



Functional Bureau Strategy

Bureau of Consular Affairs

FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

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1. Executive Statement and Mission Statement

Executive Statement

The Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) provides consular services that protect the interests of U.S. citizens overseas and facilitates legitimate travel by U.S. citizens and foreign nationals. CA represents the United States abroad as its professionals directly engage with tens of thousands of people each day, and its work sets the tone for many bilateral relationships.

CA's first goal and highest priority is to protect the lives and serve the interests of U.S. citizens overseas. Millions of U.S. citizens have a valid passport and travel overseas regularly. They are used to immediate access to services and information, whether at home or abroad, from a desktop or a mobile device. This raises expectations that the U.S. government will respond to a citizen's needs wherever they may travel or reside. CA aims to provide and improve access to passport and citizens services in keeping with current standards of digital service. Internet and mobile technology provide CA the means to communicate effectively and efficiently as well as ensure equitable access to safety and security information, so U.S. citizens can make informed decisions about traveling and residing overseas.

CA is dedicated to facilitating legitimate travel while protecting U.S. borders. CA's mission includes the issuance of passports to U.S. citizens, in addition to the adjudication of visas for foreign nationals seeking to visit the United States for leisure, business, or educational purposes, as well as for those who wish to immigrate to the United States. Establishing sound and effective U.S. border security begins with the issuance of secure error-free passports to U.S. citizens and visas to foreign nationals who qualify for them, and denial of these travel documents to those who do not. Facilitation of legitimate travel has a tangible impact on the U.S. domestic economy and U.S. business interests. It improves person-to-person relationships and builds knowledge about the United States, both critical to improving the influence of the United States.

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None of this can be done without investment in CA's technological, financial, and human resources. CA continues its information technology (IT) modernization progress, driven by public demand and the need for greater efficiency and data security. To accomplish this, CA continues to look for ways to stabilize the fee-based Consular and Border Security Programs account. Legislative restrictions prohibit the bureau from retaining fees for the full cost of all services, particularly those that impact our ability to serve U.S. citizens overseas. Well-trained Foreign Service, Civil Service, contractor, and Locally Employed Staff worldwide make passport and visa decisions that improve services to U.S. citizens overseas. CA draws on a full range of recruitment, hiring, and assignment strategies, along with a strong professional development program, to ensure that the bureau has a workforce that reflects, and supports, the diversity of the United States.

Mission Statement

CA is represented around the world in more than 230 embassies and consulates to provide routine and emergency services to U.S. citizens abroad and visa services to those who wish to travel to the United States. Domestically, CA supports the passport needs of U.S. citizens at 29 passport agencies and centers and a network of public offices managed by other federal, state, and local government agencies/offices that accept passport applications.

CA carries out the Department's most important mission overseas – the protection of U.S. citizens and their interests. Consular officers are the U.S. government's first provider of services for U.S. citizens overseas, whether registering the birth or death of a U.S. citizen, repatriating remains, providing assistance to vote in U.S. elections, or helping citizens in need to return to the United States. Consular officers also assist incarcerated and missing persons, abducted children and their families, travelers threatened by natural disasters, and during public health crises or civil unrest.

We facilitate legitimate travel to and from the United States while protecting U.S. borders. Passport adjudications entail provision of a service and making border security decisions. CA serves U.S. citizens intending international travel through passport issuance, while protecting the integrity of the U.S. passport as proof of U.S. citizenship. CA prioritizes enhancing the customer experience while improving passport security and timely service to U.S. citizens.

In addition, Consular officers at U.S. Embassies and Consulates provide visa services to relatives of U.S. citizens seeking to immigrate to the United States and to millions of visa applicants seeking to travel temporarily to, or work in, the United States. Improving capabilities to provide visa services in a secure, accurate, and efficient manner results in increased legitimate travel while securing borders in support of national security. CA coordinates with foreign governments and interagency partners such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Department of the Treasury, and the intelligence and law enforcement communities to protect U.S. borders from threats at home and abroad.

2. Bureau Strategic Framework

Bureau Goal 1: Protect the lives and serve the interests of U.S. citizens overseas through the provision of efficient and effective services.

- **Bureau Objective 1.1:** By September 30, 2024, timely and more efficient delivery of consular services information to U.S. citizens is improved.
- **Bureau Objective 1.2:** By September 30, 2024, CA's technological ability to provide routine services to U.S. citizens overseas is enhanced.

Bureau Goal 2: Enhance the customer experience while improving the security and efficiency of Passport Services.

- **Bureau Objective 2.1:** By September 30, 2022, CA will reduce the high processing times experienced during the pandemic.
- **Bureau Objective 2.2:** By September 30, 2024, CA will improve its capabilities to provide passport services to U.S. citizens.
- **Bureau Objective 2.3:** By September 30, 2024, CA will improve equity in passport and Consular Report of Birth Abroad (CRBA) application forms and accessibility to passport and citizenship services.

Bureau Goal 3: Facilitate legitimate travel while promoting secure U.S. borders.

- **Bureau Objective 3.1:** By September 30, 2026, CA will increase the number of visa applications adjudicated to meet or exceed the 11.75 million nonimmigrant visa and 561,170 immigrant visa applications adjudicated in FY 2019.
- **Bureau Objective 3.2:** Through September 30, 2026, CA will continue to secure U.S. borders by reinforcing processes and safeguards that maintain and improve visa security.

Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Goal 1: Improve organizational and resource capacity in support of consular services.

- **Management Objective 1.1:** By September 30, 2026, CA will provide more robust, reliable, and secure information technology systems that can adapt to CA's changing operational needs.
- **Management Objective 1.2:** By September 30, 2026, CA will stabilize and maintain a Consular and Border Security Programs account capable of supporting state-of-the-art routine and emergency consular services and products.
- **Management Objective 1.3:** By September 30, 2026, CA improves how it will foster and institutionalize a diverse, equitable, inclusive workforce; and an accessible workplace.
- **Management Objective 1.4:** By September 30, 2026, CA will institutionalize and expand its professional development opportunities for all consular professionals.
- **Management Objective 1.5:** By September 30, 2026, CA will enhance consular professionals' ability to prevent fraud and promote the integrity of consular services.
- **Management Objective 1.6:** By September 30, 2026, increase Congress and the public's knowledge of consular services and policies.

3. Bureau Goals and Objectives

Bureau Goal 1: Provide consular services to U.S. citizens overseas effectively and efficiently.

- **Bureau Goal 1 Description:** This goal supports the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan (JSP) Goal 5, Serve U.S. citizens around the world and facilitate secure international travel. Since 1790, protecting the lives and interests of U.S. citizens has been the Department's highest priority. CA assists U.S. citizens overseas by documenting life's milestones from birth to death. Consular professionals assist U.S. citizens affected by crises, including but not limited to, natural disasters, political strife, and medical emergencies. We work diligently to prevent and resolve international parental child abduction and improve intercountry adoption throughout the world. Advances in technology have created both new opportunities for, and challenges to, the way CA interacts with U.S. citizens. Through the span of this FBS, CA will continue to improve access to safety and security information and find more efficient ways to quickly disseminate information to effectively reach those traveling and residing abroad.

Bureau Objective 1.1: By September 30, 2024, timely and more efficient delivery of consular services information to U.S. citizens is improved.

- **Bureau Objective 1.1 Justification and Linkages:** This objective supports JSP Strategic Objective 5.1, as well as Learning Agenda 6.2, to keep U.S. citizens informed of safety and security issues, and is consistent with government-wide Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility efforts in E.O. 13985. CA will also improve its ability to provide consular information in an equitable and accessible manner.
- **Bureau Objective 1.1 Risk Considerations:** CA must stabilize the CBSP account to ensure consistent staffing and funding to maintain its delivery of information to U.S. citizens. Failure to address equity and accessibility in our information products will result in underserved populations not receiving needed critical safety and security information.

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Bureau Objective 1.2: By September 30, 2026, CA's technological ability to provide routine services to U.S. citizens overseas is enhanced.

- **Bureau Objective 1.2 Justification and Linkages:** This objective supports JSP Strategic Objective 5.1 and addresses services to U.S. citizens abroad and Learning Agenda Question 6.3 on improving capabilities to provide services. CA must continue to modernize technological efforts to efficiently provide consular services.
- **Bureau Objective 1.2 Risk Considerations:** CA must stabilize the CBSP account to ensure consistent staffing and funding for IT modernization. Failure to improve IT and financial capabilities will leave CA unable to meet expectations for electronic services.

Bureau Goal 2: Enhance the customer experience while improving the security and efficiency of passport services.

- **Bureau Goal 2 Description:** CA will prioritize the enhancement of the customer experience while improving passport security and timely service to U.S. citizens. This will be demonstrated by maintaining CA's service level commitments to process over 18.5 million passports in 2022. CA will pilot online passport renewal services as one element of our continual efforts to improve the customer experience. CA will also reduce high processing times experienced during the pandemic, enhance passport book security, and improve equity and accessibility in passport services.

Bureau Objective 2.1: By September 30, 2022, CA will reduce the high processing times experienced during the pandemic.

- **Bureau Objective 2.1 Justification and Linkages:** This objective supports JSP Strategic Objective 5.2, advance U.S. interests by facilitating legitimate travel to and from the United States. The Department's Learning Agenda and E.O. 13571 on "Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service" addresses and justifies prioritizing the reduction of high processing times customers have been experiencing during the pandemic. CA provides significant services directly to the public and is considered a High Impact Service Provider by the Office of Management and Budget. CA strives to ensure timely service to U.S. citizens, as demonstrated by our service-level commitments and performance tracked against those commitments. Consular professionals also continue to ensure passport issuance integrity and seek to reduce the potential for criminals and terrorists to exploit passport vulnerabilities.
- **Bureau Objective 2.1 Risk Considerations:** Unanticipated increases in passport demand, or unforeseen natural, public, health, or other crises impacting CA's workforce could lead to delays in CA's ability to provide timely services. Unforeseen sustained system outages or cyber security issues could impact the timely provision of passport services. Operational failures or significant delays on the part of our service partners could impact provision of passport services.

Bureau Objective 2.2: By September 30, 2024, CA's capabilities to provide passport services to U.S. citizens is improved.

- **Bureau Objective 2.2 Justification and Linkages:** This objective supports JSP Strategic Objective 5.2, advance U.S. interests by facilitating legitimate travel to and from the United States. It expands on ongoing efforts to deliver more secure travel documents to U.S. citizen travelers and an online passport renewal experience. The Department's Learning Agenda and E.O. 13571 on "Streamlining Service Delivery and Improving Customer Service" address and justify prioritizing capabilities to enhance access to passport services and expand digital engagement opportunities.

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- **Bureau Objective 2.2 Risk Considerations:** CA's current funding model relies on consular fees the Department retains. Technological process improvements necessary to expand digital improvement opportunities depend on the availability of resources to prioritize such efforts.

Bureau Objective 2.3: By September 30, 2024, improve equity in passport and CRBA application forms and accessibility to passport and citizenship services.

- **Bureau Objective 2.3 Justification and Linkages:** This objective supports JSP Strategic Objective 3.2, advance equity, accessibility, and rights relative to E.O. 13985 on "Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government" and justifies prioritizing capabilities to enhance access to passport services.
- **Bureau Objective 2.3 Risk Considerations:** CA's failure to adjust its organizational culture to reflect broader social trends would result in failing underserved and/or marginalized communities and continue practices the administration is seeking to rectify.

Bureau Goal 3: Facilitate legitimate travel while promoting secure U.S. borders.

- **Bureau Goal 3 Description:** CA formulates and implements policy relating to immigration and visa services and ensures responsive and efficient provision of visa services overseas. Consular officers at U.S. Embassies and Consulates provide visa services to millions of applicants and relatives of U.S. citizens seeking to immigrate to the United States. Improving capabilities to provide visa services in a secure, accurate, and efficient manner results in increased legitimate travel while securing borders in support of national security. Issuing visas and facilitating travel to the United States for immigration, temporary work, and tourism are also crucial to continued U.S. economic recovery and to President Biden's promise of a foreign policy for the middle class. CA relies on internal and interagency information technology to screen visa applicants effectively. Partner agencies provide data, analysis, and experience with which CA can continue to improve processes. Foreign governments share critical security information. As immigration trends and global threats evolve, CA will continue its collaboration with the interagency community and foreign partners. Efforts to improve visa processing will provide better services to visa applicants and U.S. citizens while increasing the integrity of the process.

Bureau Objective 3.1: By September 30, 2026, CA will increase the number of visa applications adjudicated to meet or exceed the 11.75 million nonimmigrant visa and 561,170 immigrant visa applications adjudicated in FY 2019.

- **Bureau Objective 3.1 Justification and Linkages:** This objective supports JSP Strategic Objective 5.2, advance U.S. interests by facilitating legitimate travel to and from the United States and supports the expansion of legitimate travel, including for international exchanges. Providing visa services in a secure, accurate, and efficient manner results in improved customer service and protects U.S. borders. Efforts to improve processing will also improve efficiency and increase the integrity of providing visa services.

- **Bureau Objective 3.1 Risk Considerations:** Inadequate resources, to include under-resourcing of CA's IT systems, and global crises present risks to CA's ability to provide visa services and to ensure U.S. national security. Additionally, CA's revenue source is vulnerable to demand volatility that is inherently reactive to economic and political events, natural disasters, public health and security crises, Congressional action, and other factors beyond CA's control. CA must stabilize the CBSP account to ensure consistent staffing and funding to maintain its delivery of visa services and the requisite IT modernization.

Bureau Objective 3.2: Through September 30, 2026, CA will continue to secure U.S. borders by reinforcing efforts that maintain and improve visa security.

- **Bureau Objective 3.2 Justification and Linkages:** This objective supports JSP Strategic Objective 5.2, advance U.S. interests by facilitating legitimate travel to and from the United States and emphasizes secure borders while opening doors to travelers and immigrants. The United States continues to be an international beacon of freedom and economic opportunities. While welcoming immigrants and temporary visitors, we must continue to avert potential threats and harm to the United States by maintaining secure U.S. borders. Reinforcing efforts that maintain and improve visa security and the integrity of the adjudication process includes a range of activities and interagency coordination and cooperation. CA relies on internal and interagency information technology to screen visa applicants effectively. Partner agencies provide data, analysis, and experience with which CA can improve processes and foreign governments share critical security information.
- **Bureau Objective 3.2 Risk Considerations:** Resource constraints could impact CA's efforts to reinforce and improve visa security and present risks to CA's ability to contribute to the operations of the National Vetting Center and other supporting agencies. Constraints within partner agencies also affect and pose risks to CA's operations.

4. Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Goal

Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Goal 1: Improve organizational and resource capacity in support of consular services.

- **Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Goal 1 Description:** CA has distinguished itself as a pioneer within the Department in leadership and management. Each directorate and office support CA's strategic mission while actively instituting systems to improve management, develop clearer tactical direction, and enhance transparency. CA strives to be a responsive, nimble, and lean organization, benefiting domestic and international customers.

CA develops, deploys, and supports IT solutions to automate the functions for the Department's consular services, from concept to product or service delivery.

CA ensures the efficient use of Consular and Border Security Programs (CBSP) financial resources to meet the bureau's strategic goals. CA provides critical services to U.S. citizens and foreign nationals domestically and abroad, while relying upon variable revenue to fund those activities. CA does not retain all the fees that it collects and, for certain services, charges less than the full cost of the service. A stable and healthy CBSP account will allow the bureau to stay current in a changing world, support the nation's security and economy, and help U.S. citizens in crisis. CA is expanding its use of data and program evaluations to inform management decisions.

CA will continue to develop a workforce that maximizes the strengths and talents of personnel and incorporates diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility principles into daily operations. In addition, CA will continue to invest in its workforce for executive readiness and ensure appropriate consular staffing, with an eye to towards improving diversity at all levels.

Consular fraud prevention is a bureau-wide effort. Not only does it address external fraud prevention by passport and visa applicants, this cross-cutting effort addresses and prevents mis/malfeasance by consular professionals within CA.

CA communicates with Congress and the public to increase awareness of policies and procedures for consular services. Doing so provides information Congress needs to conduct oversight and support, prepares the public to apply for passport and visas, and keeps international travelers informed about safety and security.

Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective 1.1: By September 30, 2026, CA provides robust, reliable, and secure information technology systems by deploying enterprise-wide solutions that can adapt to users' changing business needs.

- **Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective 1.1 Justification and Linkages:** This objective supports CA's response to Learning Agenda Question 6.3 on improving CA's capacity to provide modern, secure, and accessible consular services. Consular information technology systems are the backbone of CA's operations. Achieving this strategic objective directly results in more efficient and effective processes throughout the Bureau. Continued modernization of CA's information systems is crucial to providing straightforward, simplified transactions, and improved online and in-person interfaces. Better management of systems and records will improve performance, monitor compliance, and inform data driven, strategic decisions.
- **Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective 1.1 Risk Considerations:** Achieving this objective faces various risks, including insufficient financial resources, cybersecurity attacks, and delays in contract award processing that defer modernization efforts.

Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective 1.2: By September 30, 2024, CA stabilizes and maintains a healthy Consular and Border Security Programs account to provide state-of-the-art routine and emergency consular services and products.

- **Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective 1.2 Justification and Linkages:** CA is primarily a fee-funded bureau that must manage its resources effectively to sustain consular operations. CA's primary budgetary challenges are 1) CA sets fees at cost of service, but does not retain all fees charged, with the balance remitted to the U.S. Treasury; 2) CA does not collect fees for all the services provided and provides some services at less than cost; and 3) CA's legal expenditure authorities for revenue streams are restricted. In addition, CA's revenue sources are vulnerable to demand volatility that is inherently reactive to economic and political events, natural disasters, and public health crises (COVID-19 pandemic), security issues, and other factors beyond CA's control. This management objective supports JSP Goal 5 on serving U.S. citizens around the world and facilitating secure international travel.
- **Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective 1.2 Risk Considerations:** The fee-funded financial structure directly impacts CA's ability to provide routine and emergency consular services and staff at appropriate levels. An under-resourced bureau cannot effectively or adequately provide citizens, passport, and visa services to U.S. citizens and foreign nationals. There are significant and direct resource implications if (or when) demand fluctuates. In addition, the rule-making process for adjusting fee authorities to recover actual consular operational costs is time intensive, cumbersome, and can be impacted by successive Administrations' priorities, resulting in substantial and critical revenue shortages.

Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective 1.3: By September 30, 2026, CA improves how it fosters and institutionalizes a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workforce as well as an accessible workplace.

- **Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective 1.3 Justification and Linkages:** CA supports developing and maintaining a diverse consular workforce and cultivating an inclusive, equitable, and accessible workplace. In addition, CA ensures that overseas consular sections and domestic agencies are appropriately staffed, trained, and equipped to provide equitable access to consular services and products.
- **Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective 1.3 Risk Considerations:** CA's organizational culture should encourage inclusion, equity, and access to opportunities for all consular professionals. If CA is unable to recruit and retain a diverse workforce, they will not be equipped to lead a modern workforce.

Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective 1.4: By September 30, 2026, CA institutionalizes and expands its professional development opportunities for all consular professionals.

- **Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective 1.4 Justification and Linkages:** Developing and maintaining a high-functioning and motivated consular workforce supports CA's mission to protect and serve U.S. citizens and to facilitate a secure, effective visa and passport adjudication processes. To this end, CA ensures that overseas consular sections and domestic agencies are appropriately staffed, equipped, and supplied. CA identifies and manages staffing gaps or surges in workload domestically and abroad to maintain its standards of timely service. CA prioritizes professional development and has created tools, resources, and learning opportunities that reinforce the CA Leadership and Management Tenets and promote the CA Management Framework. Preparing consular professionals for senior positions in the Department ensures that the bureau has the leadership expertise to meet its challenges and achieve strategic goals.

- **Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective 1.4 Risk Considerations:** If the Department were to reduce or constrain hiring, this could severely hamper the Bureau's ability to protect and serve U.S. citizens and facilitate a secure, effective visa and passport adjudication process. CA must stabilize the CBSP account to avoid a repeat of the hiring and training freezes in 2020 and 2021. CA's ability to hire, train, and retain consular professionals is contingent on a sustained funding source. Failure to develop our workforce will leave consular professionals unprepared for higher levels of responsibilities within CA.

Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective 1.5: By September 30, 2026, CA will enhance consular professionals' ability to prevent fraud and promote the integrity of consular services.

- **Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective Justification 1.5:** Deterring, detecting, and investigating citizenship and visa fraud and malfeasance is essential to safeguard national security. The ingenuity, resources, and globally present nature of criminal entities that engage in fraud pose a serious risk to the integrity of consular processes. To mitigate that risk, CA believes in a robust and multi-faceted approach that engages all consular personnel and relies on close coordination between fraud prevention managers, consular leadership, and all other facets of consular operations. Data analytics provide insight into worldwide trends and identifies links between cases. These data are used to develop post-specific fraud prevention plans responsive to the latest and most pertinent threats, trends, and techniques.
- **Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective Risk Consideration 1.5:** Without fraud prevention and consular integrity measures, the integrity and security of U.S. travel documents, as well as the integrity of consular decisions, is undermined, which in turn threatens U.S. borders and the safety and security of U.S. citizens.

Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective 1.6: CA's engagement with Congress and the public about consular services and policies is increased.

- **Bureau Cross-Cutting Management Objective Justification 1.6:** CA communicates with Congress and the public to maximize awareness of policies and procedures for consular services. Doing so provides Congress the information they need to conduct oversight and support, prepares the public to apply for passport and visas, and informs international travelers about safety and security. Being open and transparent and providing accessible services to customers contributes to CA's positive reputation. CA shares information regarding citizen support and visa services with Congress through assistance with constituent inquires and proactive outreach to Congressional staff. Outreach to Congressional offices increases Congressional familiarity with consular services and procedures.
- **Management Objective Risk Consideration 1.6:** Risks to the achievement of this objective include delays in adoption of new technologies that further communication objectives and significant changes in Congressional policy/laws impacting CA operations.