May 2, 2011

# External Data Interface Standards (EDIS)
## *May Bulletin*

### Updated Transformation Timeline

Beginning this year, Transformation will be rolled out incrementally, delivering increased functionality through a series of six-month releases rather than large-scale deployments.
The first release will initially introduce the Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status (Form I-539) benefit type in the new system with the core capabilities of online accounts, e-filing, automated risk and fraud analysis, and basic case management in late 2011. Initially, only I-539s that are not being filed concurrently with any other application will be accepted for submission on behalf of principals and their dependents. Following the I-539 release, additional non-immigrant applications, immigrant applications, humanitarian application and naturalization will gradually follow, in this order, with each subsequent phase of Transformation. USCIS is confident that this phased approach minimizes the risk to the overall immigration enterprise, allows for collaboration with key stakeholders, and supports proper testing.

### OTC Customer/Advocate Listening Session Feedback

As a part of the ongoing stakeholder outreach efforts led by the Office of Transformation Coordination (OTC), USCIS recently hosted twelve listening sessions in five cities (Baltimore, Orlando, Seattle, Cleveland and Los Angeles) to collect feedback on upcoming changes to the Agency's business processes. In addition to holding in-person sessions throughout the month of March, USCIS also hosted two national webinars to solicit input on Transformation efforts. Discussion during the listening sessions and national webinars focused on collecting feedback on specific processes and design aspects based on an I-539 clickable demo and individual's comments on a proposed rule on mandatory e-filing. Outputs from the listening sessions and national webinars will be used to assist the visual design team and inform USCIS decisions leading up to the initial release of the new system.

Most attorneys / representatives and CBOs attending the listening sessions indicated that filing online will be simpler in future releases, with the addition of organizational accounts and EDIS capabilities. Participants indicated that e-filing in this situation would be challenging for their business, and urged USCIS to continue to engage with stakeholders on EDIS. Many CBO attendees voiced concerns about having appropriate resources available to support the transition to the new online system. Furthermore, the idea that the IOE and mandatory e-filing would lead to an increase in "notarios" or fraudulent preparers was a frequent concern raised by advocates. Participants were informed of the current Unauthorized Practice of Immigration Law (UPIL) initiative being managed by the Office of Public Engagement (OPE) as an effort to combat the use of "notarios" and other fraudulent practitioners.

With regard to system design, many attorneys and representatives suggested that the new system should offer additional language capabilities. Additionally, the majority of webinar and in-person

listening session participants expressed the desire to continue to be able to use and refer to applications for immigration benefits by number, rather than name of the type of application, because it encourages ease of operation. Many legal representatives suggested that offering an electronic form to fill out would be helpful; they felt that answering each question screen by screen was inefficient. Participants would also like to be able to upload files in many different formats and have more clear direction on how evidence should be provided.

OTC will continue to engage with key internal and external stakeholders throughout the Transformation process. More information can be found at www.uscis.gov/outreach.

## Most Recent EDIS Transformation Mailbox Questions

**Question: Will electronic filing via EDIS be the exclusive method for filing certain forms?**

> **Answer:** When EDIS becomes available, it will be one of two channels to file benefit requests electronically. For those organizations that choose to utilize EDIS in the development of their own interface, transmitting benefits to USCIS can be accomplished through that system to system interface. For those organizations not using EDIS they will be able to e-file benefit requests electronically via the USCIS website.

**Question: Will users be able to elect between sending in a paper USCIS form or filing it electronically with EDIS?**

> **Answer:** USCIS is considering mandatory e-filing as part of its overall Transformation strategy and the Agency is working through a number of steps to gather information and propose appropriate regulatory changes to make e-filing mandatory. USCIS is working through the regulatory process to seek general authority to mandate e-filing for benefit requests, with the potential to begin implementation of the mandate later this year with the I-539 benefit type release. Should mandatory e-filing be adopted, a transition would occur when regulatory authority has been secured and sufficient transition time for the community has been provided.

USCIS welcomes your ongoing feedback on this effort. Please email any questions and comments to Transform.EDIS@DHS.gov.

## Upcoming EDIS Events

USCIS will be publishing another quarterly EDIS bulletin in July 2011. Prior to that, additional information on EDIS can be found at www.uscis.gov/outreach, under the "Notes from Previous Engagements" section. Summaries from previous EDIS Exchange Collaboration Sessions are also provided under the same section.