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U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Office of Administrative Appeals MS 2090
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U.S. Citizenship
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FILE: WAC 08 146 50174 Office: CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER Date: NOV 30 2009

IN RE: Petitioner: [Redacted]
Beneficiary: [Redacted]

PETITION: Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker Pursuant to Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b)

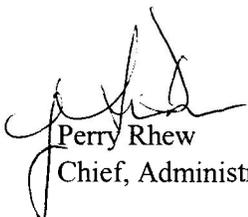
ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

SELF-REPRESENTED

INSTRUCTIONS:

This is the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All documents have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Any further inquiry must be made to that office.

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied or you have additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen. Please refer to 8 C.F.R. § 103.5 for the specific requirements. All motions must be submitted to the office that originally decided your case by filing a Form I-290B, Notice of Appeal or Motion, with a fee of \$585. Any motion must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider or reopen, as required by 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a)(1)(i).


Perry Rhew
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The Director, California Service Center, denied the nonimmigrant visa petition and the matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed. The petition will be denied.

The petitioner describes itself as a software development and consulting business and indicates that it currently employs 7 persons. It seeks to employ the beneficiary as a programmer/analyst. The petitioner, therefore, endeavors to classify the beneficiary as a nonimmigrant worker in a specialty occupation pursuant to section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b).

The director denied the petition because the petitioner failed to establish that it qualifies as a U.S. employer or agent, and that the proffered position qualifies as a specialty occupation.

On appeal, the petitioner's president states, in part, that the beneficiary will work on the petitioner's internal project and that the proffered programmer/analyst position qualifies as a specialty occupation. As supporting documentation, the petitioner submits: a "Tax Return Transcript" dated July 18, 2008, addressed to the petitioner from the IRS; information related to the petitioner's internal project, CAPSOL; and previously submitted documentation.

When filing the I-129 petition, the petitioner described itself in its March 28, 2008 letter of support as a business engaged in "computer software development and consulting services for various mid-size and large corporations." The petitioner stated, "Primarily we provide highly trained computer consultants to our clients to analyze their business problems and provide solutions through software systems applications designed to their specifications."

The director found the initial evidence insufficient to establish eligibility for the benefit sought, and issued a request for evidence (RFE) on June 16, 2008. In the request, the director asked the petitioner to submit additional evidence, including a complete itinerary for the beneficiary. The director requested documentation such as contractual agreements with the actual end-client firm where the beneficiary would work. The director also requested documentation such as: the petitioner's W-2 and W-3 wage and tax statements and federal income tax returns for 2006 and 2007; the petitioner's company profile; and the petitioner's lease agreement and business licenses.

In a letter dated July 1, 2008 from the petitioner submitted in response to the director's RFE, the beneficiary's duties are described as working at the petitioner's office in Mt. Prospect, Illinois "for [a] couple of months to get familiar with our clients, our consulting approach, and methodologies that we practice while providing our services to our clients." The petitioner also stated that the beneficiary would be working at Pepsico in Chicago, Illinois, and at Bayview Financial in Coral Gables, Florida. The petitioner submitted additional documentation, including: a "Third Party Sub Contract Agreement" dated March 18, 2008, between the petitioner and CAT Technology Inc., for the petitioner to supply CAT Technology Inc. personnel to perform IT consulting services, and a related work schedule, assigning another of the petitioner's employees to work at Merrill Lynch; a subcontractor agreement between the petitioner and Sherlock Technology, Inc., dated March 15, 2007, for the petitioner to provide consulting services to Sherlock Technology, Inc. and/or its clients,

and a related "Addendum 1," which is expired and assigns another of the petitioner's employees to work at Bayview Financial; and a "covenants agreement" dated July 11, 2007, related to an independent contractor agreement between the petitioner and ASAP Staffing, L.L.C., and a statement of work, assigning another the petitioner's employees to Pepsico in Chicago, Illinois.

On August 26, 2008, the director denied the petition. The director found that the petitioner had failed to establish that it qualifies as a U.S. employer or agent, and that the proffered position qualifies as a specialty occupation.

Section 214(i)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1184(i)(1), defines the term "specialty occupation" as an occupation that requires:

- (A) theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and
- (B) attainment of a bachelor's or higher degree in the specific specialty (or its equivalent) as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States.

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii):

Specialty occupation means an occupation which requires theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge in field of human endeavor including, but not limited to, architecture, engineering, mathematics, physical sciences, social sciences, medicine and health, education, business specialties, accounting, law, theology, and the arts, and which requires the attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States.

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A), to qualify as a specialty occupation, the position must meet one of the following criteria:

1. A baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent is normally the minimum requirement for entry into the particular position;
2. The degree requirement is common to the industry in parallel positions among similar organizations or, in the alternative, an employer may show that its particular position is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree;
3. The employer normally requires a degree or its equivalent for the position; or
4. The nature of the specific duties are so specialized and complex that knowledge required to perform the duties is usually associated with the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree.

As a threshold issue, it is noted that 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) must logically be read together with section 214(i)(1) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(i)(1), and 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii). In other words, this regulatory language must be construed in harmony with the thrust of the related provisions and with the statute as a whole. *See K Mart Corp. v. Cartier Inc.*, 486 U.S. 281, 291 (1988) (holding that construction of language which takes into account the design of the statute as a whole is preferred); *see also COIT Independence Joint Venture v. Federal Sav. and Loan Ins. Corp.*, 489 U.S. 561 (1989); *Matter of W-F-*, 21 I&N Dec. 503 (BIA 1996). As such, the criteria stated in 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) should logically be read as being necessary but not necessarily sufficient to meet the statutory and regulatory definition of specialty occupation. To otherwise interpret this section as stating the necessary *and* sufficient conditions for meeting the definition of specialty occupation would result in particular positions meeting a condition under 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) but not the statutory or regulatory definition. *See Defensor v. Meissner*, 201 F.3d 384, 387 (5th Cir. 2000). To avoid this illogical and absurd result, 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) must therefore be read as stating additional requirements that a position must meet, supplementing the statutory and regulatory definitions of specialty occupation.

Consonant with section 214(i)(1) of the Act and the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii), USCIS consistently interprets the term “degree” in the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) to mean not just any baccalaureate or higher degree, but one in a specific specialty that is directly related to the proffered position. Applying this standard, USCIS regularly approves H-1B petitions for qualified aliens who are to be employed as engineers, computer scientists, certified public accountants, college professors, and other such professions. These occupations all require a baccalaureate degree in the specific specialty as a minimum for entry into the occupation and fairly represent the types of professions that Congress contemplated when it created the H-1B visa category.

In addressing whether the proffered position is a specialty occupation, the record is unclear as to whether the beneficiary’s services would be that of a programmer/analyst.

The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iv) provides that “[a]n H-1B petition involving a specialty occupation shall be accompanied by [d]ocumentation . . . or any other required evidence sufficient to establish . . . that the services the beneficiary is to perform are in a specialty occupation.” Moreover, the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iv)(A)(1) specifically lists contracts as one of the types of evidence that may be required to establish that the services to be performed by the beneficiary will be in a specialty occupation.

The petitioner’s letter of support dated March 28, 2008 listing the beneficiary’s proposed duties has been reviewed. The proposed duties are summarized as follows: obtain system requirements for the design, development, and implementation of commercial software applications pursuant to user requirements; provide object-oriented programming analysis and design; program software applications for advanced client/server environments and database design; analyze, review, and alter programs to increase operating efficiency and/or to adapt to new requirements; plan, develop, test, and document computer programs; and optimize system performance and maintain compliance with user requirements.

On appeal, the petitioner states that the beneficiary will be working on the petitioner's internal project, CAPSOL. This information, however, conflicts with the information provided by the petitioner in its July 1, 2008 letter, namely that, after working for a couple of months in the petitioner's office, the beneficiary would be working at Pepsico in Chicago, Illinois, and at Bayview Financial in Coral Gables, Florida. It is incumbent upon the petitioner to resolve any inconsistencies in the record by independent objective evidence. Any attempt to explain or reconcile such inconsistencies will not suffice unless the petitioner submits competent objective evidence pointing to where the truth lies. *Matter of Ho*, 19 I&N Dec. 582, 591-92 (BIA 1988). Moreover, the record contains insufficient details regarding the actual duties the beneficiary would perform in the context of the CAPSOL project and/or the projects at Pepsico and Bayview Financial. As such, the record contains insufficient evidence of the specific duties to which the beneficiary would be assigned.

The record contains insufficient information regarding the nature of the beneficiary's proposed position and accompanying duties. As mentioned above, the record does not contain a detailed description of the beneficiary's duties in the context of the petitioner's internal project, CAPSOL. In addition, the record does not contain a detailed description of the beneficiary's duties from the actual end-clients, in this case, Pepsico and Bayview Financial. Without a comprehensive description of the specific project to which the beneficiary would be assigned and a detailed description of the beneficiary's proposed duties in relation to this project from the entity that requires the beneficiary's services, the petitioner fails to establish that the duties that the beneficiary would perform are those of a specialty occupation. Simply going on record without supporting documentary evidence is not sufficient for the purpose of meeting the burden of proof in these proceedings. *Matter of Soffici*, 22 I&N Dec. 158, 165 (Comm. 1998) (citing *Matter of Treasure Craft of California*, 14 I&N Dec. 190 (Reg. Comm. 1972)).

In support of this analysis, USCIS cites to *Defensor v. Meissner*, 201 F.3d 384 (5th Cir. 2000) (hereinafter "*Defensor*"), in which an examination of the ultimate employment of the beneficiary was deemed necessary to determine whether the position constitutes a specialty occupation. The petitioner in *Defensor*, Vintage Health Resources (Vintage), was a medical contract service agency that brought foreign nurses into the United States and located jobs for them at hospitals as registered nurses. The court in *Defensor* found that Vintage had "token degree requirements," to "mask the fact that nursing in general is not a specialty occupation." *Id.* at 387.

The court in *Defensor* held that for the purpose of determining whether a proffered position is a specialty occupation, the petitioner acting as an employment contractor is merely a "token employer," while the entity for which the services are to be performed is the "more relevant employer." *Id.* at 388. The *Defensor* court recognized that evidence of the client companies' job requirements is critical where the work is to be performed for entities other than the petitioner. The *Defensor* court held that the legacy Immigration and Naturalization Service had reasonably interpreted the statute and regulations as requiring the petitioner to produce evidence that a proffered position qualifies as a specialty occupation on the basis of the requirements imposed by the entities using the beneficiary's services. *Id.* In *Defensor*, the court found that that evidence of the client companies' job requirements is critical if the work is to be performed for entities other than the petitioner. *Id.*

In this matter, the job description provided by the petitioner indicates that the beneficiary would be working on client projects. Despite the director's specific request for documentation to establish the actual job duties in relation to those projects, however, the additional evidence submitted by the petitioner was insufficient. The AAO, therefore, cannot analyze whether the beneficiary's duties would require at least a baccalaureate degree or the equivalent in a specific specialty, as required for classification as a specialty occupation. Accordingly, the petitioner has not established that the proposed position qualifies as a specialty occupation under any of the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) or that the beneficiary would be coming temporarily to the United States to perform the duties of a specialty occupation as that term is defined at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii).

Although the director also denied the petition because the petitioner had not demonstrated it qualifies as a U.S. employer or agent, the AAO affirms, but shall not discuss, this additional issue because the petition is not approvable on the basis of the lack of a specialty occupation for the beneficiary.

In visa petition proceedings, the burden of proving eligibility for the benefit sought remains entirely with the petitioner. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. Here, that burden has not been met.

ORDER: The director's decision is affirmed. The petition is denied.