

VISA APPLICATION PROCESSING SOLUTIONS

FACILITATING ORDERLY, SAFE AND RESPONSIBLE
MIGRATION AND MOBILITY

IMMIGRATION & VISAS UNIT - IMMIGRATION & BORDER MANAGEMENT DIVISION
DEPARTMENT OF MIGRATION MANAGEMENT

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IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in the meeting of operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

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VISA APPLICATION PROCESSING SOLUTIONS

BACKGROUND

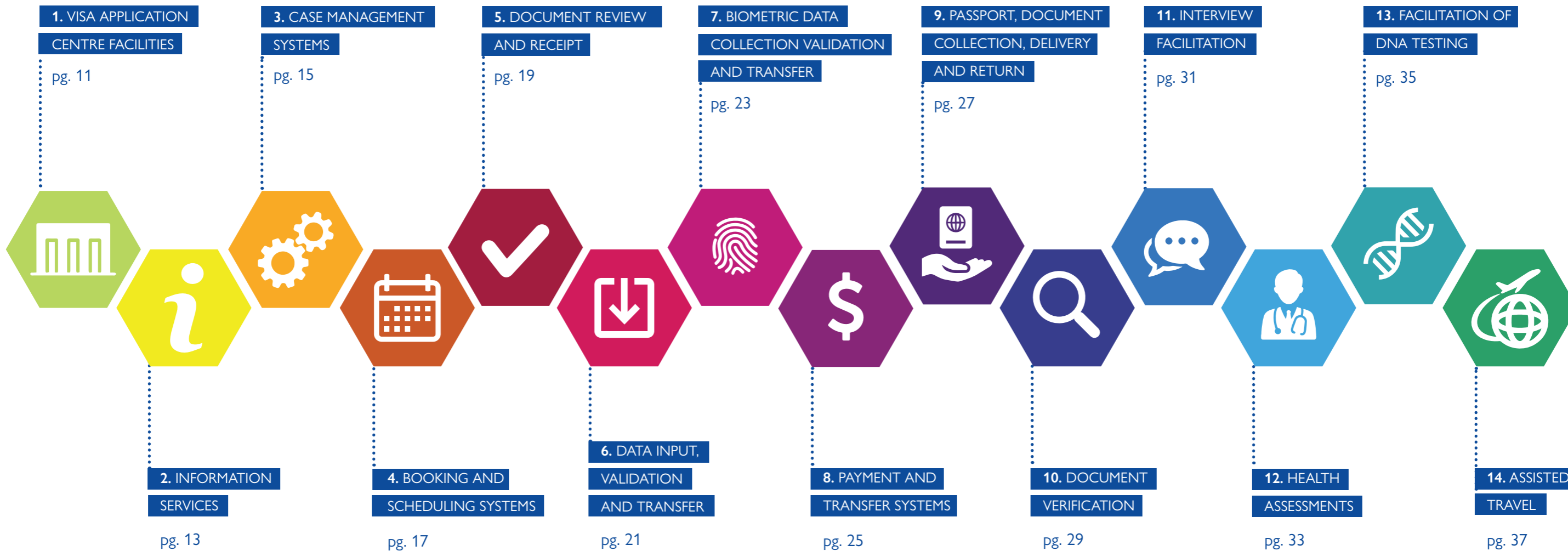
With over a billion people on the move today and an estimated two-thirds of the world's population requiring a visa to facilitate international travel, the need for more efficient and cost-effective visa processing has moved to the forefront of many national agendas. Without such access to safe, orderly and regular channels for migration and mobility, governments would witness an increased trend towards irregular migration, which is neither in the interest of migrants nor States. When governments invest more in facilitating regular migration pathways and enhanced mobility channels, such migration fosters growth and development for all.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is uniquely positioned to provide innovative, flexible and technology-driven visa processing solutions for governments. In partnership with visa issuing authorities, IOM's end-to-end solutions result in visa application processes that are better informed, more accessible, dignified, timely and transparent. Such solutions support governments in their efforts to enhance the availability and flexibility of regular migration pathways, while providing accurate information and reducing vulnerabilities throughout the migration process.

For over two decades, IOM has provided seamless solutions that support the many administrative tasks related to visa issuance by States. With over 480 offices, 172 Member States and a dedicated, global team of over 11,000 staff, IOM is a unique UN partner for immigration and consular authorities seeking a trusted, global partner to deliver reliable and flexible visa assistance in support of regular migration pathways, often in the most challenging operating environments.

This publication presents a brief description of the many flexible visa application processing solutions that IOM can offer, all of which are consistent with international and European data protection regulations.

As the United Nations Migration Agency, these solutions are aligned with the common understandings and shared responsibilities outlined by the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).





1.

VISA APPLICATION CENTRE FACILITIES

- **Convenient:** Centrally located near diplomatic missions, public transport, parking and banking facilities.
- **Secure:** Inviolable premises in strict compliance with United Nations Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS), Minimum Operating Security Standards (MOSS). Dedicated security staff and screenings, identity and access controls, 24/7 CCTV.
- **Tailored:** Sizing and staffing based on historical application volumes and average processing times with additional space allocated to respond to seasonal fluctuations.

GOAL

Safe, convenient, purpose-built facilities that perform administrative, visa application-related tasks in a timely and dignified manner, providing accurate information, with minimal wait times and reasonable fees.



2.

INFORMATION SERVICES

- **Websites:** Tailored to meet the requirements of visa issuing authorities and visa applicants, using simple intuitive designs in appropriate languages with timely updates and application status tracking, with all content pre-approved by visa issuing authorities.
- **Contact Centres:** Tailored, 24/7 multi-channel information services via telephone, e-mail and chatbot, using integrated voice response (IVR) systems and artificial intelligence (AI).
- **Information Campaigns:** Canvassing, radio, television, community meetings and social media outreach.

GOAL

Ensuring that applicants are well informed about visa application requirements and procedures through multilingual, 24/7 information solutions, thereby limiting the administrative burden on visa issuing authorities, while protecting visa applicants from disinformation by unscrupulous travel agents and visa brokers.



3.

CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

- **VAPS:** A proprietary visa application processing software solution developed by IOM, which combines an integrated, multi-modular system with data encryption, multiple data transfer methods (API, XML, USB, CD), in appropriate languages, with customizable reporting and real-time access by visa issuing authorities.
- **CRM:** A tailored, customer relationship management system used to manage application processing, which is integrated with a sophisticated contact centre solution, providing detailed statistics, with tailored dashboards, user logs and incident tracking functionality with real-time access by visa issuing authorities.

GOAL

Leveraging the best in technology to facilitate visa application processing and reporting, with independent data input solutions that are able to seamlessly and securely communicate with the software and systems of visa issuing authorities via unique credentials for monitoring, auditing, and data extraction.



4.

BOOKING AND SCHEDULING SYSTEMS

- **Online:** Scheduling of appointments on behalf of visa issuing authorities and/or at Visa Application Centres. Intuitive, website accessible systems with secure access credentials provided to visa issuing authorities to create and adjust time slots online as required using the highest standards of automation and encryption.
- **Offline:** Scheduling of interview appointments with visa issuing authorities at Visa Application Centres via telephone, email and in-person. Such offline services act as a back-up in case of internet disruption and enable those with no internet access or knowledge, to seek assistance.

GOAL

Avoiding queues and long wait times, preventing mass bookings and streamlining the scheduling process on behalf of visa issuing authorities and visa applicants. Ensuring integrity, by providing unique access credentials to visa issuing officers for monitoring purposes, while maintaining security against cyberattacks.



5.

DOCUMENT REVIEW AND RECEIPT

- **Completeness Checks:** : In-person and remote checks to ensure visa applications and supporting documentation are complete and in the proper order, as per the requirements of visa issuing authorities. Providing neutral and unbiased guidance to visa applicants on all visa application requirements with proper sorting, secure storage, reporting and forwarding of hard copies to visa issuing authorities.
- **Review of Supporting Documents:** Verifying the existence of original documents and comparing the contents of original documents with copies provided. Original sighted and returned service.
- **Digitization:** High-quality scanning of visa applications and all supporting documentation with customizable size and resolution; secure and encrypted storage and tailored transfer solutions.

GOAL

Reducing administrative backlogs and accelerating the review and sorting of supporting documentation to facilitate timely visa decision-making. Ensuring full compliance by visa applicants, with all requirements of visa issuing authorities.



6.

DATA INPUT, VALIDATION AND TRANSFER

- **Interface with Government Systems:** Manual or automated data input (barcode or QR code scans) on behalf of visa issuing authorities into government visa information systems. Ensuring data quality checks and secure transmission via certificates and approved IP addresses.
- **IOM Proprietary Systems:** The VAPS and CRM Application Programming Interface (API) enables secure connectivity with the visa information systems of issuing authorities enabling encrypted downloads of requested applicant data and secure storage and transfer through approved devices (USB, DVD, CD, SD, xml).

GOAL

Enabling the transfer of requested data directly into government visa information systems through IOM's flexible and tailor-made IT solutions and secure network. Data can be encrypted and transferred in different formats or through Application Programming Interface (API) connections, saving time for visa issuing authorities and reducing administrative burdens.



7.

BIOMETRICS DATA COLLECTION, VALIDATION AND TRANSFER

- **Fixed:** Transfer of biometric data collected from visa applicants at Visa Application Centres with strict identity management protocols and CCTV recordings. Use of the IOM biometric solution or the solution of the visa issuing authority with real-time transfer or encryption (NIST files).
- **Mobile:** Collection and transfer of biometric data from anywhere, using the IOM biometric solution (mobile kit with camera, fingerprint scanner and signature device) or the solution of the visa issuing authority with secure encryption and data storage.

GOAL

Ensuring proper identity management and that all biometric data collected is to the appropriate standard, in full compliance with the requirements of visa issuing authorities. Collecting biometrics in an efficient, secure and dignified manner, addressing the security concerns of visa issuing authorities while respecting the rights and privacy of visa applicants.



8.

PAYMENT AND TRANSFER SYSTEMS

- **Multiple Payment Methods:** Tailored to the requirements of visa issuing authorities and the needs of visa applicants, inclusive of credit, debit and prepaid card solutions, online payment options, bank transfers and cash payments. Selected payment solutions are fully integrated into IOM's visa application processing software (VAPS).
- **Multiple Currency Solutions:** Solutions offer the possibility for visa issuing authorities to receive visa fees in different currencies, according to local conditions and government requirements.

GOAL

To provide convenient, multiple payment options for visa applicants and reduce the time visa issuing authorities spend on receiving and accounting for payments. Offering seamless, multi-currency transfers in challenging operating environments.



9.

PASSPORT, DOCUMENT COLLECTION, DELIVERY AND RETURN

- **Document Logistics:** Multiple methods are utilized to transfer and receive documentation, including in-person or by international or local courier/post, with local deliveries to visa offices by IOM diplomatic vehicle, in full compliance with the time requirements of visa issuing authorities and in compliance with UNDSS/MOSS security standards.
- **Tracking:** Available online to applicants and visa issuing authorities, with secure access via a unique reference number, providing real-time status updates through barcode/QR scans of each phase of the visa application process, with automated text notifications sent to visa applicants.

GOAL

Realizing cost and time savings for visa officers and visa applicants with timely document collection, delivery and return solutions and by keeping visa applicants informed throughout the process with real-time updates and tracking solutions.



10.

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

- **Site Visits to Issuing Authorities:** Facilitating document authenticity checks in challenging operating environments, directly with local issuing authorities. Leveraging IOM's global footprint, local language and cultural knowledge as well as close relations with host governments and relevant ministries.
- **Supporting Documents:** Facilitating verification of documentation including passports, ID cards, civil status and academic records, as well as documentation related to skills, employment, finances, business registrations and property ownership.

GOAL

In challenging operating environments, on behalf of visa issuing authorities, facilitating the timely and accurate verification of documentation, directly with local issuing authorities to counter fraud.



11.

INTERVIEW FACILITATION

- **In Person:** Facilitate interviews on behalf of visa issuing authorities at IOM offices or IOM-operated Visa Application Centres.
- **Remote:** Facilitate remote video interviews by visa officers at IOM offices or IOM Visa Application Centres via secure networks, using private or registered IP addresses with encryption software and firewalls. Providing scheduling assistance, strict identity management protocols and CCTV recording.
- **Proxy:** With proper authorization and all interview questions provided, conduct interviews of visa applicants on behalf of visa officers in locations with no diplomatic representation.

GOAL

Ensuring interviews are planned and conducted in an efficient and trusted manner through tailor-made solutions which reduce costs and save time and money for both visa issuing authorities and visa applicants.



12.

HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

- **Visa-Related Health Assessments:** Evaluations of the physical and mental health status of visa applicants for the purpose of obtaining a temporary or permanent resident visa, which may include vaccinations and specialized treatment for certain diseases of public health concern, such as tuberculosis (TB).
- **Tailored Solutions:** IOM specializes in tailoring health assessments to meet the specific requirements and protocols of visa issuing authorities and employs advanced technologies in the provision of health assessments, particularly in the provision of radiology and laboratory diagnostics.

GOAL

In support of the health assessment requirements and protocols of receiving countries in relation to the visa application process, providing tailored, efficient and cost-effective health assessments for visa applicants which protect both migrants and host communities.



13.

FACILITATION OF DNA TESTING

- **Confirming Family Relationships:** Facilitation of DNA testing with IOM nurses collecting and forwarding samples to approved laboratories to assess and determine a level of familial relatedness to at least one other individual, usually an immediate family member.
- **Comprehensive Service:** Support includes appointment scheduling, confirmation of identity, document form-filling, CCTV recording, sample collection and witnessing, chain of custody, forwarding and customs clearance.

GOAL

Verifying relationships for the purposes of visa decision-making with a special protection-sensitive focus on minors; enabling visa applicants to provide proof of their relationships in order to benefit from family reunification through regular migration channels.



14.

ASSISTED TRAVEL

- **Comprehensive Movement Assistance:** Logistical support with all aspects of migrant travel, with a focus on vulnerable migrants such as unaccompanied minors, the elderly and migrants with disabilities. In addition to providing guidance in relation to country specific exit and entry requirements, support may also include assistance pre-departure with ticketing, check-in, customs and immigration as well as in transit and upon arrival. Medical escorts are also provided as needed.

GOAL

Tailored travel solutions for migrants in need of assistance, with a focus on the most vulnerable; from point of departure, while in transit and upon arrival in the country of destination.

GLOBAL FRAMEWORK



IOM's Immigration and Visa Solutions are aligned with the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 10, Target 7 which seeks to:

“Facilitate orderly, safe and responsible migration and mobility of people, including through the implementation of planned and well-managed migration policies.”



The GCM sets out common understandings, shared responsibilities and unity of purpose regarding migration, in all its dimensions.

Objective 3 includes specific references related to the need to facilitate accurate information and access to visas, with pathways that respond to the needs of migrants. Objective 5 calls for States to enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration and Objective 7 emphasizes the need to address and reduce vulnerabilities in migration.



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