Reinvigorating the International Entrepreneur Program

Recommendations to Improve Efficiency and Clarity

BACKGROUND

As part of their 10-week policy training, the scholars of the Tech Policy Primer program spent 6 weeks working on public sector challenges. In teams of 4-5, the leaders either proposed their own projects or worked with a real-world government client on a public sector problem. Below is an overview of one team's proposed project to help U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) encourage more tech startups to apply to the international entrepreneur program (IEP).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is working to revive the International Entrepreneur Rule (IER), an initiative aimed at allowing immigrant entrepreneurs to come to the United States to start their businesses. First put in place in 2017, the IER was intended to accept 3,000 applicants, but due to inefficiencies, the program approved only 1 applicant in its first 2 years. To improve application efficacy and increase the number of successful applications, USCIS should improve the process through which applications are adjudicated, in part by building an application processing tool and a stan-

dard operating procedure (SOP) for adjudicators to follow. This tool will standardize the IER application review processes and expedite the time it takes for adjudicators to review applications.

BACKGROUND/PROBLEM

There are two key barriers that dissuade entrepreneurs from applying to the IER: (1) a lack of clarity around the application criteria and adjudication process; and (2) a lack of transparency about application timelines and status updates after an application has been submitted. Immigration lawyers we interviewed suggest that inadequate documentation and tooling for adjudicators, specifically in validating qualified investors, are key reasons for this lack of transparency and clarity. These barriers have caused entrepreneurs and immigration lawyers to lose confidence in the program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To reinvigorate applicant interest in the IER, we recommend that USCIS **improve the adjudication process by building an IER application processing tool (i.e., an "adjudication wizard") and an associated standard operating procedure.** A wizard tool would automate decision logic used during the adjudication review, resulting in a more standardized review process. A wizard tool would also minimize time spent reviewing straightforward application details so that adjudicators can focus on the unique eligibility criteria of the IER.

A standard operating procedure (SOP) would also help adjudicators efficiently and accurately review IER applications. Similar to the other existing SOP documents that USCIS has published, the SOP would cover logistical information (such as how physically mailed forms are collected and internally distributed) in addition to the necessary technical information about adjudicating applications. By creating an SOP, USCIS can standardize who is a qualified investor, and aid the interpretation of cases where applications do not meet the minimum investment threshold.

*For more information about this proposal, please see: (1) an **operational plan** detailing the adjudicator wizard recommendation; and (2) a **video demo** and **live prototype of the wizard tool.***