



Functional Bureau Strategy

Bureau of Consular Affairs

FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

Approved: August 31, 2018

Table of Contents

1. Executive Statement.....3

2. Bureau Strategic Framework5

3. Goals and Objectives6

4. Cross-cutting Management Goal and Objectives10

1. Executive Statement

The Bureau of Consular Affairs (CA) provides consular services that protect U.S. citizens, ensure U.S. national security, and facilitate legitimate travel. These consular activities have broad foreign policy and domestic political implications and involve complex humanitarian, legal, and operational concerns.

CA's first goal and highest priority is to **protect the lives and serve the interests of U.S. citizens overseas**. A growing percentage of U.S. citizens have a valid passport and travel overseas regularly. U.S. citizens are also choosing to travel to more remote destinations, in large part due to increased access to global information, which also raises expectations of rapid government communication, action, and assistance even in the most isolated locations. A key focus for the bureau is providing information that lets travelers make educated decisions about safety and security while traveling. Additionally, an estimated 9 million U.S. citizens reside overseas and require both routine and emergency services. Increasing access to the internet and use of mobile technology provides an opportunity to communicate with customers around the globe, learn more about the needs of those who travel overseas, and disseminate security information more effectively.

Consular work plays a vital role in the national security and foreign policy of the United States. CA is dedicated to **strengthening U.S. border security while facilitating legitimate travel**. U.S. border security begins with the issuance of secure, error-free travel documents to those who qualify for them and denial of travel documents to those who do not qualify. CA issues passports to U.S. citizens and adjudicates visas for foreign nationals seeking to visit the United States for leisure, business, or educational purposes, all in addition to those who wish to immigrate to the United States. CA must respond to emerging threats, policy changes, and national security events, including partnering with others in the Department and interagency stakeholders. Mitigating these risks and adapting to a changing policy environment can strain resources. CA relies on its extensive employee experience and knowledge of domestic and foreign operating environments, draws on a strong network of interagency relationships, uses its authorities related to financial resources, and prioritizes resources within legal authorities to respond effectively to these challenges.

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. A visa interview may be the only encounter a foreign national has with a representative of the United States and the cumulative effect of such interaction with consular employees often provides a baseline for the United States' reputation in the host country. Every Foreign Service generalist officer's entry level career begins with one to four years with CA. By offering a transparent, ethical, and efficient process for review of visa and passport applications overseas, CA demonstrates many U.S. core values and provides a critical service to public diplomacy.

Facilitation of legitimate travel has a tangible impact on the domestic economy and the interests of U.S. businesses. CA helps U.S. citizens travel by providing passports to those who are eligible to receive them. CA visa adjudication enables the travel of over 75 million visitors to the United States annually, who, according to the Department of Commerce's 2016 Travel and

Tourism Statistics, spent \$246 billion dollars, supporting an estimated 1.2 million jobs in the United States.¹

Improving organizational and resource capacity to support consular services supports achievement of the above goals. Achieving CA's goals requires prudent management of CA resources, most notably its human resources. Well-trained employees worldwide make visa and passport decisions that strengthen national security and constantly improve operations. 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 the human resources necessary to meet strategic goals. CA continues to approach the bureau's IT challenges by innovatively partnering with Department and interagency stakeholders to develop appropriate solutions. IT modernization is driven both by public demand and the need for greater efficiency and data security. Because CA is funded by the fees and surcharges it collects for services, the flexibility of this model allows CA to prioritize funding according to a strategic plan, even when responding to emerging national security needs. CA exercises careful oversight and management of funding to mitigate risks from fluctuations in service demand and shortfalls due to legislative restrictions which prohibit the bureau from retaining fees for the full cost of all services.

CA will approach the strategic goals outlined in this document by asking each consular professional to think innovatively, plan strategically, budget wisely, and evaluate constantly. CA managers will regularly monitor progress toward achieving the sub-objectives and report these annually as part of the Consular and Border Security Programs (CBSP) reports. This approach provides a strategic progress review to ensure alignment of policy, planning, resources, and program decision-making.

¹ International Trade Administration, *National Travel and Tourism Week*, <https://www.commerce.gov/news/blog/2017/05/celebrating-national-travel-and-tourism-week> (May 8, 2017)

2. Bureau Strategic Framework

Goal 1: Protect the lives and serve the interests of U.S. citizens overseas

Objective 1.1: Enhance U.S. citizen security and better serve their interests overseas by providing the full range of U.S. citizen services in a vigilant, efficient, and timely manner
Objective 1.2: Empower U.S. citizens to make informed decisions for their safety while traveling or residing abroad through timely and effective dissemination of relevant information

Goal 2: Strengthen U.S. border security while facilitating legitimate travel

Objective 2.1: Enhance U.S. border security through vigilant, accurate, and timely passport services
Objective 2.2: Enhance U.S. border security through secure, accurate, and efficient visa services
Objective 2.3: Prevent fraud and promote the integrity of consular services
Objective 2.4: Increase the public's knowledge of consular services and policies by providing timely, accurate, and comprehensive information

Management Goal: Improve organizational and resource capacity in support of consular services

Management Objective 1: Provide robust, reliable, and secure information technology systems by deploying solutions that can adapt to users' changing business needs
Management Objective 2: Efficiently and effectively manage, prioritize, and oversee CA resources and operations
Management Objective 3: Ensure high service standards and operational efficiency by employing effective recruitment, hiring, and assignment strategies and facilitating professional development for consular personnel

3. Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Protect the lives and serve the interests of U.S. citizens overseas

Description and Linkages

Protecting the lives and interests of U.S. citizens is the Department's highest priority. As U.S. citizens travel more frequently, the demand for consular services is expanding. As of March 2018, nearly 42 percent of U.S. citizens hold a valid U.S. passport. U.S. citizens increasingly choose to travel and reside abroad, including in many remote places. Simultaneously, CA's ability to provide services faces challenges from infrastructure insufficient to meet the needs and expectations of an increasingly diverse U.S. population overseas, including dual nationals, the elderly, and children. CA must take a proactive approach to anticipate new requirements and demand fluctuations, and refocus efforts to provide superior services to U.S. citizens.

CA assists U.S. citizens overseas affected by crises, including but not limited to natural disasters, political strife, and medical emergencies. The bureau provides consular services to thousands of U.S. citizens affected by abuse, mental illness, and crime abroad. Consular professionals must respond immediately as crises arise. Advances in technology create new opportunities and challenges related to the way CA interacts with U.S. citizens. CA continues to explore the best methods to quickly disseminate information and reach those traveling and residing abroad including through traditional and social media outlets.

The bureau works to prevent international parental child abduction and improve intercountry adoption throughout the world. CA is the U.S. Central Authority for both the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Parental Child Abduction (IPCA) and the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. CA works closely with 77 Hague partner countries and with authorities in non-Hague countries to prevent IPCA and to assist left behind parents whose children have been wrongfully removed or retained. CA collaborates with 97 Hague partner countries to improve intercountry adoptions.

This goal supports the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Goal 1.5, Strengthen U.S. border security and protect U.S. citizens abroad.

Objective 1.1: Enhance U.S. citizen security and better serve their interests overseas by providing the full range of U.S. citizen services in a vigilant, efficient, and timely manner

Justification

The routine and emergency services CA provides to U.S. citizens abroad facilitates their ability to travel and live overseas while maintaining access to services such as federal benefits and the ability to vote in U.S. elections. CA assists U.S. citizens abroad in the event of death, destitution, imprisonment, disaster, or medical emergency. Additionally, the bureau promotes intercountry adoption as a viable option throughout the world and prevents and responds to international parental child abduction. To accomplish this strategic objective, CA must understand the diverse needs of U.S. citizens and adjust outreach efforts to engage target audiences more effectively. The unpredictable nature of emergencies presents a risk for the bureau's ability to operate from a strategic posture. Often, resources need to be quickly realigned in reaction to crisis events.

Objective 1.2: Empower U.S. citizens to make informed decisions for their safety while traveling or residing abroad through timely and effective dissemination of relevant information

Justification

Disseminating accurate and up-to-date information to the public helps U.S. citizens make better decisions concerning their travel plans and activities abroad, avoid unsafe situations, and mitigate the need for emergency assistance. CA monitors how citizens use consular information in order to improve the effectiveness of its outreach. CA's crisis communications capabilities use social media to enable real-time communication with affected U.S. citizens and integrate such communication into overall crisis response efforts. CA makes every effort to provide information that is accessible, accurate, relevant, and engaging. Risks to effective communication include reliance on technology that may not be available to U.S. travelers in all the environments and situations they may encounter. Also, U.S. travelers must ultimately choose what information to use and what advice to heed – some choose not to use the information CA provides.

Goal 2: Strengthen U.S. border security while facilitating legitimate travel

Description and Linkages

CA is dedicated to the protection of U.S. borders. Consular professionals have the sole legal authority to adjudicate passport and visa applications that allow legitimate travel across U.S. borders. Consular officers at overseas posts adjudicate nonimmigrant visas for foreign visitors and immigrant visas for foreign nationals seeking to immigrate to the United States. CA facilitates the travel of millions of U.S. citizens and foreign tourists annually.

By accurately and efficiently adjudicating U.S. passport and visa applications, CA ensures that the world's most coveted travel documents are kept out of the hands of those wanting to do harm to the United States. CA denies and revokes passports of U.S. citizens serving as Foreign Terrorist Fighters who pose significant threats to U.S. national security and foreign policy. CA's layered approach to visa and border security enables employees and interagency partners to track and review the visa eligibility

and status of foreign visitors from their visa applications throughout their travel to, sojourn in, and departure from the United States.

CA works closely with the FBI's Counterterrorism Division, the National Targeting Center, and other government departments and agencies to prevent the entry of terrorists and other threat actors. CA engages with the Terrorism Screening Center and partners with Diplomatic Security to support the National Joint Terrorism Task Force. CA will be an integral member of the new National Vetting Center, an interagency initiative to improve coordination and use of intelligence and other information to identify potential threats to national security, border security, homeland security, and public safety.

This goal supports the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Objective 1.5, Strengthen U.S. border security and protect U.S. citizens abroad

Objective 2.1: Enhance U.S. border security through vigilant, accurate, and timely passport services

Justification

CA strengthens U.S. national security as it provides secure, error-free travel documents to those who are eligible to receive them and denies them to those who are not eligible. CA professionals ensure passport issuance integrity and seek to reduce the potential for criminals and terrorists to exploit passport systems. The bureau prioritizes timely service to U.S. citizens, as demonstrated by maintaining CA's service level commitments while processing over 19.6 million passport applications, throughout peak demand in FY 2017, without sacrificing quality of adjudications. Projections indicate passport demand will stabilize at 18 to 19 million applications in the upcoming fiscal years, requiring CA to assess operational risks such as the resilience of its human resources and IT infrastructure. Disruptions in IT services or modernization efforts would severely impact CA's capability to process applications in a timely manner.

Objective 2.2: Enhance U.S. border security through secure, accurate, and efficient visa services

Justification

Providing visa services in a secure, accurate, and efficient manner results in strengthened borders and enhanced national security. CA relies on both 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. As global threats and immigration trends evolve, it is imperative that CA intensify collaboration with the interagency community and foreign partners. Efforts to modernize visa application systems will also improve efficiency and increase the integrity of the process. Subpar performance or under-resourcing of CA's IT systems presents a serious risk to CA's ability to provide visa services and to ensure U.S. national security. Insufficient or unpredictable funding or human resources could result in cuts to programs, decreasing the effectiveness and security of the visa process.

Objective 2.3: Prevent fraud and promote the integrity of consular services

Justification

Deterring, detecting, and investigating citizenship and visa fraud and malfeasance is essential to protect and 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. In order 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 provides insight into worldwide trends and identifies links between one case and another. This data is used to develop post-specific fraud prevention plans responsive to the latest and most pertinent threats, trends, and techniques.

Objective 2.4: Increase the public's knowledge of consular services and policies by providing timely, accurate, and comprehensive information

Justification

To maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of passport and visa services and to raise the profile of consular work, CA continuously communicates informative messaging to various stakeholders and the general public. This information increases awareness of policies and procedures for various CA services, leading to better-prepared passport and visa applicants and better-informed travelers abroad. Being open and transparent and providing accessible services to customers contributes to the bureau's positive reputation domestically and abroad. 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. 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.

4. Cross-cutting Management Goal and Objectives

Management Goal: Improve organizational and resource capacity in support of consular services.

Description and Linkages

CA has distinguished itself as a Department pioneer in leadership and management. Each directorate and office aligns its efforts to CA's strategic mission while actively instituting systems to improve management, develop clearer tactical direction, and enhance transparency. CA's efforts to streamline processes, eliminate waste, and improve management practices make CA a more nimble and lean organization, benefiting domestic and international customers.

CA develops, deploys, and supports complex IT solutions to automate the functions for the Department's visa, passport, and overseas citizens services operations, from concept to product, including research, design, development, testing, and launch. In an effort to improve efficiency and consistency across services, CA is developing a creative solution that provides a secure, reliable, and customer-focused platform. Known as ConsularOne, this system will support the effective use of information and data for the management of all consular business functions.

CA ensures the efficient use of CBSP resources to meet the bureau's strategic goals. Consular revenue comes from U.S. citizens and foreign travelers who pay for consular services and is used to fund the bureau's operations, as well as partner bureaus that perform work in support of Consular Affairs. Tracking of revenue and service demand forecasts allows CA to ensure that resources are available for the successful implementation of its strategic plans. In addition to executing funds for current program needs, CA formulates the CBSP budget for future years' operational goals. The bureau ensures resource oversight through expenditure monitoring, contractual compliance, risk management, and internal controls. To better monitor and assess effectiveness, CA is expanding its use of data and program evaluations to inform management decisions.

In overseeing the bureau's human resources, CA focuses on assigning staff to meet local demand and on developing a workforce that maximizes the strengths and talents of personnel. CA allocates the right quantity of permanent and temporary staff based on particular area needs and offers support, training, mentoring, and development of executive readiness.

This goal supports the State-USAID Joint Strategic Plan Objective 1.5, Strengthen U.S. border security and protect U.S. citizens abroad, as well as Objective 4.1, Strengthen the effectiveness and sustainability of our diplomacy and development investments, Objective 4.2, Provide modern and secure infrastructure and operational capabilities to support effective diplomacy and development, and Objective 4.3, Enhance workforce performance, leadership, engagement, and accountability to execute our mission efficiently and effectively

Management Objective 1: Provide robust, reliable, and secure information technology systems by deploying solutions that can adapt to users' changing business needs

Justification

Consular information technology systems are the backbone of CA's operations, both domestically and abroad. Achieving this strategic objective directly results in more efficient and

effective processes throughout the Bureau. Modernization of CA's aging information systems is crucial to provide straightforward, simplified transactions, improved online and in-person interfaces, and increased options throughout the application process. Better management of systems and records will improve performance, monitor compliance, and make data driven, strategic decisions. However, implementation of these efforts face various risks, ranging from cybersecurity attacks to delays in contract award processing that defer modernization efforts.

Management Objective 2: Efficiently and effectively manage, prioritize, and oversee CA resources and operations

Justification

CA is a fee-funded bureau that must manage its resources effectively to sustain consular operations. Through strategic planning, budgeting, prioritization, oversight of consular operations, and performance management, the bureau promotes transparency and public confidence in the work of Consular Affairs. Nevertheless, CA's revenue source is vulnerable to demand volatility that is inherently reactive to economic and political events, natural disasters, security issues, Congressional action, and other factors beyond CA's control. Legislative restrictions on certain revenue sources and spending authorities leaves portions of consular operations at risk of going unfunded due to lack of a dedicated revenue stream.

Management Objective 3: Ensure high service standards and operational efficiency by employing effective recruitment, hiring, and assignment strategies and facilitating professional development for consular personnel

Justification

Developing and maintaining a high-functioning and motivated consular workforce supports the bureau's capacity to protect and serve U.S. citizens and to facilitate a secure, effective visa and passport adjudication process. 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 both 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. If the Department were to reduce or constrain hiring, this could pose a risk to CA's ability to hire, train, and retain consular professionals thereby affecting the Bureau's ability to protect and serve U.S. citizens and facilitate a secure, effective visa and passport adjudication process.