

IT Program Assessment

USCIS – Transformation

Review

The DHS CIO conducted a comprehensive program review of the USCIS Transformation program during September 2011. Program observations include the following:

The USCIS Transformation program continues towards the goal of providing person-centric, account-based, biometrically supported immigration and naturalization services. The USCIS Transformation Program seeks to provide a higher level of service to all applicants. It will present a person's data and immigration status history within a single view; ensure that security checks are completed before an applicant is processed for any immigration benefits; and share relevant information with partner agencies. Based upon DHS CIO recommendations, the USCIS Transformation program was decelerated in June 2009 and restructured in 2010 to enable incremental validation of program requirements, development, and testing. During the last year, the following program actions were accomplished to correct previous issues:

- The contractor replaced their key personnel, beginning with their Program Executive, in December 2010. All of their key staffing positions were transitioned by March 2011.
- The contractor completed a bottoms up cost and schedule estimate in March for delivering the core foundational architecture components to support delivery of the I-539 form , Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status benefit type (~40+% of the architecture will be delivered in Dec 2011).
- The Program has developed an integrated means of monitoring the requirements, design, development, and test efforts. The Government's due diligence has led to increased transparency and has dramatically reduced lead times for addressing business and technical issues.

The following risks have been identified:

- If the scope of the development effort is not completed within the Contract Period of Performance, then the corresponding functionality will not be completed for the estimated contract cost.
- If the deployed Release A1 reduced scope and functionality is not favorably accepted and approved by USCIS employees and immigration services customers, then the Release will not be successful.
- Issues were encountered during testing that has introduced delays in the schedule. As a result of found anomalies the program schedule and cost are impacted.

Mitigation Strategy

In order to mitigate the risk to development scope, the program has increased government involvement in the development process to reduce response time to questions or concerns that arise. The program is not allowing any deviations from the agreed upon scope. The program is dedicating a full-time resource to plan a total program life cycle acquisition strategy. The Transformation Program office is engaging with the DHS Privacy Office and OMB early and often to ensure these offices are fully aware of the nature and reason for change. Customers are being provided with awareness program updates to ensure they are familiar with the new forms and interface designs. To mitigate any reduced functionality concerns, the program is holding outreach engagement sessions with all stakeholders and informing other agencies of the "Transformed" or revised solution architecture and capabilities. The program is striving to accurately set expectations for features/functions to be delivered in Release A1 and to ensure that all transitional processes are correct and fully vetted prior to the start of training sessions

Assessment:

Release A1 is scheduled to complete its development phase in December 2011, upon completion; production deployment will begin. While some execution risks remain in delivery of Release A1, the program has made significant progress, including improvements in program leadership, team dynamics, stakeholder involvement, and management of critical path elements. Transformation has completed several early prototypes, which have proven invaluable for both the System Architect and the government in understanding the solution from a business and technical perspective. Based on the DHS CIO's FY 2010 recommendation and the OMB "25-point plan", the program now uses a modular construction approach. During recent months the team has demonstrated significant progress in their ability to meet scheduled milestones. A remaining major risk is user acceptance. The team has involved users in the requirements process and through the development of the clickable user interface prototype, which gave users the opportunity to provide feedback prior to enterprise deployment. On the other hand, a risk remains that user acceptance issues may impact Release A1 implementation and the schedule for subsequent releases. Improvement in the USCIS management and execution of the transformation are acknowledged, but continuing risks indicate a need for continuing vigilance. This is especially important given the delays that have been introduced to the testing schedule because of anomalies found. The CIO assesses the USCIS Transformation program at Level 2—Moderately High Risk.

Score: 2