



MELTZER HELLRUNG
IMMIGRATION SOLUTIONS

BUILDING A RESILIENT IMMIGRATION PROGRAM

What HR Leaders Need to Know

October 15, 2026



MELTZER HELLRUNG
IMMIGRATION SOLUTIONS

03:00

Thanks for being here! We're allowing a couple of minutes for others to join before we begin.

INTRODUCTION

- Meltzer Hellrung combines an innovative service model, proprietary technology, and a creative immigration team
- 200+ corporate clients: Global 200, Fortune 500, Venture-backed unicorns
- Recognized in 2023 by Crain Magazine as a top 100 best places to work in Chicago
- Meltzer Hellrung has been ranked in the Illinois Chambers Spotlight 2027 Guide and recognized as a top law firm handling high-quality work.
- Meltzer Hellrung has been named a 2026 Inc. Power Partner
- Meltzer Hellrung received a Tier 1 recognition in Immigration Law in the 2026 edition of Best Law Firms®



INTRODUCTION

Responsive

Dedicated account team, 4-hour average response time

Efficient

Customized workflows, H-1B transferred in 10 business days

Service-focused

2025 NPS score: 91

Program Management

Consistent touchpoints, reporting, budgeting, and policy review

OUR SERVICE LINES



U.S. Immigration

Work visas & green cards, end-to-end



Global Immigration

Worldwide mobility through one partner



Immigration Litigation

Challenging delays & wrongful denials



I-9 & Immigration Compliance

Audits, training & enforcement defense



Immigration Specialist In-House Staffing

Embedded experts, no added headcount





Our proprietary immigration program management platform

Drives process efficiency, transparency, and centralization of all immigration information

Core Features:

- Dashboards that drive transparency
- Efficient workflow automations that save time
- Extensive immigration reporting capabilities
- Comprehensive knowledge center

The screenshot displays the 'Reports' section of the Voyager platform. At the top, there's a navigation bar with a home icon, a user profile icon, and a 'MY PROCESS REQUESTS' button. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column features three summary cards: 'Active Foreign Nationals' (133), 'Active Companies' (2), and 'Open Cases' (58). Below these is a 'Report Templates' section with a search bar and two template cards: 'Key filing date check' (last run: 07/15/2024 at 04:51 AM, 5 Columns, 0 Filters) and 'Advanced Parole Exp. Date' (last run: 07/07/2024 at 09:27 PM, 8 Columns, 0 Filters). The right column shows 'Recent Reports' with a search bar and two report cards: 'H-1B Lottery Selection Due Date' (last run: 07/15/2024 at 04:51 AM, 5 Columns, 0 Filters, status: Completed) and 'Citizenship Eligibility Date' (last run: 07/07/2024 at 09:27 PM, 8 Columns, 0 Filters, status: Completed). A 'CREATE NEW REPORT' button is located in the top right corner.

PRESENTERS

MATTHEW MELTZER

Co-Founder and Managing Partner

Specializes in assisting foreign companies to enter the U.S. market and building custom solutions for entrepreneurial and high net-worth clients. Most recently recognized as one of Crain's Chicago Business Notable Leaders in Accounting, Consulting & Law!



PRESENTERS

MATTHEW HELLRUNG

Co-Founder and Managing Partner

Specializes in scaling immigration programs for high-growth clients via immigration policy creation and stakeholder training. Matthew has represented clients from a variety of industries, including information technology, engineering, education, manufacturing, and entertainment industries.



AGENDA

WHAT WE'LL COVER

- 01** Program Management: From Reactive to Strategic
- 02** Recruiting & Hiring Protocols for Foreign National Talent
- 03** Layering Green Card Policy Into the Employee Lifecycle
- 04** The Case for a Dedicated Internal Point Person
- 05** Compliance & Risk Management Fundamentals
- 06** Budgeting & Cross-Functional Buy-In
- 07** Looking Forward to 2027

SECTION

01

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT: FROM REACTIVE TO STRATEGIC

01 02 03 04 05 06 07

FROM REACTIVE TO STRATEGIC

Beyond Case-by-Case

Move past transactional filings toward a documented, repeatable program with policy, budget, and ownership — built before volume forces the issue.

Aligned With the Business

Connect visa strategy directly to the hiring plan, headcount model, and growth stage, not to whichever case is most urgent.

Executive Visibility

Give the CEO, board, and finance leaders a clear read on hiring risk, cost exposure, and timeline.

A well-run program supports recruiting and retention — especially now that sponsorship has become scarcer and more expensive industry-wide.

SETTING INTERNAL SLAS

Stage	Legal anchor	Internal SLA
New hire intake	Offer accepted	Case opened within [__] business days
H-1B / L-1 extensions	File up to 6 months before expiry	Initiate [__] days before I-94 expiry
STEM OPT extension	File up to 90 days before EAD expiry	Flag [__] days before OPT ends
EAD renewals (H-4, AOS)	180 days early; no auto-extension	Initiate [__] days before expiry
H-1B cap registration	Registration opens mid-March	Candidate list final by [__]
Green card initiation	Benchmarks in your policy	Start within [__] days of eligibility
October 1 start dates	COS approvals take effect	I-9 reverified on October 1

Track every deadline against the I-94, not the visa stamp — and file extensions as early as possible before the current expiration.

A GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK THAT SURVIVES TURNOVER

Document It

- A written immigration policy
- An intake form and approval matrix
- Standard procedures for changes and exits

Centralize It

- One system of record the company owns
- Dashboards and reporting, not inboxes
- Every case visible to a backup

Review It

- Sponsorship policy and costs, quarterly
- I-9 spot audits, at least annually
- Regular touchpoints with your account team



The test: if your HR lead or your attorney left tomorrow, could someone else pick up every open case from the record alone?

SECTION

02

RECRUITING & HIRING PROTOCOLS FOR FOREIGN NATIONAL TALENT

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WORK-AUTHORIZATION CHECKPOINTS IN THE HIRING PROCESS

Requisition

- Does the role support sponsorship — degree-related duties, a defensible wage level?
- Is sponsorship approved and budgeted under your policy?

Interview

- Ask whether the candidate is currently authorized to work and whether they require sponsorship now in the future for the role
- Ask every candidate the same way — no document requests

Information for Attorney

- What is the candidate's current immigration status?
- When does it expire?
- Does the candidate have an application for a green card pending?

MATCHING THE VISA TO THE HIRE

Pathway	Best fit	Watch for
F-1 OPT / STEM OPT	Recent U.S. graduates	E-Verify and a training plan for STEM
H-1B	Degree-required specialty roles	Wage-weighted lottery and prevailing wage
L-1A / L-1B	Transfers from related foreign entities	12 months abroad in the prior 3 years
O-1	Top-of-field talent, including founders	Subjective review; strong record needed
TN / E-3 / H-1B1	Canadian, Mexican, Australian, Chilean, Singaporean	Nationality-specific; no lottery
E-2	Treaty-country owned U.S. businesses	Owner and employee foreign nationality must match
Green Card	Long-term retention tool	Longest lead time; start early

SETTING REALISTIC TIMELINES WITH HIRING MANAGERS

Path	Realistic timeline	What managers should know
H-1B cap	Register in March; earliest start Oct 1	Selection odds depend on wage level
H-1B transfer	2-3 weeks to file	6-8 weeks to start, longer if RFE
Consular visa	Interview waits vary widely, plan ahead	Build flexibility into start dates
L-1 transfer	4-6 weeks, must have 1 year of tenure	Plan moves well ahead, L-1B or L-1A?
O-1	4-8 weeks, evidence-heavy petition	Attorney assess eligibility before offer
PERM green card	A multi-stage, multi-year process	Used as retention or recruiting sweetener

 **FY 2027 selection rates by wage level:** Level I ~31% · Level II ~58% · Level III ~70% · Level IV ~74%

AVOIDING LIABILITY AT THE OFFER STAGE

Promising Sponsorship

The lottery isn't guaranteed. Tie offer language to your policy and to approval.

Mismatched Details

Offer letter, job description, LCA wage level, and I-129 answers must tell the same story.

Starting Too Early

No work before authorization starts. Section 2 of the I-9 within three business days.

Shifting Costs

Certain H-1B costs must stay with the employer. Review any pass-through or clawback with counsel.

Citizenship-Only Postings

Unless legally required, these invite discrimination claims from DOJ.

Remote-First Blind Spots

Do you want the person hired abroad as contractor or EOR in the U.S. in the future?

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL REQUIRES A PLAN

What's Happening

- Visa interview waits of up to 12 months at some posts
- Expanded social media vetting of all applicants
- More 221(g) refusals and administrative processing

What Your Policy Should Answer

- Is travel required, optional, or assessed by visa type and nationality?
- Who reviews visa stamps and timing before booking?
- What is your electronic device policy?
- What's the plan if someone is stranded abroad?
- Should you notify counsel?

Employees switching to H-1B need a new visa stamp to re-enter after international travel. Build flexibility into business and employee timelines.

OFFBOARDING A SPONSORED EMPLOYEE

1 Call counsel before it's communicated
Timing of the termination and the petition withdrawal affects the employee's status options.

2 Withdraw the H-1B petition
Notify counsel so the H-1B can be withdrawn and LCA obligations are managed.

3 Offer return transportation
Required for H-1B and O-1 employees — the cost of return travel to the home country.

4 Weigh garden leave vs. severance
Keeping someone on payroll can preserve status; a lump sum may not.

5 Address dependents
Spouses and children in dependent status are affected by the principal's termination.

6 Tag the Form I-9
Mark the file for retention and future purge as part of your offboarding process.

THE GRACE PERIOD MAY DISAPPEAR

TODAY

Up to 60 days, at USCIS discretion

In place since 2017. Laid-off employees filing during the grace period have received Notices to Appear in record numbers.

AS PROPOSED

No grace period for E, H-1B, L-1, TN, or O-1

Ended entirely, not scaled back. Dependent spouses lose work authorization immediately as well.

BUILD YOUR LAYOFF PLAYBOOK NOW

Garden leave versus severance · advance preparation of B visa change-of-status requests · counseling for employees · H-1B cap sponsorship for employees in dependent status

SECTION

03

LAYERING GREEN CARD POLICY INTO THE EMPLOYEE LIFECYCLE

01 02 **03** 04 05 06 07

CLEAR, CONSISTENT ELIGIBILITY AND TIMING

Set your criteria in writing:

Tenure	[__] months of continuous employment
Performance	A defined rating threshold, applied the same way for everyone
Role	Eligible levels, or business-critical roles
Legal deadlines	Start early enough to extend H-1B status beyond six years

POLICY QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

- When do green card processes get initiated?
- What parts of the process does the company pay for?
- Do you cover dependents?
- When do you cover premium processing?
- Who approves exceptions?

SEQUENCING GREEN CARDS WITH CAREER MOVES



Promotions and Role Changes

The PERM is for a specific job. Major changes before the I-485 stage can mean starting over — talk to counsel before the change.

Transfers and Relocations

A move outside the area of intended employment can require a new PERM and H-1B amendment. Beware of corporate office closures.

Once the I-485 Is Pending

After 180 days, the employee can generally move to a same or similar role without restarting.

PERM recruitment is tricky and should be led by an attorney; Consider starting PERMs in the next six months, before expected PERM and prevailing wage changes.

COMMUNICATING POLICY TRANSPARENTLY

Inconsistent sponsorship decisions feel like favoritism — even when they aren't, and could be seen as discriminatory

Clear criteria protect the company and set honest expectations for employees.

Publish

Share the eligibility criteria and what the company covers

Apply

Use the same criteria for everyone; document every exception and its approval

Set timing

Green cards are multi-year, and fees and rules may change

Provide access

Give employees access to counsel for their questions

Update

Tell employees how the company will approach each major changes in green card programs

SECTION

04

THE CASE FOR A DEDICATED INTERNAL POINT PERSON

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WHY AD HOC OWNERSHIP CREATES RISK

When every HRBP handles cases ad hoc, nobody owns the program.

Inconsistency

Different HRBPs make different calls, and petitions for the same role drift apart — exactly what USCIS cross-checks

Missed deadlines

Renewals and EAD expirations live in personal inboxes

Lost knowledge

No institutional memory when someone leaves

Compliance gaps

Worksite changes, terminations, and I-9 reverifications fall through the cracks

THE INTERNAL IMMIGRATION LIAISON

Core Responsibilities

- Intake and case initiation
- Deadline tracking and reporting
- Flagging title, worksite, pay, and hours changes to counsel
- Offboarding: petition withdrawal and return transportation
- I-9 reverification and PAF upkeep

Skill Set

- Process discipline and attention to detail
- Discretion with sensitive employee data
- Clear cross-functional communication
- Working knowledge — no legal degree required

Interface With Counsel

- One channel in, one channel out
- Complete intake on day one
- Regular account touchpoints
- Shared dashboards for real-time status

SECTION

05

COMPLIANCE & RISK MANAGEMENT FUNDAMENTALS

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I-9 AUDIT READINESS AND RECORDKEEPING

2x

ICE has doubled in size, from roughly 10,000 to 22,000 employees.

Omissions are now substantive violations: \$288–\$2,861 per form.

Best Practices

- A written policy and one point of contact
- Train everyone who administers the I-9
- Annual spot audits — not by your own I-9 staff
- Fix omissions properly; never backdate
- Vet I-9 software — you retain the liability

Recordkeeping

- Keep for the duration of employment
- Purge 3 years from hire or 1 year after termination, whichever is later
- Purge annually — purgeable forms given to ICE can still be fined
- E-Verify is required for STEM OPT hires

PUBLIC ACCESS FILE OBLIGATIONS

What Goes In

- The certified LCA
- The wage rate offered and the actual wage system
- The prevailing wage source
- Proof the LCA notice was posted
- A summary of benefits

When

- Ready within one working day of filing the LCA
- LCA notice posted for 10 business days, physically or electronically
- Retained 1 year past the last H-1B employment under the LCA

Applies To

- H-1B, E-3, and H-1B1 roles
- New worksites and amendments — let counsel know before a move
- PERM files: keep audit documentation for 5 years



Every worksite change: let counsel know in advance — an amendment may be needed, and the public access file must be updated.

SITE VISITS, LCAS, AND AGENCY SCRUTINY

FDNS Site Visits

Primarily H-1B and L-1. Create a protocol: Who will receive a government agent? Where will you put them? Do you know your employer rights?

DOL Project Firewall

Unannounced investigations and data-driven audits of wages, worksites, and role descriptions. Keep LCAs and public access files accurate in real time.

Layoffs and H-1B Review

An executive order directs agencies to weigh layoffs in H-1B review — including past layoffs, especially where work was outsourced.

STAYING AHEAD OF POLICY SHIFTS

Rule	Status	What to do now
\$103,265 H-1B cap-subject fee	Proposed — final expected Dec–Feb	Wait, likely unlawful via first \$100,000 rulings
\$100,000 proclamation fee	Still in litigation, likely unlawful	Wait
End of 60-day grace period	Proposed	Build the layoff/termination playbook
DOL prevailing wage increases	Proposed; final rule in drafting	Monitor, initiate PERMs not to avoid
PERM recruitment overhaul	Expected regulation	Monitor, initiate PERMs now to avoid
F-1/J-1 end of duration of status	Final; paused by court 9/15	Track every F-1 and J-1 employee expiration date
Mandatory USCIS e-filing order	Effective; no gov’t action yet	Ask counsel what they’re doing to prepare?

SECTION

06

BUDGETING & CROSS-FUNCTIONAL BUY-IN

01 02 03 04 05 06 07

FORECASTING SPEND AS A PREDICTABLE LINE ITEM

What to build into the budget:

- Known extensions
- I-140s from certified PERMs
- New hires and transfers
- Global and business travel
- Premium processing (\$2,965)
- Advertising and evaluations
- Green card initiations
- Adjustment of status
- H-1B cap cases
- RFE costs
- \$250 visa integrity fee, per person
- Buffer for hourly guidance

Budget Maximally

It is way easier to save money than seek additional funds.

Model Scenarios

Price each proposed fee and wage rule as its own scenario, and hold a rolling reserve.

CROSS-FUNCTIONAL BUY-IN AND PROGRAM ROI

Shared expectations

HR	Owns the policy, intake, and employee communication
Legal	Advises on strategy, risk, and filings
Finance	Approves the reserve and spend thresholds
Hiring managers	Plan around realistic timelines

METRICS TO REPORT TO LEADERSHIP

- Headcount and sponsored visas
- Renewals due in the next 6 months
- Cap-lottery exposure
- Cases filed within internal SLAs
- Actual spend versus forecast
- Retention of sponsored employees

SECTION

07

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2027

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HOW TO SHAPE SPONSORSHIP IN 2027

Register With Wage Level in Mind

FY 2027 selection rates ran ~31% at Level I versus ~74% at Level IV. Plan who you register.

Lock In Current Rules

File LCAs and PWDs now for renewals, and start PERMs within the next six months.

Accelerate Green Cards

Reduce dependence on temporary status before fees and wage levels rise.

Build Alternatives

O-1, L-1, TN, E-3, cap-exempt options, and global solutions for those not selected.

Review Quarterly

Given the pace of change, revisit policy and cost assumptions every quarter, not annually.

Give Employees Clarity

Tell employees early how the company will approach immigration changes

QUESTIONS?

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