



August 12, 2010

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

### **Background**

Transformation is an effort to create a more efficient and effective customer-focused organization. Transformation will enable the Agency to receive and process six to eight million benefit requests and petitions every year through an electronic environment, making it quicker and easier for the Agency to access information, adjudicate decisions, and reduce fraud. In the electronic environment, the data is stored and indexed uniformly for easy access and cases are processed and triaged at an earlier stage to prepare cases for the adjudication process.

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 which creates a new electronic filing channel. This new e-filing channel will increase efficiency and improve acceptance rate for immigration benefit request submissions by utilizing automated processes and applying numerous business rules.

Office of Public Engagement (OPE) held four EDIS Exchange collaboration sessions between November 2009 and May 2010 with interested external parties. These sessions focused on sharing the status and technical details on EDIS. In addition, OPE heard from potential users about their issues or concerns with EDIS. This insight helped the Agency to learn about possible issues at an early developmental stage and brought awareness to the alternative electronic filing channel.

USCIS will distribute e-Bulletins to provide updates on EDIS-related activities and plans. As Transformation progresses, the Agency will continue to share necessary and relevant information with stakeholders in several ways, including e-Bulletins, teleconferences, and outreach events.

### **August 2010: Construction of the EDIS Domain Model Underway**

The EDIS team started to develop the EDIS domain model which describes the data entities and data attributes that will be shared between the Agency's new system and immigration practitioners' case management systems. USCIS is currently analyzing Transformation's new business and technical processes and translating them into interface requirements for system-to-system exchanges of data. These requirements will establish a domain model that provides the foundation for EDIS specifications.

Once USCIS establishes a domain model, it will be mapped to the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM). NIEM includes a "Core Domain" and an "Immigration Domain", among others, that provide many of the data elements that are required by EDIS.

## Questions and Answers

**Q: I would appreciate being a part of this process from inception through utilization. Could I be a beta tester for the EDIS system?**

A: USCIS recognizes the benefits of using beta testers for this initiative and is now working to determine how testing will be conducted. Once the details for an EDIS pilot program are determined, USCIS will reach out to the external stakeholders to gauge interest.

**Q: There are two ways to produce the XML schemas. 1) The e-Verify model, where USCIS creates the schemas and simply notifies the developers of upgrades, and 2) the collaborative model, where developers contribute to the work of the schemas based on their particular problems and issues. That is the OASIS type of model. Which method is anticipated for EDIS?**

A: USCIS has experience with various models in developing schemas. The way in which the EDIS schemas will be developed is still being determined. The EDIS team would like to gather stakeholder feedback on this topic, which will be discussed at a future collaboration session.

**Q: Will USCIS provide a step-by-step explanation of the new filing procedure under EDIS?**

A: Yes, USCIS will develop a series of documents that will outline how the system-to system-interface works, who to contact for issues, how to get started and how subsequent information will be shared. Information on certification and testing processes will also be provided. During the certification and testing period, external stakeholders will learn how to transmit benefit requests via the system-to-system interface.

## Upcoming EDIS Events

USCIS will host a teleconference in September to answer new questions and provide the next round of updates for the External Data Interface Standards (EDIS). Details on the teleconference will be emailed to previous attendees of the EDIS Exchange Collaboration Sessions and will be posted on the USCIS website at [www.uscis.gov/outreach](http://www.uscis.gov/outreach).

Additional information on EDIS can be found at [www.uscis.gov/outreach](http://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.

USCIS welcomes your ongoing feedback on this effort. Please email any questions and comments to [Transform.EDIS@DHS.gov](mailto:Transform.EDIS@DHS.gov).