

Preparing Afghan Protection Cases

An Adjudication-Focused Guide for Practitioners

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This guide is not exhaustive. Every protection case presents distinct facts, legal questions, evidentiary concerns, and procedural considerations. Nothing in this guide guarantees—or should be understood as predicting—the outcome of any application, petition, interview, adjudication, administrative proceeding, or judicial action.

The guide draws on publicly available legal authorities, government publications, country-conditions materials, and the author's professional experience in asylum and refugee adjudications. It does not disclose confidential, classified, deliberative, law-enforcement-sensitive, personally identifiable, or otherwise non-public government information. The views expressed are solely those of the author and do not represent the official views, policies, or positions of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, any other government agency, or any current or former employer.

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How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed as a companion for practitioners representing Afghan applicants seeking humanitarian protection. It provides a structured and repeatable method for identifying the people, places, periods, organizations, documents, and relationships requiring development; recognizing matters requiring further research or legal analysis; and preparing each applicant and derivative family member for the full adjudicative process.

Although written principally for practitioners, applicants and advocates may also use its questions, checklists, and resources to identify areas requiring careful preparation.

This guide focuses principally on factual development for USCIS refugee and affirmative asylum adjudications. Its methodology may also assist practitioners handling defensive asylum, Special Immigrant Visa, humanitarian parole, family reunification, and related matters, but each process has distinct legal standards, forms, procedures, and adjudicative structures.

The guide is organized into six sections:

- 1. Understanding Why Afghan Cases Are Unusually Complex** explains how time, place, family, employment, organizations, displacement, and identity may become material during adjudication.
- 2. Developing the Applicant's Life History** provides practical prompts for intake, follow-up interviews, document review, chronology, geography, family and associational relationships, and other factual development.
- 3. Identifying Issues Requiring Further Analysis** highlights facts that may implicate protection eligibility, credibility, corroboration, statutory bars, national-security review, or discretion.
- 4. Using the Developed Record to Determine How Best to Proceed** connects the factual record to legal analysis, amendments, disclosure of difficult facts, additional research, declaration drafting, interview preparation, and responses to issues arising during adjudication.
- 5. Resources** provides links to primary authorities, publicly available adjudicator materials, and trusted practitioner and country-conditions resources.
- 6. Case-Development Checklist** provides a reusable tool for intake, factual development, legal review, filing, and interview preparation.

Case development is rarely linear, and the same is true of adjudication. New documents, testimony, country information, screening information, supervisory review, or specialized review may generate additional questions and require practitioners to return to the applicant, the factual record, or the linked resources.

The questions and checklists in this guide are starting points rather than an exhaustive interview script. Some cases will require substantial follow-up in areas addressed only briefly here; others will not require every inquiry. Practitioners should use professional judgment to determine which

questions and resources are relevant to the particular applicant and each derivative family member.

Although developed for Afghan cases, this methodology may also be adapted to other complex protection matters involving prolonged conflict, shifting regimes or territorial control, state security services or armed organizations, repeated displacement, fragmented records, or heightened identity and national-security review.

This guide draws in part on publicly released USCIS Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations Directorate lesson plans and related government training and policy materials. Those materials describe factual, legal, interviewing, and decision-making principles taught to adjudicators. Links to the referenced materials appear in **Resources**.

Why This Guide Exists

Preparing an Afghan protection case requires more than identifying a protected ground and documenting the events that appear to support it. The adjudication may reach nearly every part of the applicant's life: family relationships, education, employment, residence, travel, displacement, political or religious activity, government service, and interactions with armed groups or other organizations.

A fact that initially appears peripheral may become central. A short period of employment, residence in a particular district during a particular year, an association involving a family member, or an apparently minor inconsistency may affect eligibility, credibility, a statutory bar, or another issue bearing on the outcome. Practitioners must therefore reconstruct the applicant's history, place it in context, and develop a record that is accurate, complete, and well supported.

This guide rests on three principles.

Build the life story first. Let the legal theories follow.

Rather than beginning with a predetermined protected ground or theory of the case, begin with the applicant. Reconstruct the applicant's life chronologically and geographically. Develop the family, education, employment, organizational, military, governmental, residence, and travel histories. Identify the people and institutions involved. Review the documents. Investigate gaps, inconsistencies, and facts whose significance may not yet be clear.

Once that foundation has been developed, the practitioner can more fully assess the legal theories, evidentiary needs, statutory bars, and other potentially complicating issues presented by the case.

Use country conditions as an investigative tool.

Country-conditions research should not be reserved for the end of the case as evidence that persecution occurs in Afghanistan. It can help practitioners determine what questions to ask and what evidence to seek.

Who controlled a district during the period when the applicant lived there? Which armed groups operated nearby? What roads, schools, government institutions, military facilities, or employers existed? How did people travel? When did political or military control change?

Answers to those questions may clarify the applicant's account, reveal additional evidence, identify matters requiring explanation, and expose legal issues that might otherwise emerge only during adjudication.

Prepare for the full adjudicative process.

In cases adjudicated by USCIS, the interviewing officer generally will not be the only agency official to examine the record. Before the interview, the officer reviews the existing file and identifies issues requiring further development. During the interview, the officer explores the applicant's history and follows questions as they arise. The officer's assessment and proposed decision generally receive supervisory review.

Depending on the facts and issues presented, an Afghan protection case may receive additional review or consultation involving Fraud Detection and National Security personnel, headquarters components, or both. Different reviewers may focus on different parts of the record. Practitioners should therefore prepare the case not only for the interview, but for every stage of the adjudication that may follow.

Many excellent resources explain asylum law, refugee processing, immigration pathways, and country conditions affecting Afghan nationals. This guide is intended to complement those materials by addressing a different practical question:

How should a practitioner systematically develop and prepare an Afghan protection case from the ground up?

The goal is to help practitioners build complete factual records, identify and address material issues before they arise unexpectedly during adjudication, and give each applicant the best possible opportunity for a full and fair adjudication.



Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Afghanistan: Administrative Divisions (2008).

Note: The provincial boundaries shown reflect the administrative divisions depicted in the 2008 source map and generally used during the Islamic Republic era. The map does not depict territorial control, which changed repeatedly across locations and periods.

1. Understanding Why Afghan Cases Are Unusually Complex

For more than four decades, Afghanistan has been one of the world's principal sources of refugees and other displaced people. Soviet occupation, armed resistance, civil war, successive Taliban and republican governments, international military intervention, insurgency, and renewed Taliban rule have produced repeated waves of internal displacement and migration, particularly to Pakistan and Iran.

Many Afghans have lived under multiple governments and armed actors, moved repeatedly across districts or borders, and relied on family networks and tribal, religious, community, or other local structures where formal state authority was limited or contested. Those histories make time, place, relationships, and organizational affiliations unusually important to understanding an individual case.

An Afghan protection claim may initially appear straightforward. A woman or girl denied education, employment, movement, and participation in public life under Taliban rule may present a recognizable claim. Other applicants may face harm because of former government service, work connected to the United States, religion, ethnicity, family relationships, journalism, civil-society activity, sexual orientation or gender identity, or another individualized circumstance.

The apparent protection claim, however, represents only one part of the adjudication. Questions involving the applicant's family and associational relationships, residence, employment, travel, movements, and interactions with government officials, armed groups, or other organizations may become equally important. Those facts may strengthen the claim, require additional explanation, or raise issues involving credibility, identity, corroboration, terrorism-related and other inadmissibility grounds, statutory bars, discretionary considerations, or additional national-security review.

Several recurring features make Afghan cases unusually complex.

Time, Place, and Territorial Control

Afghan applicants may have lived through several governments, periods of conflict, and changes in territorial control. Depending on the applicant's age and location, the relevant history may include the communist government, Soviet occupation, armed resistance, civil war among mujahideen factions, the Taliban's first period of rule, the post-2001 Islamic Republic, the international military presence, the insurgency, the Republic's collapse in August 2021, and the Taliban's return to national power.

Those periods did not affect every part of Afghanistan in the same way or at the same time. Formal government authority did not always reflect practical control. A district nominally governed by the Republic might also contain Taliban checkpoints, government-aligned militias, local armed groups, criminal networks, tribal authorities, or other actors exercising influence.

A statement that something occurred “during the Taliban” or “under the government” may therefore require further development:

- Which period does the applicant mean?
- Which government formally held authority?
- Who exercised practical control in the particular location?
- Which armed groups, security forces, institutions, or organizations operated there?
- How did control change during the applicant’s residence?
- What interactions did ordinary life in that area require?

Where and when the applicant lived is not merely background. It helps identify who controlled the area, which institutions and organizations operated there, what interactions ordinary life may have required, and which questions may arise during adjudication.

Family, Community, and Organizational Relationships

An Afghan applicant may be affected by the activities of relatives, household members, friends, employers, commanders, community figures, or other associates. Those relationships may explain why the applicant was targeted, how the applicant obtained work, where the applicant lived, who provided protection, or why the applicant moved.

General descriptions can conceal material distinctions. A statement that a person “fought with the mujahideen,” “worked for the government,” “joined the Taliban,” “defended the village,” “sat on a tribal council,” or “served in the police” may leave unanswered:

- The person’s precise relationship to the applicant
- The organization’s full name and the relevant faction, unit, subgroup, or affiliation
- The person’s role, duties, locations, and period of activity
- What the applicant knew about those activities and how that knowledge was acquired
- The nature, frequency, and recency of the applicant’s contact with the person
- Whether the applicant provided or received money, transportation, shelter, employment, documents, services, supplies, or other assistance
- Whether the relationship resulted in threats, questioning, detention, surveillance, harm, or other attention

A relative’s or associate’s conduct does not automatically become the applicant’s conduct. The applicant’s own knowledge, actions, assistance, and continuing contact must be developed separately.

The extent of the inquiry should reflect the significance of the relationship. A distant relative with whom the applicant had little or no contact may require only limited development. A close relative, household member, employer, commander, or continuing associate may require substantial follow-up.

The same attention must be given to each derivative family member. A spouse or adult child may have a different family, residence, employment, travel, military, political, or organizational

history. The inquiry may be more limited for young children, but their identities, parentage, custody, residence, travel, and material experiences must still be documented accurately.

Displacement, Travel, and Life Outside Afghanistan

Many Afghan applicants have moved repeatedly within Afghanistan or lived for extended periods in Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia, the Gulf, Europe, or another country. Some were born outside Afghanistan and later returned. Others crossed borders informally or moved back and forth without passports, visas, or complete records.

Each material period may require development:

- Where did the applicant live?
- When and why did the applicant move?
- Who traveled with the applicant?
- What route was used?
- What immigration or other legal status did the applicant hold?
- Could the applicant work, study, travel, or obtain documents?
- Did the applicant seek protection or another status?
- Did the applicant return to Afghanistan?
- What family, financial, political, or organizational connections continued across the border?

These facts may affect the protection claim, credibility, internal relocation, firm resettlement, third-country status, identity resolution, or national-security review.

Informal movement should not automatically be treated as implausible or suspicious. It must nevertheless be developed sufficiently to explain when, where, how, and why the movement occurred.

Identity, Documents, and Prior Records

Afghan names may appear in different orders or spellings. Applicants may use given names, family names, tribal names, patronymics, nicknames, honorifics, or other identifying terms in different settings. Transliteration from Dari or Pashto may produce multiple valid English spellings. Dates may be recorded under different calendars, birth dates may be estimated, and place names or administrative boundaries may have changed.

Documents may be unavailable, incomplete, damaged, issued late, corrected, or inconsistent with one another. An applicant may possess a paper or electronic tazkira, passport, school record, military identification, employment card, contractor badge, recommendation letter, or only a digital copy of a document no longer accessible in Afghanistan.

A discrepancy is not necessarily evidence of fabrication. It should nevertheless be identified, investigated, and explained when possible. A difference that appears minor to the applicant may affect identity resolution, background screening, credibility, or comparison across government records.

The Protection Claim and the Broader Inquiry

Practitioners understandably focus on persecution, protected ground, nexus, and future fear. Those issues are essential, but they do not complete the adjudication.

The broader inquiry may include identity and nationality, prior statements, residence and travel, government or military service, organizational relationships, criminal conduct, assistance to armed actors, possible participation in persecution, firm resettlement, terrorism-related inadmissibility grounds, national-security concerns, and discretion.

Some facts may support the protection claim while also requiring separate eligibility analysis.

Former government service may explain Taliban targeting while requiring examination of the applicant's duties. A payment at a checkpoint may demonstrate the realities of travel while raising a material-support question. Contractor employment may establish association with the United States while producing questions about work locations, duties, access, supervisors, or prior screening.

The existence of a question does not establish ineligibility. It means that the underlying facts must be developed before the legal issue can be analyzed accurately.

2. Developing the Applicant's Life History

The purpose of life-history development is to create a reliable working record of the applicant's experiences before drafting the final legal theory or declaration. The process should identify the significant people, places, periods, organizations, movements, and events in the applicant's life and connect them to available documents, prior statements, and country conditions.

The first interview does not need to resolve every issue. It should establish the basic structure of the applicant's life and identify areas requiring follow-up. Later interviews can clarify relationships, compare prior records, develop material events, and address legal issues revealed by the initial account.

The same process should be completed separately for each derivative family member, with the scope of the inquiry adjusted for age and individual circumstances.

Begin With the Applicant's Account

Begin by allowing the applicant to describe the relevant history in the applicant's own words. Open-ended questions help reveal how the applicant understands the sequence of events and which experiences the applicant considers significant.

The practitioner should determine the applicant's preferred language and dialect, whether an interpreter is needed, and whether the applicant is comfortable communicating through the particular interpreter. Family members should not automatically be used as interpreters, particularly when the case may involve sensitive family relationships, sexual violence, gender

identity, political activity, criminal conduct, armed-group activity, or information the applicant may be reluctant to disclose in front of a relative.

The initial account should not be limited to the events appearing to establish persecution. It should include the broader history necessary to understand those events:

- Where the applicant was born and raised
- The members of the applicant's household and extended family
- Places where the applicant lived
- Education and employment
- Government, military, political, religious, tribal, civic, or organizational activity
- Internal displacement and international travel
- Significant relationships and associations
- Harm, threats, detention, questioning, or other material events
- The circumstances leading to departure from Afghanistan
- Life in transit countries and the applicant's immigration history

After the applicant provides an initial narrative, return to particular periods and events with focused questions. Clarify ambiguous terms rather than assuming that the practitioner and applicant understand them in the same way. If the applicant says that someone “disappeared,” “worked for the government,” “helped the Taliban,” or “was with the mujahideen,” ask what the applicant means.

Create the Working Life-History Record

The practitioner should maintain four related working records:

- A family and association record
- A master chronology
- A geographic history
- A document and prior-record inventory

Employment, organizational, military, security-service, travel, immigration, and other significant histories should be incorporated into these records and developed separately when their complexity requires it.

The records may be combined into a single case-development document or maintained separately. The format matters less than the ability to connect people, dates, locations, organizations, events, and evidence.

These records should inform preparation of Form I-589, Form I-590, or another application and should be updated as necessary for amendments, supplemental submissions, interview preparation, responses to Requests for Evidence or Notices of Intent to Deny, and other issues arising during adjudication.

As each part of the record is developed, compare it with country information relevant to the same time, place, people, and organizations. Country research may clarify territorial control, government structures, armed-group activity, military operations, travel routes, displacement

patterns, local institutions, employment practices, and material events. It may also identify questions requiring further inquiry.

The purpose is not to reject an account because public reporting is incomplete or appears inconsistent with it. It is to recognize and address material questions before they arise during adjudication.

Family and Association Record

Build a family tree extending beyond the relatives listed on the application. Include immediate and extended family, current and former household members, dependents, and other relatives or associates whose histories may be relevant. Include the families of derivative applicants when appropriate.

The extent of the inquiry should reflect the significance of the person and relationship. Basic identifying information ordinarily should be collected for immediate family and relevant extended family. More extensive development may be required for a close or continuing associate, household member, missing or deceased relative, community leader, government official, police officer, member of a military or intelligence service, armed-group member, or another person whose activities or relationship to the applicant may become material.

For immediate family and relevant extended family, document:

- Full name and any alternative spellings, aliases, nicknames, honorifics, or other names used
- Relationship to the applicant
- Whether the person is living, deceased, missing, detained, or otherwise unaccounted for
- Current or last known location
- Government, military, police, intelligence, political, religious, tribal, community, business, armed-group, or other significant organizational involvement
- U.S., coalition, embassy, NGO, international-organization, or contractor employment

For a deceased family member or associate, record the date, place, and known cause of death. If the person died of natural causes and the death has no apparent connection to the protection claim or another material issue, further inquiry ordinarily is unnecessary.

If the death was violent, unexplained, conflict-related, or potentially connected to the case—or if the person is missing, detained, or otherwise unaccounted for—determine, as applicable:

- What happened and under what circumstances?
- When and where did the death, disappearance, detention, or loss of contact occur?
- If the person is missing, when and where was the person last seen, and by whom?
- What does the applicant know or believe about who may have been responsible?
- What supports that understanding, and what information came from another person?
- What did the applicant personally observe?
- What efforts were made to locate the person, report the disappearance, recover remains, or obtain records?

- Has anyone received later information or contact?
- What documents, reports, messages, photographs, or witness statements may exist?
- Did the event result in threats, questioning, displacement, harm, or other consequences for the applicant or family?

The practitioner need not develop the circumstances of every death, disappearance, or loss of contact. More detailed inquiry is appropriate when the event may support the protection claim, explain the applicant's history, corroborate another fact, or raise a material eligibility or review issue.

When a person's activities or relationship may be significant, also determine:

- The applicant's knowledge of the person's activities and how that knowledge was acquired
- When the applicant first had contact with the person and the date of the most recent contact
- The frequency and methods of contact, including in-person contact, telephone calls, email, messaging applications, social media, intermediaries, or other means
- Whether direct or indirect contact is continuing
- Whether the applicant had independent contact with the person's colleagues or organization
- Whether the applicant provided or received money, shelter, transportation, employment, documents, introductions, services, supplies, or other assistance
- Whether the relationship resulted in threats, questioning, detention, surveillance, harm, or other attention from a government, armed group, or another actor

The record should distinguish the existence of a relationship from the applicant's own knowledge and conduct. A relative's activities do not automatically become the applicant's activities. A close, continuing, dependent, or otherwise significant relationship may nevertheless require substantial follow-up.

Master Chronology

Create a continuous chronology beginning with the applicant's birth and continuing through the present. Include:

- Residences
- Education
- Employment
- Military, police, intelligence, or government service
- Political, religious, civic, tribal, and organizational activity
- Internal displacement
- International travel and migration
- Immigration applications and status
- Arrests, detention, threats, violence, and other material events
- Marriage, separation, births, deaths, and changes in household composition
- Periods that remain uncertain or unexplained

The chronology should account for every material period of the applicant's life. It need not describe every ordinary day, but it should explain transitions between major periods.

For each move or transition, determine:

- What changed?
- When did the change occur?
- Why did the applicant move, leave school, change employment, join or leave an organization, or alter another regular activity?
- Who made or influenced the decision?
- Who moved or remained behind?
- How did the applicant travel?
- What happened immediately before and after the change?
- What document or witness may help establish the timing?

Use approximate dates when exact dates are unavailable, but identify them as estimates and record how the applicant reached the estimate. An applicant may remember a season, religious holiday, school year, harvest, pregnancy, marriage, death, change in government, military operation, or another event more reliably than a calendar date.

Do not create false precision merely to complete a form. Preserve the applicant's original reference point together with any estimated corresponding date.

Pay particular attention to periods that overlap or remain unexplained. Employment in one province may conflict with claimed residence in another. A document may place the applicant in a location not previously disclosed. A relative's account may use a different date for the same event. These differences may have reasonable explanations, but they should be identified before filing or interview.

The chronology should be updated whenever new information changes the sequence. It is a working investigative tool, not merely a finished exhibit.

Geographic History

Locations must be developed together with time. Record every known place where the applicant lived for a meaningful period. Include the country, province, district, city or town, village, neighborhood, refugee settlement, camp, or other location, together with the dates of residence.

Also identify every material school, employment location, detention site, military facility, border crossing, place of harm, and recurring travel route.

For each material location, determine:

- The most specific name the applicant can reliably provide
- Alternative names, spellings, or historical administrative designations
- Nearby cities, roads, rivers, borders, markets, schools, mosques, government buildings, or other landmarks
- Who lived with or near the applicant

- Why the applicant moved there and why the applicant left
- Who formally governed and who exercised practical control
- Which armed groups, security forces, tribal authorities, or other organizations operated nearby
- How the applicant traveled to work, school, markets, government offices, or other locations
- Which roads, checkpoints, borders, airports, or travel routes the applicant used
- Whether the applicant crossed borders formally or informally
- What legal or immigration status the applicant held
- Whether the applicant could work, study, travel, or obtain documents
- Whether control of the area changed during the relevant period

Compare the applicant's account with maps and reliable historical country information. If available information appears inconsistent with the account, first confirm that the research concerns the correct place and period. Administrative boundaries, place names, roads, governments, and territorial control may have changed.

Where and when the applicant lived is not merely background. It helps identify who controlled the area, which institutions and organizations operated there, what interactions ordinary life may have required, and which questions may arise during adjudication.

Employment and Organizational History

Develop every material period of employment, service, training, volunteer activity, or organizational membership. Record:

- The employer's or organization's full name and any alternative names
- Whether the employer was, or was connected to, a government entity, military or security component, contractor, subcontractor, NGO, international organization, political body, religious institution, tribal body, business, or armed group
- Job title, unit, department, or project
- Dates and locations
- Supervisors and significant coworkers
- Duties actually performed
- Training, equipment, weapons, facilities, or systems used
- Reasons for beginning and ending the work
- Documents or witnesses capable of corroborating the history

When the applicant worked with U.S. or coalition personnel, determine the relevant government agency, military component, diplomatic post, contractor, subcontractor, project, facility, and period of service.

Ask about badges, identification cards, employment verification, background investigations, vetting, clearances or access authorizations, training certificates, commendations, recommendation letters, contracts, payroll records, and contact information for supervisors or coworkers.

The practitioner should establish the applicant's responsibilities, access, and contact without requesting classified, operationally sensitive, law-enforcement-sensitive, or other protected information. The record ordinarily needs the nature and significance of the work—not protected details the applicant should not disclose.

Military, Police, Intelligence, and Armed-Service History

If the applicant served in a military, police force, intelligence service, militia, armed group, local security force, or another armed component, develop the history separately and in greater detail.

Determine:

- The full name of the organization, branch, force, unit, and subunit
- Any former names, aliases, predecessor organizations, or affiliated forces
- Whether service was voluntary, compulsory, coerced, or arranged through family or community connections
- The dates of service
- Each rank held and the highest rank attained
- Commanders, supervisors, and units at each stage
- Every material duty location and the dates served there
- Duties performed at each location
- Basic and specialized training
- Weapons, vehicles, equipment, databases, facilities, or systems used
- Whether the applicant supervised or commanded other personnel
- Whether the applicant served in combat and, if so, where, when, against whom, and in what capacity
- Whether the applicant carried or used a weapon and the circumstances in which it was used
- Whether the applicant participated in raids, searches, arrests, checkpoints, interrogations, intelligence collection, detention, transportation, or transfer of prisoners
- Whether the applicant guarded, questioned, transported, processed, or maintained records concerning detainees or prisoners
- Whether the applicant witnessed, reported, prevented, facilitated, assisted, or participated in mistreatment, unlawful detention, torture, killing, disappearance, destruction of property, or another abuse
- What orders the applicant gave or received and what occurred after those orders
- Whether the applicant knew of alleged abuses committed by the unit, organization, commanders, or coworkers
- Whether the applicant was investigated, disciplined, reassigned, detained, threatened, or punished
- How and why the service ended, including discharge, resignation, desertion, defection, demobilization, or organizational collapse
- Records and witnesses capable of corroborating the history

Participation in combat requires factual development but is not synonymous with persecution. Determine who or what was targeted, whether civilians, detainees, or other protected persons

were harmed, whether any harm was connected to a protected ground, and how the applicant's own conduct contributed to the event.

These questions should be asked with a focus on the applicant's actual role, knowledge, and conduct. Service in a military, police force, intelligence service, militia, armed group, or other security component does not by itself establish that the applicant ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in persecution.

Depending on the organization and relevant period, however, membership, military-type training, assistance, or other conduct may independently require analysis under the terrorism-related inadmissibility grounds or another provision. The developed facts allow the practitioner to determine whether further analysis may be required concerning the persecutor bar, TRIG, other admissibility or statutory bars, credibility, national-security review, discretion, or the applicant's own protection claim.

Document and Prior-Record Review

Create an inventory of documents and prior records available to the applicant or practitioner.

In refugee cases, these may include Form I-590, an RSC Case History, a UNHCR Resettlement Registration Form, and other referral, registration, or processing records. In asylum cases, they may include Form I-589, parole, visa, SIV, family reunification, and prior interview or filing records.

The inventory should also include:

- Identity and civil documents
- Passports and travel documents
- Education and employment records
- Military, police, government, or contractor identification
- Letters of recommendation
- Affidavits or statements from relatives and witnesses
- Medical or psychological evidence
- Emails, messages, photographs, videos, and social-media material
- Visas, residence permits, and border records
- Digital copies of records no longer physically available

Record what exists, what has been requested, what cannot be obtained, and where the applicant may previously have provided material information.

The documents available to the applicant may not constitute the complete government record. The practitioner should nevertheless identify and examine every prior record reasonably available.

For each prior form or statement, determine:

- Who prepared it?

- In what language was the information collected?
- Was an interpreter used?
- What questions was the applicant asked?
- Did the applicant review the completed document before signing or submitting it?
- Did the applicant understand the document?
- Were estimates, summaries, translations, or corrections made?
- Has the applicant previously attempted to correct an error?
- Does the record contain information supplied by another person rather than by the applicant?

Compare names, dates, addresses, family relationships, employment, travel, organizational activity, and material events across the available record. Cross-reference those facts with the family and association record, chronology, geographic history, and relevant country information.

Do not assume that every difference is intentional or material. Identify the difference, determine its source, ask the applicant to explain it, and assess whether another document, witness, map, or reliable country source can clarify the issue.

Identify and Address Information Gaps

A gap exists when a material period, relationship, event, organization, or document remains unexplained or insufficiently developed. Common examples include:

- A period with no identified residence, education, employment, or other regular activity
- Overlapping dates or locations
- An unexplained move or border crossing
- A relative or household member appearing in one record but not another
- A general reference to an unidentified government body, military unit, political movement, or armed group
- Employment without identified duties, supervisors, or work locations
- A document whose source or date is uncertain
- A material event known only through another person
- Different spellings, dates of birth, family relationships, or other identity information
- An apparent inconsistency among testimony, documents, prior statements, maps, or country information

When a gap or apparent inconsistency emerges, develop it using the type of non-leading questions an adjudicating officer is likely to ask. Identify the specific difference, establish the source of each version, and give the applicant a meaningful opportunity to explain it.

Useful formulations include:

- “Help me understand what happened during this period.”
- “Earlier you said _____. This document says _____. Can you explain the difference?”
- “What do you mean when you use that term?”
- “Who provided this information?”
- “Who completed this form?”

- “Is there a reason you cannot remember or provide that detail?”
- “Is there another document, person, map, or source that may help clarify this?”

The purpose is to identify and address the same questions likely to arise during adjudication without presuming deception or suggesting a preferred answer.

Practitioners should preserve difficult facts and reasonable uncertainty rather than editing them out of the record. An unresolved question discovered during preparation can be researched, documented, explained, or identified honestly as unresolved. The same question first discovered during adjudication may delay the case, affect credibility, or generate additional review.

Life-history development remains iterative. A document may reveal a new address. Country research may identify an armed group, military operation, government institution, or travel restriction affecting the relevant location and period. A relative’s statement may produce a different date. Legal research may show that employment, assistance, residence in another country, military activity, or a family association requires more detailed inquiry.

When new information emerges:

- Add it to the chronology and other working records.
- Cross-reference it with the relevant time, place, people, organizations, and country conditions.
- Determine whether it affects another period, person, relationship, or event.
- Return to the applicant with focused follow-up questions.
- Compare the new information with prior statements and documents.
- Record the applicant’s explanation.
- Identify additional evidence or research.
- Reassess the legal and adjudicative significance of the facts.

Changes resulting from genuine clarification should be documented transparently. The goal is not to make every record artificially identical. It is to understand why differences exist and present the most complete and accurate account possible.

Develop Each Derivative Applicant’s History

Do not assume that a derivative applicant’s history is fully captured by the principal applicant’s account. Develop each derivative’s identity, parentage, custody, residence, education, travel, material experiences, family relationships, and independent activities. Cross-reference that history with available documents, the principal applicant’s account, and relevant country conditions.

A spouse or adult child may have separate employment, political activity, organizational contacts, military or government service, travel, prior applications, or grounds for protection. Those facts may independently affect eligibility or review.

The inquiry may be more limited for young children, but their identities, parentage, custody, residence, travel, and experiences must still be documented accurately.

Questions for children should be short, clear, age appropriate, and directed toward concrete experiences. Avoid compound, leading, abstract, or legalistic questions. Ask what the child saw, heard, experienced, or understood, using the child's own terminology. Do not require a child to supply adult-level dates, political explanations, or organizational analysis.

What the Practitioner Should Have at This Stage

Before moving to full legal analysis and determining how best to proceed, the practitioner should have:

- A chronology covering every material period
- A geographic history identifying significant locations and movements
- A record of significant relatives, associates, and organizations
- Separate information for each derivative applicant
- A record of material events and the applicant's source of knowledge
- A document and prior-statement inventory
- A list of discrepancies, explanations, and unresolved questions
- A list of possible witnesses and corroborating evidence
- A list of country-conditions and organizational research still needed
- A preliminary list of issues requiring further legal analysis

These materials form the factual foundation for the remaining stages of case preparation.

3. Identifying Issues Requiring Further Analysis

Once the working life-history record has been developed, the practitioner should identify the facts requiring closer legal or evidentiary analysis. The purpose of this stage is issue spotting, not reaching premature conclusions.

A fact may strengthen the protection claim while also raising a separate eligibility question. Government or military service may explain why the Taliban targeted an applicant but also require development of the applicant's duties and conduct. Assistance to an armed actor may have been compelled, incidental to ordinary civilian life, or provided without knowledge of the organization's activities, but it may still require analysis under the terrorism-related inadmissibility grounds. Residence in another country may explain displacement while also raising questions about immigration status or firm resettlement.

The governing standards differ among refugee, asylum, parole, Special Immigrant Visa, adjustment, and other proceedings. They may also change through statutes, regulations, precedential decisions, controlling circuit law, agency policy, or exercises of exemption authority. Each identified issue should therefore be researched under the authorities governing the particular application.

The principal applicant and each derivative family member must be evaluated separately. A fact affecting one family member may not affect another in the same way.

Protection Claim, Protected Ground, Nexus, and Future Fear

The developed record should identify the harm experienced or feared, the person or organization responsible, and the evidence explaining why the applicant was or may be targeted.

Further analysis may be required when:

- The persecutor's motive is unclear, mixed, personal, criminal, or partly connected to a protected characteristic.
- The claimed characteristic was imputed to the applicant because of employment, family, community, or organizational relationships.
- The harm was inflicted by a nonstate actor and the record does not yet establish whether the government was unable or unwilling to provide protection.
- The applicant has not recently received threats, but relatives or similarly situated people have been harmed.
- Conditions, territorial control, or the persecutor's ability to locate the applicant have changed.
- Internal relocation appears possible but may not be safe or reasonable under the applicant's individual circumstances.

The applicable burdens and presumptions concerning internal relocation depend on whether the applicant established past persecution and whether the alleged persecutor is governmental, government-sponsored, or private.¹ Practitioners should consult the current regulation governing the particular application.

Country conditions should be used both to support the applicant's account and to test whether the proposed theory fits the relevant location, period, actor, and pattern of conduct.

Credibility and Corroboration

Differences among testimony, documents, prior applications, interview records, and information supplied by relatives should be identified before adjudication whenever possible.

Further development may be required when the record contains:

- Material omissions or inconsistent descriptions of an event.
- Conflicting names, dates, family relationships, addresses, employment periods, or travel histories.
- Statements that appear inconsistent with documented country conditions.
- Documents that are late-issued, corrected, incomplete, or inconsistent with other records.
- Facts based on information from another person rather than the applicant's direct knowledge.
- Important events for which reasonably available corroborating evidence has not been obtained.

¹ 8 C.F.R. § 208.13(b)(1)(ii), (b)(3) (2026).

The practitioner should determine the source of each difference and give the applicant a neutral opportunity to explain it. Translation, interpretation, calendar conversion, trauma, age, education, preparation by another person, and differences in the questions previously asked may all be relevant. A plausible explanation should be documented and supported where possible; it should not simply be assumed.

Persecutor Bar

Military, police, intelligence, militia, armed-group, detention, interrogation, or command experience may require persecutor-bar analysis. Relevant facts can include participation in raids or arrests, selection or transportation of targets, guarding or transferring prisoners, interrogation, reporting individuals to authorities, enforcement of discriminatory rules, participation in abuse, command responsibility, and assistance to others who committed harmful acts.

Combat service is not synonymous with participation in persecution. The practitioner should determine who or what was targeted, whether civilians, detainees, or other protected persons were harmed, whether the harm was connected to a protected ground, what the applicant knew, and how the applicant's own conduct contributed to the event.

Questions involving knowledge, intent, coercion, assistance, and the degree of personal involvement require careful research under current law. Service in an organization or unit with a history of abuse does not eliminate the need to determine what the individual applicant actually did.

The role of coercion or duress in applying the persecutor bar remained unsettled for years following the Supreme Court's decision in *Negusie v. Holder*. Under the Attorney General's currently operative interpretation, however, the statutory persecutor bar contains no exception for coercion or duress.² Practitioners should therefore determine whether the applicant's own conduct falls within the statutory terms and should not treat coercion as a standalone defense if the bar otherwise applies.

Terrorism-Related Inadmissibility Grounds

This guide identifies facts that may require further analysis under the terrorism-related inadmissibility grounds; it does not provide a comprehensive treatment of TRIG. Practitioners should consult the statute, current agency guidance, applicable precedent, available exemptions, and other specialized resources before reaching a legal conclusion. Applicants and advocates using this guide without counsel should not assume that a disclosed association, interaction, or form of assistance necessarily establishes inadmissibility and should seek qualified legal assistance when such issues arise.

TRIG may arise from conduct that applicants and practitioners do not ordinarily understand as terrorism. Facts requiring further analysis may include:

² *Negusie v. Holder*, 555 U.S. 511 (2009); *Matter of Negusie*, 29 I. & N. Dec. 285 (A.G. 2025) (making *Matter of Negusie*, 28 I. & N. Dec. 120 (A.G. 2020), the operative opinion).

- Membership in or representation of an organization.
- Solicitation of funds or recruitment of members.
- Provision of money, food, shelter, transportation, documents, communications, services, supplies, or other assistance.
- Military-type training received from or on behalf of an organization.
- Assistance provided directly to a member of an organization.
- Participation in planning, preparation, or other activities connected to violent conduct.
- A spouse's or parent's activities when the applicable family-based provision may be implicated.

The absence of an organization from a public designation list does not resolve the issue. A Tier III organization is an undesignated group assessed under the statutory definition based on its activities during the relevant period. Even a small or informal group may qualify. The practitioner should identify the particular organization, faction, subgroup, leadership, location, relevant dates, activities, and the applicant's knowledge and conduct.

Assistance provided under coercion, at a checkpoint, as a condition of travel, or as part of ordinary civilian survival still requires factual development. Whether a statutory ground applies, whether an applicant can satisfy a relevant knowledge exception, and whether an authorized exemption may be available are separate questions that must be researched under current law. The practitioner should not assume that coercion automatically ends the inquiry or that an exemption will necessarily be granted.

Firm Resettlement and Third-Country Status

For asylum adjudications, residence outside Afghanistan may itself establish firm resettlement under current regulations. An applicant may be considered firmly resettled if, after the events giving rise to the asylum claim and before arriving in the United States, the applicant received or was eligible for permanent legal status in another country; held, or could have applied for and obtained, non-permanent but indefinitely renewable status; voluntarily resided in one country for one year or more without continuing to suffer persecution or torture; or held citizenship in another country and was present there during the relevant period. The regulation may also impute a parent's firm resettlement to a child in specified circumstances. Other immigration pathways may apply different standards.

Develop the nature and duration of any residence or status; whether the applicant could renew, recover, or obtain status; the applicant's ability to work, study, travel, obtain documents, and reunite with family; restrictions, persecution, or threats experienced there; and the circumstances of departure. Third-country residence, transit, removal risk, citizenship, and firm resettlement are related but distinct issues and may operate differently across immigration pathways.

Criminal Conduct and Other Bars or Inadmissibility Grounds

Arrests, charges, convictions, admissions of conduct, military or organizational activity, document fraud, misrepresentation, or suspected participation in violence may require analysis under one or more statutory provisions. Conduct outside the United States may be relevant even when no formal charge or conviction exists.

Obtain the underlying records where possible and develop what occurred, the applicant's role, motive, age, surrounding political circumstances, harm caused, available defenses, and disposition. The practitioner should then identify the precise bar or inadmissibility ground potentially implicated rather than treating all adverse conduct as a single general concern.

Identity and National-Security Review

Identity variations, unexplained residence or travel periods, document irregularities, continuing contact with particular individuals, or relationships with governments or organizations may prompt additional identity, background, or national-security review.

CARRP has operated as an internal USCIS review policy rather than an independent statutory ground of inadmissibility or ineligibility. On July 2, 2026, a federal court approved a settlement and ordered USCIS to rescind CARRP within seven months. Because the matter was remanded without vacatur, practitioners should verify whether USCIS has notified the court that rescission has occurred and whether the agency has issued any replacement national-security vetting policy. Under the publicly released CARRP materials, information suggesting an articulable connection to a person, organization, or activity of national-security concern could prompt additional review. CARRP itself, however, did not create an independent legal ground for denying an immigration benefit.³

Practitioners ordinarily will not have access to undisclosed screening information. The appropriate response is to develop the available record thoroughly: document identity and name variations, explain travel and residence, identify relationships and methods of contact, investigate relevant organizations, address known discrepancies, and provide reliable supporting evidence.

Discretion

Asylum is discretionary even after an applicant establishes statutory eligibility. Current regulations identify specific significant adverse factors and circumstances in which DHS will not favorably exercise discretion, subject to stated exceptions. Other forms of humanitarian protection or related relief may apply different discretionary frameworks. Practitioners should analyze the provisions governing the particular application rather than assuming that the absence of a mandatory bar resolves the discretionary inquiry.⁴

Relevant considerations may include the nature, severity, and recency of the conduct; candor in disclosing it; coercion or other surrounding circumstances; evidence of rehabilitation; family and humanitarian considerations; service to the United States or others; community ties; and the consequences of denial. The practitioner should identify both favorable and adverse considerations and address significant negative facts directly rather than assuming that statutory eligibility resolves the case.

³ *Wagafe v. Trump*, No. 2:17-cv-00094-LK, Order Granting Motion for Final Approval at 12–13 (W.D. Wash. July 2, 2026), ECF No. 719; U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services, *Policy for Vetting and Adjudicating Cases with National Security Concerns* (Apr. 11, 2008).

⁴ 8 C.F.R. § 208.13(d)(1)–(2).

Create the Working Issue List

At the end of this stage, create a working issue list identifying:

- The issue requiring further analysis.
- The facts that raised it.
- Facts that remain uncertain or disputed.
- The governing immigration pathway and jurisdiction.
- Authorities and publicly available agency materials requiring review.
- Additional testimony, documents, country conditions, or organizational research needed.
- Whether specialized immigration, criminal, national-security, or other expert consultation may be appropriate.
- The possible effect on the principal applicant and each derivative family member.
- The next action required before filing or interview.

The working issue list should be updated as the case develops. It provides the bridge between factual development and the decisions that follow: how to complete or amend the application, what to address in the declaration, which evidence to submit, how to prepare the applicant and derivatives, and whether a difficult issue requires specialized analysis before the case proceeds.

4. Using the Developed Record to Determine How Best to Proceed

The life-history record and working issue list should determine how the case proceeds. A recognizable protection claim does not necessarily mean the case is ready to file or interview. An unexplained period, organizational connection, prior statement, third-country history, identity discrepancy, criminal event, or other indicator may require additional factual development and legal analysis.

For each indicator identified, the practitioner should determine:

- The legal issue it may raise.
- The facts necessary to analyze that issue.
- Which facts remain uncertain or require corroboration.
- Whether current legal authorities or publicly available agency materials require further research.
- Whether specialized consultation is appropriate.
- How the issue affects the principal applicant and each derivative.
- How the application, declaration, supporting evidence, and country-conditions submission should address it.
- How the applicant should be prepared for questions about it during adjudication.

Tailor the Filing and Preparation to the Issues Identified

The complete working record does not need to appear in the filing. It should instead guide the practitioner in deciding which facts are necessary to present the protection claim accurately,

which require direct explanation, and which should remain available for interview preparation or later review.

A material issue should not be omitted merely because it complicates the claim. Determine whether it should be addressed in the application, declaration, legal submission, supporting evidence, or a combination of those materials. The treatment should be proportionate to the issue and grounded in the applicant's actual facts.

Interview preparation should focus on the questions the identified issue is likely to generate. The applicant should understand why the subject may arise, review the relevant portions of the record, and be prepared to explain personal knowledge, conduct, relationships, dates, locations, documents, and any apparent discrepancies truthfully and in the applicant's own words. Preparation should clarify the record, not script testimony.

Each derivative should be evaluated and prepared separately when appropriate. A spouse or child may have different knowledge, experiences, relationships, or history. Those differences should be understood rather than forced into artificial consistency.

When new information emerges through testimony, document review, country research, an RFE, a NOID, or another stage of adjudication, return to the same process: identify the legal issue, develop the relevant facts, research the governing authority, and determine how the record and case strategy should be updated.

The objective is a filing and preparation strategy tailored to the issues actually presented by the case—not every issue that could theoretically arise in an Afghan adjudication.

5. Resources

The following materials provide starting points for legal research, factual development, country-conditions research, and adjudication preparation. Immigration law, agency policy, country conditions, and online resources change. Practitioners should confirm that they are using current authorities and current versions of linked materials.

Primary Law, Decisions, and Agency Guidance

[USCIS Policy Manual](#)

[EOIR Virtual Law Library](#)

Includes the Immigration and Nationality Act, Title 8 regulations, AG and BIA precedent decisions, country-conditions resources, and other immigration authorities.

[EOIR AG/BIA Precedent Decisions](#)

[Electronic Code of Federal Regulations—Title 8](#)

[USCIS Forms](#)

Consult the current form, edition date, instructions, filing location, and applicable fee information.

[USCIS—Request Records Through FOIA or the Privacy Act](#)

Public RAIO Adjudicator Materials

RAIO lesson plans describe frameworks, interviewing methods, and legal concepts used in refugee and asylum adjudications. They are valuable for understanding likely lines of inquiry, but they do not replace current statutes, regulations, precedent, controlling circuit law, or binding agency policy.

[AILA Collection of Public Asylum and RAIO Lesson Plans](#)

[RAIO—Interviewing: Eliciting Testimony](#)

[RAIO—Decision Making](#)

[RAIO—Refugee Definition](#)

[RAIO—Definition of Persecution and Eligibility Based on Past Persecution](#)

[RAIO—Nexus and the Protected Grounds](#)

[RAIO—Firm Resettlement](#)

[RAIO—Discretion](#)

[RAIO—Children’s Claims](#)

Afghanistan-Specific Government Training and Practitioner Materials

[CLINIC—Practice Advisory: Common Obstacles When Representing Afghans in Immigration Proceedings](#)

Analyzes common statutory bars and other complications in Afghan cases and includes sample interview questions, RFEs, and NOIDs.

[ABA COI & Welcome Legal Alliance, Pro Se Affirmative Asylum Module Series for Afghans Toolkit, Updated April 2023](#)

Provides outlines, trainings, templates, and samples for organizations assisting Afghan affirmative-asylum applicants.

[IRAP Collection of U.S. Government Training and Guidance Documents Related to Afghan Refugee, Asylum, SIV, and Parole Processing](#)

Includes publicly released RAIO materials addressing Afghanistan country conditions, Taliban topics, women and gender, Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, and armed groups in Afghan adjudications.

[IRAP Legal Practitioner Resources](#)

[IRAP Practice Guide on Special Immigrant Visas for Afghans and Iraqis](#)

[IRAP Legal Resources for Afghans](#)

Includes applicant-facing information in English, Dari, and Pashto.

[AfghanEvac—A Practitioner’s Companion: Relief and Legal Standards for Afghan Nationals in U.S. Immigration Court](#)

[AfghanEvac—The Ledger](#)

Collects government records, reports, litigation, case law, and other materials concerning Afghan protection and relocation.

TRIG, Armed Organizations, and National-Security Review

[USCIS—Terrorism-Related Inadmissibility Grounds](#)

[USCIS—TRIG Situational Exemptions](#)

[USCIS—TRIG Group-Based Exemptions](#)

[Department of State—Foreign Terrorist Organizations](#)

[Department of State—Terrorist Exclusion List](#)

[Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual—Terrorism-Related Grounds](#)

[USCIS—CARRP Guidance \(historical guidance; verify current status\)](#)

No public list conclusively identifies every Tier III organization. Practitioners should research the particular organization, faction, subgroup, relevant period, and activities. The absence of a group from a Tier I or Tier II designation list does not resolve whether it may satisfy the statutory Tier III definition.

Country Conditions and Organizational Research

[ecoi.net—Afghanistan](#)

[UNHCR—Guidance Note on Afghanistan: Update II \(September 2025\)](#)

[European Union Agency for Asylum—Afghanistan](#)

[United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan—Human Rights](#)

[U.S. Department of State—Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#)

[U.S. Department of State—International Religious Freedom Reports](#)

[Afghanistan Analysts Network](#)

[UNHCR Operational Data Portal—Afghanistan Situation](#)

Country-conditions research should be specific whenever possible to the applicant's location, period, identity, claimed persecutor, organization, and circumstances. General descriptions of Afghanistan may not resolve questions involving local control, a particular faction, an individual unit, a travel route, or the applicant's personal risk.

6. Case-Development Checklist

Applicant: _____

A-Number / Case Number: _____

Principal or Derivative: _____

Immigration Process / Form: _____

Interview or Hearing Date: _____

Last Updated: _____

This checklist is designed for repeated use during intake, factual development, legal review, filing, and interview preparation. Not every inquiry will be necessary in every case. Complete relevant portions separately for the principal applicant and each derivative family member.

Identity and Existing Record

- ☐ Record the applicant's full name and every alternative spelling, alias, nickname, honorific, patronymic, tribal name, or other identity used.
- ☐ Confirm date and place of birth, all nationalities or citizenships held or potentially available, passports or other national documents used, ethnicity, religion, language, dialect, marital history, and family relationships.
- ☐ Identify the applicant's preferred interview language and any interpretation needs.
- ☐ Obtain and review available identity, civil, educational, employment, military, travel, and immigration documents.
- ☐ Identify prior refugee, asylum, SIV, parole, visa, UNHCR, family reunification, or other immigration applications, registrations, interviews, and filings.
- ☐ Compare the current account with prior applications, statements, forms, and records.
- ☐ If applicable, consider requesting the applicant's A-File or other reasonably obtainable government records through applicable FOIA or records-access procedures.

Family and Associations

- ☐ Build a family and association tree covering immediate family, relevant extended family, household members, and significant associates.
- ☐ Record whether each relevant person is living, deceased, missing, detained, or otherwise unaccounted for.

- ☐ Identify government, military, police, intelligence, political, religious, tribal, community, business, armed-group, U.S., coalition, NGO, international-organization, or contractor involvement.
- ☐ Determine what the applicant knew about each significant person's activities and how that knowledge was acquired.
- ☐ Document the frequency, methods, and most recent date of relevant contact.
- ☐ Determine whether the applicant provided or received money, shelter, transportation, employment, documents, introductions, services, supplies, or other assistance.
- ☐ Determine whether a relationship resulted in threats, questioning, detention, surveillance, displacement, harm, or other attention.

Chronology and Geography

- ☐ Create a continuous chronology covering every significant period of the applicant's life.
- ☐ Record residence, education, employment, military or organizational activity, travel, and material events by date and location.
- ☐ Identify unexplained periods, uncertain dates, and overlapping activities.
- ☐ Record province, district, village, neighborhood, and relevant addresses for each residence and material event.
- ☐ Determine who formally governed and who exercised practical control in each location during the relevant period.
- ☐ Identify armed groups, government institutions, military facilities, employers, checkpoints, roads, border crossings, and other locally relevant actors or features.
- ☐ Explain moves, internal displacement, cross-border movement, and returns to earlier locations.
- ☐ Cross-reference the chronology and geographic history with country conditions.

Education and Employment

- ☐ Record every school, university, training program, and period of study.
- ☐ Record every employer, position, location, supervisor, date of employment, and principal duty.
- ☐ Identify employment obtained through a relative, community figure, political connection, government official, or organizational relationship.

- ☐ Develop U.S., coalition, embassy, NGO, international-organization, and contractor employment in sufficient detail to identify the employer, contract, location, duties, access, supervision, and supporting records.
- ☐ Identify security clearances, badges, weapons access, restricted locations, sensitive responsibilities, or contact with U.S. or foreign personnel when relevant.
- ☐ Obtain employment letters, contracts, identification cards, evaluations, payroll records, recommendation letters, emails, photographs, or other available corroboration.
- ☐ Cross-reference education and employment with the chronology, geographic history, prior filings, and country conditions.

Government, Military, Police, Intelligence, and Organizational Service

- ☐ Identify the government, organization, branch, unit, faction, subgroup, or component involved.
- ☐ Record all dates, duty locations, ranks, titles, supervisors, commanders, and responsibilities.
- ☐ Identify military-type, intelligence, weapons, interrogation, detention, or other specialized training.
- ☐ Develop participation in combat, raids, arrests, searches, checkpoints, interrogations, detention, prisoner transportation or guarding, intelligence collection, target selection, or enforcement activity.
- ☐ Determine whether the applicant possessed, carried, or used a weapon and under what circumstances.
- ☐ Determine whether civilians, detainees, prisoners, or other protected persons were harmed.
- ☐ Determine what the applicant personally did, knew, observed, ordered, reported, prevented, or assisted.
- ☐ Identify allegations of abuse involving the applicant's unit or organization and determine the applicant's knowledge and role.
- ☐ Explain how and why the service ended and whether contact with former members continues.
- ☐ Obtain service records, identification, discharge documents, training certificates, photographs, letters, or other available evidence.
- ☐ Research the organization, faction, unit, relevant period, geographic activity, and any potential legal classification.

Travel, Displacement, and Third-Country History

- ☐ Record every country in which the applicant lived, traveled, transited, sought protection, or held status.
- ☐ Document entry and exit dates, routes, border crossings, travel documents, and persons traveling with the applicant.
- ☐ Identify lawful or informal status, refugee recognition, residence permission, visas, work authorization, or any right to remain.
- ☐ Determine whether status could be renewed, recovered, or converted into permanent residence or citizenship.
- ☐ Document the applicant's ability to work, study, travel, obtain documents, receive protection, and reunite with family.
- ☐ Explain departures, removals, attempted removals, returns to Afghanistan, and movement between third countries.
- ☐ Identify facts requiring analysis of firm resettlement, third-country protection, identity, credibility, or national-security review.

Protection Claim and Material Events

- ☐ Identify each material threat, act of harm, detention, disappearance, forced activity, displacement, or other event affecting the claim or eligibility.
- ☐ Record when and where it occurred, who was involved, and what happened before and afterward.
- ☐ Distinguish what the applicant personally observed from information learned from another person.
- ☐ Identify the actor responsible and the evidence of motive.
- ☐ Determine whether the applicant sought government, community, tribal, family, or other protection and what resulted.
- ☐ Develop harm or threats involving relatives and similarly situated people when relevant.
- ☐ Identify attempted relocation and explain why it succeeded or failed.
- ☐ Develop the applicant's present fear, the persecutor's continued interest, current capability, and relevant changed circumstances.
- ☐ Cross-reference each material event with country conditions, documents, witnesses, and prior statements.

Documents, Corroboration, and Unresolved Facts

- ☐ Create an inventory of documents received, requested, unavailable, or requiring translation.
- ☐ Confirm the source, authenticity indicators, dates, names, and visible content of material documents and digital evidence.
- ☐ Identify witnesses and record the basis of each witness's knowledge.
- ☐ Obtain reasonably available corroboration or document why it cannot be obtained.
- ☐ Compare names, dates, relationships, addresses, employment, travel, and material events across the entire record.
- ☐ Identify omissions, inconsistencies, documentary conflicts, and facts that remain uncertain.
- ☐ Give the applicant a neutral opportunity to explain each material difference.
- ☐ Record the explanation and seek supporting evidence when possible.
- ☐ Use country conditions to support and test the account, not merely to confirm general danger in Afghanistan.

Issues Requiring Further Analysis

- ☐ Filing deadlines, jurisdiction, prior proceedings, and other pathway-specific procedural requirements, including the asylum one-year filing deadline and any potentially applicable exception.
- ☐ Protection claim, protected ground, nexus, past persecution, future fear, government protection, and internal relocation.
- ☐ Credibility, source of knowledge, corroboration, and prior inconsistent statements.
- ☐ Persecutor bar.
- ☐ TRIG, including Tier III organizations, membership, representation, material support, solicitation, recruitment, and military-type training.
- ☐ Firm resettlement and third-country status.
- ☐ Criminal conduct, particularly serious crime, serious nonpolitical crime, crimes involving moral turpitude, and other applicable statutory bars or inadmissibility grounds.
- ☐ Identity, background, and national-security review, including any applicable specialized agency review.
- ☐ Discretion.
- ☐ Effect of each issue on the principal applicant and every derivative.

- ☐ Need for additional factual development, legal research, organizational research, records, or expert consultation.
- ☐ Whether another available form of protection or immigration pathway requires separate consideration.

Filing and Interview Review

- ☐ Determine whether the record is sufficiently developed to proceed.
- ☐ Tailor the application, declaration, evidence, and legal submission to the issues actually presented.
- ☐ Preserve copies of every filing and document what was corrected, amended, or supplemented.
- ☐ Review the complete filing with the applicant in the applicant's preferred language.
- ☐ Prepare the principal applicant and relevant derivatives separately for questions arising from their own histories.
- ☐ Confirm that testimony has not been scripted and that the applicant understands the importance of answering from personal knowledge.
- ☐ Conduct a final comparison of the application, declaration, derivatives' records, prior filings, documents, witnesses, chronology, geography, country conditions, and issue list.
- ☐ Return to the record when new information emerges through testimony, document review, an RFE, a NOID, or another stage of adjudication.