



IT Program Assessment

USCIS- Computer Linked Application Information Management System 4 (CLAIMS 4) (2010)

Review Assessment

The DHS Chief Information Officer (CIO) conducted a comprehensive program review of the USCIS Computer Linked Application Information Management System 4 (CLAIMS 4) Program on November 4, 2009. CLAIMS 4 is the legacy USCIS case management IT system supporting adjudication of all applications for naturalized citizenship by non-U.S. citizens. The CLAIMS 4 architecture and workflow is based on a forms-based construct built upon the forms USCIS uses to process and adjudicate naturalization requests. CLAIMS 4 is a fee-funded investment in the O&M stage of its life cycle, funded by fees paid by applicants for naturalized citizenship.

CLAIMS 4 is a client-server application with a first production release in 1998 and full operation capability in 2000. CLAIMS 4 is based on a 2 tier client server architecture using Visual Basic (IDE no longer supported), with thick clients and 1800 workstations, developed in an aged development environment, and operates on a transactional (non-relational) data base. CLAIMS 4 architecture and workflow is transaction-based versus person-centric, and is not scalable to support comprehensive Immigration Reform. Documentation is deficient, specifically with respect to the conceptual and logical data models, business rules, and similar aspects of CLAIMS 4. CLAIMS 4 is intended to be replaced by IT capabilities to be provided by the USCIS Transformation Program.

Assessment findings include the following:

- CLAIMS 4 must maintain the capability to support Naturalization application processing until replacement capabilities are fielded by USCIS Transformation, which was planned to be one of the first capabilities provided by USCIS Transformation. However, shortly before the CLAIMS 4 Program Review, USCIS Transformation had rebaselined its program, with Naturalization now becoming one of the later capabilities to be provided. USCIS CLAIMS 4 management was assessing the impact of the resulting CLAIMS life extension through 2014 at the time of the review.
- Close coordination between CLAIMS 4 and USCIS Transformation, and between CLAIMS 4 and other related programs (Lockbox, USCIS Enterprise Service Bus), is critical to ensure effective transition planning and seamless support of the processing of Naturalization applications.

Mitigation Strategy

Mitigation activities for the issues identified above include three action items, The CLAIMS 4 Program manager has submitted acceptable responses to all three action items.

- The CLAIMS 4 Program Manager (PM) was tasked by the DHS CIO with developing a plan for CLAIMS 4 modernization and life extension through 2014, to include cost, given the revised USCIS Transformation program baseline. USCIS CLAIMS 4 management has submitted that plan to the DHS OCIO for review.
- The DHS CIO directed the CLAIMS 4 PM to return and brief the DHS CIO on any contractor proposals for modernizing CLAIMS 4 (e.g., transitioning to .NET) prior to any implementation decision by USCIS. The CLAIMS 4 PM has provided the requested information to the DHS CIO.
- The DHS CIO tasked the USCIS Acting CIO and the CLAIMS 4 PM to provide the DHS CIO with a determination of how long the CLAIMS 4 system can tolerate "down time" without causing major operational impact to the business.

The DHS CIO will continue to monitor the coordination between legacy systems such as CLAIMS 4 and the emerging USCIS Transformation program to ensure that the transition of capabilities from legacy capabilities to Transformation capabilities is effectively planned and managed.

Score: 3