Audit of the
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's
Contract Management of
Information Technology Services

OIG-24-A-09
July 3, 2024

MEMORANDUM

DATE:	July 3, 2024
TO:	Raymond V. Furstenau Acting Executive Director for Operations
FROM:	Hruta Virkar, CPA */RA/* Assistant Inspector General for Audits & Evaluations
SUBJECT:	AUDIT OF THE U.S. NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION'S CONTRACT MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES (OIG-24-A-09)

Attached is the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) audit report titled: *Audit of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Contract Management of Information Technology Services*.

The report presents the results of the subject audit. Following the March 18, 2024, exit conference, agency staff indicated that they had no formal comments for inclusion in this report.

Please provide information on actions taken or planned on each of the recommendation(s) within 30 days of the date of this memorandum.

We appreciate the cooperation extended to us by members of your staff during the audit. If you have any questions or comments about our report, please contact me at 301.415.1982.

Attachment:
As stated

cc: J. Martin, Acting ADO
     M. Meyer, DADO
     J. Jolicoeur, OEDO

Results in Brief

Why We Did This Review

The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) strives to keep current with proven technologies to provide the agency with a secure and reliable information technology (IT) infrastructure and capabilities that increase productivity and maximize value.

To better the agency's position in providing quality IT services, the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) has adopted an agile approach to procuring, developing, maintaining, and delivering IT services. The OCIO has moved away from a large seat contract with a single vendor for the agency's IT needs, to owning and managing its IT assets and overseeing multiple vendors to deliver IT services.

The audit objective was to determine if the NRC is efficiently and effectively managing IT-related contracts for the agency's information technology services and support.

Audit of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission's Contract Management of Information Technology Services

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What We Found

The NRC could improve its IT services and support through more consistent management with an emphasis on service level agreements (SLAs) and the closeout of IT-related contracts.

Consistent with federal regulations and prudent business practices, contract requirements should be clearly defined, and the appropriate performance standards should be developed so the contractors' performance can be measured. However, the NRC does not consistently use SLAs when awarding IT contracts because the agency has no specific guidance on how or when to use SLAs. As a result, the NRC may be limiting its ability to measure contractor performance and may not receive the services the agency requires or purchases.

The NRC is required to close out contracts in an orderly and timely manner. However, the NRC is not always prompt in contract closeouts and in deobligating excess funds. This occurs because the NRC does not always prioritize contract closeouts and does not have a tracking method for contracts in the closeout process. This has led to a surplus of unliquidated obligations that could be put to better use.

What We Recommend

This report makes two recommendations to improve the NRC's management and closeout of IT contracts.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADM	Office of Administration
AMD	Acquisition Management Division
BPA	Blanket Purchase Agreement
CIO	Chief Information Officer
CO	Contracting Officer
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
FAR	Federal Acquisition Regulation
FITARA	Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GLINDA	GLobal INfrastructure and Development Acquisition
HCM	Human Capital Management
IT	Information Technology
MD	Management Directive
NRC	U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
OCIO	Office of the Chief Information Officer
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
POP	Period of Performance
SLA	Service Level Agreement

I. BACKGROUND

NRC IT Services and Support

Information technology (IT) changes rapidly. The U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) strives to keep current with proven technologies to provide the agency with a secure and reliable IT infrastructure and capabilities that increase productivity and maximize value for the cost. To better the agency's position in providing quality IT services, the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) has adopted an agile approach to procuring, developing, maintaining, and delivering IT services. The OCIO has moved away from a large seat[1] contract with a single vendor for the agency's IT needs, to owning and managing its IT assets and overseeing multiple vendors to deliver IT services. This approach gives the agency more agility and transparency regarding contract cost and value, in alignment with the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act of 2014 (FITARA).[2]

The NRC offers various information technology services and support to its employees. The NRC acquires IT services through the GLobal INfrastructure and Development Acquisition (GLINDA) initiative/contract. GLINDA is a blanket purchase agreement (BPA) with six awardees that commenced in June 2017, with 11 BPA calls[3] for various IT services and support.

Available Services and Support

The NRC provides IT infrastructure services that are not customer-facing but rather enable the delivery and use of end-user services that are directly consumed by users. IT infrastructure services include computer, data center, and network services. As for the end-user services, the NRC provides client computing services, communication and collaboration services, and connectivity services. The end-user services allow the workforce to access business applications, communicate with other employees and customers, and create content using productivity software.

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[1] Seat refers to end-user devices, software, and services currently managed by the Service Fulfillment and Delivery Branch under the IT Services Development and Operations Division in the OCIO.

[2] FITARA puts federal agency Chief Information Officers (CIOs) in control of IT investments by requiring CIOs and Chief Technology Officers to give documented approval of each IT purchase.

[3] The 11 BPA calls are as of August 9, 2021.

The Office of the Chief Information Officer

The OCIO manages and supports agencywide IT infrastructure services to facilitate appropriate and efficient connectivity at the NRC. These services and systems include the following: voice over internet protocol capability; wire/cable infrastructure support; cellular service; internet access services; and, access to local area and wide area networks. Within the OCIO, the IT Services Development and Operations Division provides the services for obtaining and using IT infrastructure and end-user services, including installation and removal, upgrades, helpdesk support, hardware/software maintenance, network access, and operations services.
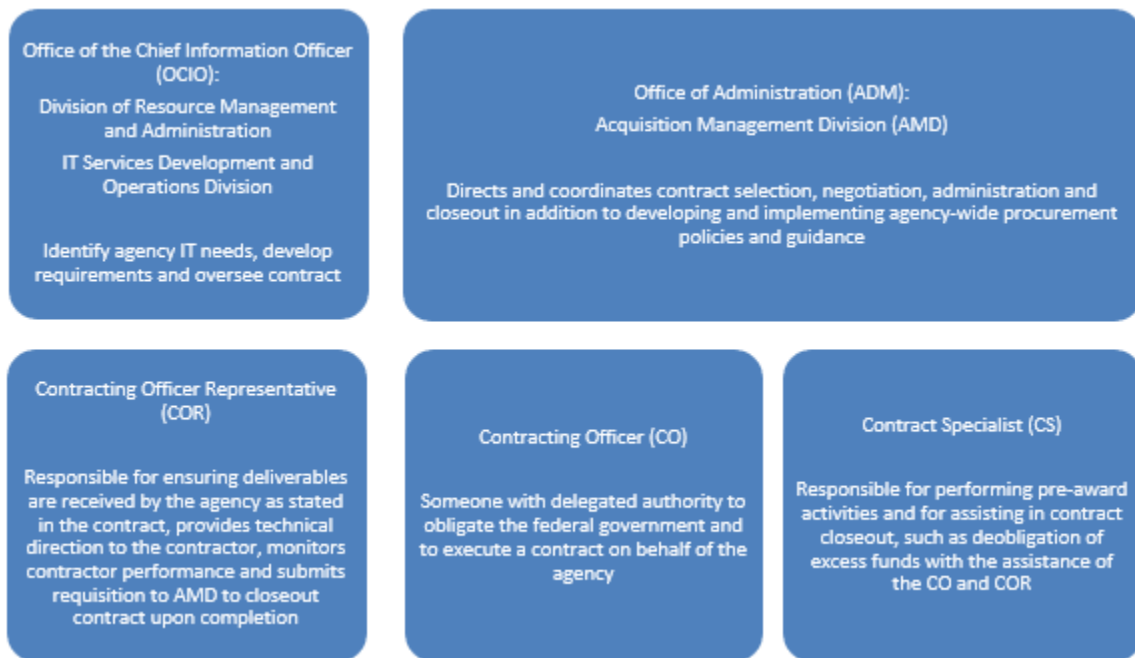
The NRC's Contract Process

Management Directive (MD) 11.1 provides an overview of the NRC procurement program.[4] It also provides procedures and guidance for the NRC's acquisition of supplies and services from commercial firms, nonprofit organizations, universities, and states. This MD sets forth the NRC's policy that the acquisition of supplies and services supporting the agency's mission will be planned, awarded, and administered efficiently and effectively and will be accomplished in accordance with applicable federal statutes and procurement regulations.

Contract administration is the management of the contract from the time of award through closeout to ensure that the contractor's total performance is under the terms of the contract and that the agency's contract objectives are fulfilled. See Figure 1 below for contract administration roles and responsibilities.

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[4] Management Directive (MD) 11.1, *NRC Acquisition of Supplies and Services,* last revised on May 9, 2014.

Figure 1: NRC's Contract Management Roles and Responsibilities

Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO):

Division of Resource Management and Administration

IT Services Development and Operations Division

Identify agency IT needs, develop requirements and oversee contract

Office of Administration (ADM):

Acquisition Management Division (AMD)

Directs and coordinates contract selection, negotiation, administration and closeout in addition to developing and implementing agency-wide procurement policies and guidance

Contracting Officer Representative (COR)

Responsible for ensuring deliverables are received by the agency as stated in the contract, provides technical direction to the contractor, monitors contractor performance and submits requisition to AMD to closeout contract upon completion

Contracting Officer (CO)

Someone with delegated authority to obligate the federal government and to execute a contract on behalf of the agency

Contract Specialist (CS)

Responsible for performing pre-award activities and for assisting in contract closeout, such as deobligation of excess funds with the assistance of the CO and COR

Source: OIG-generated based on processes outlined in MD 11.1

Before an NRC contract is awarded, it goes through acquisition planning, funding considerations, market research, the requisition phase, determination of the type of contract, advertising, the solicitation phase, and the evaluation phase.
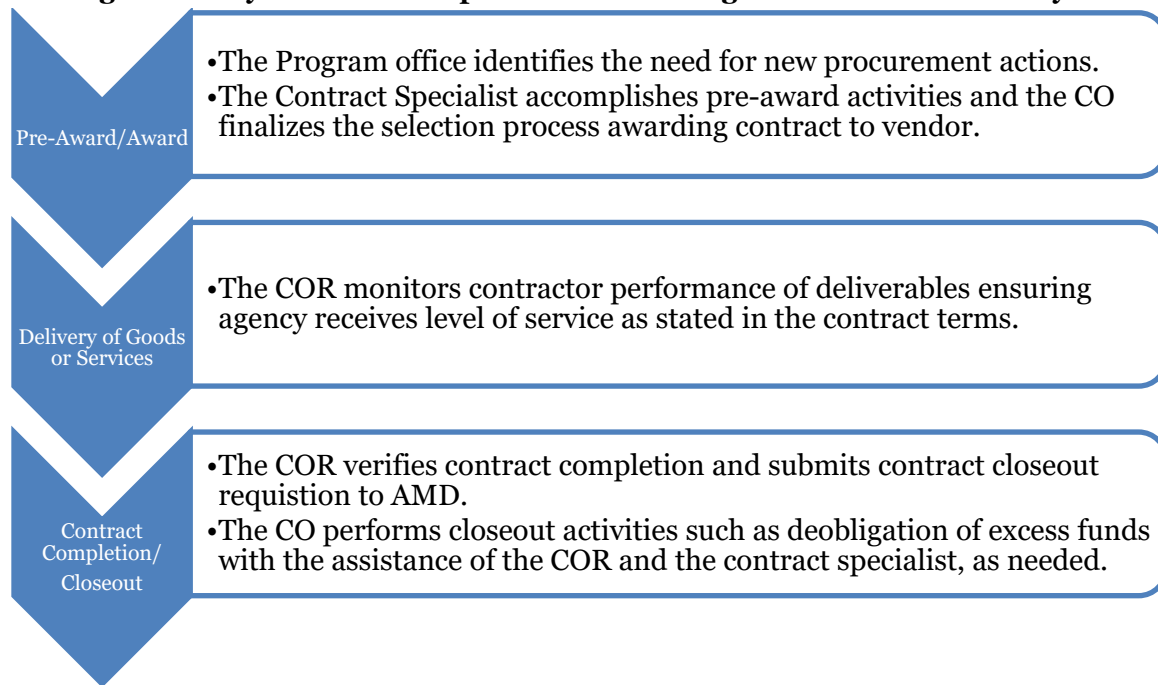
Once the contract is awarded, the contract administration period begins and continues until contract closeout. During contract administration, the Contracting Officer's Representative (COR) is responsible for providing technical direction to the contractor, ensuring that the contractor's total performance is under the terms of the contract, and ensuring that the agency's contract objectives are fulfilled.

A contract is not closed until it has been administratively completed; that is, all objectives and final payment have been completed. The COR is responsible for initiating a request for contract closeout by submitting a requisition to the Office of Administration's (ADM) Acquisition Management Division (AMD) within 90 days of contract expiration. The Contracting Officer[5] (CO) then performs all required actions to administratively close out the contract, including deobligation of unliquidated obligations (excess

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[5] The CO designates and authorizes the COR to perform specific technical or administrative functions.

funds). See Figure 2 for roles and responsibilities throughout the contract lifecyle.

Figure 2: Key Roles and Responsibilities Throughout the Contract Lifecyle

Pre-Award/Award
- The Program office identifies the need for new procurement actions.
- The Contract Specialist accomplishes pre-award activities and the CO finalizes the selection process awarding contract to vendor.

Delivery of Goods or Services
- The COR monitors contractor performance of deliverables ensuring agency receives level of service as stated in the contract terms.

Contract Completion/ Closeout
- The COR verifies contract completion and submits contract closeout requistion to AMD.
- The CO performs closeout activities such as deobligation of excess funds with the assistance of the COR and the contract specialist, as needed.

Source: OIG generated based on processes outlined in MD 11.1

Service Level Agreements

According to the National Institute of Standards and Technology, a service-level agreement (SLA) defines the specific responsibility of the service provider and sets the customer's expectations. SLAs are an integral part of an IT vendor contract. The SLA represents the level of service that is expected from a vendor, describing what metrics will be used to measure services, as well as defining agreed-upon remedies or penalties the contractor will face should a service level not be met. In the event of disputes regarding the level of service, neither party can plead ignorance regarding contract expectations, because both parties will have agreed to and understood the applicable requirements.

II. OBJECTIVE

The audit objective was to determine if the NRC is efficiently and effectively managing IT-related contracts for the agency's information technology services and support.

III. FINDINGS

The NRC could improve its IT services and support through more consistent contract management, with an emphasis on SLAs and the closeout of IT-related contracts.

1. The NRC Does Not Consistently Use SLAs in IT Contracts

Consistent with federal regulations and prudent business practices, contract requirements should be clearly defined, and appropriate performance standards should be developed to measure contractor performance. The NRC does not consistently use SLAs when awarding IT contracts because the agency has no specific guidance on how or when to use SLAs. As a result, the NRC may be limiting its ability to measure contractor performance and may not receive the services they require or purchase.

What Is Required

The NRC Should Implement SLA Guidance and Incorporate Best Practices

The Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Subpart 37.5, *Management Oversight of Service Contracts,* states: "Contracting officials should ensure that 'best practices' techniques are used when contracting for services and in contract management and administration." It defines best practices as techniques gained from experience that agencies may use to help detect problems in the acquisition, management, and administration of service contracts or to improve the procurement process.

An SLA is important because it ensures that services are being performed at the levels specified in the contract, can significantly contribute to avoiding conflict, and can facilitate the resolution of an issue before it escalates into a

dispute. Other federal agencies use SLAs in their IT contracts as best practices. For example:

- The U.S. Department of Energy states that SLAs are a critical component of its technology vendor contracts. The department defines an SLA as a document that defines the level of service expected from a vendor, laying out the metrics by which service is measured, as well as remedies or penalties if the vendor does not achieve agreed upon service levels.

- The Department of Health and Human Services uses an Enterprise Performance Life Cycle framework to enhance IT governance that includes the use of SLAs. The framework provides for a contractual agreement with the service provider specifying performance guarantees with associated penalties should the service not be performed as contracted.

A 2016 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report[6] depicts a compilation of ten key practices for federal agencies to incorporate into contracts to ensure services are performed effectively, efficiently, and securely; in the report, the GAO encourages the use of SLAs. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has also directed subject matter experts to issue guidance highlighting SLAs as a key factor to be addressed in developing service contracts, such as cloud computing contracts.[7]

What We Found

Inconsistent Application of SLAs in IT Contracts

The NRC inconsistently applies SLAs in its IT contracts. The OIG selected a sample of 70 IT contracts and reviewed five IT contracts. Of the five IT contracts reviewed, three contracts did not include SLAs. The results are shown in Figure 3.

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[6] Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, GAO-16-325, *Cloud Computing: Agencies Need to Incorporate Key Practices to Ensure Effective Performance*

[7] *Creating Effective Cloud Computing Contracts for the Federal Government: Best Practices for Acquiring IT as a Service*, issued on February 24, 2012, by the Chief Information Officers Council and Chief Acquisition Officers Council in coordination with the Federal Cloud Compliance Committee

Figure 3: OIG Review of IT Contracts

Contract Number	Task Order Number	Description	SLA
NRC-HQ-10-17-A-0006	31310022F0035	GLINDA Mobility Services	Yes
NRC-HQ-10-17-A-0007	31310018F0015	End-User Computing Services	Yes
NRC-HQ-10-17-A-0008	31310021F0127	Protected Web Server Support Services	No
GS35F0119W	31310020F0139	Human Capital Management (HCM) Software as a Service Time and Labor Platform Implementation	No
GS00F146DA	31310022F0092	Ongoing support for the new Human Capital Management Software as a Service Time and Labor Product	No

Source: OIG-generated using information obtained from NRC's Strategic Acquisition System

Based on the OIG's review of the five IT contracts, the HCM cloud implementation, Ongoing support services contracts, and the Protected Web Server contract, did not include SLAs. ADM management stated that SLAs may not be appropriate or applicable for every type of IT contract. While this may be accurate, currently, the NRC does not review every IT contract to determine whether it should have an SLA. The NRC could benefit by using SLAs in all IT contracts, if appropriate and applicable.

The benefits of SLAs are illustrated in the examples below. The End-User Computing Services and GLINDA Mobility Services contracts did include SLAs, and as a result these contracts included performance standards, acceptable quality levels, and surveillance methods. For instance:

- The end-user computing contract stated that up to 15 percent of the total invoice cost may be deducted due to late or incomplete deliverables.

- In the enterprise mobility services contract, if the contractor fails to comply with the service level requirements outlined in the performance work statement, they are sanctioned 2 percent of the firm fixed price portion of each invoice.

Why This Occurred

The NRC Lacks Guidance on When to Use SLAs

According to ADM staff, they do not have any guidance on how and when to use SLAs because SLAs are specific to the services provided. Including specific SLAs in IT contracts requires programmatic expertise and significant input from the OCIO, as well as input from the COR. For example, according to an OCIO staff member, the assigned COR worked with a performance management support contractor to develop SLAs for the end-user computing services contract, but this does not happen with every IT contract.

Why This Is Important

The NRC May Not Be Able to Measure Contractor Performance

By incorporating an SLA into a contract, the NRC can work with the contractor to manage expectations and workloads and establish clear and measurable guidelines. Without an SLA, the NRC may lose its ability to establish clear and measurable expectations.

Furthermore, SLAs provide recourse for unmet service obligations.[8] Without an SLA, the NRC may not be able to effectively hold contractors accountable, increasing the potential for waste. Having sufficient, detailed SLAs could help the NRC ensure that contracts do not exceed cost.

Recommendation

The OIG recommends that the Executive Director for Operations:

1.1. Develop and implement agency guidance on how and when SLAs should be included in IT contracts.

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[8] Recourse may take the form of monetary penalties that can be used if losses are incurred.

2. The NRC Does Not Deobligate Funds Timely from IT Contracts

The NRC is required to close out contracts in an orderly and timely manner. However, the NRC is not always prompt in contract closeouts and in deobligating excess funds. Of the 70 IT contracts selected and reviewed, the OIG found 35 contracts were past their period of performance (POP) end date, and the remaining funds had not been deobligated.[9] This occurred because the NRC does not always prioritize contract closeouts and does not have a tracking method for contracts in the closeout process. This has led to a surplus of unliquidated obligations that could be put to better use.

What Is Required

FAR Requires Orderly and Timely Contract Closeout

Under FAR 4.804-1, "Closeout by the office administering the contract," orderly and timely closeout of all contract files for expired contracts should be accomplished within specific time standards. The FAR 4.804-5, "Procedures for closing out contract files," also requires that the contract administration office conduct a fund review upon initiating the contract closeout process to determine whether excess funds are available for deobligation.

Office of Management and Budget Guidance

According to the OMB's public website, "The Federal Government has a fundamental responsibility to be effective stewards of the taxpayers' money. We must be responsible with money that comes into the government, money that is spent, and money that is used in running the government itself. Decision makers and the public must have confidence in financial management in order to make informed decisions about managing government programs and implementing policy."
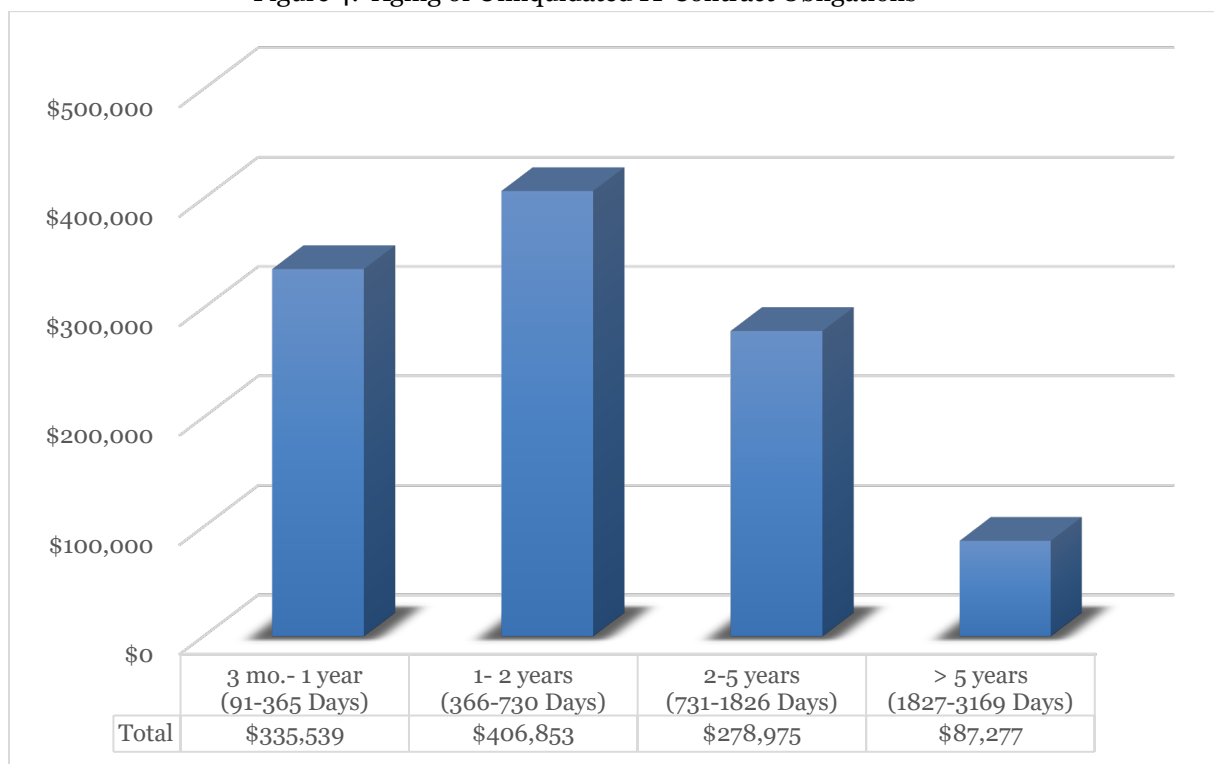
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[9] GAO-05-734SP, *A Glossary of Terms Used in the Federal Budget Process*, defines deobligation as: "An agency's cancellation or downward adjustment of previously incurred obligations. Deobligated funds may be reobligated within the period of availability of the appropriation. For example, annual appropriated funds may be reobligated in the fiscal year in which the funds were appropriated, while multiyear or no-year appropriated funds may be reobligated in the same or subsequent fiscal years."

The NRC Does Not Promptly Close Out Contracts

The NRC is not always prompt in closing out contracts and deobligating excess funds. As of October 4, 2023, the OIG found that 35 (50 percent) of the 70 IT contracts reviewed were still open with obligated funds past their POP end dates. See Figure 4 for the time and dollar amount of the 35 unliquidated IT contract obligations.

Figure 4: Aging of Unliquidated IT Contract Obligations

	3 mo.- 1 year (91-365 Days)	1- 2 years (366-730 Days)	2-5 years (731-1826 Days)	> 5 years (1827-3169 Days)
Total	$335,539	$406,853	$278,975	$87,277

Source: OIG-generated based on information obtained from the OCIO

These contracts collectively had more than $1.1 million of obligated funds remaining. Approximately 30 percent, or $335,539, of the contracted funds were between 91 days and 1 year past their POP end date. Another 37 percent, or $406,853, were between 1 year and 2 years past their POP end date. Finally, 33 percent, or $366,252, were between 2 and 8.5 years past their POP end date.

NRC Management Does Not Always Prioritize Contract Closeout

Thirty-five IT contracts remain open past their POP end dates because NRC management does not always prioritize contract closeout. Instead, the focus is to award contracts for the goods and services needed to support the agency's mission.[10] Additionally, contract closeout at the NRC depends on actions by more than one office, and the NRC does not always have effective coordination across offices.

In a meeting with the OCIO and ADM staff, the OIG was informed that the NRC prioritizes contract award over contract closeout, and the agency's resources were generally used for contract award and not contract closeout. The NRC staff's statements echo the findings in the GAO's report titled: "*Federal Contracting: Additional Management Attention and Action Needed to Close Contracts and Reduce Audit Backlog*." The GAO report stated:

> A recurring issue highlighted in our prior work, as well as in this review, is that contract closeout was not a priority for either agency management or contracting officers. Agency officials and contracting officers noted the focus for contracting officers is to award contracts for the goods and services needed to support agency operations and missions, and that closing out contracts is largely viewed as an administrative task that staff get to when time is available. Further, agency acquisitions officials we spoke with on this review noted that their ability to focus attention on contract closeout was affected by resource constraints, including workforce challenges and sequestration.

The NRC Lacks a Unified Contract Management Process

Another example showing that the NRC does not prioritize or emphasize contract closeout is that contracts are not formally tracked in the closeout process. For the 35 contracts past the POP end date, the OIG asked the OCIO and ADM to explain why they were not closed out. Both offices could only

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[10] The AMD submitted a request to the OCFO in March 2023 to establish a $10,000 threshold for completing unilateral contract close-outs and deobligation of unliquidated obligations. In response, the OCFO agreed to the proposed threshold under which unilateral action may be taken to close out a contract and deobligate unliquidated obligations after the contract is physically completed and all administrative actions have been completed.

speculate that the contracts were not closed because they were not aware of the status of these contracts. ADM management stated they can generate reports for expired contracts and requisition closeouts; however, the NRC does not have a formal tracking procedure for expired contracts until a requisition to request the closeout is initiated. While the generated reports help the NRC recognize expired contracts, obligated funds past the POP end date remain.

Agency Guidance is Outdated

MD 11.1 was last revised on May 9, 2014. ADM subsequently issued interim guidance YA-19-0021, *Timely Initiation of Contract Closeouts*, on February 8, 2019.[11] This guidance states that the "COR is responsible for creating and submitting the requisition package for contract closeout within 90 days of contract or task order completion. If any funds remain on the contract to be deobligated, the requisition must, at a minimum, contain a statement directing the contracting officer to deobligate all remaining unliquidated obligations from the contract." According to ADM management, the guidance from YA-19-0021 is to be included in an updated version of MD 11.1, which was near the final stages of completion as of April 2024.

Why This Is Important

Unliquidated Obligations Could Have Been Put to Better Use

The $1.1 million in funds remaining on the 35 IT contracts could have been put to better use. The Inspector General Act of 1978 defines the phrase "recommendation that funds be put to better use" as a recommendation by the OIG that "funds could be used more efficiently if management of an establishment took actions to implement and complete the recommendation, including---...(b) deobligation of funds from programs or operations...."[12] In essence, the excess funds could be used more efficiently and potentially reobligated for other purposes.

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[11] YA-19-0021 expired on February 8, 2024.

[12] 5 U.S.C. § 405(a)(5)

Furthermore, when contract closeout requirements are not followed, the risk of late payments to contractors increases, as does the risk that improper payments may not be identified or recovered from contractors. Additionally, closing a contract years after the performance is complete can be more time-consuming because key documentation, such as invoices, reports, and contracting personnel with first-hand knowledge of the contract, may no longer be available.

Recommendation

The OIG recommends that the Executive Director for Operations:

2.1. Develop and implement a method to prioritize NRC contract closeout, including:
   a. Updating agency guidance to describe current practices for contract closeout and deobligation;
   b. Reinforcing contract closeout policy to the CORs and acquisition personnel through formal communications and refresher training on the closeout process; and,
   c. Creating a procedure to track closeout requisitions, from submission to completion, that results in the timely completion of closeouts by the AMD. The tracking information should include, among other things, contract type, date the CO received evidence of physical completion, funding allocation, and where the expired contract is in the contract management process.

IV. CONSOLIDATED LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The OIG recommends that the Executive Director for Operations:

1.1. Develop and implement agency guidance on how and when SLAs should be included in IT contracts.

2.1 Develop and implement a method to prioritize NRC contract closeout, including:
   a. Updating agency guidance to describe current practices for contract closeout and deobligation;
   b. Reinforcing contract closeout policy to the CORs and acquisition personnel through formal communications and refresher training on the closeout process; and,
   c. Creating a procedure to track closeout requisitions, from submission to completion, that results in the timely completion of closeouts by the AMD. The tracking information should include, among other things, contract type, date the CO received evidence of physical completion, funding allocation, and, where the expired contract is in the contract management process.

V. NRC COMMENTS

The OIG held an exit conference with the agency on March 18, 2024. Before the exit conference, agency management reviewed and provided comments on the discussion draft version of this report, and the OIG discussed these comments with the agency during the conference. The OIG has incorporated the agency's comments into this report as appropriate. Responsible officials will provide agency planned corrective actions within 30 days following report publication as part of the audit resolution process.

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Objective

The audit objective was to determine if the NRC is efficiently and effectively managing IT-related contracts for the agency's information technology services and support.

Scope

This audit focused on the efficiency and effectiveness of the NRC's management of information technology services and support contracts. We conducted this performance audit at NRC headquarters in Rockville, Maryland, from March 2022 to October 2023.

Internal controls related to the audit objective were reviewed and analyzed. Specifically, the OIG reviewed the components of control environment, risk assessments, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring. Within those components, the OIG reviewed the principles of establishing structure, responsibility, and authority; defining objectives and risk tolerances; identifying, analyzing, and responding to risk; designing activities for the information system; implementing control activities through policies; using quality information; communicating internally and externally; performing monitoring activities; and, evaluating issues and remediating deficiencies.

Methodology

The OIG reviewed relevant criteria for this audit, including, but not limited to:

- Various sections of the Federal Acquisition Regulation;

- The Government Accountability Office *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*;

- Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-15-14, *Management and Oversight of Federal Information Technology*;

- *NRC Principles of Good Regulation*;

- Management Directive 2.6, *Information Technology Infrastructure and End User Services*; and,

- Management Directive 2.8, *Integrated Information Technology/Information Management Governance Framework.*

The OIG interviewed various NRC employees from the OCFO, the OCIO, and the ADM. The OCFO interviews and some of the OCIO interviews were conducted to learn about the NRC helpdesk and how it performs. Many other OCIO interviews were conducted to discuss the NRC's ability to meet federal requirements and how best practices are currently used within the NRC's IT framework. ADM interviews were conducted to learn about the NRC'S contract management lifecycle and contracting processes. In addition, the OIG reviewed results from an NRC survey related to its IT helpdesk.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Throughout the audit, auditors considered the possibility of fraud, waste, and abuse in the program.

The audit was conducted by Michael Blair, Team Leader; Terri Cooper, Team Leader; Jenny Cheung, Audit Manager; George Gusack, Audit Manager; William Chung, Senior Auditor; Muhammad Arefin, Senior Auditor; Celia Flores-Garcia, Auditor; Shreedhar Kandel, Auditor; and George Auel, Student Analyst.

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COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS

If you wish to provide comments on this report, please email the OIG using this [link](#).

In addition, if you have suggestions for future OIG audits, please provide them using this [link](#).

NOTICE TO NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND BUSINESS ENTITIES SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED IN THIS REPORT

Section 5274 of the James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, Pub. L. No. 117-263, amended the Inspector General Act of 1978 to require OIGs to notify certain entities of OIG reports. In particular, section 5274 requires that, if an OIG specifically identifies any non-governmental organization (NGO) or business entity (BE) in an audit or other non-investigative report, the OIG must notify the NGO or BE that it has 30 days from the date of the report's publication to review the report and, if it chooses, submit a written response that clarifies or provides additional context for each instance within the report in which the NGO or BE is specifically identified.

If you are an NGO or BE that has been specifically identified in this report and you believe you have not been otherwise notified of the report's availability, please be aware that under section 5274 such an NGO or BE may provide a written response to this report no later than 30 days from the report's publication date. Any response you provide will be appended to the published report as it appears on our public website, assuming your response is within the scope of section 5274. Please note, however, that the OIG may decline to append to the report any response, or portion of a response, that goes beyond the scope of the response provided for by section 5274. Additionally, the OIG will review each response to determine whether it should be redacted in accordance with applicable laws, rules, and policies before we post the response to our public website.

Please send any response via email using this [link](#). Questions regarding the opportunity to respond should also be directed to this same address.