



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

**Non-Precedent Decision of the
Administrative Appeals Office**

In Re: 11911495

Date: JUNE 10, 2021

Appeal of Nebraska Service Center Decision

Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker (Advanced Degree, Exceptional Ability, National Interest Waiver)

The Petitioner, a data science researcher, seeks second preference immigrant classification as a member of the professions holding an advanced degree, as well as a national interest waiver of the job offer requirement attached to this EB-2 classification. *See* Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act) section 203(b)(2), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(2).

The Director of the Nebraska Service Center denied the petition, concluding that the Petitioner had not established that a waiver of the required job offer, and thus of the labor certification, would be in the national interest.

On appeal, the Petitioner submits additional documentation and a brief asserting that he is eligible for a national interest waiver under the *Dhanasar* framework.

In these proceedings, it is the petitioner's burden to establish eligibility for the immigration benefit sought. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361. Upon *de novo* review, we will sustain the appeal.

I. LAW

To establish eligibility for a national interest waiver, a petitioner must first demonstrate qualification for the underlying EB-2 visa classification, as either an advanced degree professional or an individual of exceptional ability in the sciences, arts, or business. Because this classification requires that the individual's services be sought by a U.S. employer, a separate showing is required to establish that a waiver of the job offer requirement is in the national interest.

Section 203(b) of the Act sets out this sequential framework:

- (2) Aliens who are members of the professions holding advanced degrees or aliens of exceptional ability. –
 - (A) In general. – Visas shall be made available . . . to qualified immigrants who are members of the professions holding advanced degrees or their equivalent or

who because of their exceptional ability in the sciences, arts, or business, will substantially benefit prospectively the national economy, cultural or educational interests, or welfare of the United States, and whose services in the sciences, arts, professions, or business are sought by an employer in the United States.

(B) Waiver of job offer –

(i) National interest waiver. . . . [T]he Attorney General may, when the Attorney General deems it to be in the national interest, waive the requirements of subparagraph (A) that an alien’s services in the sciences, arts, professions, or business be sought by an employer in the United States.

While neither the statute nor the pertinent regulations define the term “national interest,” we set forth a framework for adjudicating national interest waiver petitions in the precedent decision *Matter of Dhanasar*, 26 I&N Dec. 884 (AAO 2016).¹ *Dhanasar* states that after a petitioner has established eligibility for EB-2 classification, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) may, as matter of discretion², grant a national interest waiver if the petitioner demonstrates: (1) that the foreign national’s proposed endeavor has both substantial merit and national importance; (2) that the foreign national is well positioned to advance the proposed endeavor; and (3) that, on balance, it would be beneficial to the United States to waive the requirements of a job offer and thus of a labor certification.

The first prong, substantial merit and national importance, focuses on the specific endeavor that the foreign national proposes to undertake. The endeavor’s merit may be demonstrated in a range of areas such as business, entrepreneurialism, science, technology, culture, health, or education. In determining whether the proposed endeavor has national importance, we consider its potential prospective impact.

The second prong shifts the focus from the proposed endeavor to the foreign national. To determine whether he or she is well positioned to advance the proposed endeavor, we consider factors including, but not limited to: the individual’s education, skills, knowledge and record of success in related or similar efforts; a model or plan for future activities; any progress towards achieving the proposed endeavor; and the interest of potential customers, users, investors, or other relevant entities or individuals.

The third prong requires the petitioner to demonstrate that, on balance, it would be beneficial to the United States to waive the requirements of a job offer and thus of a labor certification. In performing this analysis, USCIS may evaluate factors such as: whether, in light of the nature of the foreign national’s qualifications or the proposed endeavor, it would be impractical either for the foreign national to secure a job offer or for the petitioner to obtain a labor certification; whether, even assuming that other qualified U.S. workers are available, the United States would still benefit from the foreign national’s contributions; and whether the national interest in the foreign national’s contributions is

¹ In announcing this new framework, we vacated our prior precedent decision, *Matter of New York State Department of Transportation*, 22 I&N Dec. 215 (Act. Assoc. Comm’r 1998) (*NYS DOT*).

² See also *Poursina v. USCIS*, No. 17-16579, 2019 WL 4051593 (Aug. 28, 2019) (finding USCIS’ decision to grant or deny a national interest waiver to be discretionary in nature).

sufficiently urgent to warrant forgoing the labor certification process. In each case, the factor(s) considered must, taken together, indicate that on balance, it would be beneficial to the United States to waive the requirements of a job offer and thus of a labor certification.³

II. ANALYSIS

The record indicates that the Petitioner qualifies as a member of the professions holding an advanced degree.⁴ The sole issue to be determined is whether the Petitioner has established that a waiver of the requirement of a job offer, and thus a labor certification, would be in the national interest.

At the time of filing, the Petitioner was working as a “postdoctoral fellow and data science scholar” in the Department of [redacted] at [redacted] University.⁵ The record indicates that his duties involved “conducting research in the areas of ambitious data science, [redacted] [redacted] [redacted] and [redacted]” His responsibilities also included “helping launch the [redacted] [redacted] at [redacted] University.” In response to the Director’s request for evidence (RFE), the Petitioner submitted a January 2020 letter from [redacted] Professor and Head of the Department of [redacted] at [redacted] University, discussing the Petitioner’s “employment as an Assistant Professor of [redacted] at [redacted] University.” [redacted] stated: “In this faculty position, [the Petitioner] will be responsible for conducting advanced research in [redacted] [redacted] methods and applications” For the reasons discussed below, we conclude the Petitioner has established eligibility for a national interest waiver under the analytical framework set forth in *Dhanasar*.

A. Substantial Merit and National Importance of the Proposed Endeavor

The Petitioner indicated that he intends to continue his “work in data science, focusing on algorithms for [redacted] as well as computing environments for [redacted] [redacted]” In response to the Director’s RFE, the Petitioner asserted that his proposed research is aimed at utilizing [redacted] to address “complex problems in [redacted]” He explained that that his undertaking includes “enhancing experiment management [redacted] and enabling easier [redacted] access for data science research.” The Petitioner further stated that his proposed research on [redacted] algorithms involves analyzing [redacted] and investigating “the generalization error of [redacted]” Additionally, he noted that he planned to engage in research to improve the speed of magnetic resonance imaging through utilization of [redacted] [redacted] sensing systems.

In his decision denying the petition, the Director determined that the Petitioner had not demonstrated the national importance of his proposed endeavor. The Director stated that the Petitioner had not shown that the potential prospective impact of his proposed endeavor stands to have “national or even global implications within the field.”

³ See *Dhanasar*, 26 I&N Dec. at 888-91, for elaboration on these three prongs.

⁴ The Petitioner received a Ph.D. in Civil and Environmental Engineering from [redacted] University in 2016.

⁵ As the Petitioner is applying for a waiver of the job offer requirement, it is not necessary for him to have a job offer from a specific employer. However, we consider information about this position to illustrate the capacity in which he intends to work in order to determine whether his proposed endeavor meets the requirements of the *Dhanasar* framework.

To satisfy the national importance requirement, the Petitioner must demonstrate the “potential prospective impact” of his work. As evidence that the benefit of his proposed research has broader implications in the field, the Petitioner provided letters of support discussing how his undertaking stands to improve methods for extracting and processing information from both [redacted] [redacted] data sets. For instance, [redacted], Adjunct Professor of [redacted] at [redacted] University, explained that the Beneficiary’s proposed research offers new methodologies for [redacted] transfer of big datasets, and acquisition of [redacted] via proper [redacted] reasoning on [redacted] datasets.” The Petitioner also submitted articles about the widespread scientific and economic benefits associated with advancements in [redacted] computing. Furthermore, the Petitioner has submitted documentation indicating that the benefit of his proposed research has broader implications for the field, as the results are disseminated to others in the field through scientific journals and conferences. As the Petitioner has demonstrated both the substantial merit and national importance of his proposed research, we conclude that he meets the first prong of the *Dhanasar* framework.

B. Well Positioned to Advance the Proposed Endeavor

The second prong shifts the focus from the proposed endeavor to the Petitioner. The record includes his curriculum vitae, academic records, published and presented work, peer review activity, and documentation of numerous articles that cited to his research findings. In addition, the Petitioner offered reference letters describing his expertise in data science and his past record of success in that field. Several expert references identify specific examples of how the Petitioner’s [redacted] [redacted] research has affected his field. As corroborating documentation regarding the significance of his work, the Petitioner provided citation evidence showing that his published work has been frequently cited by independent researchers, and that the rate at which his work has been cited is high relative to others in the field. His experience and expertise as a data scientist, published articles, citation evidence, record of success contributing to various research projects, and progress in his field position him well to advance his proposed endeavor. Accordingly, the record supports the Director’s determination that the Petitioner satisfies the second prong of the *Dhanasar* framework.

C. Balancing Factors to Determine Waiver’s Benefit to the United States

As explained above, the third prong requires the petitioner to demonstrate that, on balance, it would be beneficial to the United States to waive the requirements of a job offer and thus of a labor certification. As a data scientist, the Petitioner possesses considerable experience and expertise in research relating to [redacted], [redacted] and [redacted]s. The record also demonstrates the widespread benefits associated with research progress in [redacted] [redacted] and [redacted] computing. In addition, the Petitioner has documented his past successes in the data science field and publication of influential research findings. Based on the Petitioner’s track record of successful research and the significance of his proposed work to advance U.S. scientific interests, we conclude that he offers contributions of such value that, on balance, they would benefit the United States even assuming that other qualified U.S. workers are available.

III. CONCLUSION

The Petitioner has met the requisite three prongs set forth in the *Dhanasar* analytical framework. We conclude that he has established he is eligible for and otherwise merits a national interest waiver as a matter of discretion.

ORDER: The appeal is sustained.