



Department of Homeland Security

**Citizenship and Immigration Services: Office of
Citizenship and Applicant Information Services**

2020 Action Plan

Federal Customer Experience

US BY THE PEOPLE
FOR THE PEOPLE
WITH THE PEOPLE

Who are we?

The mission of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), External Affairs Directorate (EXA), Office of Citizenship and Applicant Information Services (CAIS) is to:

- Deliver effective information and services that help our applicant community learn and navigate the immigration journey through a digital and live-help experience, which creates value and efficiency for our applicants and the agency's adjudicative process.
- Foster immigrant assimilation and promote education on citizenship rights and responsibilities through federal leadership, grants, tools and resources.

This mission is achieved through work performed by CAIS's three component areas (at right).

Office of Citizenship

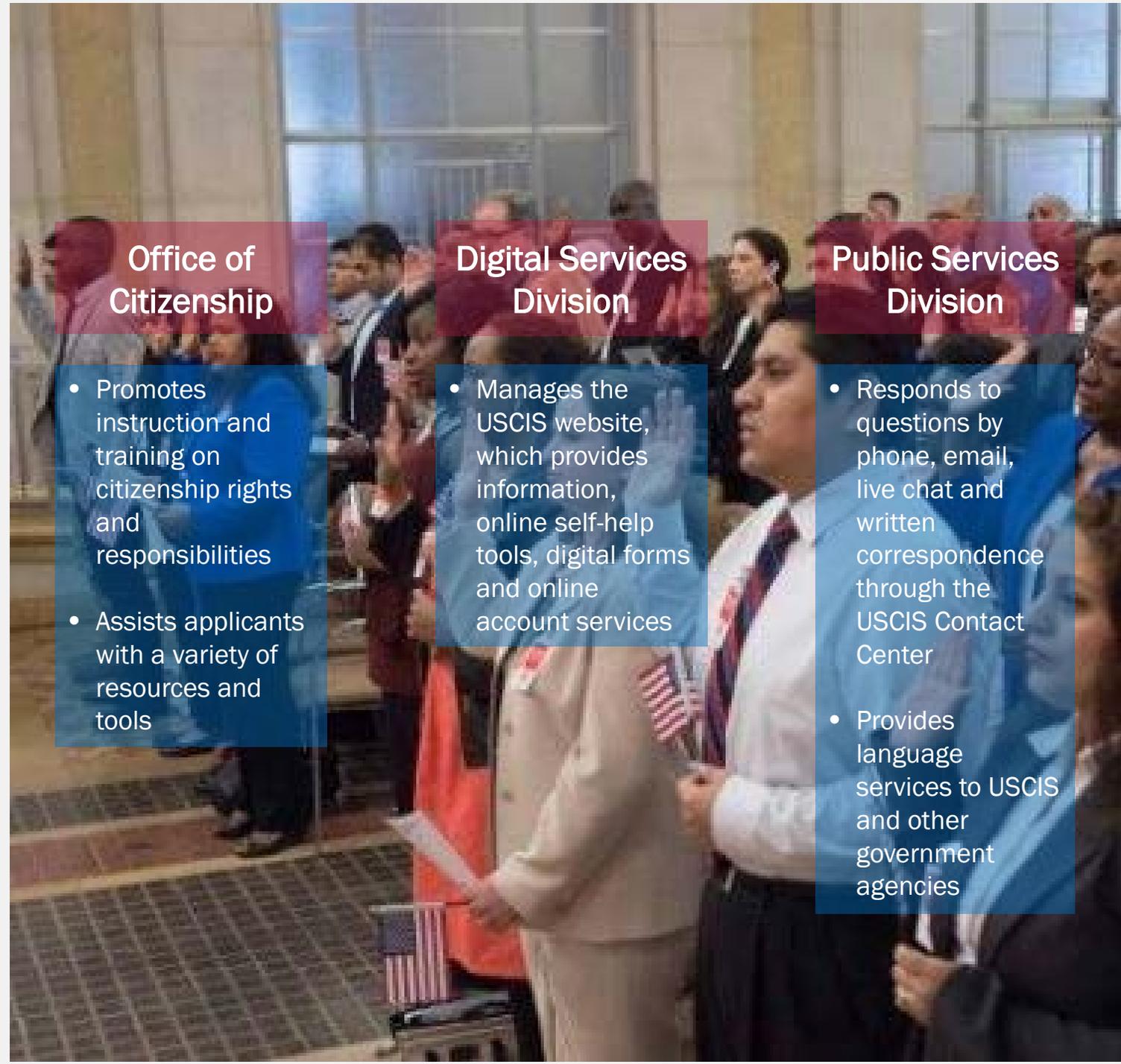
- Promotes instruction and training on citizenship rights and responsibilities
- Assists applicants with a variety of resources and tools

Digital Services Division

- Manages the USCIS website, which provides information, online self-help tools, digital forms and online account services

Public Services Division

- Responds to questions by phone, email, live chat and written correspondence through the USCIS Contact Center
- Provides language services to USCIS and other government agencies



How do we deliver value to the public?

Occasion

Annually, thousands of legal permanent residents make the decision to become naturalized U.S. citizens. They are often excited about the prospect of becoming a citizen including solidifying their life as an American and being able to vote in elections, but they may require help preparing for naturalization. This includes preparation for the civics test that is part of the application process.

All individuals seeking immigration benefits must apply by submitting the required forms and fees to USCIS. Individuals typically obtain the forms from the uscis.gov website or work through an immigration attorney or community-based organization for assistance. Several benefit forms are available for online filing. For example, those seeking to become a naturalized citizen would complete form N-400, Application for Naturalization, which can be completed online or via a paper form. A growing number of individuals are choosing to file online.

Applicants and petitioners often require live assistance after filing for an immigration benefit. The type of assistance can vary. Examples include questions about the status of their case, help with changing their address on file with USCIS, documentation to travel outside the United States and the rescheduling of biometrics appointments.

High-Impact Service

The **Grants Division within the Office of Citizenship** is responsible for the management and oversight of the **Citizenship and Assimilation Grant Program**. The program is designed to prepare legal permanent residents for naturalization.

The **Digital Services Division** manages the front-end user interface for online filing at USCIS. Applicants and petitioners are able to file several USCIS forms online at uscis.gov. The process includes creating an online account, completing the required form(s) and submitting all applicable fees. Once the form is submitted, USCIS will instruct the applicant or petitioner on next steps such as completing biometrics and participating in an interview (if required).

The **USCIS Contact Center, managed by the Public Services Division**, is the primary channel for providing live assistance to the public. It is a multi-tiered operation with escalating levels of assistance and offers service via telephone, online inquiries and live chat. The USCIS Contact Center also schedules in-person appointments for documentary services.

Offering

The objective of the Citizenship and Assimilation Grant Program is to expand the availability of quality citizenship preparation services for legal permanent residents and prepare them to pass the naturalization test. The program also promotes civic assimilation through increased knowledge of English, U.S. history and civics.

The online filing process is designed to provide a convenient, user-friendly and intuitive experience by guiding the user through the form to minimize incomplete submissions and mistakes. Once the form is submitted, the applicant or petitioner can log into their online account to check the status of their case as it progresses through each phase of the application process.

The USCIS Contact Center provides tiers of service to assist with inquiry resolution, depending on complexity, and only when someone cannot resolve through self-help.

Where could we improve?

Selected service:
USCIS Contact Center

Steps

1: User Tries Self-Service

2: User Escalates to Live Help

3: User Still Seeking Resolution

Customer Steps

Name and describe the main steps that a person takes to use the service, left to right, start to finish.

- An applicant or petitioner has filed a form with USCIS and requires assistance with their case.
- The specific assistance needed can vary, but common needs are case status, help with updating their address, travel-related documents and general questions about the immigration process.
- Typically, the individual will try self-service before escalating to live help.

- If the applicant or petitioner is unable to find the information required using self-service, they will often escalate to live help by contacting the USCIS Contact Center.
- The USCIS Contact Center resolves most inquiries received.
- In some cases, the applicant or petitioner may be told that the inquiry requires escalation to a field office or service center for further assistance.

- If the applicant or petitioner does not receive a timely response from the field office or service center, they will contact the USCIS Contact Center again.

Service System

Describe the channels, roles, and tools from your agency or partners.

- Self-service tools include Case Status Online, Change of Address, eRequest, virtual assistant Emma, the online account and the USCIS website.

- Applicants and petitioners can contact the USCIS Contact Center via phone, chat, web form and secure messaging.
- For escalations to a field office or service center, the USCIS Contact Center will submit a service request using the Service Request Management Tool.

- When contacting the USCIS Contact Center again, the applicant or petitioner can use any of the available channels (phone, chat, web form and secure messaging).

Pain Points

Describe the highest priority problems to solve

- Enhancing the online account to provide consistent capabilities across all form types.
- Building new self-help tools and enhancing the USCIS website in a way that simplifies the complex immigration processes and policies.
- Ensuring consistent messaging through a centralized knowledge management system.

- Leveraging technology, including artificial intelligence, to resolve inquiries and reduce escalations to live help at the USCIS Contact Center.
- Reducing the number of inquiries that require escalation to a field office or service center.
- Building capacity within the USCIS Contact Center at Tier 2 to handle more inquiries.

- Multiple inquiries to the USCIS Contact Center when service requests are not resolved timely.
- Costs associated with responding to service requests. Multiple unresolved service requests create costs for the government.
- Limited funding and resources to modernize the service request process and equip USCIS Contact Center staff with the ability to resolve inquiries that would typically be escalated to a field office or service center.

What will we do?

Project:

Service Request Modernization at USCIS

Purpose

*Why did your agency undertake this project?
What does it hope to achieve, in specific performance indicators, if possible.*

What is the problem?

Service requests are created when applicants and petitioners are unable to get immediate resolution and require escalation, typically to a field office or service center. The delay negatively impacts the user experience and costs the agency money to process. In FY19, nearly 2 million service requests were created with over 600,000 of them created by the USCIS Contact Center alone.

Desired future state?

Through our Service Request Modernization initiative, CAIS will collaborate with Field Operations and Service Center Operations to implement process and technology changes that enable USCIS Contact Center staff to resolve certain inquiry types that currently require escalation. This initiative not only provides better service to our applicants and petitioners, but also frees up resources in field offices and service centers to focus on adjudicating benefit applications and to resolve issues that truly require their engagement.

Any measurable indicators and targets?

- Reduction in service request escalations by the USCIS Contact Center - *Phase 1*: 10% reduction; *Phases 2 and 3*: TBD

Approach

Describe the timeline and work plan to achieve that purpose. If this is an ongoing initiative, describe your progress.

Process, methods and expertise?

The initiative consists of three phases:

Phase 1: Business process changes to identify categories of service requests that can be resolved by the USCIS Contact Center, training for the staff, revising guidance and content, and implementing the changes.

Phase 2: Enhancing the online account to allow for the intake of service requests from applicants and petitioners directly. This will replace the legacy eRequest Tool.

Phase 3: Enhancing the Contact Center's Salesforce-based Customer Relationship Management system to relay service requests that the Contact Center cannot resolve to field offices and service centers to address. This will replace the legacy Service Request Management Tool.

Timeline, stage gates and dates?

Projected Completion Dates

Phase 1: FY21 Q4 (*currently in progress*)

Phase 2: FY22 Q2 (*funding dependent*)

Phase 3: FY22 Q4 (*funding dependent*)

Deliverables being produced?

Reference the section above.

Resources

Describe the stakeholders involved, financial and human capital dedicated to the work, and any partners contributing to the work.

Who is responsible?

CAIS is leading this effort.

Who is contributing to the project?

The success of this initiative is dependent on support from Field Operations, Service Center Operations and the Office of Information Technology.

Optional: estimated budget allocated to the work?
\$3 million.

What are we proud of this year?

Project:
*Information Services Modernization
at USCIS (FY18 – FY19)*

Service Improvement

Who is the user and what was the problem? If you have baseline statistics, include (ex. “34% of users dropped off on this page, or “call volume on this made up 20% of our calls)

Applicants and petitioners were self-scheduling appointments at local field offices for inquiries that could be resolved more efficiently over the phone with the USCIS Contact Center. On average, field offices were servicing 1.3 million self-scheduled appointments a year, diverting critical resources away from adjudicating applications. Additionally, many individuals who needed an appointment were unable to get one.

What did you build / improve? What does it do for the public or how you deliver your mission? What was the resulting impact? (Include numbers whenever possible)

CAIS collaborated with Field Operations and the Office of Information Technology to implement the Information Services Modernization (InfoMod) initiative. This initiative transitioned field office inquiries to the USCIS Contact Center. Instead of self-scheduling an in-person appointment, the applicant or petitioner would contact the USCIS Contact Center for real-time resolution, reserving field office appointments for inquiries that could not be resolved.

Any lessons for other agencies emulating this work?

- Ensure your organization has the required resources to be successful.
- Engage key stakeholders early and often.
- Ensure messaging to the public promotes the benefits to them, and not just internal or operational benefits.
- Use data to drive decisions. Ensure you have a way to track the success of the program.

Sum up what happened in two sentences.

The program was a success by providing a more efficient and convenient channel for resolving inquiries, ensuring those who required an appointment were able to get one. InfoMod also improved the timeliness of emergency services to applicants and petitioners.

Capacity Building

Was this a governance, measurement, organizational, customer understanding, service development, or service delivery capability?

Service Delivery Capability

What was the new action taken capability and it's goal or purpose?

Shifting appointment inquiries to the USCIS Contact Center reduces the number of in-person appointments at field offices, which increases adjudicative capacity in the field. As a result, USCIS is able to provide more timely decisions to applicants and petitioners and reduce backlogs. The agency is also providing value to applicants and petitioners who are able to get resolution from the USCIS Contact Center and not have to travel to local field offices.

What was the resulting impact?

Through InfoMod, USCIS shifted from approximately 1.3 million annual public self-scheduled appointments to less than 150,000 actual annual appointments, a decrease of 88 percent. This has not led to a degradation in applicant experience. To the contrary, applicant experience has improved under InfoMod. USCIS is able to ensure that anyone needing in-person service receives an appointment. Additionally, the average time between scheduling by the USCIS Contact Center and an in-person appointment is 3-5 days. This is a vast improvement over the legacy environment in which individuals may or may not have been able to self-schedule 2 weeks in advance, and we had no way of knowing who needed an appointment but was unable to make one because slots were already claimed.

What are we proud of this year?

Project:
*Information Services Modernization
at USCIS (FY18 – FY19)*

HAWAII NEWS | NEWSWATCH | TOP NEWS

Honolulu immigration field office taking services online

By [Nina Wu](#) · May 10, 2019



STAR-ADVERTISER / SEPT. 2014

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the U.S. District Court, District of Hawaii welcomed 74 new U.S. citizens during a special Citizenship and Constitution Day naturalization ceremony. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is bringing many of its services to Honolulu online, starting Monday, and is encouraging applicants to take advantage of them, potentially saving time and money from making a trip to the field office at Waterfront Plaza.

USCIS Yakima field office to implement information services modernization program

Aug 2, 2019



f t e b

YAKIMA, WA – U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Yakima Field Office is the most recent office nationwide to implement the new Information Services Modernization Program. The program was [announced nationally](#) last year, and begins in Yakima Aug. 5.