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IT Program Assessment U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) – Transformation Program

The DHS CIO conducted a review of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) – Transformation Program in March 2012.

Description / Background:

The USCIS Transformation Program seeks to migrate to a modern digital processing capability, while enhancing National Security, and improving efficiencies and effectiveness. This modernization will be achieved by establishing a person-centric, account-based, biometrically supported process that will provide a higher level of service to all applicants, present data regarding a person's immigration status history within a single view, ensure security checks are completed before an applicant is processed for any immigration benefit, and share relevant information with partner agencies.

In November 2011, the USCIS Transformation program completed the development phase of Release A1. The program is currently in pre-deployment testing phase. The program has completed several early prototypes, which have proven invaluable for both the System Architect and the Government. The program has demonstrated its ability to begin to transition from the waterfall methodology to an adopted agile methodology. The team has involved users in all phases (including testing), which has given users the opportunity and ability to provide feedback prior to enterprise deployment phase.

Issues and Risks:

- The program continues to experience schedule delays stemming from the completion of Release A1.
- The program continues to experience cost overruns. Testing delays have resulted in a revised cost estimate of \$71M to complete Release A1/A2. A net increase of \$29M above the original Releases A1 and A2 cost estimate of \$42M.

Mitigation Strategy:

The program seeks approval from the Investment Review Board (IRB) to commit additional funding to complete Releases A1 and A2. The program received approval to commit \$20.2M to continue work on Releases A1 and A2. The program must provide a programmatic update to the IRB in order to receive approval to commit the additional \$8.8M.

The program has increased programmatic governmental oversight and involvement in the management in order to reduce response time to questions or concerns that arise.



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The program is not allowing any deviations from the agreed upon scope. The Program Office has engaged the DHS Privacy Office and OMB early and often to ensure these offices are fully aware the program's status.

Stakeholders are involved in all phases, including testing, to help ensure acceptance. Customers are provided with awareness program updates to help familiarize them with the new forms and interface design. To mitigate any concerns of reduced functionality, the program is holding outreach engagement sessions with all stakeholders and informing other agencies of the revised solution architecture and capabilities. The program is striving to accurately set expectations for the capabilities and 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.

As a result of the IRB, the following mitigation strategies were recommended:

- Focus on completing the testing and delivery of Release A1 before committing to a full A2 development.
- Establish an ESC to provide governance oversight.
- Implement a productivity analysis.

Assessment:

The program's schedule slipped approximately 14 weeks due to issues discovered during System Acceptance and User Acceptance Testing. As a result of testing delays, the program experienced a net program increase of \$29M above the original cost estimate for Releases A1 and A2. Implementation of the transformation program has been delayed due to changes in deployment strategy and insufficiently defined requirements. Per the Investment Review Board's recommendation, the program has established an Executive Steering Committee (ESC) made up of key DHS and USCIS leadership to review and make decisions on issues impacting the cost, schedule and performance of the program.

The Office of Inspector General recommended to "ensure that process documentation provides sufficient detail; develop and implement a governance structure to enable streamlined decision making; and ensure that staff with the necessary skills are in place." In February 2012, the program briefed the DHS Investment Review Board and several mitigation strategies were recommended.

Although progress has been made, challenges still remain. This program remains under the watchful leadership of both the USCIS and DHS CIO. The CIO assesses the USCIS Transformation Program as a **Moderately High Risk** investment.

Score: 2