External Data Interface Standards (EDIS)
February Bulletin

Transformation and EDIS Background

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Transformation is an agency-wide effort to move immigration services from a paper-based model to a state-of-the-art, electronic environment. Transformation will deliver a simplified, web-based system for benefit seekers to submit and track their applications. The new, account-based system will provide customers with better, faster and more accurate services. It will also enhance USCIS's ability to process cases with greater precision, security, and timeliness.

USCIS is dedicated to redesigning the agency's business processes to support delivery of the most effective and reliable operating model for the 21st century. The USCIS E-Filing External Data Interface Standard (EDIS) represents a set of technical standards that will enable immigration practitioners to securely submit benefit requests electronically to USCIS. EDIS is a system-to-system interface that creates a new electronic filing channel. This new e-filing channel will increase efficiency and improve acceptance rates for immigration benefit request submissions by utilizing automated processes and applying numerous business rules.

EDIS Specific Updates

When we last reached out to you in the August 2010 bulletin, we shared the significant progress made in EDIS. We had developed the EDIS concept of operations and high-level security requirements and identified an initial list of data entities and attributes for the EDIS domain model and NIEM mapping. Since that time, we have further developed our overall solution. We have developed system architecture, data models, functional and interface requirements, and test plans, among other activities. We will use the work completed thus far on EDIS and the overall solution to move forward on the EDIS domain model, IEPD artifacts, NIEM mapping, partner registration and test plans.

We are planning to launch EDIS in our second release, Release B. As previously discussed, USCIS has taken an approach that focuses on introducing immigration applications and access to the new online system in a manageable way over time. As such, the focus at this time is on establishing baseline requirements for Release A. This strategy will enable USCIS to learn from the initial deployment of the new online system and incorporate lessons learned into the design of Release B.

Most Recent EDIS Transformation Mailbox Questions

Question: Will the new online system store data for future use (i.e., will it have data persistence)?

Answer: Yes, in the new online system, customers and their advocates will only have to enter data one time. In EDIS Collaboration Session #3, we discussed the six parts that would serve to form the template for the standard collection of data, such as filers' information (identity), application type, eligibility, information included in the application, signature and attestation and designation of representative (G-28). Although design of the new system is not complete, data persistence is at the forefront of design. Once more information is available, we will be able to share it.

Question: Will a customer or advocate be able to print an application in the new online system?

Answer: Yes, although the design process for the new system and EDIS are still ongoing, printing capabilities (for review, as a copy/ proof of filing, etc.) are part of this design.

Question: All I have seen so far is very high-level information. There is no information that I have seen that would allow me to start working on an interface to your system. Is there any other information that I may have missed? I hear that the first phase will be starting soon.

Answer: You are correct, no EDIS-specific information has been released to date that would enable external parties to begin developing an interface to the new USCIS system. While Release A will begin in the Fall 2011, EDIS will not be available as part of this initial phase. Communications are beginning again in the form of this January 2011 bulletin, and another bulletin is anticipated in April 2011 to keep stakeholders aware of the latest EDIS-related Transformation updates.

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 April 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. In addition, EDIS-specific FAQs and other transformation materials and information will soon be available for the public on the website.