

Contractor’s Market Research and Analysis for the Disability Case Processing System

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Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To evaluate the market research and analysis a contractor conducted for the Social Security Administration’s (SSA) Disability Case Processing System (DCPS).

Background

SSA partners with State disability determination services (DDS) to evaluate disability claims and make disability determinations. The DDSs use various customized systems to process disability cases.

SSA is developing DCPS to provide DDSs a common system to simplify system support and maintenance, improve the speed and quality of the disability process, and reduce the overall growth rate of infrastructure costs.

SSA decided to suspend development of DCPS in May 2015 and, over the last 2 years, has been developing a new custom-built solution, DCPS2.

In April 2017, SSA hired a contractor to conduct market research and analyze options that could fulfill the Agency’s requirements. The contractor evaluated three alternatives: SSA’s custom-built DCPS2; a commercial off-the-shelf case management system; and a modernized version of the vendor-owned existing systems used by the majority of DDSs. The contractor delivered its final report to SSA on July 31, 2017.

Results

The contractor reported, “The modernized system is needed by SSA Business in January 2018” and determined that DCPS2 was the only alternative that could meet that requirement. SSA has made significant investments in DCPS2 since 2015 and, at the time of the contractor’s analysis, had made progress toward delivering Release 1 by January 2018. Conversely, the other two options the contractor considered would have required acquisition by the Agency and would not have been able to deliver the functionality by the Agency-determined “Need By” date.

According to the contractor, the analysis was intended to “. . . identify issues and risks that might affect the agency’s final decision.” SSA’s leadership informed us that, based on the contractor’s results, the Agency continued developing DCPS2.

Conclusion

Because SSA had not identified all the user stories associated with the functionality DDSs need to fully process all their workloads or the level of effort required to develop and deliver that functionality, we do not know when the Agency will deliver full functionality through DCPS2. To complete development, SSA will need to continue investing in DCPS2 beyond January 2018. Further, until it implements the new system, the Agency cannot retire its existing systems.

While we acknowledge the Agency’s efforts in obtaining this analysis, a number of factors—including Federal procurement requirements, the date by which SSA told the contractor it needed a new solution, and the short timeframe the Agency gave the contractor to conduct its analysis—limited the contractor’s analysis.

As Chairman Johnson requested, we plan to continue monitoring the DCPS project and issue periodic reports on SSA’s DCPS-related efforts.