Moving Spousal Immigration Processing from Years to Weeks

A proposal for AI-assisted review, targeted staffing, proactive evidence validation, and applicant preparation

The strongest approach is to treat immigration processing as one connected operation: automate routine work, give human officers better evidence, and add capacity wherever cases accumulate. Installing AI at one stage will accomplish little if cases simply reach the next understaffed department sooner.

For straightforward overseas spousal cases, **six months is a useful initial reform target, with 8–12 weeks as an ambitious target to validate through a pilot.** Four weeks could be an exceptional accelerated pathway, but the evidence available here does not justify promising it broadly.

These are proposed performance targets, not established USCIS capabilities or predictions for an individual case. The staffing examples below are transparent hypothetical models. They show what would need to be true for these reductions to happen.

1. What must change

The elapsed time for a case consists of several different components:

Total processing time = active work + queue time + applicant response time + external-check time + appointment waits.

AI primarily reduces active administrative work, preventable errors, and coordination delays. Additional staff increase review and interview capacity. Better scheduling and workload management reduce queues.

USCIS identifies application volume, workload and staffing allocations, applicant responses, and operational changes as factors affecting processing times. The agency’s published explanation does not establish how much each factor contributes to an individual case. [1]

A 24-month case therefore should not be assumed to require 24 months of labor—or to consist entirely of avoidable waiting. **The first operational requirement is to measure where the time actually goes.** The available evidence here does not establish what proportion of total elapsed time is waiting, nor whether the same breakdown applies across offices and case types.

This resembles a manufacturing line: speeding up document intake has limited value if final review or interviews cannot absorb the output.

2. Scope of this proposal

This analysis concerns **a spouse applying for an immigrant visa from overseas through an I-130 petition**, followed by National Visa Center processing and a consular interview.

The proposed completion targets run **from a complete initial filing to immigrant-visa issuance**. They exclude the applicant's later travel and physical green-card delivery.

The fastest pathway assumes:

- A legally eligible, straightforward case.
- Authentic, complete documents and prompt applicant responses.
- Routine checks that resolve without a substantive investigation.
- Available medical and interview appointments.
- Secure integration between participating agencies.
- Sufficient trained staff throughout the process.

Cases involving disputed evidence, unresolved identity matches, legal complications, or substantive investigations need an exception pathway. Visa categories subject to numerical limits also have constraints that administrative automation cannot remove.

3. What AI and human officers should do at each stage

The following are **proposed future capabilities and operational targets**. They assume lawful access, validated systems, and appropriate oversight. Stage-level savings overlap and should not be added together.

Processing stage	AI's proposed role	Human role and safeguards	Proposed improvement
1. Filing intake	Validate fields, signatures, fees, and attachments before submission; create the electronic case automatically.	Resolve disputed validation errors and unusual filings. Preserve the original record.	Routine intake in minutes or hours; fewer rejected submissions.
2. Petition and marriage review	Extract information, compare records, build a relationship timeline, and produce an evidence summary linked to original documents. Verify records with issuing sources where authorized and available.	Assess eligibility and marriage evidence; resolve contradictions; authorize decisions.	Reduce routine reading and comparison work while preserving meaningful review.
3. Identity and security screening	Initiate permitted checks in parallel, reconcile name variations, and organize potential matches for analysts.	Investigate consequential matches and resolve uncertainty. Apply strict access controls and audit trails.	Faster routine checks and fewer idle handoffs; investigations retain variable timelines.
4. Petition decision	Assemble completed findings and draft a recommendation or a consolidated request for missing evidence.	An accountable officer independently evaluates the recommendation and authorizes action.	Decision preparation within a working day after prerequisites are complete.

Processing stage	AI's proposed role	Human role and safeguards	Proposed improvement
5. Transfer to NVC	Transfer the complete electronic record, confirm receipt, and reuse verified information.	Resolve transfer failures and record discrepancies.	Routine transfer within one business day.
6. Visa and sponsorship submissions	Prefill prior information for confirmation; organize DS-260 and I-864 evidence; check calculations and consistency.	Applicants confirm submissions. Specialists review complex sponsorship and eligibility issues.	Less duplicate entry and fewer correction cycles.
7. NVC document review	Validate document types, legibility, completeness, translations, and country-specific requirements as uploads occur.	Review exceptions and override incorrect flags.	Same-day routine validation; one consolidated deficiency notice where possible.
8. Documentarily qualified status	Recognize completion and move the case promptly into scheduling.	Retain clear separation between document completeness and visa eligibility.	Eliminate a separate administrative wait after review is complete.
9. Interview scheduling	Match ready cases to appointments, refill cancellations, forecast demand, and expose staffing shortages.	Apply transparent scheduling priorities and review expedite requests.	Better use of appointments; shorter waits where capacity is adequate.
10. Medical coordination	Coordinate instructions, records, and secure delivery of results.	Authorized clinicians perform examinations and make medical findings.	Fewer postponements caused by missing records or results.
11. Consular interview	Prepare a source-linked briefing and assist with authorized transcription and documentation.	Conduct the interview, evaluate evidence, and determine eligibility. Provide qualified language support.	More officer time available for interviews and decisions.
12. Post-interview processing	Route outstanding actions, track dependencies, validate responses, and flag stalled cases.	Resolve substantive issues and authorize issuance or other action.	Less idle time between necessary actions.
13. Admission and card records	Reconcile fee, admission, address, and production records; detect discrepancies early.	Resolve identity, address, and production exceptions.	Prompt administrative readiness after required events.

Under the current process, petition approval is followed by NVC submissions and document review, then interview scheduling. Medical examinations and fingerprint collection form part of the visa process, and some cases require administrative processing after the interview. An approved I-130 or documentarily complete file does not itself establish final visa approval. [2–4]

4. How AI and additional staffing multiply capacity

The staffing question is best answered with a capacity model.

Illustrative document-review operation

Assume:

- **10,000 new cases arrive weekly.**
- Each reviewer has **25 productive case-review hours weekly**, after training, meetings, leave allowances, and other duties.
- Manual review takes an average of **two human hours per case**.
- AI-assisted review takes an average of **45 human minutes per case**, including exceptions and quality work.
- These figures describe one review operation, not the entire immigration process.
- The staffing figures represent fully trained personnel, not newly hired staff still learning the work.

Weekly capacity = reviewers × productive review hours ÷ average human hours per case.

Operating model	Reviewers	Average human time per case	Weekly capacity	Capacity above 10,000 weekly arrivals
Manual review	800	2 hours	10,000	0
AI-assisted review	800	45 minutes	26,667	16,667
AI-assisted review, 25% more staff	1,000	45 minutes	33,333	23,333
AI-assisted review, 50% more staff	1,200	45 minutes	40,000	30,000

Under these assumptions, **AI plus 25% more reviewers provides approximately 3.3 times the original review capacity.**

The improvement comes from combining less work per case with more available reviewer hours. Capacity can also be increased through reassignment, better scheduling, and reduced rework; additional hiring should follow measured need rather than be required at every stage. It depends on achieving the assumed time reduction without unacceptable errors or rework.

Training and deployment require separate resources and lead time. Savings should be measured after staff are proficient, and the model must include time spent checking AI findings, correcting errors, and handling exceptions.

What if AI saves less time?

A credible proposal must test less favorable results.

With **1,000 reviewers**:

Average human review time after AI	Weekly capacity	Capacity above new arrivals	Time to clear a 200,000-case backlog
90 minutes	16,667	6,667	About 30 weeks
60 minutes	25,000	15,000	About 13.3 weeks
45 minutes	33,333	23,333	About 8.6 weeks

These are simplified clearance calculations. They assume stable arrivals, available cases, and sustained productivity.

The actual average must include difficult cases. Measuring only how quickly AI handles easy documents would overstate the staffing benefit.

5. Clearing the backlog requires surplus capacity

A system that finishes exactly as many cases as it receives can keep pace indefinitely while leaving its existing backlog untouched.

Backlog clearance time = existing backlog ÷ weekly capacity remaining after new arrivals.

For the hypothetical **200,000-case backlog**:

Operating model	Weekly surplus capacity	Approximate clearance time
Manual review, 800 reviewers	0	Does not shrink
AI-assisted review, 800 reviewers	16,667	12 weeks
AI-assisted review, 1,000 reviewers	23,333	8.6 weeks
AI-assisted review, 1,200 reviewers	30,000	6.7 weeks

These figures concern the modeled review backlog only. They do not imply that everyone receives a visa within that period.

They also describe the transition to a better system. A future 8–12-week service target could become achievable only after backlogs and downstream capacity are brought under control.

The staffing structure should therefore include:

- **A permanent processing team** with enough capacity to handle new arrivals and normal fluctuations.
- **A temporary backlog team** to reduce accumulated pending work.
- **Specialist teams** for complex legal, financial, identity, and security issues.
- **Quality reviewers and reconsideration staff** to detect and correct errors.
- **A cross-agency operations team** responsible for handoffs and total elapsed time.

Immediate staffing cuts after automation would reduce the surplus capacity needed to clear old cases.

6. Interview capacity must grow with review capacity

Faster petition review can increase the number of interview-ready applicants. Without corresponding embassy capacity, the queue simply moves.

The State Department identifies consular operating capacity as a factor in interview scheduling. NVC coordinates appointments with the relevant embassy or consulate. [5–6]

Illustrative interview operation

Assume:

- **1,000 cases become interview-ready weekly.**
- One officer can complete **20 interviews weekly**, including associated work.
- Management plans around **80% utilization**, leaving room for variability and exceptions.

Staffing objective	Approximate interviewing officers needed
Keep pace at full assumed capacity	50
Keep pace with a 20% capacity cushion	63
Handle new arrivals and clear 10,000 waiting interviews over 20 weeks, with the same cushion	94

These are hypothetical planning figures. Actual staffing must reflect local interview duration, case complexity, duties, and resources.

Additional interviewing officers also need:

- Document and scheduling support.
- Qualified language assistance where needed.
- Security and suitable interview space.
- Sufficient authorized medical-examination capacity.

- Staff to complete post-interview actions.

AI's contribution should be measured by whether it reduces preparation and documentation enough to increase **completed, accurate decisions per officer**, rather than merely producing more summaries.

7. A proposed 8–12-week operating schedule

The following schedule is a design target for a straightforward case, not an established achievable timetable.

Target period	Work completed	Necessary operating conditions
Week 1	Intake validation, record creation, initial evidence organization, authorized checks initiated	Complete filing and integrated systems
Weeks 1–3	Petition review, routine screening assessment, officer decision	Available reviewers and no unresolved substantive issues
Weeks 3–5	NVC transfer, applicant confirmation and submissions, civil and financial review	Prompt responses and immediate document validation
Weeks 5–8	Appointment coordination and medical examination	Available embassy and medical capacity
Weeks 8–10	Interview and final eligibility assessment	Complete records and timely check results
Weeks 10–12	Remaining routine actions and visa issuance	No additional investigation or unresolved documentation

Earlier preparation of later-stage documents could reduce applicant delays. Government stages that must remain sequential would still follow the applicable legal and procedural requirements.

Comparison with a 24-month example

Using approximately **104 weeks** as the starting point:

Future completion target	Time saved	Approximate reduction
26 weeks	78 weeks	75%
12 weeks	92 weeks	88%
8 weeks	96 weeks	92%
4 weeks	100 weeks	96%

These percentages describe the proposed outcome. **They do not establish that AI alone can deliver it.**

- **26 weeks:** Initial reform target to test.
- **8–12 weeks:** Ambitious routine-case target after capacity is balanced and backlogs are reduced.
- **4 weeks:** Exceptional accelerated target requiring unusually favorable conditions.

8. Where to add humans first

Hiring should follow observed queues and workload, rather than applying the same percentage increase everywhere.

Measured bottleneck	Staffing response	AI support
Petitions waiting for decisions	More trained adjudicating officers	Evidence summaries and consistency checks
Repeated document corrections	More document specialists and applicant support	Immediate validation and consolidated requests
Unresolved identity matches	More trained background analysts	Name reconciliation and source-linked match analysis
Complex financial reviews	More sponsorship specialists	Calculations and evidence organization
Interview queues	More consular officers and supporting staff	Scheduling, preparation, and documentation
Post-interview inactivity	Dedicated case-completion staff	Dependency tracking and overdue-action alerts
Incorrect findings and rework	More quality and reconsideration capacity	Error-pattern detection and traceability

For each stage, staffing can be estimated as:

Required staff = weekly workload × average human hours per case ÷ productive hours per employee ÷ planned utilization.

Backlog work must be included in weekly workload during the clearance period.

9. Safeguards that support both speed and accuracy

Safeguards should be built into the workflow so officers can trust and efficiently verify the system’s work.

- **Source-linked findings:** Every material conclusion points to an original document or authorized record.
- **Accountable decisions:** Human officers authorize consequential decisions and can reject AI recommendations.
- **Meaningful correction:** Applicants can correct mistaken identities, inaccurate records, and misunderstood evidence.
- **Controlled access:** Systems use only authorized data, with limited permissions and auditable access.
- **Validated matching:** Identity tools are tested on transliterations, common names, and incomplete records.
- **Fairness testing:** Performance is evaluated across languages and applicant groups.
- **No speculative lie detection:** Nervousness, accent, or facial expressions are not treated as proof of deception.
- **Complete audit trails:** The record identifies what AI produced, what sources it used, and what the officer accepted or changed.
- **Quality sampling and targeted review:** Routine cases receive appropriate checks; uncertain or consequential findings receive deeper attention.
- **Data security:** Encrypt stored records and transmissions, require strong authentication, separate applicant and officer permissions, and restrict access by role and purpose. Log access and exports, test defenses, and maintain an incident-response plan.
- **Data minimization:** Retain only authorized information for the required period. Applicant records should not become general-purpose model-training data without separate lawful authority and approved controls.
- **Resilience:** Maintain tested backups, recovery procedures, and a controlled fallback workflow during outages. Preserve submitted records, filing timestamps, and lawful deadlines; reconcile actions when service resumes.
- **Officer training:** Require demonstrated ability to verify citations, recognize uncertainty and language limitations, and challenge AI output. Include escalation, refresher training, and supervision.
- **Accessible service:** Provide human assistance, accessible interfaces, appropriate language support, low-bandwidth options, and authorized representative access. Lack of digital access should not itself be treated as an adverse credibility signal.
- **Translation controls:** AI translations may assist sorting and review, but should preserve originals and identify uncertainty. Official submissions must continue to satisfy applicable translation and certification requirements; an unreviewed machine translation should not be represented as certified.
- **Human marriage determination:** AI may analyze evidence and identify corroboration or contradictions. The responsible officer determines whether the marriage meets the applicable legal requirements.

If officers must redo all automated work, the time savings disappear. If they accept it without meaningful evaluation, errors can spread faster. The operating design must avoid both outcomes.

10. What a pilot must prove

Before adopting an 8–12-week commitment, a pilot should establish:

Measure	What it tells management
Human hours per completed case	Whether AI reduces total labor, including exceptions and corrections
Queue time at every stage	Where staffing or handoffs still delay cases
Weekly arrivals and completions	Whether capacity exceeds demand
Backlog size and age	Whether older cases are actually being resolved
Median and 90th-percentile elapsed time	Whether improvement reaches most applicants
Error, rework, and overturned-decision rates	Whether speed preserves decision quality
Interview and medical availability	Whether downstream resources can absorb faster reviews
Results by language and applicant group	Whether performance is equitable
Cost per accurate completed case	Whether the combined technology and staffing model is worthwhile

The pilot should compare similar case groups and count all work, including technical support, specialist review, and correction of AI mistakes. It should also measure training costs, service interruptions, accessibility outcomes, and security incidents. Rollout should proceed through the release gates in Section 15.

Temporary backlog staffing should remain until the queue is reduced and the permanent operation demonstrates sustained capacity above incoming demand.

11. Overall assessment

The strongest reform proposal combines AI-assisted administration, targeted human staffing, surplus capacity to clear backlogs, and accountability for the entire case timeline.

The calculations show how this could work: in the illustrative review operation, reducing human work from two hours to 45 minutes and adding 25% more reviewers increases capacity approximately 3.3-fold. But that result translates into shorter total processing only if security review, NVC processing, medical appointments, interviews, and issuance can keep pace.

A credible policy objective would be to:

1. **Validate a six-month standard for straightforward cases.**

2. **Reduce existing backlogs with temporary surplus staffing.**

3. **Test an 8–12-week routine-case pathway across the full process.**

4. **Maintain a separately staffed exception pathway with visible progress and accountable follow-up.**

The case for reform is strong enough to investigate seriously. The precise number of weeks requires operational data and a pilot. **The central question is how to build enough reliable capacity that a complete case moves continuously from filing to decision, with waiting justified by a necessary action rather than an unattended queue.**

12. Proactive evidence review and applicant guidance

Objective: Minimize avoidable Requests for Evidence by helping the petitioner and beneficiary build the most complete, accurate, and relevant file possible before substantive officer review.

- **Review evidence before submission.**
  - Check required documents, legibility, missing pages, translations, signatures, and consistency.
  - Evaluate whether submitted evidence addresses the applicable requirement—not merely whether a file occupies an upload slot.
- **Identify weaknesses immediately.**
  - Distinguish between a missing required document, an inconsistency needing explanation, and supporting evidence that could strengthen the case.
  - Explain each issue in plain language and identify the relevant requirement.
  - Separate mandatory corrections from optional suggestions so applicants are not pressured to submit unnecessary material.
- **Provide specific, practical instructions.**
  - Explain which types of evidence are acceptable, what they help establish, and any applicable document requirements.
  - Offer alternatives when an applicant cannot reasonably obtain a particular document, following the governing rules.
  - Tailor guidance to the actual circumstances. For example, spouses living in different countries may have different relationship records than spouses sharing a household.
- **Review additions as they arrive.**
  - Analyze replacement documents and explanations promptly.
  - Tell applicants whether the identified issue appears resolved, remains unresolved, or requires human judgment.

    - Maintain a consolidated checklist instead of revealing routine deficiencies one at a time.
- **Continue reviewing during the queue.**
    - Allow applicants to supplement the record through an authorized, version-controlled process.
    - Flag documents that may require updating and explain when an update is actually necessary.
    - Preserve filing dates and queue position when applicants supply routine supplemental information, subject to applicable procedural rules.
- **Present the officer with a review-ready file.**
    - Provide a source-linked evidence summary, a history of resolved deficiencies, and a short list of remaining questions.
    - Keep original submissions and later changes available for inspection.
    - Direct officer attention toward substantive judgment and unresolved issues.
- **Preserve formal protections.**
    - Clearly distinguish AI preparation feedback from an official RFE or agency decision.
    - Require human authorization for formal demands carrying legal deadlines or consequences.
    - Avoid guaranteeing that evidence is legally sufficient or that approval will follow.
    - Keep formal RFEs available when the officer identifies a necessary issue the early review did not resolve.

How this could save time

The benefit is moving routine correction work into the waiting period—or eliminating it before filing—instead of starting it after an officer finally opens the case.

Here is an illustrative example, not an agency processing estimate:

Event	Late discovery	Proactive AI review
Evidence weakness identified	Week 12, during officer review	Week 1
Applicant obtains and submits correction	Weeks 13–16	Weeks 2–4
Correction checked	Weeks 17–20	During the existing waiting period
Officer receives a complete file	Week 20	Week 12
Potential difference	—	**Eight weeks saved in this example**

This example assumes the early correction does not reset the case’s queue position and that AI correctly identifies the deficiency. Some issues take longer to resolve; others require an officer’s judgment.

How to measure whether it works

The pilot should track:

- **Avoidable formal RFEs per 100 cases.**
- **Percentage of early deficiencies resolved before officer review.**
- **Time from identifying a deficiency to verifying its correction.**
- **Unnecessary or incorrect AI evidence requests.**
- **Total applicant effort, officer work, and elapsed processing time.**

The preparation tool should explain published evidentiary requirements, identify substantive gaps, and suggest lawful alternatives. It should not disclose sensitive investigative methods or internal fraud-detection thresholds. Protecting those methods is compatible with giving applicants meaningful guidance about what their evidence establishes.

For spouses living in different countries, recommendations should reflect the actual household arrangement. Joint leases and utility accounts are examples, not universal requirements. Remittances, communication, visits, shared responsibilities, and explained third-party payment arrangements may be relevant. The tool should not reward the creation of artificial joint paperwork or treat absence of unavailable documents as automatic evidence of fraud.

The goal should be fewer avoidable RFEs and better decisions—not simply fewer RFEs on paper. Replacing one formal request with ten confusing automated requests would defeat the purpose.

AI should help applicants prepare the evidence, continuously check its readiness, and then help officers evaluate it. That makes completeness an ongoing part of the process instead of a problem discovered months into it.

13. Applicant preparation and advance-stage guidance

Objective: Keep the petitioner and beneficiary prepared for upcoming stages through advance instructions, document validation, fee information, and realistic timing estimates.

The proposed system would have two connected functions:

A separate AI preparation workspace

Immigration should provide an applicant-facing application where the petitioner and beneficiary can assemble and check documents before submitting them to the official case record.

- **Use the same applicable standards as the processing system.**
  - Follow current forms, document requirements, country-specific rules, and translation standards.
  - Identify the version and effective date of the requirements being applied.
  - Notify applicants when a requirement changes and explain whether it affects their prepared documents.

- **Analyze documents in a preparation area.**
  - Review completeness, legibility, document type, formatting, translations, and consistency.
  - Explain deficiencies and suggest acceptable alternatives where the rules allow them.
  - Recheck corrected documents and maintain a clear readiness checklist.
- **Give documents a defined readiness status.**
  - Examples: “Ready for submission,” “Correction needed,” or “Human review needed.”
  - Distinguish technical completeness from questions requiring legal or evidentiary judgment.
  - Treat readiness clearance as a meaningful preparation result, while preserving the officer’s responsibility for final eligibility decisions.
- **Keep preparation separate from formal submission.**
  - Let applicants organize drafts and replace documents without accidentally submitting them.
  - Require an explicit submission action before transferring selected documents into the official case record.
  - Transfer validated information directly, avoiding duplicate uploads and data entry.
- **Carry the validation record forward.**
  - Attach the applicable standards, completed checks, and unresolved questions to the submitted package.
  - Preserve the exact submitted version so later changes cannot silently alter the official record.
  - Allow officers to rely on validated routine checks to the extent supported by testing and agency policy.

The applicant-facing AI would prepare the package; the agency’s processing system would receive that package with its validation history. Both should use a shared, version-controlled standards service so they do not give conflicting instructions. The service must preserve legitimate distinctions among petition, visa, country-specific, and embassy requirements rather than flatten them into one checklist.

Advance notification and preparation for the next stage

AI should communicate what comes next while the current stage is underway.

- **Explain the next stage.**
  - Identify which agency will handle it, what happens there, and what action the applicants will need to take.
  - Distinguish tasks that can begin immediately from tasks that require an official notice.
- **Provide a personalized preparation checklist.**
  - List required documents, acceptable formats, translation requirements, and who must provide each item.
  - Identify documents that may take substantial time to obtain.

    - Explain which information can be reused and which must be updated.
- **Provide timing estimates with uncertainty.**
    - Show an estimated range based on the case’s stage and available operational data.
    - Identify when the estimate was updated and explain material changes.
    - Distinguish an estimated preparation window from a confirmed appointment or deadline.
- **Explain upcoming fees.**
    - Identify the fee, who collects it, when it becomes payable, and the authorized payment method.
    - Distinguish government fees from variable expenses such as medical examinations, translations, and obtaining records.
    - Alert applicants to fee changes before payment is due.
- **Time preparation appropriately.**
    - Encourage early collection of durable records.
    - Avoid directing applicants to obtain time-sensitive documents or examinations so early that they expire or must be repeated.
    - Send reminders when preparation should begin, rather than repeatedly sending generic status messages.
- **Coordinate the petitioner and beneficiary.**
    - Assign tasks to the appropriate person and show shared progress with authorized access.
    - Protect personal information that should not automatically be visible to another participant.
    - Include the authorized attorney or representative according to established permissions.

How pipelining reduces elapsed time

In a sequential workflow, applicants may finish one stage, receive instructions, and only then begin gathering the next package.

In the proposed pipeline, **preparation overlaps with the current stage wherever legally and practically appropriate.**

Illustrative activity	Sequential preparation	Pipelined preparation
Current stage is processed	Eight weeks	Eight weeks
Next-stage documents are gathered and checked	Three additional weeks	Completed during those eight weeks
Next-stage package becomes ready	Week 11	Week 8
Potential time saved	—	**Three weeks in this example**

This is an illustrative scheduling benefit, not a measured immigration result. It assumes the documents can appropriately be prepared early and remain valid.

Together, the two additions address different sources of delay: proactive evidence review reduces correction cycles, while pipelining reduces the gaps between stages. Their savings may overlap and should be measured together rather than simply added.

The intended experience is straightforward: **“Here is where your case stands, here is what comes next, here is what you should prepare now, and here is a secure place to check it before you submit.”**

14. Accelerating background screening with AI

AI could accelerate background screening by starting the right checks earlier, running independent checks in parallel, matching records more accurately, and giving analysts a concise, verifiable report. Human quality control is essential, but identity verification should happen before someone else’s information is incorporated into the beneficiary’s report.

Requesting records, finding information, and deciding what it means are three separate jobs. AI can assist with all three, with different safeguards. This section expands the identity and security screening function in Section 3 and applies the staffing and applicant-preparation principles described above.

What kinds of background checks are involved?

Category	What it establishes	Proposed AI contribution
Identity and document checks	Whether the person and identifying documents are consistent and authentic	Compare names, birth dates, identification numbers, name changes, and document records
Police certificates and relevant court records	Reported criminal history and the disposition of relevant cases	Identify required records, coordinate requests, authenticate responses where possible, and summarize findings
Immigration history	Previous applications, entries, refusals, removals, or inconsistent information	Compare authorized records and flag discrepancies for review
Biometric checks	Whether fingerprints match relevant records or another identity	Coordinate approved biometric systems and organize match results
Security screening	Potential matches to relevant government security information	Initiate authorized queries and help analysts distinguish actual matches from similar names
Online-presence review	Information relevant to identity, application accuracy, or applicable eligibility and security questions	Locate accessible accounts, verify attribution, and summarize relevant material with sources

This is a functional breakdown, **not a claim that every applicant receives an identical investigation**. The State Department describes extensive security screening and collects social-media identifiers from most visa applicants; digital fingerprints are also part of visa screening. [7–8]

AI coordination of police-record requests

AI could coordinate requests **where the foreign authority permits electronic requests from an authorized government system or representative**.

The proposed workflow would be:

- **Determine which records are required.** Use the beneficiary's residence history and applicable country-specific requirements. Current residence alone may not identify every required certificate.
- **Identify the correct issuing authority.** This may be a national police organization rather than the local police station.
- **Prepare the request.** Reuse verified identity information, previous names, required attachments, and any necessary authorization.
- **Submit through an approved channel.** Use a secure government connection, official portal, or authorized request mechanism.
- **Track acknowledgment and completion.** Detect rejected requests, missing attachments, and overdue responses.
- **Receive and verify the response.** Check the issuing source, applicant identifiers, coverage, and any available digital signature.
- **Route relevant findings to an analyst.** Distinguish an arrest, charge, conviction, dismissal, and incomplete record rather than treating them as equivalent.

For Thailand specifically, the published instructions require supporting identity documents and describe an applicant police-certificate process. A direct automated government-to-government request would be a proposed integration—not something we should assume already exists. [9]

The improvement would come from eliminating incomplete requests and unattended handoffs. If an authority still needs fingerprints, an in-person action, or a manual archive search, AI should arrange and track that dependency.

Document-authenticity and cross-case fraud assistance

AI could flag suspected alterations, conflicting document identifiers, or repeated evidence patterns across cases for authorized specialists. Where technically and legally possible, issuer verification should carry more weight than a visual anomaly score alone.

A shared address, common preparer, standard document template, or recurring family name is not proof of fraud. The system must account for legitimate explanations, document the basis of a flag, and require human investigation before a consequential finding. Specialists should measure both

false alarms and missed relevant findings.

Direct verification with foreign registries would require country-specific agreements, reliable identity matching, and secure connections. It is a longer-term integration objective rather than a capability assumed to exist at launch. External agencies retain ownership of their searches and investigations; shared workflow tools can improve requests and handoffs without guaranteeing faster substantive investigations.

Start social-media review with known accounts

The most reliable starting point is the identifiers supplied by the beneficiary, rather than searching a name and assuming the results belong to that person. The government's published DS-260 example includes social-media platform and user-ID fields. [10]

A proposed system could then:

- Check the supplied account identifiers.
- Examine publicly available or otherwise lawfully accessible information.
- Identify directly linked accounts and possible additional accounts.
- Keep uncertain account matches in a separate verification queue.

"Scan all social media" would be too broad a technical promise. Private accounts, deleted content, unindexed platforms, impersonation, and access restrictions make complete coverage impossible to establish. **The system should report what it searched and what it could not access.**

Verify account ownership before attributing content

For every candidate account, AI should assemble the reasons it may—or may not—belong to the beneficiary.

Evidence	How it should be used
Applicant-supplied account identifier	Strong starting point, with checks for correct account and possible impersonation
Link from another verified account	Corroborating evidence
Consistent locations, employment, dates, or language	Supporting context; insufficient alone
Same name or similar photograph	A lead requiring corroboration
Conflicting age, residence, or biography	Evidence against a match that must remain visible

The system should assign a status such as:

- **Confirmed through an approved verification method.**
- **Corroborated but awaiting analyst confirmation.**

- **Unresolved candidate—content not attributed to the applicant.**
- **Excluded as a different person.**

A name match should never become a criminal or security finding by itself. The same principle applies to police databases and watchlist matches.

Summarize relevant content with evidence and context

Once attribution is sufficiently established, AI could help a reviewer work through accessible material by:

- Translating text while preserving the original.
- Extracting text from images and transcribing accessible audio or video.
- Organizing material chronologically.
- Identifying specific discrepancies with application statements.
- Bringing potentially relevant material to an analyst's attention.
- Including surrounding context and evidence that contradicts an initial concern.

Every flagged item should include:

- The source account and exact source location.
- Publication date, when available, and collection date.
- Original material and clearly labeled translation.
- The reason it may be relevant.
- Identity-attribution evidence.
- Uncertainty and any alternative explanation.

The distinction between **"the applicant wrote this," "the applicant shared this," and "someone else posted this on the applicant's page"** matters. So do satire, quotations, news reporting, and mistranslation.

The proposed system should evaluate evidence against defined requirements—not generate a general personality score or assume wrongdoing from someone's friends, religion, or political opinions.

Human review of identity and interpretation

Quality control should include **two review gates**:

1. **Identity gate:** Is this actually the beneficiary's record or account?

2. **Relevance gate:** Does the information accurately support a finding relevant to the case?

Human review should be mandatory before a potential adverse match affects a decision. Routine results could receive automated consistency checks and sampled human audits, with sampling increased when errors emerge.

Applicants should also have an appropriate opportunity to correct mistaken attribution or explain a material discrepancy, consistent with applicable procedures.

Potential time savings

The strongest immediate savings would likely come from less manual research and less waiting between actions. We do not yet have evidence to assign a reliable overall percentage.

An illustrative labor model shows the opportunity:

Hypothetical review task	Manual workflow	AI-assisted workflow
Locate and organize records	60 minutes	10 minutes of human verification
Compare identity information	45 minutes	15 minutes of human verification
Review and summarize accessible online material	120 minutes	35 minutes of human review
Prepare the final screening report	45 minutes	15 minutes of human review
Total human time	**270 minutes**	**75 minutes**

That would be **about a 72% reduction in human labor for those tasks**, if a pilot demonstrates those assumptions. It excludes machine processing time, foreign-authority response time, and substantive investigations. Difficult cases could require considerably more work.

Running independent checks concurrently could also shorten elapsed time. For example, three checks taking five, ten, and fifteen business days would take **30 business days if performed sequentially**, versus approximately **15 if all could properly begin together**. This is a scheduling example, not an estimate of actual government check durations.

These savings are components of the broader proposal, not additional reductions to add to the 8–12-week target. Testing must include mistaken-identity rates, missed relevant findings, unnecessary escalations, analyst correction time, and total screening completion time.

Initiate checks early, conduct independent checks in parallel, verify identity before attributing findings, and give humans the underlying evidence—not just an AI conclusion. That could make routine screening faster while reserving investigative staff for cases that actually need investigation.

15. Phased implementation and operational responsibility

The proposed capabilities should be introduced in measured phases rather than through a single replacement of the immigration system. Timing and staffing commitments should follow demonstrated performance, including correction work, system support, and officer training.

Phase 1: Establish the baseline and automate routine administration

- Measure active work, queue time, external dependencies, and applicant response time at each stage before attributing delays to a particular cause.
- Introduce form checks, document-format validation, reusable verified information, transfer acknowledgments, and appointment reminders.
- Improve scheduling through voluntary cancellation-slot offers that allow adequate travel and medical preparation time.
- Keep deterministic checks, such as required fields and fee calculations, in ordinary rules-based software where that is sufficient. Use AI where language, varied documents, or context require it.
- Preserve existing lawful submission routes and establish assisted access for applicants who cannot use the digital workspace independently.

Phase 2: Pilot substantive preparation and officer assistance

- Introduce source-linked extraction, relationship timelines, translations for review support, financial-evidence organization, and consolidated deficiency guidance.
- Begin with a shadow evaluation in which AI output is compared with independently completed human work before it influences decisions.
- Train and assess officers on source verification, uncertainty, mistaken identity, translation errors, and inappropriate reliance on recommendations.
- Measure the time needed to verify and correct AI output. Include that work in productivity calculations.
- Give applicants explanations and an accessible human route when they dispute a preparation finding.

Phase 3: Expand verified integrations and specialist support

- Connect authorized external records only after participating agencies establish access authority, technical compatibility, security controls, and operating agreements.
- Introduce document-authenticity assistance and carefully governed cross-case pattern analysis for specialist review.
- Reallocate staff or add trained personnel where measured demand exceeds capacity, including consular interviews and external-check resolution.
- Use temporary surplus staffing to clear backlogs while maintaining service for new applications.

Release gates and independent evaluation

Expansion should require acceptable accuracy, privacy, security, accessibility, and total-time results. A faster demonstration on selected easy cases is insufficient.

- Publish aggregate performance measures and clearly identify modeled targets versus observed results.

- Test performance across languages, document types, and differing household arrangements.
- Measure unnecessary requests, missed findings, incorrect account attribution, rework, and applicant effort.
- Maintain versioned models and rules, test updates before deployment, and provide rollback when performance deteriorates.
- Retain meaningful human reconsideration and monitor for routine acceptance of incorrect recommendations.

Responsibility across agencies

USCIS would remain responsible for petition adjudication; the State Department, including NVC and the embassy, would handle the immigrant-visa stages; CBP would determine admission. Supporting checks may involve additional authorized agencies.

Every cross-agency action should have a named organizational owner, an acknowledgment, an internal response target, and an escalation path. These management targets must not be presented as invented legal deadlines. No check should be treated as cleared merely because a response is overdue.

Applicants should receive meaningful status updates without disclosure of protected investigative information. Managers should see which agency or action is holding a case, how long it has been waiting, and who is responsible for follow-up.

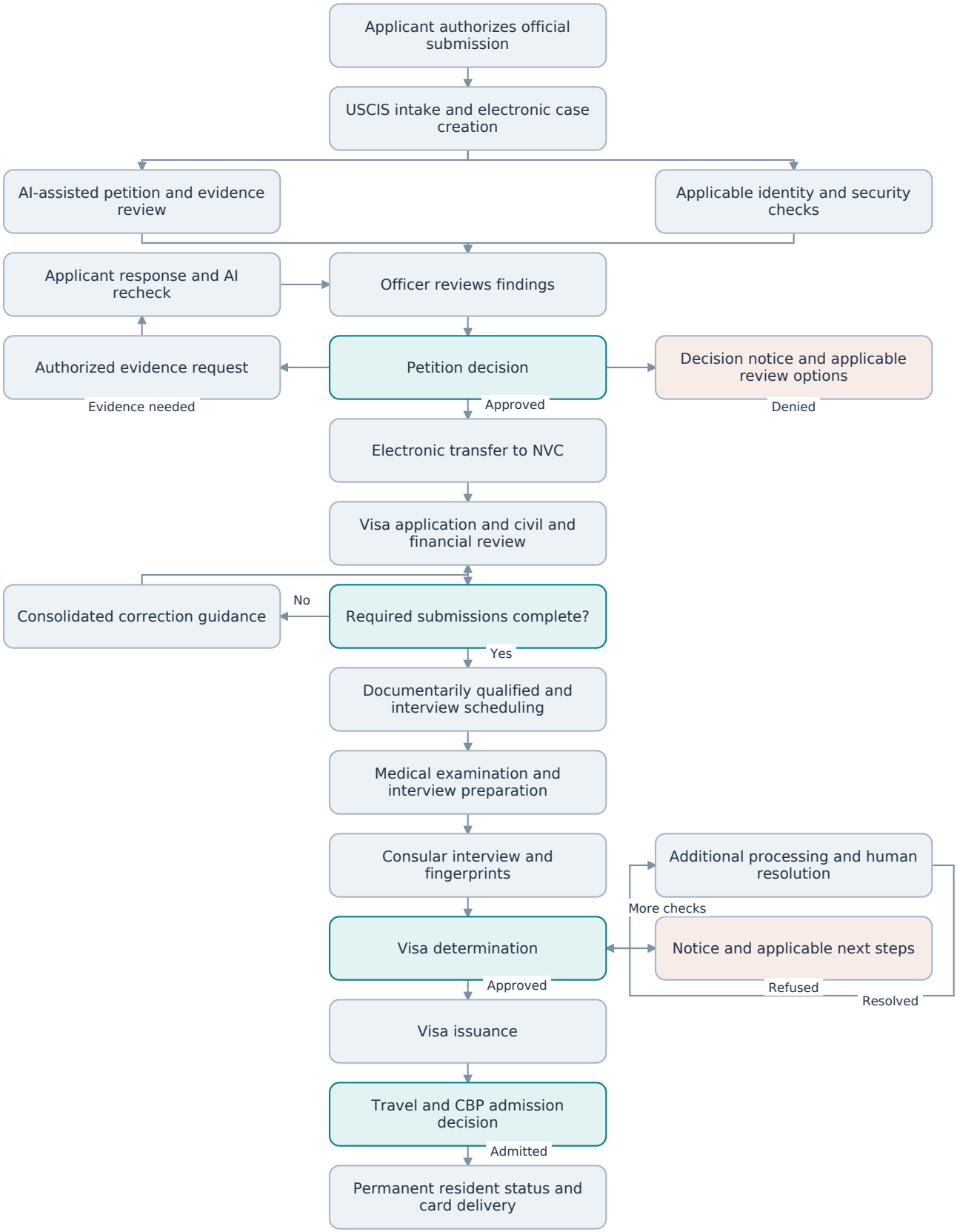
Implementation costs and transition capacity

The staffing model describes trained operating capacity, not the time required to hire, train, integrate systems, or negotiate foreign-record access. Budgeting must separately account for those transition costs, cybersecurity, interpreters and language specialists, applicant assistance, quality review, and maintenance.

The six-month and 8–12-week objectives apply to a future, functioning process under the stated conditions. They are not promises about how quickly the modernization program itself can be deployed.

16. Main immigration process: proposed flowchart

This diagram shows the proposed official processing pipeline. AI supports reviews and coordination; authorized officers retain consequential decisions. Exception paths remain available when additional evidence or investigation is necessary.

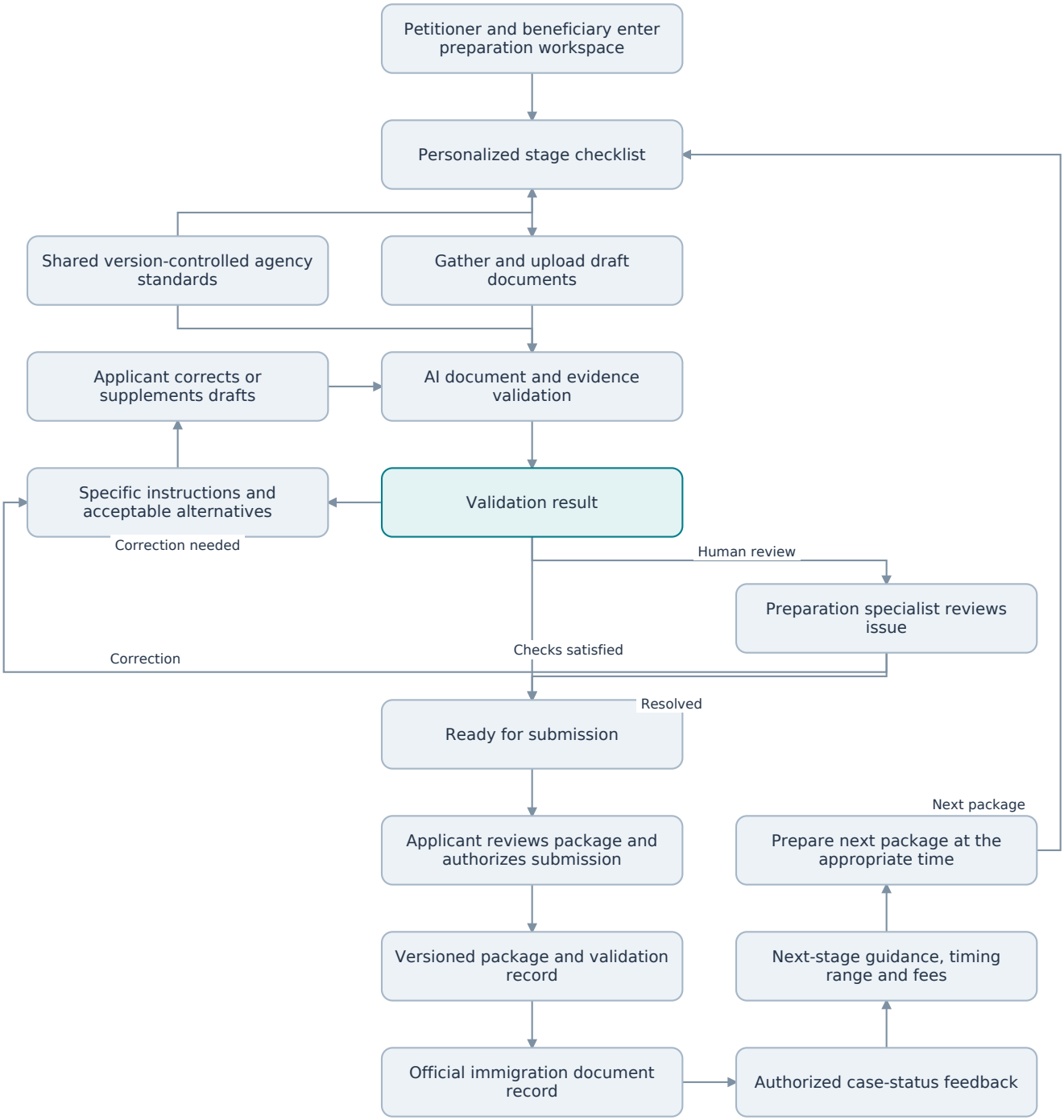

Applicant authorizes official submission
USCIS intake and electronic case creation
AI-assisted petition and evidence review
Applicable identity and security checks
Applicant response and AI recheck
Officer reviews findings
Authorized evidence request
Evidence needed
Petition decision
Decision notice and applicable review options
Denied
Approved
Electronic transfer to NVC
Visa application and civil and financial review
Consolidated correction guidance
No
Required submissions complete?
Yes
Documentarily qualified and interview scheduling
Medical examination and interview preparation
Consular interview and fingerprints
Additional processing and human resolution
More checks
Visa determination
Notice and applicable next steps
Refused
Resolved
Approved
Visa issuance
Travel and CBP admission decision
Admitted
Permanent resident status and card delivery

The diagram represents process relationships rather than a guarantee that all checks finish at the same point. Additional screening can occur later as required.

17. Standalone document preparation and validation: proposed flowchart

This application operates **before formal submission of each document package**. Applicants can use it for the initial petition and later-stage packages while the official case proceeds.

“Ready for submission” means the preparation checks have been satisfied; it does not mean the petition or visa has been approved.


Petitioner and beneficiary enter preparation workspace
Personalized stage checklist
Shared version-controlled agency standards
Gather and upload draft documents
Applicant corrects or supplements drafts
AI document and evidence validation
Specific instructions and acceptable alternatives
Validation result
Correction needed
Human review
Preparation specialist reviews issue
Correction
Checks satisfied
Resolved
Ready for submission
Next package
Applicant reviews package and authorizes submission
Prepare next package at the appropriate time
Versioned package and validation record
Next-stage guidance, timing range and fees
Official immigration document record
Authorized case-status feedback

How the two processes connect

Connection	Purpose
Shared agency standards → preparation and official review	Keep instructions and validation criteria aligned.
Preparation workspace → official record	Transfer the applicant-authorized package with its validation history.
Official case status → preparation workspace	Trigger timely guidance about the next stage, documents, estimated timing, and fees.
Official evidence request → preparation workspace	Help applicants prepare and check a response before formally submitting it.

Draft uploads would remain separate from the official case record until the applicant authorizes submission. Changes after submission would be recorded as authorized supplements or replacements, with a preserved history.

Source notes

Official sources support descriptions of the current process. Staffing assumptions, projected savings, and future system capabilities are proposals developed for this analysis; they are not agency findings.

[1] USCIS — Frequently Asked Questions About Processing Times
https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/processing-times-faqs

[2] Department of State — NVC Processing
https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/the-immigrant-visa-process/step-1-submit-a-petition/step-2-begin-nvc-processing.html

[3] Department of State — Submit Documents
https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/the-immigrant-visa-process/step-8-scan-collected-documents/step-9-upload-and-submit-scanned-documents.html

[4] Department of State — Immigrant Visa for a Spouse of a U.S. Citizen
https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/family-immigration/immigrant-visa-for-spouse.html

[5] Department of State — IV Scheduling Status Tool
https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/iv-wait-times.html

[6] Department of State — Interview Appointment
https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/immigrate/the-immigrant-visa-process/step-10-prepare-for-the-interview/appointment.html

[7] Department of State — Collection of Social Media Identifiers from U.S. Visa Applicants
https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/visas-news-archive/20190604_collection-of-social-media-identifiers-from-U-S-visa-applicants.html

[8] Department of State — Safety and Security of U.S. Borders: Biometrics
https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/border-biometrics.html

[9] Department of State — Thailand: Reciprocity and Civil Documents
https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/Visa-Reciprocity-and-Civil-Documents-by-Country/Thailand.html

[10] Department of State — DS-260 Application Example, June 2023
https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/PDF-other/DS-260-updated-June_2023.pdf