



**DHS/USCIS Approach to  
Records Digitization**  
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**U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services**

# THE RECORDS MANAGED...

- The USCIS Records Division is the custodian of approximately 120 million agency and program records mostly at the National Records Center (NRC) and historical files at the Federal Records Centers.
- The immigrant record (A-File) is the Service's largest population of paper records (100 million+). About 75% of the A-Files can be found at the NARA Federal Records Center and USCIS Lee's Summit Record Centers (NRC).

# ROLE OF A-FILES

The A-File is used to:

- Collect information pertaining to:
  - The granting or denying immigration-related benefits
  - Naturalization
  - Law Enforcement activities
- The retention schedule is seventy-five years after last action



# A-FILE FACTS:

- The NRC opened its doors in 1999 with an A-File storage capacity of 8 million
- Today, the NRC has a 30 million A-File capacity
- The Harrisonburg File Facility (HBG) houses approximately 25 million receipt files
- We have approximately 1.4 million cubic feet of A-Files

# LITTLE KNOWN A-FILE FACTS:

- The NRC pulls 3,500 files per day
- The HBG pulls 1,500 per month
- The annual cost for shipping files exceeds over \$10 million (not including labor)
- The Service creates an average of 1.2 million A-files per year



# TOP REASONS TO DIGITIZE:

- Multiple users can have access to the same file at the same time
- Improve data integrity
- Reduce number of lost or misplaced
- Reduce costs for storage, shipping and maintenance



# MORE BENEFITS TO DIGITIZING A-FILES

| Backlog Elimination & Customer Service  | National Security  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Decreased cycle times</li><li>▪ Increased productivity</li><li>▪ Reduced costs</li><li>▪ Improved data management</li><li>▪ Improved customer satisfaction</li><li>▪ 24 hour access to information</li><li>▪ Increased accountability</li><li>▪ Streamlined processes</li><li>▪ Eliminates the risk of lost files</li><li>▪ Reduces errors</li><li>▪ Accessibility of files by multiple persons</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Enhances fraud detection</li><li>▪ Data sharing for enforcement components</li></ul> |



# DIGITIZATION INITIATIVE

In alignment with presidential mandate, *9/11 Report* recommendations, the strategic priorities of USCIS (i.e. National Security, Customer Service and Organizational Excellence), and increasing customer demand, USCIS is transitioning processes from a form and paper-based system to an electronic, account-based paperless platform to make the organization leaner, faster, and stronger by improving data integrity, automating retention schedules, and digitally storing immigration records until they are retired to the Federal Records Center.

**Enabling this organizational vision are two USCIS programs: Transformation & Digitization.**

**On December 12, 2005, the following  
Vision was announced to guide  
future USCIS operations**

*“Over the next five years, USCIS will stand up and implement a **scaleable digitization capability** as part of the USCIS Transformation initiative. This capability will provide **electronic access to millions of immigration records** to enhance national security and improve customer service to both our internal and external stakeholders.”*

# TRANSFORMATION AND DIGITIZATION

## Transformation

*A USCIS enterprise-wide initiative to deliver a new business identity, fresh tools, and dependable information, making USCIS the world's preeminent immigration benefits processing organization.*

*Transformation will enable applicants to input information digitally, and will secure real time data sharing, based on digital person-centric records.*

## Digitization

*A USCIS initiative to scan, store, and view immigration paper files and related documents while integrating to person-centric records, making them electronically available to DHS, USCIS, ICE, CBP and other agencies.*

*Phase I of Digitization is a pilot program during which smaller batches of files will be scanned and user testing will be performed.*

### USCIS Drivers

- Commitment to backlog reduction
- Movement towards automated adjudication processing
- Enforcement's need for timely access to files
- Paper reduction
- Cost reduction (shelving & shipping)
- Allows multiple users to view the same file simultaneously
- Prevents loss of files
- Improves Data Integrity and data reliability in systems



### DHS-wide Drivers

- Enterprise-wide information sharing and integration
- Promote National Security, eliminate immigration adjudication backlog, & improve immigration customer services
- Expanding the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States' (9/11 Commission) recommendations

# OVERVIEW OF DIGITIZATION PROCESS

## Primary Digitization Components

Submitters of Physical Files and Support Evidence for A-Files

Users Who Need to View the Physical File Images

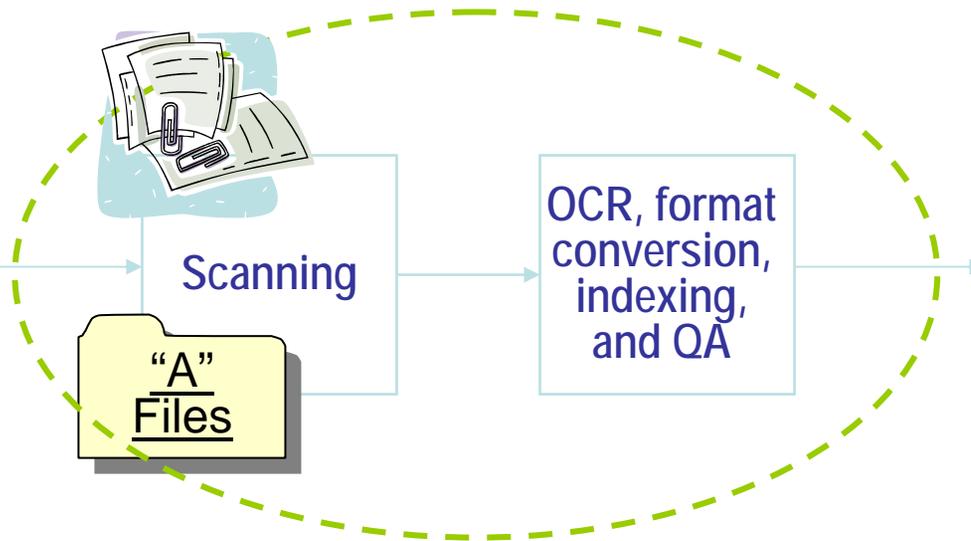
### Digitization of A-Files



**3<sup>rd</sup> Party Petitioners**



**3<sup>rd</sup> Party Sponsors**



**Adjudicators**



**Enforcement Agents**



# STATUS OF DIGITIZATION INITIATIVE

## RECORDS DIGITIZATION FACILITY (RDF) STATS:

**-Established in September 2006.** Contractor owned and operated by CSC/Datatrak, in Williamsburg, KY

**# of Files at the Facility – over 500,000**

**# of Files Scanned – over 300,000**

**# of Contractor Staff on Board – over 370**

### Quality Assurance

- **12 Contractor QA Staff on Board**
- **100% QA During Pilot Phase**
- **Multiple QA Reviews throughout Scanning Process**
  - **Initial Triage/System Updates**
  - **Image Quality**
  - **Metadata/Image Comparison**



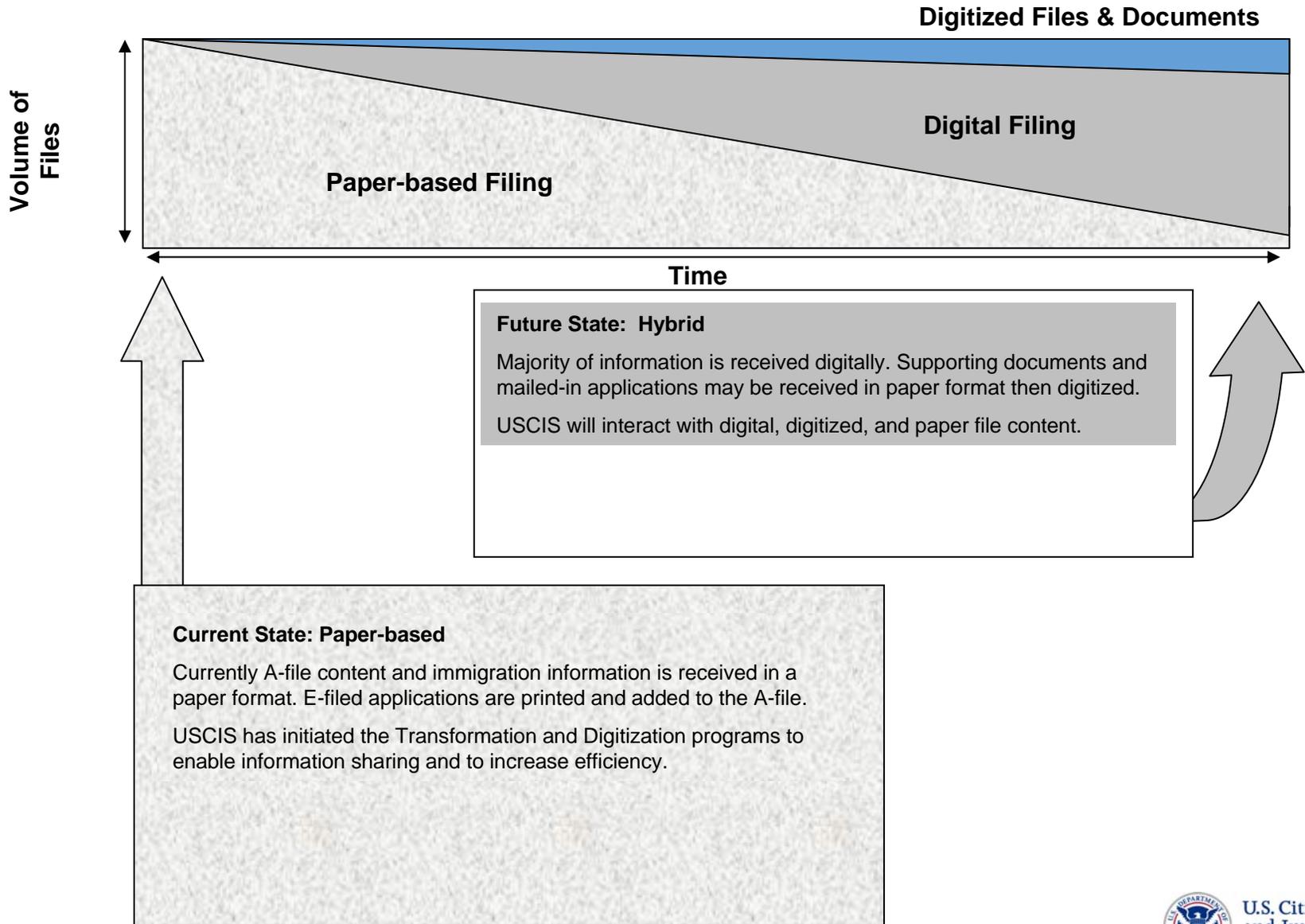
# NARA SUPPORT for DIGITIZATION INITIATIVE

## NARA Discussions:

- Scheduling Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) that will allow the scanned records to be viewed and allowing the destruction of paper records once the digital record is made the official record
- Establishing the Alien File (A-File) a permanent record
- Conducting reviews on all current forms to determine new retention guidelines to be used in EDMS and a new case management system under development by the USCIS Transformation Program.



# MOVING TOWARD THE FUTURE....



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## Upcoming Digitization Initiatives

- Scan on Demand
- LESC – Digitization of High-Profile Enforcement Files
- ICE/CBP – Electronic Transfer of Files
- MIDAS – Expand access to Field Offices



# LESSONS LEARNED:

- Establish a project plan with all stakeholders and ensure that change management process is instituted
- Balance expectations with available resources
- Establish and monitor performance measures
- Develop Q&A procedures as soon as possible



# QUESTIONS/DISCUSSION



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