



# Homeland Security

## IT Program Assessment

### United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Transformation

Latest update: February 22, 2011

#### Review Assessment

The current DHS Chief Information Officer first conducted a comprehensive program review of the USCIS- Transformation Program on November 5, 2009. As part of the mitigation strategy from the program review, DHS OCIO conducted an in-depth technical review in spring 2010 to ensure adequacy of the proposed solution architecture. The program was again evaluated on July 8, 2010 during the IT Portfolio Review Initiative. On November 29, 2010 an Acquisition Review Team reviewed the status of the USCIS Transformation program. In addition to these reviews, the DHS CIO attends the CIS Transformation Program Management Reviews (PMRs), which occur monthly. The latest PMR was held on February 4, 2011.

USCIS Transformation is a major business and IT transformation initiative that involves fundamental reengineering of USCIS business processes and supporting IT capabilities, moving from the current stove-piped business processes and out-moded legacy technologies to modernized and integrated business processes and supporting IT capabilities, built around a person-centric data construct to better manage the lifecycle of non-US Citizens and their travel and interactions with the United States government. As USCIS Transformation rolls out new capabilities, legacy systems and infrastructure will be retired. The USCIS Transformation program is early in its life cycle. The program was decelerated in June 2009 and restructured during 2010 to enable incremental validation of the program requirements, development, and testing. Release A is scheduled to begin production deployment during calendar year 2011.

#### Accomplishments

While significant execution risks remain (see below) in delivery of Release A, there has been significant progress made in the Transformation program. Highlights of this progress include:

- **Program Leadership:** With the addition of some key executives, there is significant improvement in the overall running and coordination of program activities. The program is much more mature in its planning activities, execution, issue and risk management, and reporting. It is also evident that the program leadership has improved its vendor management capabilities, ensuring both better communications with the vendor, but also ensuring better oversight and accountability for vendor performance.
- **Team Dynamic:** The USCIS Office of Transformation Coordination (OTC), Office of Information Technology (OIT), and Solutions Architect (SA) teams are working together well on a day-to-day basis. Communication has been streamlined and occurs effectively at all levels. Due to strengthening of the teams, the government is no longer dependent on contractor PM support.
- **Transparency:** The program team has made a strong and deliberate effort to increase program transparency with all stakeholders. The DHS CIO attends regular PMRs and is briefed on status and issues outside of these sessions as well. The team has actively sought help and built a support network outside the agency.
- **Stakeholder Involvement and Change Management:** The program team has conducted 162 Transformation information sessions across the country, with over 1,500 employees. They have solicited feedback from USCIS customers, immigration advocates, employees and other federal agencies to inform and shape the transformation approach, and have worked with Partner agencies to define information sharing strategies. Legacy system owners have been involved in



Transformation. USCIS senior leadership has been involved in business process improvement reviews and reviews of the prototype.

- **Business Process Reengineering:** The program team has completed business process reengineering for the end-to-end immigration benefit business process from the intake of the benefit application through the production of the benefit document, with the involvement of senior leadership, and has documented over 50 improvements to existing business processes.
- **Requirements Management:** The team has completed business requirements, business rules and workflow processes for nonimmigrant benefit types in support of Release A.
- **Prototypes:** The team has completed a number of prototypes, notably the clickable user interface (UI) prototype and the solution prototype. The clickable UI prototype helped give stakeholders a concrete feel for the planned Release A functionality, and helped establish the user flow for the system. The solution prototype tested and demonstrated the integration of the architectural components of the solution. The solution prototype did uncover some performance issues. The issues are being currently being investigated and mitigation approaches being developed. Even with performance issues, these prototypes have shown the architecture of the solution is sound. It is also a real positive development that such issues are being uncovered now, rather than near the end of the development and testing cycle.
- **Management of Critical Path Elements:** A number of the items that have been on the schedule as critical path elements are being effectively managed to ensure resolution prior to them affecting the Release A schedule. Such items include the Privacy Impact Assessment, review and approval of forms changes, establishment of the production environments at the DHS enterprise data centers, and definition and development of interfaces to legacy systems (both internal and external to DHS).
- **Modular Development:** Beyond Release A, the team is working on a plan that will drive to 6-month release schedules for subsequent releases, as called for in the OMB "25 Point Implementation Plan to Reform Information Technology Management".

## Current Risks

Even with the accomplishments, there is still significant schedule risk regarding the delivery of Release A into production. The team has a schedule and is driving for Release A production deployment to begin late this calendar year (2011). With the requirements now finalized for Release A, and leveraging the findings of the prototypes, the team is in the design phase for Release A. Other than some small amount of development experience with the prototypes, the team's metrics regarding development (to include coding or configuration productivity rates, defect rates, and testing productivity) are based on like program metrics, not on the USCIS Transformation program itself (these rates are unknowable until Release A development is underway in earnest). The DHS CIO is recommending the team identify a core set of functionality in which the design can be completed expeditiously and moved then into development. The learning achieved through moving into this segment of the life-cycle is worth the trade-off of possible rework caused by moving into development on part of Release A without having completed design on all elements of the system. Even with this mitigation, the DHS CIO does rate the schedule risk for delivery of Release A as high.

While the technical aspects of Release A are being managed more effectively, the other major risk is acceptance of the Release A by USCIS users. The team has done a good job of outreach and involvement of users in the requirements process and through the development of the clickable UI prototype. The change management practices being employed are sound to include an incremental roll-out strategy to get user feedback with a small set of users (one Service Center) prior to enterprise



deployment. But implementation of Transformation is a fundamental business process change and user acceptance of such a change must always be viewed as a significant risk. The DHS CIO is not recommending any additional actions or change to the approach, but there is concern that the acceptance issues may impact the implementation schedule.

**Score: 2**