplete benefit requests due to online filing



## Objective 3.3:

### Align agency infrastructure and resources to enhance the effectiveness of our operations

USCIS' infrastructure is the sum of internal functions that support core operational programs. Activities such as human resources, information technology, budget and financial management, security, facilities, contracting, records and data management, and administration are all critically important to our ability to effectively adjudicate petitions and applications. We will increase and enhance the unity of effort between USCIS' business lines and infrastructure support functions to help succeed in our mission.

***“I love that every day, we all get to help individuals start a new life and create their own version of the American Dream. We also ensure that no one tries to take advantage of the American Dream and our values.”***

- An employee at USCIS' National Benefits Center (Overland Park, Kansas)

## Desired Outcomes:

- Policies and procedures aligned to changing priorities and identified risks
- Increased public confidence in the immigration system
- Improved employee satisfaction with support services

## Progress Indicators:

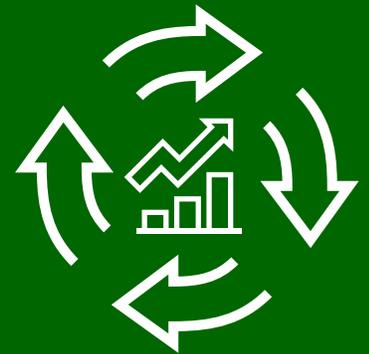
- Consolidated functions and alignment of adjudicative responsibilities
- Reduced inquiries about the status of immigration benefit applications or petitions

## Goal 4:

### Continuously improve key processes, programs, and systems

Our commitment to continuous improvement is a crucial factor in the success of our mission. We must continue to evaluate, streamline, and revise our ways of doing business. We will transition to a digital environment to improve our means of distributing and processing work, sharing data, and providing services. This effort will be our highest priority.

We will continue to build upon our successes, implement innovative processes, and assess our results—all elements of the USCIS National Quality Management Program. As we progress, we will advance the President's Management Agenda in information technology modernization, data governance, accountability, and transparency.



### Objective 4.1:

#### Transition from a paper-based environment to a digital environment

Our transition to a digital environment means that the filing, adjudication, and communication processes related to new benefit requests will exist in a digital environment. USCIS will receive benefit requests online, request evidence online, and use those digital records to adjudicate requests. We will adapt existing systems to share data and services across USCIS. We will establish our digital platform and ensure that USCIS redesigns operational processes, and trains employees to excel in our evolving agency-wide digital environment.

## Desired Outcomes:

- Robust digital environment that:
  - Increases efficiency and effectiveness of the production/operations lifecycle: intake, evaluation, adjudication, and documentation of decisions
  - Provides access to “the right data at the right time” to support decision-making processes
- Information technology capabilities that support electronic application and adjudication processes

- Human capital strategies that align personnel training and leadership to the digital environment
- Increased availability of electronic data to improve transparency, reporting reliability, and the adjudication process

## Progress Indicators:

- Increased electronic processing capabilities
- Increased processing efficiency and effectiveness
- Strengthened human capital strategies that employ gap analysis to assist the agency in its transition to and expansion of the digital environment
- Reduced duplicative data requests



## Objective 4.2:

### Improve data accessibility, information sharing, and workload management capabilities

Quality data, reliably available within USCIS and to our partners and the public, is key to the success of USCIS' business lines and our mission support functions. We intend to further develop the support functions for the digital environment. Posting aggregated data online in response to FOIA requests will ensure greater transparency for the public. We will continue to monitor our internal data to allocate the volume of work among locations and employees while also evaluating whether processes could be improved. Through our systems that provide "the right data at the right time," USCIS will support the Federal Data Strategy outlined in the President's Management Agenda by promoting evidence-based decision-making at all levels of our agency.

## Desired Outcomes:

- Increased accessibility of USCIS data and information
- Provide data that will support program evaluation and link strategic goals with individual performance
- Enhanced sharing of intelligence information

## Progress Indicators:

- Ongoing progress toward achievement of Backlog Reduction Plan goals
- Successful decommissioning of unneeded legacy systems
- Effectively trained users on areas of the new digital environment
- Reduced audit findings from the Office of Inspector General and Government Accountability Office regarding the digital environment
- Reduced public burden due to increased transparency of data
- Expanded public data offerings on USCIS.gov



### **Objective 4.3:**

## **Enhance organizational efficiency and unity of effort to achieve mission requirements**

To further excel, operationally and culturally, our agency will strive to become “One USCIS,” a community of engaged public servants united in purpose, greater than the sum of its parts. We must strengthen our cohesiveness through a shared understanding of goals and objectives as we decide how we will balance operational effectiveness with prudent budgetary decisions. As USCIS moves to a digital environment, our unity of effort in achieving efficiencies will be enhanced by: creating stronger links among our strategic goals, operational objectives, and outcomes; executing administrative services; developing our workforce for the twenty-first century; and optimizing operational management. This objective will improve our capacity to plan, work, and communicate.

### **Desired Outcomes:**

- Improved workload forecasting through the availability of more accurate data
- Established direct links between all operational actions and strategic goals and outcomes

### **Progress Indicators:**

- Increased productivity through effective workforce management
- Increased processing efficiency
- Improved use of strategic and management performance measures requiring collaboration within USCIS
- Improved operational processes
- Increased workforce engagement



### **Objective 4.4:**

## **Strengthen agency-wide risk management capabilities**

USCIS will continue to develop an Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) program, as required by Office of Management and Budget Circulars A-11 and A-123 and encouraged by the DHS Memorandum, “Enterprise Risk Management and Financial Audit Approach.” The ERM program is an agency-wide approach that addresses the full spectrum of strategic, operational, reporting, and compliance risks. An enterprise-wide, strategically-aligned portfolio view of organizational challenges will help our leaders effectively prioritize and manage the risks that could prevent us from fulfilling our mission by improving certainty about the probability and potential effects of threats and opportunities.

### **Desired Outcomes:**

- Risk management messaging integrated into existing USCIS communications to increase awareness and understanding of mitigation efforts

- Matured ERM as a multi-component function within USCIS
- Established roles and responsibilities of risk reporting and identification through proper ERM channels

## Progress Indicators:

- Improved use of an Annual Operational Risk Register as required by DHS guidance
- Workforce trained in ERM
- Increased awareness and understanding of enterprise risks
- Increased risk management capabilities
- Informed executive leadership of agency-wide risks through the availability of a Standardized Risk Report
- ERM Working Group established with members from each Program Office and Directorate
- Developed USCIS-specific cybersecurity risk indicators and scorecard



***“Creating opportunities like a “Community of Practice” fosters a culture of continuous improvement embracing introspection, innovation, and initiative. All ideas are welcome as we strive to reach consensus in improving the work process.”***

- A manager at USCIS’ San Francisco District Office

## CONCLUSION

Successful implementation of the USCIS Strategic Plan will improve our capacity to perform our mission with excellence and unity of purpose on behalf of the American people. We have already begun work on some of the objectives contained in this updated Strategic Plan.

By executing this plan, we will improve our programs, systems, and services, resulting in increased efficiency in vetting and adjudication. These efficiencies will equip us to carry out our mission of ensuring the integrity of the nation's immigration system. Our investment in an empowered workforce is critical to our success. Our workforce's abilities, expertise, agility, and effectiveness will be the bedrock of our achievements.

Moving forward, we will implement our strategic plan with annual and operating plans that articulate the tactical execution of our objectives through performance metrics. As part of our strategic review process and our reporting to DHS, we will assess progress against those measures and, if necessary, establish action plans to achieve our objectives.

Our focus on high-quality performance is significant. What we do at USCIS is important to our nation and to those whose benefit requests we adjudicate. The nature of our work is often complex, and we must never allow our work to be regarded solely in terms of production. We must carefully consider the benefit requests we receive and base our decisions on applicable laws, regulations, and policies. The American people, through Congress, have entrusted us with the stewardship of the legal immigration programs that allow foreign nationals to visit, work, live, and seek refuge in the United States. With pride in our purpose, USCIS seeks to ensure that those who naturalize are dedicated to this country, share our values, assimilate into our communities, and understand their responsibility to help preserve our freedom and liberty.



**U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services**

***“I think we do our best work at USCIS when we solve challenges together. For example, when our immigration policy experts and officers collaborate across the agency, we make our policies clearer to directly reflect U.S. immigration law. Our work starts in small work groups and ultimately affects millions of people around the world. It’s an awesome responsibility.”***

- An employee at USCIS’ Office of Policy and Strategy