



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

(b)(6)

DATE: **SEP 08 2014** OFFICE: CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER FILE: [REDACTED]

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)

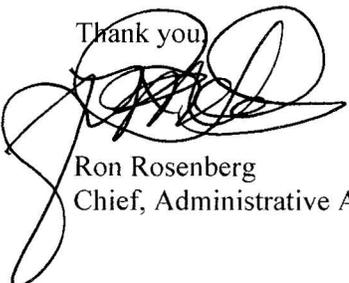
ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

INSTRUCTIONS:

Enclosed please find the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) in your case.

This is a non-precedent decision. The AAO does not announce new constructions of law nor establish agency policy through non-precedent decisions. If you believe the AAO incorrectly applied current law or policy to your case or if you seek to present new facts for consideration, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen, respectively. Any motion must be filed on a Notice of Appeal or Motion (Form I-290B) within 33 days of the date of this decision. **Please review the Form I-290B instructions at <http://www.uscis.gov/forms> for the latest information on fee, filing location, and other requirements. See also 8 C.F.R. § 103.5. Do not file a motion directly with the AAO.**

Thank you


Ron Rosenberg
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The director initially approved the nonimmigrant visa petition. Upon subsequent review of the record, the director issued a notice of intent to revoke (NOIR) the approval of the petition, and ultimately did revoke the approval of the petition. The matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed. The approval of the petition remains revoked.

I. FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The petitioner submitted a Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker (Form I-129) to the California Service Center. In the Form I-129 petition and supporting documentation, the petitioner describes itself as a computer and software consultancy firm established in 1994. Seeking to employ the beneficiary in what it designates as a systems analyst position, the petitioner filed this H-1B petition in an endeavor to classify him 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).

In the Form I-129 petition, the petitioner stated that it seeks the beneficiary's services as a systems analyst on a full-time basis.¹ The petitioner stated that the beneficiary would be employed at [REDACTED] facility (the end-client). On the Form I-129, the petitioner identified an address in [REDACTED] California ([REDACTED] CA Metropolitan Statistical Area) as the beneficiary's place of employment.² On the Labor Condition Application (LCA), the petitioner indicated an address in [REDACTED] California ([REDACTED] CA Metropolitan Division) as the beneficiary's place of employment.³ The petitioner did not request other worksites and did not submit an itinerary. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(2)(i)(B) (requiring an itinerary for services performed in more than one location).

¹ It must be noted for the record that the petitioner has provided inconsistent information regarding the beneficiary's rate of pay. In the Form I-129, the petitioner indicated that the beneficiary would be paid \$64,200 per year. On the Labor Condition Application (LCA), the petitioner stated that the beneficiary would be compensated at the rate of \$54,579 per year. In response to the NOIR, the petitioner submitted (1) a letter claiming that the beneficiary received a guaranteed annual salary of at least \$74,100; (2) a new LCA, which indicated the beneficiary's annual salary as \$40,581; and (3) a Form W-2, Wage and Tax Statement indicated that he beneficiary was paid \$52,416 in 2012. Further, counsel asserted that the beneficiary's guaranteed annual salary was \$64,100. No explanation for the variances was provided by the petitioner.

² With certain limited exceptions, the applicable U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) regulations define the term "place of employment" as the worksite or physical location where the work actually is performed by the H-1B nonimmigrant. *See* 20 C.F.R. § 655.715. The Office of Management and Budget established Metropolitan Statistical Areas to provide nationally consistent geographic delineations for collecting, tabulating and publishing statistics. *See* 44 U.S.C. § 3504(e)(3); 31 U.S.C. § 1104(d); Exec. Order No. 10,253, 16 Fed. Reg. 5605 (June 11, 1951); 75 Fed. Reg. 37,246, 37,246-252 (2010) (discussing and defining, *inter alia*, Metropolitan Statistical Areas).

³ We observe that the petitioner provided inconsistent information regarding the beneficiary's place of employment. No explanation for the variance was provided by the petitioner.

After the petition was approved, an administrative site visit was conducted.⁴ The site inspector made contact with the end-client's receptionist, who had no knowledge of the beneficiary. The site inspector sent an email to the petitioner. The petitioner's response indicated that the beneficiary began working on a different project in another state approximately two months after the H-1B petition was approved.

The director reviewed the site visit report and the record of proceeding and issued a NOIR. The NOIR provided a detailed statement of the revocation grounds, and afforded the petitioner an opportunity to provide a rebuttal. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(11)(iii)(B). In response, the petitioner confirmed that the beneficiary was not working on the project or at the location specified in the original petition when the site visit was conducted, but rather for [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] Arkansas. The petitioner supplied an LCA that provided a new worksite – in [REDACTED] Arkansas ([REDACTED] AR-MO Metropolitan Statistical Area) - as the beneficiary's place of employment. The worksite is located in a metropolitan statistical area differing from the worksite listed on the original petition.

The director concluded that the change in the place of employment of the beneficiary constituted a material change to the terms and conditions of the beneficiary's employment as specified in the original petition. Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(2)(i)(E), the petitioner was required to file an amended Form I-129 reflecting this change, and to which the newly submitted LCA corresponded. The petitioner failed to file an amended petition, and the director revoked the approval of the petition. Thereafter, counsel for the petitioner submitted an appeal.

II. THE LCA AND H-1B VISA PETITION PROCESS

In pertinent part, the Act defines an H-1B nonimmigrant worker as:

[A]n alien . . . who is coming temporarily to the United States to perform services . . . in a specialty occupation described in section 214(i)(1) . . . who meets the requirements for the occupation specified in section 214(i)(2) . . . and with respect to whom *the Secretary of Labor determines and certifies to the [Secretary of Homeland Security] that the intending employer has filed with the Secretary [of Labor] an application under section 212(n)(1)*

Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Act (emphasis added).⁵

⁴ USCIS must be able to verify the information provided in the petition to further determine eligibility for an immigration benefit and/or compliance with applicable laws and authorities. To that end, agency verification methods may include but are not limited to review of public records and information; contact via written correspondence, the Internet, facsimile or other electronic transmission, or telephone; unannounced physical site inspections; and interviews. *See* 8 C.F.R. §§ 103, 204, 205, and 214, 8 U.S.C. §§ 1103, 1155, 1184.

⁵ In accordance with section 1517 of title XV of the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (HSA), Pub. L. No. 107-296, 116 Stat. 2135, any reference to the Attorney General in a provision of the Act describing functions which were transferred from the Attorney General or other U.S. Department of Justice official to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) by the HSA "shall be deemed to refer to the Secretary" of

In turn, section 212(n)(1)(A) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1182(n)(1)(A), requires an employer to pay an H-1B worker the higher of either the prevailing wage for the occupational classification in the "area of employment" or the actual wage paid by the employer to other employees with similar experience and qualifications who are performing the same services.⁶ See 20 C.F.R. § 655.731(a); *Venkatraman v. REI Sys., Inc.*, 417 F.3d 418, 422 & n.3 (4th Cir. 2005); *Michal Vojtisek-Lom & Adm'r Wage & Hour Div. v. Clean Air Tech. Int'l, Inc.*, No. 07-97, 2009 WL 2371236, at *8 (Dep't of Labor Admin. Rev. Bd. July 30, 2009).

Implemented through the LCA certification process, section 212(n)(1) is intended to protect U.S. workers' wages by eliminating economic incentives or advantages in hiring temporary foreign workers. See, e.g., 65 Fed. Reg. 80,110, 80,110-111, 80,202 (2000). The LCA currently requires petitioners to describe, *inter alia*, the number of workers sought, the pertinent visa classification for such workers, their job title and occupational classification, the prevailing wage, the actual rate of pay, and the place(s) of employment.

To promote the U.S. worker protection goals of a statutory and regulatory scheme that allocates responsibilities sequentially between the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), a prospective employer must file an LCA and receive certification from DOL before an H-1B petition may be submitted to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(i)(B)(1); 20 C.F.R. § 655.700(b)(2).⁷ If an employer does not submit the LCA to USCIS in support of a new or amended H-1B petition, the process is incomplete and the LCA is not certified to the Secretary of Homeland Security. See section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Act; 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(i)(B)(1); 20 C.F.R. § 655.700(b); see also 56 Fed. Reg. 37,175, 37,177 (1991); 57 Fed. Reg. 1316, 1318 (1992) (discussing filing sequence).

In the event of a material change to the terms and conditions of employment specified in the original petition, the petitioner must file an amended or new petition with USCIS with a corresponding LCA. Specifically, the pertinent regulation requires:

The petitioner shall file an amended or new petition, with fee, with the Service Center where the original petition was filed to reflect any material changes in the terms and conditions of employment or training or the alien's eligibility as specified

Homeland Security. See 6 U.S.C. § 557 (2003) (codifying HSA, tit. XV, § 1517); 6 U.S.C. § 542 note; 8 U.S.C. § 1551 note.

⁶ The prevailing wage may be determined based on the arithmetic mean of the wages of workers similarly employed in the area of intended employment. 20 C.F.R. § 655.731(a)(2)(ii).

⁷ Upon receiving DOL's certification, the prospective employer then submits the certified LCA to USCIS with an H-1B petition on behalf of a specific worker. 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(2)(i)(A), (2)(i)(E), (4)(iii)(B)(1). DOL reviews LCAs "for completeness and obvious inaccuracies," and will certify the LCA absent a determination that the application is incomplete or obviously inaccurate. Section 212(n)(1)(G)(ii) of the Act. In contrast, USCIS must determine whether the attestations and content of an LCA correspond to and support the H-1B visa petition, including the specific place of employment. 20 C.F.R. § 655.705(b); see generally 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(i)(B).

in the original approved petition. An amended or new H-1C, H-1B, H-2A, or H-2B petition must be accompanied by a current or new Department of Labor determination. *In the case of an H-1B petition, this requirement includes a new labor condition application.*

8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(2)(i)(E) (emphasis added). Furthermore, petitioners must "immediately notify the Service of any changes in the terms and conditions of employment of a beneficiary which may affect eligibility" for H-1B status and, if they will continue to employ the beneficiary, file an amended petition. 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(11)(i)(A).

A change in the place of employment of a beneficiary to a geographical area requiring a corresponding LCA be certified to DHS with respect to that beneficiary may affect eligibility for H-1B status and is, therefore, a material change for purposes of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(2)(i)(E) and (11)(i)(A).⁸ When there is a material change in the terms and conditions of employment, the petitioner must file an amended or new H-1B petition with the corresponding LCA. 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(2)(i)(E).

As previously noted, the petitioner has provided inconsistent information regarding the beneficiary's place of employment. In the Form I-129, the petitioner claimed that the beneficiary's place of employment was located in [REDACTED] California ([REDACTED] CA Metropolitan Statistical Area). However, in the certified LCA, the petitioner indicated the beneficiary's place of employment as [REDACTED], California ([REDACTED] CA Metropolitan Division). After conducting the site visit, USCIS determined that the beneficiary was not employed at either location. In response to the director's NOIR, the petitioner stated that the beneficiary had been employed in [REDACTED], Arkansas (at a location not designated on the petition and LCA).⁹

⁸ This interpretation of the regulations clarifies but does not depart from the agency's past policy pronouncements that "the mere transfer of the beneficiary to another work site, in the same occupation, does not require the filing of an amended petition provided the initial petitioner remains the alien's employer and, provided further, the supporting labor condition application remains valid." *See, e.g.*, Memorandum from T. Alexander Aleinikoff, Exec. Assoc. Comm'r, Office of Programs, Immigration and Naturalization Serv., Amended H-1B Petitions 1-2 (Aug. 22, 1996), 73 *Interpreter Releases* No. 35, 1222, 1231-32 (Sept. 16, 1996); *see also* 63 Fed. Reg. 30,419, 30,420 (1998) (stating in pertinent part that the "proposed regulation would not relieve the petitioner of its responsibility to file an amended petition when required, for example, when the beneficiary's transfer to a new work site necessitates the filing of a new labor condition application"). To the extent any previous agency statements may be construed as contrary to this decision, *see, e.g.*, Letter from Efren Hernandez III, Dir., Bus. and Trade Branch, USCIS to Lynn Shotwell, Am. Council on Int'l Pers., Inc. (Oct. 23, 2003), those statements are hereby superseded. We need not decide here whether, for purposes of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(2)(i)(E), there may be material changes in terms and conditions of employment that do not affect the alien's eligibility for H-1B status but nonetheless require the filing of an amended or new petition.

⁹ The record here indicates that the new place of employment was not a short-term placement. *See generally* 20 C.F.R. §§ 655.715, 655.735. The petitioner did not claim, and we do not find, that this new work location falls under a "non-worksites" location as described at 20 C.F.R. § 655.715 or a short-term placement or assignment as described at 20 C.F.R. § 655.735.

A change in the terms and conditions of employment of a beneficiary which may affect eligibility under section 101(a)(15)(H) of the Act is a material change. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(2)(i)(E); *see also id.* § 214.2(h)(11)(i)(A) (requiring that a petitioner file an amended petition to notify USCIS of any material changes affecting eligibility of continued employment or be subject to revocation).¹⁰

Because section 212(n) of the Act ties the prevailing wage to the "area of employment," a change in the beneficiary's place of employment to a geographical area not covered in the original LCA would be material for both the LCA and the Form I-129 visa petition, as such a change may affect eligibility under section 101(a)(15)(H) of the Act. *See, e.g.,* 20 C.F.R. § 655.735(f). If, for example, the prevailing wage is higher at the new place of employment, the beneficiary's eligibility for continued employment in H-1B status will depend on whether his or her wage for the work performed at the new location will be sufficient. As such, for an LCA to be effective and correspond to an H-1B petition, it must specify the beneficiary's place(s) of employment.¹¹

Having materially changed the beneficiary's authorized place of employment to a geographical area not covered by the original LCA, the petitioner was required to immediately notify USCIS and file an amended or new H-1B petition, along with a corresponding LCA certified by DOL, with both documents indicating the relevant change.¹² 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(2)(i)(E), (h)(11)(i)(A). By failing to file an amended petition with a new LCA, or by attempting to submit a preexisting LCA that has never been certified to USCIS with respect to a specific worker, a petitioner may impede efforts to verify wages and working conditions. Full compliance with the LCA and H-1B petition process, including adhering to the proper sequence of submissions to DOL and USCIS, is critical to the U.S. worker protection scheme established in the Act and necessary for H-1B visa petition approval.

III. CONCLUSION AND ORDER

The appeal will be dismissed for the above stated reasons. It is the petitioner's burden to establish eligibility for the immigration benefit sought. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361; *Matter of*

¹⁰ The record here indicates that the new place of employment was not a short-term placement. *See generally* 20 C.F.R. §§ 655.715, 655.735. We do not find that the new work location falls under a "non-worksites" location as described at 20 C.F.R. § 655.715 or short-term placement or assignment as described at 20 C.F.R. § 655.735.

¹¹ A change in the beneficiary's place of employment may impact other eligibility criteria, as well. For example, at the time of filing, the petitioner must have complied with the DOL posting requirements at 20 C.F.R. § 655.734. Additionally, if the beneficiary will be performing services in more than one location, the petitioner must submit an itinerary with the petition listing the dates and locations. 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(2)(i)(B); *see also id.* § 103.2(b)(1).

¹² Here, the petitioner submitted an LCA certified for the beneficiary's place of employment in [REDACTED] AR in response to the NOIR. The LCA was not previously certified to USCIS with respect to the beneficiary and, therefore, it had to be submitted to USCIS as part of an amended or new petition before the beneficiary would be permitted to begin working in that place of employment. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(2)(i)(E).

Skirball Cultural Ctr., 25 I&N Dec. 799, 806 (AAO 2012). Here, that burden has not been met. We will affirm the decision of the director. The Form I-129 petition's approval is revoked pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(11)(iii)(A)(1), (A)(3), and (A)(4).¹³

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.

¹³ As the discussed ground for revocation is dispositive of the petitioner's continued eligibility, we need not address any additional issues in the record of proceeding.