



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

USCIS Announces First Ten Areas of Focus for Agency-wide Policy Review *Public Survey Informs Selection* Questions and Answers

Introduction

On April 15, 2010, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) launched the USCIS Policy Review, an unprecedented, top-to-bottom examination the agency's adjudication and customer service policies with the engaged participation of the USCIS workforce and the public. USCIS issued a survey that asked any interested member of the public, as well as its own workforce, to help identify the issue areas that the agency should examine first. Nearly 5,600 stakeholders [responded](#) to the survey, representing current immigrant and non-immigrant visa holders, employers, immigration attorneys and advocates, among others, in addition to responses from approximately 2,400 members of the USCIS workforce. Those responses helped USCIS select the first 10 issue areas to address in the agency-wide review. USCIS is now convening working groups to review the first 10 issue areas.

Questions and Answers

Q. What is the USCIS Policy Review?

A. The USCIS Policy Review is a comprehensive review of policy, guidance, and procedures related to our adjudications and customer service. The Policy Review is divided into four stages: (1) assembling and categorizing existing policy documents; (2) deciding which issue areas to review first, with input from surveys of the workforce and external stakeholders; (3) completing a review of policies in each identified issue area; and (4) consolidating and publishing updated policy documents (as appropriate), once approved.

Q. How does the Policy Review advance major goals already established for USCIS and the

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)?

A. In the 2010 Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (QHSR), DHS identified the effective administration of the immigration system as a key priority. In particular, the QHSR emphasized the importance of a system that produces fair, consistent and prompt decisions for the public it serves. The Policy Review is designed to ensure that USCIS meets that standard in its work.

Q. How does the Policy Review relate to USCIS's responsibilities and authority under federal law?

A. By law, USCIS is charged with setting policies and priorities for the administration of immigration services. USCIS will be reviewing those policies in our current effort. If the Policy Review identifies the need for proposed regulatory changes, we will fully engage in the federal rulemaking process. The purpose of the Policy Review is not to develop proposed changes to the immigration statutes established by Congress.

Q. Will the Policy Review change USCIS policy?

A. In many cases, yes. Working groups will evaluate policy based on USCIS goals, legal requirements and stakeholder concerns. These working groups will draft updated policy documents and proceed through USCIS's policy-approval process. If the Policy Review identifies the need for proposed regulatory changes, USCIS will fully engage in the federal rulemaking process.

Q. What happens to existing policies during the course of the Policy Review?

A. While the Policy Review is underway, all policies already in place remain in full force and will be honored. From time to time in the course of the agency's operations, policy issues may arise that require immediate attention outside the course of the formal Policy Review. We will continue to give these issues immediate attention as the need arises.

Q: What prompted the Policy Review?

A. USCIS is committed to ensuring that our policies are consistent and up to date. To that end, the agency has launched the USCIS Policy Review to examine our policies with input from the public it serves and from its workforce.

Q. Has USCIS previously undertaken a comprehensive review of its policies?

A: No. The effort to undertake a top-to-bottom review of our adjudication and customer service policies is an unprecedented initiative for USCIS.

Q. How will USCIS seek the public's input during the Policy Review?

A. In keeping with our commitments to customer service and transparency, USCIS will engage practitioners, advocates, businesses, applicants, and other interested stakeholders throughout the course of the Policy Review. The survey was the first opportunity for stakeholders to participate. As we review policies in specific issue areas, we will offer a number of further opportunities for the public to offer input. For example, in some issue areas, we will conduct public meetings to solicit stakeholders' views on specific policy matters. In many cases, we will also published drafts of new or revised policy memoranda on our website for public comment, now a regular step in USCIS's policy development

process.

Q. What did the survey ask?

A. The survey asked any interested member of the public, as well as the USCIS workforce, to help identify the issue areas that the agency should examine first. The survey also included comment sections.

Q. How many people responded to the survey?

A. Nearly 5,600 external stakeholders responded to the survey, representing current immigrant and non-immigrant visa holders, employers, immigration attorneys and advocates, among others. Nearly 2,400 members of the workforce from USCIS offices worldwide also participated in the survey.

Q. How has USCIS used the survey results?

A. The survey results helped USCIS identify which issue areas to address first in its agency-wide review. USCIS considered quantitative and qualitative feedback from the surveys along with operational and programmatic needs to develop the initial list of issue areas for review.

Q. In addition to the survey, what progress has USCIS made in the Policy Review?

A. USCIS has assembled thousands of existing policy documents and categorized them into issue areas. USCIS is now convening internal working groups to begin examining and evaluating the policy documents in the first 10 issue areas.

Q. What is the expected length and scope of the Policy Review?

A. The Policy Review is a multi-year effort designed to work thoughtfully through thousands of policy documents, many of which overlap or complement each other, in collaboration with the USCIS workforce and external stakeholders. New policy documents, once drafted, will be submitted through the USCIS clearance process, with many posted on the USCIS website for public comment.

Last updated:07/26/2010