

**U.S. Department of Commerce  
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office**



**Privacy Threshold Analysis  
for the  
USPTO AINS eCase SaaS System (UAECSS)**

## U.S. Department of Commerce Privacy Threshold Analysis

### USPTO USPTO AINS eCase SaaS System (UAECSS)

**Unique Project Identifier: PTO-EBPL-LT-AINS eCase SaaS System (EBPL-LT-03-00)**

**Introduction:** This Privacy Threshold Analysis (PTA) is a questionnaire to assist with determining if a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) is necessary for this IT system. This PTA is primarily based from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) privacy guidance and the Department of Commerce (DOC) IT security/privacy policy. If questions arise or further guidance is needed in order to complete this PTA, please contact your Bureau Chief Privacy Officer (BCPO).

**Description of the information system:** *Provide a brief description of the information system.*

The E-Government Act of 2002 defines “information system” by reference to the definition section of Title 44 of the United States Code. The following is a summary of the definition: “Information system” means a discrete set of information resources organized for the collection, processing, maintenance, use, sharing, dissemination, or disposition of information. See: 44. U.S.C. § 3502(8).

The CSP AINS eCase SaaS Solutions Platform (UAECSS) is a commercial SaaS (Software as a Service) implemented with AINS eCase/FOIAXpress. This SaaS provides for end-to-end processing of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and Privacy Act requests and appeals. The system electronically stores, retrieves, and redacts documents for delivery to requesters. UAECSS offers multiple applications, however USPTO’s Office of General Counsel (OGC) requires only the FOIAXpress (FX) application to facilitate the capability to process FOIA requests, support FOIA case management workflow processes, tracking and reporting a wide range of USPTO FOIA processes.

Address the following elements:

*a) Whether it is a general support system, major application, or other type of system*

The USPTO-AINS eCase System (UAECSS) is a Software as a Service (SaaS).

*b) System location*

UAECSS is a cloud FedRAMP Authorized SaaS located in Equinix data center in Gaithersburg, MD.

*c) Whether it is a standalone system or interconnects with other systems (identifying and describing any other systems to which it interconnects)*

UAECSS interconnects with the following systems:

**ESS – Enterprise Software Services (ESS)** The Enterprise Software Services (ESS) system ESS is comprised of multiple on premise and in the cloud software services which support the

USPTO in carrying out its daily tasks. ESS provides an architecture capable supporting current software services as well as provide the necessary architecture to support the growth anticipated over the next five years

**NSI** - Network and Security Infrastructure System (NSI) is an Infrastructure information system, and provides an aggregate of subsystems that facilitates the communications, secure access, protective services, and network infrastructure support for all United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) IT applications.

**DBS** – Database Services (DBS) is an Infrastructure information system, and provides a Database Infrastructure to support the mission of USPTO database needs.

**EWS** – Enterprise Windows Servers (EWS) is an Infrastructure information system, and provides a hosting platform for major applications that support various USPTO missions.

**EUS** - Enterprise Unix Services (EUS) consists of assorted UNIX operating system variants (OS), each comprised of many utilities along with the master control program, the kernel.

*d) The purpose that the system is designed to serve*

UAECSS is designed to facilitate the end-to-end processing of FOIA and Privacy Act requests.

*e) The way the system operates to achieve the purpose*

The UAECSS system provides a workflow that tracks and facilitates the processing of FOIA and Privacy Act requests. The system provides a correspondence capability to communicate with requesters and program offices. The system has a document management capability to store, retrieve, redact, and produce document releases.

*f) A general description of the type of information collected, maintained, used, or disseminated by the system*

The system stores the name of the requester and any necessary correspondence and identification information such as address, phone number, email address, driver's license that is used to communicate with and identify the requester. The system is used to store and maintain information from FOIA and Privacy Act searches of agency records. The responsive information is reviewed and redacted prior to dissemination to the requester.

*g) Identify individuals who have access to information on the system*

FOIA Officers, FOIA Specialists, and UAECSS system administrators who are PTO employees and contractors have access to information in the system.

*h) How information in the system is retrieved by the user*

UAECSS is a web application that allows authorized users to access and view information in the system using a web browser.

*i) How information is transmitted to and from the system*

UAECSS users use a web browser to make a Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS) connection to web application; the system also uses Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP) to send email correspondence.

**Questionnaire:**

1. Status of the Information System

1a. What is the status of this information system?

- This is a new information system. *Continue to answer questions and complete certification.*
- This is an existing information system with changes that create new privacy risks. *Complete chart below, continue to answer questions, and complete certification.*

<b>Changes That Create New Privacy Risks (CTCNPR)</b>					
a. Conversions	<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Significant Merging	<input type="checkbox"/>	g. New Interagency Uses	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Anonymous to Non-Anonymous	<input type="checkbox"/>	e. New Public Access	<input type="checkbox"/>	h. Internal Flow or Collection	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Significant System Management Changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	f. Commercial Sources	<input type="checkbox"/>	i. Alteration in Character of Data	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Other changes that create new privacy risks (specify):					

- This is an existing information system in which changes do not create new privacy risks, and there is not a SAOP approved Privacy Impact Assessment. *Continue to answer questions and complete certification.*
- This is an existing information system in which changes do not create new privacy risks, and there is a SAOP approved Privacy Impact Assessment. *Skip questions and complete certification.*

1b. Has an IT Compliance in Acquisitions Checklist been completed with the appropriate signatures?

- Yes. This is a new information system.
- Yes. This is an existing information system for which an amended contract is needed.

- No. The IT Compliance in Acquisitions Checklist is not required for the acquisition of equipment for specialized Research and Development or scientific purposes that are not a National Security System.
- No. This is not a new information system.

2. Is the IT system or its information used to support any activity which may raise privacy concerns?

NIST Special Publication 800-53 Revision 4, Appendix J, states “Organizations may also engage in activities that do not involve the collection and use of PII, but may nevertheless raise privacy concerns and associated risk. The privacy controls are equally applicable to those activities and can be used to analyze the privacy risk and mitigate such risk when necessary.” Examples include, but are not limited to, audio recordings, video surveillance, building entry readers, and electronic purchase transactions.

- Yes. *(Check all that apply.)*

Activities			
Audio recordings	<input type="checkbox"/>	Building entry readers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video surveillance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Electronic purchase transactions	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (specify):			

- No.

3. Does the IT system collect, maintain, or disseminate business identifiable information (BII)?

As per DOC Privacy Policy: “For the purpose of this policy, business identifiable information consists of (a) information that is defined in the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) as “trade secrets and commercial or financial information obtained from a person [that is] privileged or confidential.” (5 U.S.C. 552(b)(4)). This information is exempt from automatic release under the (b)(4) FOIA exemption. “Commercial” is not confined to records that reveal basic commercial operations” but includes any records [or information] in which the submitter has a commercial interest” and can include information submitted by a nonprofit entity, or (b) commercial or other information that, although it may not be exempt from release under FOIA, is exempt from disclosure by law (e.g., 13 U.S.C.).”

- Yes, the IT system collects, maintains, or disseminates BII.
- No, this IT system does not collect any BII.

4. Personally Identifiable Information (PII)

4a. Does the IT system collect, maintain, or disseminate PII?

As per OMB 17-12: “The term PII refers to information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual’s identity either alone or when combined with other information that is linked or linkable to a specific individual.”

- Yes, the IT system collects, maintains, or disseminates PII about: *(Check all that apply.)*
  - DOC employees
  - Contractors working on behalf of DOC

- Other Federal Government personnel
- Members of the public

No, this IT system does not collect any PII.

***If the answer is “yes” to question 4a, please respond to the following questions.***

4b. Does the IT system collect, maintain, or disseminate Social Security numbers (SSNs), including truncated form?

- Yes, the IT system collects, maintains, or disseminates SSNs, including truncated form.

Provide an explanation for the business need requiring the collection of SSNs, including truncated form. SSNs may be incidentally collected and maintained as a result from FOIA or Privacy Act search requests of agency records.
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Provide the legal authority which permits the collection of SSNs, including truncated form. Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552; Privacy Act of 1974 as amended, 5 U.S.C. 552a; 5 U.S.C. 301, and 44 U.S.C. 3101.
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- No, the IT system does not collect, maintain, or disseminate SSNs, including truncated form.

4c. Does the IT system collect, maintain, or disseminate PII other than user ID?

- Yes, the IT system collects, maintains, or disseminates PII other than user ID.
- No, the user ID is the only PII collected, maintained, or disseminated by the IT system.

4d. Will the purpose for which the PII is collected, stored, used, processed, disclosed, or disseminated (context of use) cause the assignment of a higher PII confidentiality impact level?

Examples of context of use include, but are not limited to, law enforcement investigations, administration of benefits, contagious disease treatments, etc.

- Yes, the context of use will cause the assignment of a higher PII confidentiality impact level.

- No, the context of use will not cause the assignment of a higher PII confidentiality impact level.

***If any of the answers to questions 2, 3, 4b, 4c, and/or 4d are “Yes,” a Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) must be completed for the IT system. This PTA and the SAOP approved PIA must be a part of the IT system’s Assessment and Authorization Package.***

## CERTIFICATION

The criteria implied by one or more of the questions above **apply** to the **USPTO AINS eCase SaaS System (UAECSS)** and as a consequence of this applicability, a PIA will be performed and documented for this IT system.

The criteria implied by the questions above **do not apply** to the **USPTO AINS eCase SaaS System (UAECSS)** and as a consequence of this non-applicability, a PIA for this IT system is not necessary.

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