U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

U.S. CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION SERVICES E-VERIFY

SYNOPSIS

E-Verify is an Internet-based system operated by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). It works within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), in partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA), to provide a means for employers to verify the employment eligibility of newly hired employees. E-Verify compares the information of newly hired employees taken from Form I-9 (the paper-based employment eligibility verification form used for all new hires) against more than 425 million records in SSA's database and more than 60 million records in DHS's immigration databases. In 96.1 percent of cases, work eligibility is automatically verified. To participate in E-Verify, an employer must register online, complete training, and accept the memorandum of understanding (MOU) that details the responsibilities of SSA, DHS, and the employer. This case study highlights the success of E-Verify from a data sharing perspective, between SSA and different systems within DHS.

AGENCY OVERVIEW

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is a component of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), created by the Homeland Security Act of 2002. The function of USCIS is to establish immigration services, policies, and priorities to preserve America's legacy as a nation of immigrants while ensuring that no one is admitted who is a threat to public safety. Included among the services provided by USCIS are immigration status and employment eligibility verifications that are supported by the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) and E-Verify programs, respectively. The core automated information system that supports both E-Verify and SAVE is USCIS's Verification Information System.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CHALLENGE: Connect with internal and external data sources to increase the percentage of employment eligibility cases that are verified within seconds through the use of E-Verify.

SOLUTION: USCIS designed, developed, and implemented a department-wide Enterprise Service Bus (ESB) to address problems involving multiple data sources from internal and external entities that do not share common data architecture. (The ESB is an information medium that allows dissimilar systems to share data.) The E-Verify system was developed in compliance with DHS standards for information exchange according to the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM) and the Information Exchange Package Documentation (IEPD) development process and was based on the deployment of a NIEM-conformant Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA).

RESULTS: USCIS successfully implemented the ESB-enabled USCIS data sharing with other DHS components and external agencies. Current connections include, for example, DHS's Customs and Border Protection and SSA. Future expansion plans include the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and individual state Departments of Motor Vehicles (DMVs).

CHALLENGE

As system use expanded, E-Verify needed to connect with additional internal and external data sources (such as U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement [ICE], U.S. Customs and Border Protection [CBP], U.S. Department of State [DOS], and Departments of Motor Vehicles [DMVs]) to increase the percentage of employment eligibility cases that are verified within seconds. Despite architectural variance among the needed data sources, the solution needed to be fast, accurate, and simple for employers to use.

SOLUTION

To meet the challenge, USCIS developed an information infrastructure that merges and matches data from different data sources. This is accomplished by information sharing among DHS components and with external agencies and organizations. The E-Verify system was developed in compliance with DHS standards for information exchange according to the National Information Exchange Model (NIEM) and the Information Exchange Package Documentation (IEPD) development process and was based on the deployment of a NIEM-conformant Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA). These standards enabled USCIS to share information with disparate systems based on standardized data element names and definitions. The publication of NIEM-based IEPDs in the DHS Data Architecture Repository also enhances the discovery and reuse of information exchange. The NIEM-conformant interface used by USCIS is the DHS Enterprise Service Bus (ESB). This interface provides query services to these systems—the Computer Linked Application Information Management System 4 (CLAIMS 4), the Reengineered Naturalization Applications Casework System (RNACS), and the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). Both CLAIMS 4 and RNACS manage naturalization applications submitted by permanent residents of the United States. USCIS is currently developing interfaces to access passport, visa, and state driver's license records via the ESB.

RESULTS

As of June 30, 2008, there were 73,460 employers using the E-Verify system—96.1 percent of employees were automatically confirmed as work-authorized instantly or within 24 hours, and 3.9 percent of employees received initial mismatches, also known as "tentative non-confirmations." Of the mismatches, 2.96 percent were SSA mismatches and 0.95 percent were DHS mismatches. By June 30, 4.5 million individual queries had been processed in 2008.