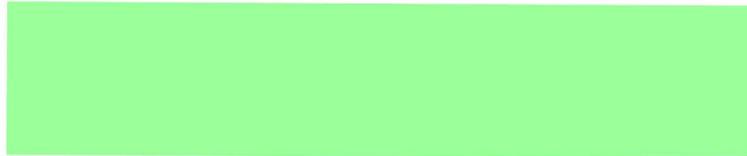




U.S. Citizenship
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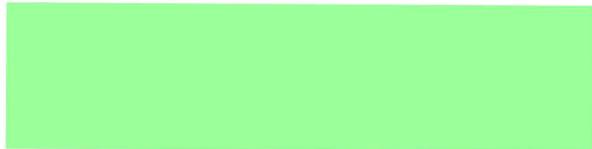


DATE: **JUN 17 2013** Office: VERMONT SERVICE CENTER FILE:

IN RE: Petitioner:
Beneficiary:

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

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:



INSTRUCTIONS:

Enclosed please find the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All of the documents related to this matter have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Please be advised that any further inquiry that you might have concerning your case must be made to that office.

If you believe the law was inappropriately applied by us in reaching our decision, or you have additional information that you wish to have considered, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen in accordance with the instructions on Form I-290B, Notice of Appeal or Motion, with a fee of \$630. The specific requirements for filing such a request can be found at 8 C.F.R. § 103.5. **Do not file any motion directly with the AAO.** Please be aware that 8 C.F.R. § 103.5(a)(1)(i) requires that any motion must be filed within 30 days of the decision that the motion seeks to reconsider or reopen.

Thank you,

Ron Rosenberg
Acting Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The Director, Vermont 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 filed the nonimmigrant petition to classify the beneficiary as an intracompany transferee pursuant to section 101(a)(15)(L) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(L). The petitioner is a computer software development and consultancy company with an affiliate, [REDACTED], located in India. It seeks to employ the beneficiary in the specialized knowledge position of programmer analyst, and intends to assign him to work primarily offsite at the offices of [REDACTED] for a period of three years.

The director denied the petition, concluding that the petitioner failed to establish that the beneficiary has been employed abroad or would be employed in the United States in a specialized knowledge capacity.

The petitioner subsequently filed an appeal. The director declined to treat the appeal as a motion and forwarded the appeal to the AAO. On appeal, counsel for the petitioner asserts that the record contains ample evidence establishing that the beneficiary was employed abroad and will be employed in the United States in a specialized knowledge capacity. Counsel submits a brief and additional documentation in support of the appeal.

I. The Law

To establish eligibility for the L-1 nonimmigrant visa classification, the petitioner must meet the criteria outlined in section 101(a)(15)(L) of the Act. Specifically, a qualifying organization must have employed the beneficiary in a qualifying managerial or executive capacity, or in a specialized knowledge capacity, for one continuous year within the three years preceding the beneficiary's application for admission into the United States. In addition, the beneficiary must seek to enter the U.S. temporarily to continue rendering his or her services to the same employer or a parent, subsidiary, or affiliate of the foreign employer.

If the beneficiary will be serving the United States employer in a managerial or executive capacity, a qualified beneficiary may be classified as an L-1A nonimmigrant alien. If a qualified beneficiary will be rendering services in a capacity that involves "specialized knowledge," the beneficiary may be classified as an L-1B nonimmigrant alien. *Id.*

Section 214(c)(2)(B) of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1184(c)(2)(B), provides the statutory definition of specialized knowledge:

For purposes of section 101(a)(15)(L), an alien is considered to be serving in a capacity involving specialized knowledge with respect to a company if the alien has a special knowledge of the company product and its application in international markets or has an advanced level of knowledge of processes and procedures of the company.

Furthermore, the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(1)(ii)(D) defines specialized knowledge as:

[S]pecial knowledge possessed by an individual of the petitioning organization's product, service, research, equipment, techniques, management or other interests and its application in international markets, or an advanced level of knowledge or expertise in the organization's processes and procedures.

The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(3) states that an individual petition filed on Form I-129 shall be accompanied by:

- (i) Evidence that the petitioner and the organization which employed or will employ the alien are qualifying organizations as defined in paragraph (l)(1)(ii)(G) of this section.
- (ii) Evidence that the alien will be employed in an executive, managerial, or specialized knowledge capacity, including a detailed description of the services to be performed.
- (iii) Evidence that the alien has at least one continuous year of full-time employment abroad with a qualifying organization within the three years preceding the filing of the petition.
- (iv) Evidence that the alien's prior year of employment abroad was in a position that was managerial, executive or involved specialized knowledge and that the alien's prior education, training and employment qualifies him/her to perform the intended services in the United States; however the work in the United States need not be the same work which the alien performed abroad.

II. The Issues on Appeal

The issues to be addressed are whether the petitioner established that the beneficiary was employed abroad and will be employed in the United States in a specialized knowledge capacity.

The petitioner stated on the Form I-129, Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker, that it has more than 60,000 employees worldwide and approximately 12,000 in the United States. In a letter of support appended to the petition, the petitioner averred that it is a "leading provider of custom information technology ("IT") design, development, integration, and maintenance services primarily for 'Fortune 1,000' companies." Regarding its business model, the petitioner stated as follows:

[The petitioner] designs, engineers, and implements business solutions on a project basis for companies that are not in the IT sector. Generally, [the petitioner] does not provide staff augmentation for clients in the IT service sector. Rather, [the petitioner's] employees work directly for [the petitioner] on projects designed and built by our company, and under the direct and primary supervision of one or more [project managers for the petitioner] who typically oversee projects onsite. All projects are completely managed by [the petitioner].

Accordingly, the petitioner is **not** a placement company, nor an agent that arranges short-term employment.

(Emphasis in original).

The petitioner also described the on-site/offshore model it uses to provide clients with IT solutions and services, noting that the company "typically assigns U.S.-based client site project leaders who have an advanced level of knowledge of [the petitioner's] proprietary tools and systems, as well as experience in key roles on other projects in which [the petitioner's] onsite/offshore methodology was implemented."

With regard to the beneficiary's position, the petitioner stated that he would be employed as a programmer analyst working on the [redacted] Claim Handling project for the petitioner's client, [redacted]. The petitioner explained that this project is a multi-year program that will implement an "End to End" solution for each line of business in several releases. The petitioner noted that the Claim Handling project to which he would be working is the same project to which the beneficiary is currently assigned at the petitioner's offices in India. Regarding the beneficiary's physical worksite, the petitioner claimed that he would work onsite at the client's location in Hartford, Connecticut.

The petitioner explained that in providing solutions to [redacted] its project teams and the constituent professionals allotted to each project would develop a specific domain, also referred to as "an area of control" or "sphere of knowledge," particular to a specific project. The petitioner further stated that, from project to project, the technology spectrum is quite disparate and may involve any combination of technologies including application servers, products and data warehouse tools, databases, languages, multiple platforms, and other complex systems. The petitioner indicated that this Claim Handling project involves migrating 5 of the client's Claim Systems developed in the V10 framework to an enhanced V12 .Net framework.

According to the beneficiary's resume submitted in support of the petition, the beneficiary has worked on the Claim Handling project for [redacted] for the past year while employed with the petitioner's Indian affiliate.

The petitioner provided background information regarding the Claim Handling project and the beneficiary's work on this project while in India. Specifically, the petitioner stated;

While currently working on this project in India, as a Programmer Analyst, [the beneficiary] is working with a team of software professionals at our client site to study the various internal systems of the client. He leads a team of 5 resources. When the project initially started with two resources, one at offshore and one at Onsite, [the beneficiary] was representing the offshore. After his [successful] completion of the Pilot Iteration, the project grew with many resources. Hence he is a spear head to the [redacted] Claim Handling project. He possesses strong knowledge in the migration techniques using in this project by the client. With that knowledge, he is performing the requirements study for the maintenance work that is proposed to be done in the offshore development center of [the foreign entity]. He is coordinating the offshore activities from our center in Chennai. [The beneficiary] is closely working with the client business team to understand the business requirement and raise

queries/ambiguities in the business requirement. He is effectively using the IMS database and DB2 database (application database) using the AQT tool as he possesses the working experience with the tool. [The beneficiary] possesses a strong knowledge in the applications like Impact, Claim net home & several other applications. With this acquired knowledge[,] he is involved in the review of test scenarios, cases, execution & status reporting.

The petitioner also provided additional details regarding the beneficiary's employment history, noting that the beneficiary has been working on various projects for [redacted] since April 2007, and prior to that he worked on other projects in the petitioner's insurance industry vertical. Regarding the beneficiary's proposed transfer to the United States, the petitioner stated that the purpose of the transfer was to bring expertise to the U.S. that is not commonly held throughout the petitioner. The petitioner stated that the beneficiary would apply the advanced and special knowledge he gained while working on the Claims Handling project abroad, and described the duties to be performed in the United States as follows:

Test Planning (5%)

- Preparation of Test Strategy
- Preparation of Test Plan
- Preparation of Test Approach document

Requirements Gathering (25%)

- Analyze the Business Rules from existing V10 systems
- Analyze the existing artifacts provided by the Business team and select the valid testable requirements
- Prepare the Rules document

Onsite-Offshore coordination (40%)

- Allocate tasks to offshore team based on Iteration Plan
- Reporting the process of the project to the client daily/weekly/monthly basis using QC extractor, a customized tool for [redacted]
- Collect Project Metrics based on the progress
- Provide KT to Offshore team about the requirements
- Provide clarifications to the ambiguities
- Performing Requirement Traceability Matrix using Quality Center tool

Test Design (10%)

- Prepare Test Matrix using the Business Rules document and get signoff from the Business Team
- Generate test cases from the signed-off Test Matrix
- Prepare Test data for each of the test case generated using AQT (advanced Query Tool)

Test Execution (10%)

- Execute the Test cases and run them in Quality Center
- Log defects in Quality Center and tracking the same to closure
- Prepare Test Summary Reports on the actual results generated during test execution

Defect Triaging (10%)

- Participate in the Defect Triage meeting and discuss about each defect
- Assign severity to each defect
- Perform Defect Trend Analysis

The petitioner also stated that due to the complexity of the beneficiary's knowledge, it is "difficult to impart it to another [] associate without long-term assignment to the ongoing [redacted] Claim Handling project for the [redacted] Company, which would cause [the petitioner] and [redacted] Company significant economic inconvenience."

In addition, the petitioner stated that to serve as a programmer analyst on the [redacted] Claim Handling project, an individual must have advanced and special knowledge of various technologies and processes Impact, Travpro, Tmate, C Track, Claim Portal, PERS Editor, Innovision, HP Quality Center, and File Aid. The petitioner provided brief descriptions of these processes and noted that the knowledge required for the position is "highly technical knowledge" which is "held by only certain individuals at Programmer Analyst or higher level on the [redacted] Claim Handling projects" and "not commonly held" throughout the company. The petitioner stated that the beneficiary gained in-depth knowledge of these processes while working on various projects for Travelers, and further claimed that this knowledge is not generally known within the petitioner or outside of the petitioner in the industry in general.

Finally, the petitioner claimed that the beneficiary completed 238 training hours as part of a formal training program and also acquired specialized knowledge through "informal trainings, knowledge transfer sessions and on the job experience using [the petitioner's] systems and tools." The petitioner identified the following training courses:

1. Entry Level Training Program (144 hours)
2. Quality Center - Elearning (10 hours)
3. Insurance Claims (eLearning) (15 hours)
4. Process Training (6 hours)
5. Six-Sigma Yellow Belt Training (4 hours)
6. Requirements Management (15 hours)
7. Fundamentals of XML (4 hours)
8. Quick Test Professional (40 hours)

The petitioner's supporting evidence included the beneficiary's detailed resume and evidence that the beneficiary completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Physics. On his resume, the beneficiary lists his technical skills as: Windows Families, MS-Dos, C, C++, Java, Visual C#, SQL Server, ORACLE 10i, DB2, QTP 9.2, Test Director 8.0, SQL Query Analyzer, Q-VIEW, Q-SMART, and Ms-Office 2003 and 2007. He further states that he has approximately 40 months of overall IT experience. The resume also includes a

description of the [REDACTED] Claim Handling project and other projects to which the beneficiary has been assigned since the start of his employment with the petitioner.

The director found the initial evidence insufficient to establish eligibility, and consequently issued a request for additional evidence (RFE). The director instructed the petitioner to submit additional evidence to show that the beneficiary's knowledge is not commonly held by practitioners in the field. The director requested that the petitioner describe a typical work day, highlighting specific duties that require an individual with specialized knowledge. The director also requested, *inter alia*, further documentation with respect to the training provided to the beneficiary, information regarding the amount of time required to train an employee to fill the proffered position, and the number of similarly trained workers within the organization.

In response, the petitioner explained that the beneficiary, while working on the [REDACTED] Claim Handling project in India, "has accumulated project and technology specific expertise that is advanced and special." The petitioner noted that he "gained his advanced and special knowledge by performing requirement studies and by developing and implementing several highly sophisticated application support modules." The petitioner also supplemented the previously-submitted description of the beneficiary's proposed duties in the United States with specific references to processes and technologies the beneficiary would implement. In addition, the petitioner claimed that the primary difference between the beneficiary's employment abroad and in the United States would focus on Onsite-Offshore Coordination, noting that 25% of the beneficiary's time would be devoted to this task as opposed to primarily performing project management duties. The petitioner provided a list of its employees currently assigned to the project, noting that the beneficiary would work on a team with seven individuals, and would supervise three additional employees. Out of these ten individuals, four are Offshore QA Leads and one is an Offshore QA Lead trainee, positions similar to that of the beneficiary.¹ The petitioner claims that the beneficiary's services are distinguishable from these other individuals by virtue of his ability to handle all of their functions as well as testing functions, which the petitioner claims these employees are not able to perform.

The petitioner went on to further describe the beneficiary's training, noting most of the beneficiary's knowledge has come from his experience working on the [REDACTED] Handling project as well as from past company projects since the commencement of his employment with the petitioner in September 2006. Nevertheless, the petitioner's letter included the same course listings previously submitted in support of the petition, as well as a training certificate which provided the course names included in the beneficiary's "entry-level training program." The petitioner noted that in addition to formal classroom instruction, training on the petitioner's proprietary project management tools and techniques is also needed.

Finally, the petitioner stated that there are 1,192 Offshore QA Leads in the U.S. workforce, and 119 of these employees work in its insurance vertical. The petitioner also indicated that the beneficiary's technical training and experience go beyond the elementary /introductory level and, as a result, it would pose hardship to the petitioner and the client to attempt to train a new individual to perform the beneficiary's duties.

¹ It is noted that the petitioner interchangeably refers to the beneficiary as an "Offshore QA Lead" as opposed to a programmer analyst throughout the petition.

In summary, the petitioner claimed that the beneficiary's special and advanced knowledge may only be attained within the petitioner through direct work experience with the petitioner's process and tools and through project work for its clients such as [REDACTED] along with similar training to that of the beneficiary.

The director denied the petition, concluding that the petitioner failed to establish that the beneficiary possesses specialized knowledge or that it will employ him in a capacity requiring specialized knowledge. In denying the petition, the director noted that the beneficiary's knowledge of the [REDACTED] Claim Handling project and the processes and procedures used on this project appeared to be related more to internal [REDACTED] procedures than to proprietary tools and processes of the petitioner. The director concluded by stating that the beneficiary's knowledge did not appear to be distinguishable from other similarly-employed individuals in the industry.

On appeal, counsel for the petitioner asserts that the director's decision was erroneous, contending that the petitioner has submitted sufficient and detailed evidence of the beneficiary's specialized knowledge and the specialized knowledge capacity of the proposed position.

III. Analysis

Upon review, the petitioner's assertions are not persuasive. The AAO finds insufficient evidence to establish that the beneficiary has been or will be employed in a specialized knowledge position.

In order to establish eligibility for the L-1B visa classification, the petitioner must show that the individual has been and will be employed in a specialized knowledge capacity. 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(3)(ii). The statutory definition of specialized knowledge at section 214(c)(2)(B) of the Act is comprised of two equal but distinct subparts. First, an individual is considered to be employed in a capacity involving specialized knowledge if that person "has a special knowledge of the company product and its application in international markets." Second, an individual is considered to be serving in a capacity involving specialized knowledge if that person "has an advanced level of knowledge of processes and procedures of the company." *See also* 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(1)(ii)(D). The petitioner may establish eligibility by submitting evidence that the beneficiary and the proffered position satisfy either prong of the definition.

USCIS cannot make a factual determination regarding the beneficiary's specialized knowledge if the petitioner does not, at a minimum, articulate with specificity the nature of the claimed specialized knowledge, describe how such knowledge is typically gained within the organization, and explain how and when the beneficiary gained such knowledge. Once the petitioner articulates the nature of the claimed specialized knowledge, it is the weight and type of evidence which establishes whether or not the beneficiary actually possesses specialized knowledge. *See Matter of Chawathe*, 25 I&N Dec. 369, 376 (AAO 2010). The director must examine each piece of evidence for relevance, probative value, and credibility, both individually and within the context of the totality of the evidence, to determine whether the fact to be proven is probably true. *Id.*

As both "special" and "advanced" are relative terms, determining whether a given beneficiary's knowledge is "special" or "advanced" inherently requires a comparison of the beneficiary's knowledge against that of others

in the petitioning company and/or against others holding comparable positions in the industry. The ultimate question is whether the petitioner has met its burden of demonstrating by a preponderance of the evidence that the beneficiary's knowledge or expertise is special or advanced, and that the beneficiary's position requires such knowledge.

Turning to the question of whether the petitioner established that the beneficiary possesses specialized knowledge and will be employed in a capacity requiring specialized knowledge, upon review, the petitioner has not demonstrated that this employee possesses knowledge that may be deemed "special" or "advanced" under the statutory definition at section 214(c)(2)(B) of the Act, or that the petitioner will employ the beneficiary in a capacity requiring specialized knowledge.

A. Description of Job Duties

In examining the specialized knowledge of the beneficiary, the AAO will look to the petitioner's description of the job duties and the weight of the evidence supporting any asserted specialized knowledge. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(l)(3)(ii). The petitioner must submit a detailed job description of the services to be performed sufficient to establish specialized knowledge. *Id.* Merely asserting that the beneficiary possesses "special" or "advanced" knowledge will not suffice to meet the petitioner's burden of proof.

The description of duties that the petitioner provided for the proffered position is entirely vague and generic. First, the AAO notes that the description does not appear to apply specifically to the [REDACTED] Claim Handling project, the claimed overseas source of the beneficiary's specialized knowledge. While the description of the overseas position clearly conveys that the beneficiary worked on the [REDACTED] Claim Project and various [REDACTED] projects, the description of the proffered position includes no specific reference to similar details. Instead, the description is nonspecific. The petitioner's description of duties, therefore, does little to clarify exactly what knowledge is required for performance of the role of programmer analyst, or how such knowledge will be applied. Specifics are plainly an important indication of whether a beneficiary's duties involve specialized knowledge; otherwise, meeting the definitions would simply be a matter of reiterating the regulations. *See Fedin Bros. Co., Ltd. v. Sava*, 724, F. Supp. 1103 (E.D.N.Y. 1989), *aff'd*, 905, F.2d 41 (2d. Cir. 1990).

The petitioner fails to adequately articulate or document the manner in which the beneficiary has been and will be employed in a specialized knowledge capacity. Going on record without documentary evidence is not sufficient for purposes of meeting the burden of proof in these proceedings. *Matter of Soffici*, 22 I&N Dec. 158, 165 (Comm'r. 1998) (citing *Matter of Treasure Craft of California*, 14 I&N Dec. 190 (Reg. Comm'r. 1972)).

B. Proprietary Tools And Methodologies

With regard to the specific claims on appeal, both counsel and the petitioner continually assert that the proffered position requires project-specific knowledge that the beneficiary gained in India and experience with the petitioner's internal processes and procedures. They conclude that the duties of the proffered position

could not be performed by the typical skilled programmer analyst specializing in either the petitioner's insurance vertical or in that industry in general.

The question before the AAO is whether the beneficiary's knowledge of and experience with the petitioner's proprietary tools, processes and methodologies, by itself, constitutes specialized knowledge. The current statutory and regulatory definitions of "specialized knowledge" do not include a requirement that the beneficiary's knowledge be proprietary. However, the petitioner might satisfy the current standard by establishing that the beneficiary's purported specialized knowledge is proprietary, as long as the petitioner demonstrates that the knowledge is either "special" or "advanced." By itself, simply claiming that knowledge is proprietary will not satisfy the statutory standard.

The proprietary specialized knowledge in this matter is stated to include proprietary tools and methodologies developed by the petitioner for the management of the company's software and systems development projects. Initially, in its letter in support of the Form I-129, the petitioner unequivocally stated that in order to serve as a programmer analyst on the [REDACTED] Claim Handling project, a programmer analyst must have "advanced and special knowledge" of various technologies and processes, including third party tools such as File-Aid, a proprietary tool developed by IBM, and Microsoft VC++.

Additionally, the petitioner provided the beneficiary's resume for the record. The AAO notes that while the beneficiary may in fact use the petitioner's internal tools to track his project activities, little or no company-specific knowledge is mentioned in his resume. For example, the beneficiary lists the [REDACTED] Claim Handling project for [REDACTED] on his resume yet indicates that the project was executed using knowledge of third-party technologies such as .Net, Java, MS-Office and Microsoft Visual Source Safe.

The petitioner emphasizes that the beneficiary possesses special knowledge and advanced understanding of internal tools and their implementation in the [REDACTED] Claim Handling project. However, it is reasonable to expect all IT consulting firms to develop internal tools, methodologies, procedures and best practices for documenting project management, technical life cycle and software quality assurance activities. The petitioner did not attempt to explain how its processes and methodologies differ significantly from those utilized by other IT companies. The petitioner has not specified the amount or type of training its technical staff members receive in the company's tools and procedures and therefore it cannot be concluded that processes are particularly complex or different compared to those utilized by other companies in the industry, or that it would take a significant amount of time to train an experienced information technology consultant who had no prior experience with the petitioner's family of companies. Going on record without supporting documentary evidence is not sufficient for purposes 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 addition to the tools and methodologies discussed above, the petitioner also claimed that the beneficiary had knowledge of proprietary tools developed by the petitioner that are applicable to the project in the United States, including [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. The petitioner claimed that the beneficiary's knowledge of these internal tools, as well as various hardware and software platforms which are used in the [REDACTED] Claim Handling project, has allowed him to play a major role in the project. The petitioner concludes that his concentrated

focus on the development and implementation of the client's technology cannot easily be passed to another programmer. The record, however, contains no documentation, such as internal handbooks or promotional materials, which document the existence of these internal processes and platforms the petitioner claims form the basis of the beneficiary's special and advanced knowledge, and which it claims are essential to the performance of duties for [REDACTED]. Moreover, despite the listing of training received by the beneficiary which was submitted in support of the claim that his knowledge is specialized, there is no record of training being administered in any of these claimed internal processes. This lack of documentary evidence, coupled with the non-specific description of the duties to be performed in the United States, shed little light on the exact requirements for the beneficiary on the [REDACTED] Claim Handling project in the United States and whether specialized knowledge of these, or any similar processes or procedures, will actually be required. Again, going on record without supporting documentary evidence is not sufficient for purposes of meeting the burden of proof in these proceedings. *Matter of Soffici*, 22 I&N Dec. at 165.

C. Training

Turning to the training history of the beneficiary, the AAO notes that between November 2006 and November 2009, the petitioner claims that the beneficiary underwent formal training in the processes identified above. The AAO notes that the beneficiary appears to have completed 238 hours of formal training during that time. The record, however, contains no evidence, other than an internal training certificate that provides only a basic listing of the courses claimed in the response to the RFE, to establish that the beneficiary actually completed the formal training claimed by the petitioner. The record is devoid of sufficient evidence to corroborate the petitioner's claim that the beneficiary actually completed the claimed 238 hours of formal training. Again, going on record without supporting documentary evidence is not sufficient for purposes of meeting the burden of proof in these proceedings. *Matter of Soffici*, 22 I&N Dec. at 165.

Regardless, the training list submitted in response to the RFE included minimal, if any, courses in proprietary or client-specific processes. This minimal information raises questions regarding the true nature of the beneficiary's claimed special and advanced knowledge. The record reflects that the beneficiary has been assigned to various projects for [REDACTED] and within the petitioner's insurance vertical since the commencement of his employment with the petitioner, thereby demonstrating that extensive experience and training was not a prerequisite prior to working on the current project and related projects. Absent evidence from the petitioner outlining the manner in which programmer analysts are trained and the length of time required to become, as the petitioner claims, an "expert" in these processes, the AAO must conclude that other programmer analysts in the insurance vertical have received similar training and perform similar duties to those of the beneficiary. Although the AAO notes the petitioner's claim that the beneficiary's position differs from that of other programmer analysts/Offshore QA Leads because he performs testing, there is no evidence in the record to support this claim. The failure to submit requested evidence that precludes a material line of inquiry shall be grounds for denying the petition. *See* 8 C.F.R. § 103.2(b)(14).

Again, the record appears to indicate that the beneficiary has been fully performing the duties of the programmer analyst position since the date he was hired by the foreign entity. There is no indication that the beneficiary was employed as a "trainee" or any other position other than that of a programmer analyst/Offshore QA Lead. Moreover, most of the courses he allegedly completed do not appear to constitute

or contribute to specialized knowledge as contemplated by the regulations. Finally, the petitioner does not articulate or document how specialized knowledge is typically gained within the organization, or explain how and when the beneficiary gained such knowledge. This is particularly relevant since the beneficiary will join numerous other employees with the same job titles in the United States, yet the petitioner makes no attempt to definitively establish how the beneficiary's training and experience differs from that of his coworkers. Instead, the petitioner repeatedly asserts that knowledge is gained while working in a hands-on manner on various Travelers projects.

Based on the petitioner's representations, its proprietary processes and tools, while highly effective and valuable to the petitioner, are customized versions of standard practices used in the industry that can be readily learned on-the-job by employees who otherwise possess the requisite technical background in software testing technologies and appropriate functional or domain background for the project to which they will be assigned. For this reason, the petitioner has not established that knowledge of its processes and procedures alone constitute specialized knowledge.

D. Preponderance Analysis

The petitioner submitted lengthy statements in support of the petition and in response to the RFE which provide extensive detail regarding the nature of its business operations. However, it simultaneously provided varied claims with regard to the beneficiary's specialized knowledge that have not consistently explained the nature or specifics of the claimed knowledge, documented when or how he acquired such knowledge, or explained why such knowledge is necessary to the performance of his proposed job duties in the United States. As such, the evidence as a whole does not allow the AAO to conclude that the beneficiary possesses special knowledge by virtue of his training as a programmer analyst working in the petitioner's insurance vertical, either compared to programmer analysts working for the petitioner or compared to other programmer analysts providing consulting services in the same industry segment.

All employees can be said to possess unique skill or experience to some degree. Moreover, the proprietary qualities of the petitioner's process or product do not establish that any knowledge of this process is "specialized." Rather, the petitioner must establish that qualities of the unique process or product require this employee to have knowledge beyond what is common in the industry. This has not been established in this matter.

The AAO does not dispute that the beneficiary is a skilled and experienced employee who has been, and would be, a valuable asset to the petitioner. However, as explained above, the evidence does not distinguish the beneficiary's knowledge as more advanced than the knowledge possessed by other people employed by the petitioning organization or by workers employed elsewhere. The beneficiary's duties and technical skills, while impressive, demonstrate that he possesses knowledge that is common among programmer analysts in the information technology consulting field. Furthermore, it is not clear that the performance of the beneficiary's duties would require more than basic proficiency with the company's internal processes and methodologies. Although the petitioner repeatedly claims that the beneficiary's knowledge is special and advanced, the petitioner failed to provide independent and objective evidence to corroborate such claims. Going on record without supporting documentary evidence is not sufficient for purposes of meeting the burden of proof in these proceedings. *Matter of Soffici*, 22 I&N Dec. at 165.

It is reasonable to conclude, and has not been shown otherwise, that all programmer analysts assigned to client projects must use the same tools to record and track project activities. The petitioner has failed to demonstrate that the beneficiary's training, work experience, or knowledge of the company's processes is advanced in comparison to that possessed by others employed by the petitioner, or that the processes used by the petitioner are substantially different from those used by other technology consulting companies, such that knowledge of such processes alone constitutes specialized knowledge.

In visa petition proceedings, the burden is on the petitioner to establish eligibility. *Matter of Brantigan*, 11 I&N Dec. 493 (BIA 1966). The petitioner must prove by a preponderance of evidence that the beneficiary is fully qualified for the benefit sought. *Matter of Chawathe*, 25 I&N Dec. at 376. In evaluating the evidence, eligibility is to be determined not by the quantity of evidence alone but by its quality. *Id.*

For the reasons discussed above, the evidence submitted fails to establish by a preponderance of the evidence that the beneficiary possesses specialized knowledge and will be employed in a specialized knowledge capacity with the petitioner in the United States. See Section 214(c)(2)(B) of the Act. Accordingly, the appeal will be dismissed.

IV. Conclusion

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. Accordingly, the appeal will be dismissed.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed.