



Accenture wins \$297 million contract from Trump Administration

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International professional services corporation Accenture has won a massive \$297 million contract, spread out over five years, from the Trump Administration, to help the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agency recruit and hire 7,500 additional officers and agents, to enhance border security.

CBP received five offers for the contract and has obligated almost \$42.7 million for the initial base year. The agency awarded the firm-fixed-price contract to Accenture Federal Services on Nov. 17, according to Deltek data, reported Washington Technology.

Accenture will assist CBP in efforts to add 5,000 additional Border Patrol agents, 2,000 customs officers and 500 agents for the Office of Air and Marine Operations to monitor the U.S.-Mexico border.

This hiring push aligns with a series of executive orders and a February memo from then-Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly that directed CBP to hire more agents.

The White House's fiscal year 2018 budget blueprint sought \$314 million for the Homeland Security Department to hire 500 new Border Patrol agents and 1,000 new law enforcement personnel for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency, reported Washington Technology.

News of the contract was first reported Tuesday by the San Diego Union-Tribune, which said CBP has only 19,500 agents on staff as of May versus the congressionally-mandated 21,370 agent roster. CBP has more than 40,000 officers and agents in both Border Patrol and customs, according to that report.

Los Angeles Times reported the contract with the Dublin, Ireland-based Accenture, which had \$35 billion in revenues in 2017 and has more than 130,000 employees based in India, comes at a time when the Border Patrol is struggling to meet minimum staffing levels mandated by Congress and is losing more agents per year than it hires.

It also represents one of the larger expenditures so far in the Trump administration's now nearly-year-long drive to increase border security.

In October, work on eight prototype border walls was completed in Otay Mesa near the U.S.-Mexico border — a project for which Customs and Border Protection officials set aside \$20 million in the spring.

The scope of work in the contract requires the company to manage “the full life cycle of the hiring process” from job posting to processing new hires. The company, the agency said in an

email response to questions, will augment the agency's existing internal hiring programs, reported Los Angeles Times.

It also calls for a "hard-hitting, targeted recruitment campaign consisting of promoting [Customs and Border Protection] law enforcement careers and opportunities" and a public education campaign about customs and Border Patrol jobs.

Critics lambasted the contract awarded to Accenture.

"They're spending almost \$40,000 per hire," said Alex Nowrasteh, an immigration policy analyst at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank in Washington, to the Los Angeles Times. "Just off the bat that seems like a pretty desperate move."

If the contract runs its full five years and is fully paid out, the agency will spend \$39,600 per hire. That's just below the \$39,738 starting pay for a customs officer.

Nowrasteh said the Accenture deal could be beneficial because the company's expertise may allow it to draw from a different pool of potential hires than Customs and Border Protection has in the past.

But he questioned whether so many agents are even needed. He noted that the number of apprehensions of unauthorized immigrants across the southwest border has fallen to record low numbers. There were 1.2 million apprehensions in 2001, and this year just 310,000 — the lowest level in 46 years.

This is not the first time the government has hired Accenture to help meet its hiring goals. In 2016 the company won a \$290-million, five-year contract to help the Transportation Security Agency hire 8,000 to 10,000 additional workers per year.