

**Management Alert —  
CBP Needs to Address  
Serious Performance  
Issues on the Accenture  
Hiring Contract**





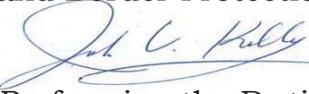
## OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Department of Homeland Security

Washington, DC 20528 / [www.oig.dhs.gov](http://www.oig.dhs.gov)

December 6, 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Kevin K. McAleenan  
Commissioner  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection

FROM: John V. Kelly   
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the  
Inspector General

SUBJECT: *Management Alert – CBP Needs to Address Serious  
Performance Issues on the Accenture Hiring Contract*

For your action is our final management alert, *CBP Needs to Address Serious Performance Issues on the Accenture Hiring Contract*, the purpose of which is to notify you of issues that require immediate attention. Specifically, we are recommending that U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) assess Accenture Federal Services' (Accenture) performance under its contract with CBP. Issuance of this management alert is consistent with our duties under the *Inspector General Act of 1978*, as amended, to conduct audits and recommend policies to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in Department of Homeland Security programs and operations.

We have incorporated the formal comments provided by your office on the draft management alert and appended them verbatim. Your office concurred with the four recommendations we made to improve performance on the Accenture hiring contract. CBP's corrective actions will be critical to ensuring the contract structure going forward is in the best interest of the Government in terms of efficiency and effectiveness.

Based on the information provided in your response to the draft alert, we consider the recommendations open and resolved. Once your office has fully implemented the recommendations, please submit a formal closeout letter to us within 30 days so that we may close the recommendations. The memorandum should be accompanied by evidence of completion of agreed-upon corrective actions. Please send your response or closure request to [OIGAuditsFollowup@oig.dhs.gov](mailto:OIGAuditsFollowup@oig.dhs.gov).

Consistent with our responsibility under the *Inspector General Act*, we will provide copies of our alert to congressional committees with oversight and appropriation responsibility over the Department of Homeland Security. We will post the alert on our website for public dissemination. We plan to discontinue our ongoing audit of the CBP Accenture contract and will monitor DHS' and CBP's progress on this matter through our recommendation follow-up activities.



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Please call me with any questions, or your staff may contact Sondra McCauley, Assistant Inspector General for Audits, at (202) 981-6000.



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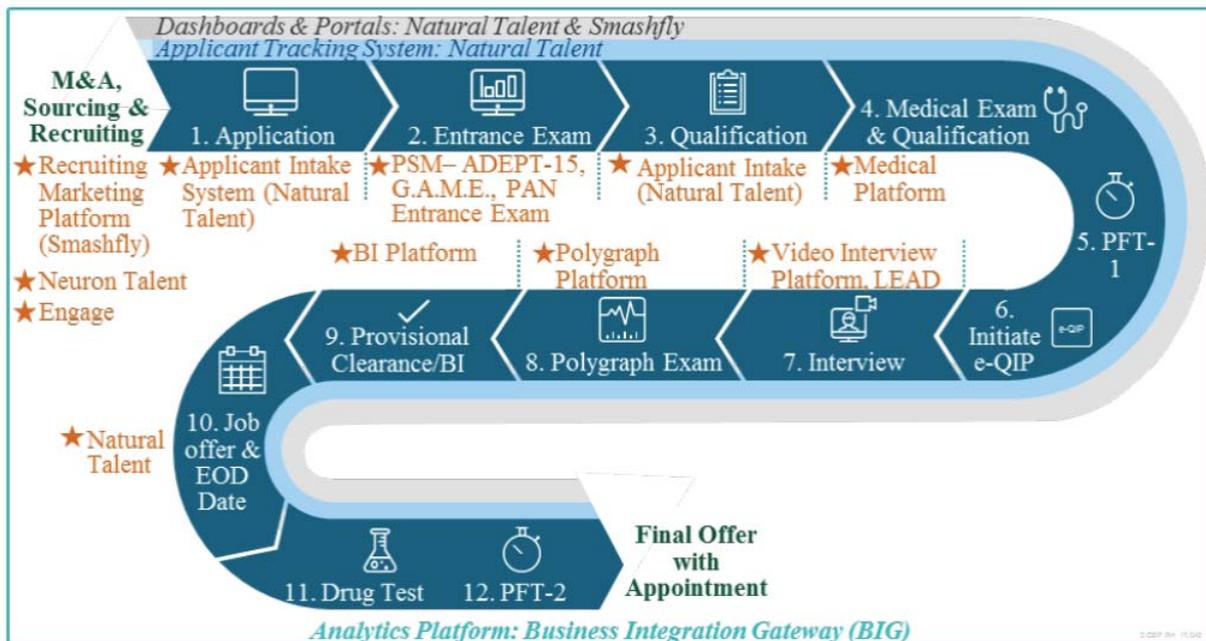
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## Background

In November 2017, CBP awarded Accenture a \$297 million contract to help meet the demands of recruiting and hiring agents and officers under the President’s January 25, 2017 Executive Order, *Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements*. The contract includes 1 base year, with 4 option years, to hire 7,500 fully qualified applicants, including Customs and Border Protection Officers, Border Patrol Agents, and Air and Marine Interdiction Agents. According to its Performance Work Statement (PWS), Accenture agreed to recruit enough highly qualified frontline candidates to satisfy the Executive Order and complete CBP’s 12-step hiring process, as shown in figure 1, in its entirety by:

- implementing a leading edge process and tools to improve candidate quality, reduce time to hire, and maintain CBP’s direct hire authority;
- implementing a core recruiting and hiring technology solution to manage information and actions throughout the hiring process;
- providing a team of experienced Federal human resource personnel and testing, medical, polygraph, and background investigation practitioners to complete all hiring steps; and
- managing a team of subcontractors responsible for delivering a cohesive turnkey recruiting and hiring operation.

**Figure 1: Accenture’s Vision to Complete CBP’s 12-step Hiring Process**



Source: Accenture PWS, August 8, 2017



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The intention was for Accenture to execute its hiring process in parallel with the existing CBP hiring process, but to collaborate with CBP to ensure Accenture complied with applicable Federal mandates. CBP designed the contract to pay Accenture based on its performance and delivery of qualified applicants, as demonstrated by successful completion of all steps of the hiring process. CBP agreed to pay approximately \$40,000 per hire during the base year — 80 percent upon accepted offer and 20 percent once an applicant enters on duty.

In July 2018, we initiated an audit to determine whether CBP awarded and is managing its \$297 million hiring contract with Accenture in a fiscally responsible manner according to Federal, departmental, and component requirements. The audit was in response to multiple OIG Hotline complaints related to the performance and management of the Accenture hiring contract. This alert describes serious performance issues with the Accenture contract that we identified during our review.

### Accenture Has Not Provided the Promised Hiring Process or Results

CBP hired Accenture to recruit and hire qualified candidates. According to the PWS, Accenture claimed it would have the capability and capacity to perform all steps of the hiring process within 90 days of awarding the contract. However, with the contract nearing the end of its base year, Accenture has yet to demonstrate the efficient, innovative, and expertly run hiring process described in its PWS. In addition, before awarding Accenture the contract, CBP did not ensure the proposed systems and processes, such as applicant tracking, complied with all applicable laws and regulations or could be integrated into its hiring process. CBP also did not establish metrics to assess the contractor's performance and hold the contractor accountable. Yet, as of October 1, 2018 — 10 months into the contract — CBP has paid Accenture approximately \$13.6 million for startup costs, security requirements, recruiting, and applicant support. In return, Accenture has processed two accepted job offers.

### Accenture Relied on CBP Resources to Fulfill Contract Obligations

Accenture was supposed to provide a team of technical experts and tools to fulfill contract requirements. Instead, Accenture relied heavily on CBP resources to complete the hiring process. Accenture did not always provide necessary technical experts and experienced vendors, such as human resource personnel and those involved in the background investigation process, to complete CBP's hiring process end-to-end, as it indicated it would in the PWS. Accenture also claimed it could provide an innovative applicant tracking system to manage the hiring process. However, Accenture did not deploy its proposed applicant tracking system and used CBP's hiring system instead.



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Further, Accenture could not track results of its online marketing and recruitment efforts due to Office of Management and Budget restrictions,<sup>1</sup> as well as privacy concerns.

Recognizing Accenture could not fulfill the PWS requirements without significant delays, CBP agreed to modify the contract to accommodate Accenture.<sup>2</sup> CBP provided Accenture an additional 3-month interim period, from March through June 2018, to continue to ramp up operations and build the necessary capacity to fulfill the original contract terms.

Under the modification, during Accenture's period of interim operations, CBP staff carried out a significant portion of the hiring operations, such as application intake and qualification review, ordering of medical and fitness exams, drug testing, and initiation of background investigation forms. During this period, since Accenture could not determine which applicants it recruited, CBP agreed to give credit and temporarily pay Accenture for a percentage of all applicants regardless of whether CBP or Accenture processed the applicants. As of October 1, 2018, CBP had processed 14 applicants on behalf of Accenture. All 14 applicants accepted job offers and 7 of the 14 entered on duty, which translated to payment of approximately \$500,000 to Accenture for work CBP had completed.

CBP also reduced Accenture's scope of work during its full operational phase, which technically began July 1, 2018. For example, CBP decreased the number of hiring steps Accenture had to accomplish and agreed to administer entrance exams, as well as carry out other aspects of the hiring process not deemed inherently governmental functions. Because of this shift in responsibilities, CBP modified the contract to reduce the amount it would pay Accenture per hire. However, we analyzed the contract modification and determined CBP would still be paying Accenture an average of \$40,000 per hire, roughly the same amount as originally agreed upon during the base period. Although supposed to begin July 1, 2018, as of October 2018, Accenture had yet to become fully operational, i.e., perform all steps in the hiring process required by CBP.

### Accenture Has Not Provided the Agreed Upon Technological Innovations

Accenture is struggling to implement the technology and tools promised to improve candidate quality and reduce time to hire. For example, Accenture proposed using its e86 automation tool, software developed to validate electronic security clearance forms and accelerate background investigations.

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<sup>1</sup> The Office of Management and Budget places restrictions on third parties using "web measurement and customization technologies" on behalf of a Federal agency.

<sup>2</sup> In total, CBP has modified the contract four times, changing the scope of work and raising the cost ceiling by about \$8 million.



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However, the software is not in use due to functionality issues, including high error rates and multiple software bugs. As a result, Accenture had to begin reviewing security clearance forms manually, resulting in a backlog of forms requiring review.

### EyeDetect Tool Poses Potential Concerns

Accenture proposed implementing EyeDetect, a retinal scanning tool used to discern deception based on eye and face muscle movement, to pre-screen candidates to help determine their suitability. Ultimately, Accenture plans to use EyeDetect to help decide whether to keep candidates in its hiring stream or return them to CBP's hiring stream, depending on a candidate's likelihood of receiving a job offer.

We have concerns about Accenture's implementation of EyeDetect. Specifically, Accenture piloted EyeDetect at an August 2018 hiring expo without required approval from DHS' Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) Compliance Assurance Program Manager, who has the authority to ensure all activities involving human subjects comply with applicable laws and regulations. In October 2018, S&T provided approval for Accenture to deploy EyeDetect to collect, not validate, data as part of its hiring process, which still requires a privacy assessment and approval by DHS' Privacy Office.

To ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations, CBP must not allow EyeDetect to be deployed until it is properly assessed and approved as required. If Accenture revises how it uses EyeDetect, any subsequent revisions also must be properly vetted. Finally, unless CBP uses EyeDetect in its hiring process in the same manner Accenture does, there is a risk applicants will be held to differing standards or processes, which may constitute a prohibited hiring practice. This could, in turn, subject CBP to increased legal risk and oversight by other Federal agencies and Congress into CBP's hiring practices.

### Conclusion

In its first year, CBP's contract with Accenture has already taken longer to deploy and delivered less capability than promised. Accenture is nowhere near satisfying its 7,500-person hiring goal over the next 5 years. Further, CBP has used significant staffing and resources to help Accenture do the job for which it was contracted. As such, we are concerned that CBP may have paid Accenture for services and tools not provided. Without addressing the issues we have identified, CBP risks wasting millions of taxpayer dollars on a hastily approved contract that is not meeting its proposed performance expectations. CBP must hold the contractor accountable, mitigate risk, and devise a strategy to ensure results without additional costs to the Government.



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### Recommendations

We recommend the Commissioner of CBP:

1. Assess Accenture's contract performance and determine whether Accenture should reimburse DHS for services not provided.
2. Analyze whether the Accenture payment structure is the most cost-effective and in the best interest of the Government, and if not, restructure the contract as appropriate.
3. Consult with the proper entities and obtain any required approvals prior to deploying EyeDetect.
4. Develop and implement performance metrics for the Accenture contract.

### CBP Management's General Comments and OIG Response

CBP management provided written comments on a draft of this alert. We included a copy of CBP's management comments in their entirety in appendix A. We also received technical comments to the draft alert and revised the alert as appropriate.

In its general comments, CBP management expressed concerns that statements in our management alert are inaccurate. We contend that the information presented in this management alert is accurate and fairly presents the results of our review. Following are our responses to CBP's specific assertions.

**CBP Management Comment:** Our draft management alert says, "CBP has paid Accenture approximately \$13.6 million for startup costs, security requirements, recruiting, and applicant support. In return, Accenture has processed two accepted job offers." According to CBP management, this is not accurate. Rather, CBP management indicates that, in return for \$13.6 million, Accenture has created a hiring structure, tailored technology solutions to support and manage the hiring process, stood up an applicant care center, marketed and recruited thousands of new applicants, and conducted many of the hiring steps for several thousand applicants.

**OIG Response:** While we recognize that CBP has worked with Accenture to establish hiring activities, we stand by our statement that such activities have resulted in only two accepted job offers as of October 1, 2018. Additionally, CBP management asserted that Accenture "marketed and recruited thousands of new applicants," but nonetheless noted in official contract documentation that neither CBP nor Accenture can track applicants recruited by Accenture. As such, we question the veracity of CBP management's assertion and reiterate our management alert finding that "Accenture could not track results of its online marketing and recruitment efforts due to Office of Management and



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Budget restrictions, as well as privacy concerns.”

**CBP Management Comment:** According to our management alert, “CBP also significantly reduced Accenture’s scope of work during its full operational phase.” CBP management took issue with our suggestion that this reduction in scope was due to some failure on Accenture’s part. CBP management said they requested and supported the reduction in scope because it offered better overall efficiency in mutual hiring activities (with Accenture). CBP management further said an independent validation of pricing was determined to be fair and, for any reduction in scope, CBP also made equitable adjustments to decrease contracted cost-per hire.

**OIG Response:** We disagree. Our review and analysis of the contract modifications and supporting documentation, including the revised pricing schedule, pre-negotiation memorandum, and hiring process flow, clearly show that CBP reduced the contract scope of work and revised the pricing schedule. Accenture would still receive the same payment per hire, on average.

**CBP Management Comment:** Our management alert states, “Accenture piloted EyeDetect at an August 2018 hiring expo without required approval from DHS’ Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) Compliance Assurance Program Manager.” In fact, CBP obtained necessary approval before conducting the pilot.

**OIG Response:** To the contrary, we have documented evidence that CBP did not receive approval from the S&T Compliance Assurance Program Manager as required. CBP officials initiated contact with S&T and attempted to get approval to deploy EyeDetect at the August 2018 hiring expo; however, approval was never granted. CBP officials provided documentation that EyeDetect was nevertheless deployed.

**CBP Management Comment:** CBP management claimed that the characterization in our management alert of the reasons for some program delays is incomplete and inaccurate. In some cases, management said, the Government has been unable to clear Accenture personnel or provide waivers on the desired schedule. In other cases, the Government requested accommodations and changes to contract scope in the interests of the Government – not because of Accenture’s inability to fulfill the Performance Work Statement scope.

**OIG Response:** We disagree. Based on our review of contract documentation (from pre-award through post-award), including all contract modifications and key information obtained from official correspondence and interviews, CBP has been accommodating Accenture, rather than Accenture accommodating CBP.



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### CBP Management Response to Recommendations and OIG Analysis

CBP concurred with our four recommendations. We consider the four recommendations resolved and open until CBP implements the proposed corrective actions. A summary of CBP's response and our analysis follows.

**CBP Response to Recommendation #1:** Concur. CBP will assess the contract performance and also determine whether the Government paid for any services that were not provided. CBP's assessment will cover which aspects of the contract are effective and which aspects are not progressing as planned. Additionally, CBP plans to develop a course of action for FY 2019, including a decision to continue or modify the contract. The course of action will include plan of action and milestones for FY 2019, and estimated cost and performance impacts. The overall estimated completion date is March 31, 2019.

**OIG Analysis:** We consider these actions responsive to the recommendation, which is resolved and open. We will close this recommendation after we verify CBP has:

- completed its contract assessment analysis, with recommendations and plan of action milestones outlining courses of action addressing contract modification and pricing adjustments as needed;
- updated its program plans and milestone schedules; and
- identified key performance indicators.

**CBP Response to Recommendation #2:** Concur. CBP will assess the current contract payment structure and determine if the payment structure should be adjusted. The estimated completion date is March 31, 2019.

**OIG Analysis:** We consider these actions responsive to the recommendation, which is resolved and open. We will close this recommendation after we verify CBP has assessed the payment structure and determined if pricing adjustments are warranted.

**CBP Response to Recommendation #3:** Concur. CBP will continue to coordinate completion requirements with the appropriate entities prior to deploying EyeDetect. The estimated completion date is March 31, 2019.

**OIG Analysis:** We consider these actions responsive to the recommendation, which is resolved and open. We will close this recommendation after we verify CBP has received the required documented approvals from the following entities:



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- S&T;
- DHS and CBP Privacy offices;
- CBP Office of Professional Responsibility; and
- Other offices, such as the National Center for Credibility Assessment.

CBP deployed EyeDetect at an August 2018 hiring expo without the required approval. Although CBP officials initiated contact with S&T to obtain approval, it was never granted. CBP stated it received approval to deploy EyeDetect at the hiring expo; however, CBP could not provide documentation supporting its statement.

**CBP Response to Recommendation #4:** Concur. CBP has already developed several performance measures for the Accenture contract and tracks them regularly. CBP will continue to assess current performance metrics and determine additional performance metrics, based on program adjustments resulting from an FY 2019 course of action. The estimated completion date is March 31, 2019.

**OIG Analysis:** We consider these actions responsive to the recommendation, which is resolved and open. We will close this recommendation after we verify CBP has:

- established and implemented performance metrics to hold Accenture accountable; and
- developed a milestone schedule for collection and tracking of metrics.

We also note that, during our review, we requested performance metrics and evidence of oversight specific to Accenture performance. However, CBP did not provide any supporting documentation of its oversight and indicated it was still developing performance metrics.



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**Appendix A**  
**CBP's Management Comments to the Draft Alert**

1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20229



**U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection**

November 28, 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR: John V. Kelly  
Senior Official Performing the Duties  
of the Inspector General  
Office of the Inspector General

FROM: Henry A. Moak, Jr.   
Senior Component Accountable Official  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection

SUBJECT: Management Response to OIG Draft Management Alert: "CBP  
Needs to Address Serious Performance Issues on the Accenture  
Hiring Contract," (Project No. 18-103-AUD-CBP)

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) appreciates the Office of Inspector General's (OIG) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

Pursuant to the Presidential Executive Order 13767, *Border Security and Immigration Enforcement Improvements*, dated January 25, 2017, CBP has made strides in improving its recruiting, hiring, and retaining processes. CBP is constantly working to strengthen its hiring capabilities to secure staffing for critical frontline operations and the sophisticated network of personnel who support these operations. For example, CBP has undertaken a comprehensive effort to look across all of its hiring process areas has established precise, data-driven improvements and process changes that resulted in efficiency gains. CBP will continue to review its staffing and hiring practices as part of an ongoing cycle of analysis and refinement.

CBP is also exploring innovative practices regarding incentives and mobility options. These practices should not only enhance recruitment prospects, but also improve workforce attrition rates. While several modifications to CBP's pre-employment process are being considered, CBP is carefully weighing all risks and mitigation measures, ensuring the agency's high standards of integrity are not compromised while further improvements are made to address hiring, recruitment, and retention challenges.

We appreciate the attention and deliberation evident in the draft management alert. However, we remain concerned that many statements are inaccurate. Our technical



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comments provide a more detailed analysis, but I would especially highlight the following:

- The draft alert says that “CBP has paid Accenture approximately \$13.6 million for startup costs, security requirements, recruiting, and applicant support. In return, Accenture has processed two accepted job offers.” This is not accurate. In return for \$13.6 million, Accenture has created a hiring structure, tailored technology solutions to support and manage the hiring process, stood up an applicant care center, marketed and recruited thousands of new applicants, and conducted many of the hiring steps for several thousand applicants.
- The draft alerts says, “CBP also significantly reduced Accenture’s scope of work during its full operational phase.” The alert suggests this reduction in scope was due to some failure on Accenture’s part, but that is not accurate. In fact, the reduction in scope was requested and supported by CBP because it offered better overall efficiency in our mutual hiring activities and an independent validation of the pricing was done, which was determined to be fair. For any reduction in scope, we also made equitable adjustments to decrease contracted cost-per hire.
- The draft alert says, “Accenture piloted EyeDetect at an August 2018 hiring expo without required approval from DHS’ Science and Technology (S&T) Compliance Assurance Program Manager.” In fact, we obtained necessary approval before we conducted the pilot.

The draft alert’s characterization of the reasons for some program delays is also incomplete and inaccurate. In some cases, the government has been unable to clear Accenture personnel or provide waivers on the desired schedule. In other cases, the government has requested accommodations and changes to contract scope in the interests of the government—and not because of an inability to perform the scope of the Performance Work Statement.

We created this contract as an aggressive approach to improve our hiring results. We recognized from the start it had some risk, but we believed the value of the initial investment was warranted to investigate other opportunities for improved results and that any additional obligation of funds would be informed by our experience and results. We have learned that some opportunities are more challenging to leverage than we hoped, but we have also learned that there is great potential to gain benefit from world class industry expertise in recruiting, marketing, data analytics, applicant care, and information technology. We intend to review the future of the contract, keeping in mind these lessons learned.

The draft alert contained four recommendations, with which CBP concurs. In fact, our own review of the future of the contract, consistent with our lessons learned, is entirely consistent with the recommendations offered in the draft alert. Attached find our detailed



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response to the recommendations. Technical comments were provided under separate cover.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft alert. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you again in the future.

Attachment



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Department of Homeland Security

**Attachment - Management Response to Recommendations Contained in OIG Draft Management Alert (18-103-AUD-CBP)**

OIG recommended that the Commissioner of CBP:

**Recommendation 1:** Assess Accenture’s contract performance and determine whether Accenture should reimburse DHS for services not provided.

**Response:** Concur. CBP will assess the contract performance to determine what if any scope changes need to be made by determining which aspects of the contract are effective and which aspects are not progressing as planned. Identify the course of action for FY 2019, to include decision on continuing or modifying the contract. Course of action will include plan of action and milestones for FY 2019, and estimated cost and performance impacts. CBP does not believe there are any areas where the government has paid for services that were not provided but will include a review as a part of the assessment.

**Estimated Completion Date (ECD):** March 31, 2019

| <b>Milestone:</b>  | <b>Status/Date:</b> |
|--|---------------------|
| CBP Enterprise Services (ES), Office of Acquisition (OA)<br>Complete contract Assessment Analysis, with recommendations and plan of action milestones deliverable to document course of action, addressing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contract Modification, if needed</li> <li>• Pricing adjustments, if needed</li> </ul> | March 31, 2019      |
| CBP ES Portfolio Acquisition Executive (PAE)<br>Program updates after assessment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program Plan</li> <li>• Program milestone schedule</li> <li>• Program Communication Plan</li> </ul>   | March 31, 2019      |
| CBP ES, Office of Human Resource Management<br>Program Performance Metrics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identification of key performance indicators</li> </ul>   | March 31, 2019      |



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**Recommendation 2:** Analyze whether the Accenture payment structure is the most cost-effective and in the best interest of the Government, and if not, restructure the contract as appropriate.

**Response:** Concur. CBP will assess the current contract payment structure. Based on contract assessment and course of action, determine if payment structure should be adjusted. (See table under response to Recommendation 1.) **ECD:** March 31, 2019

**Recommendation 3:** Consult with the proper entities and obtain any required approvals prior to deploying EyeDetect.

**Response:** Concur. CBP will continue to coordinate completion of requirements with DHS S&T, CBP/DHS Privacy Office (PRIV), and with the CBP Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR) prior to deploying EyeDetect. **ECD:** March 31, 2019

| <b>Milestone:</b>   | <b>Status/Date:</b>     |
|---|-------------------------|
| Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology (S&T) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of plan of action for EyeDetect</li> <li>• Guidance to CBP Program Management Office</li> <li>• Approval to proceed with EyeDetect Deployment</li> </ul> | Complete (October 2018) |
| CBP/DHS PRIV <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of plan of action for EyeDetect</li> <li>• Guidance to CBP Program Management Office</li> <li>• Identification of criteria to proceed with EyeDetect Deployment</li> </ul>                                     | March 31, 2019          |
| CBP OPR <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of plan of action for EyeDetect</li> <li>• Guidance to CBP Program Management Office</li> <li>• Identification of criteria required to proceed with EyeDetect Deployment</li> </ul>                                 | March 31, 2019          |

**Recommendation 4:** Develop and implement performance metrics for the Accenture contract.

**Response:** Concur. CBP has already developed several performance measures for the Accenture contract and we track them regularly. We will continue to assess those current performance metrics being collected and tracked. Determine additional performance



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metrics will be collected based on program adjustments resulting from overall course of action for FY 2019. Identify key performance indicators to be used to assess contract performance. **ECD:** March 31, 2019

| <b>Milestone:</b>  | <b>Status/Date:</b> |
|--|---------------------|
| Program Performance Metrics:<br>CBP ES-HRM <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identification of key performance indicators</li></ul> CBP ES-PAE <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop milestone schedule for collection and tracking of metrics</li></ul> | March 31, 2019      |



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**Appendix B**  
**Alert Distribution**

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