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APPROPRIATION LANGUAGE

For carrying out titles XI and XVI of the Social Security Act, section 401 of Public Law 92-603, section 212 of Public Law 93-66, as amended, and section 405 of Public Law 95-216, including payment to the Social Security trust funds for administrative expenses incurred pursuant to section 201(g)(1) of the Social Security Act, [\$48,609,338,000] \$45,717,853,000, to remain available until expended: *Provided*, That any portion of the funds provided to a State in the current fiscal year and not obligated by the State during that year shall be returned to the Treasury: *Provided further*, That not more than [\$86,000,000] \$91,000,000 shall be available for research and demonstrations under sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act, and remain available through September 30, [2025] 2026.

For making, after June 15 of the current fiscal year, benefit payments to individuals under title XVI of the Social Security Act, for unanticipated costs incurred for the current fiscal year, such sums as may be necessary.

For making benefit payments under title XVI of the Social Security Act for the first quarter of fiscal year [2024] 2025, [\$15,800,000,000] \$21,700,000,000, to remain available until expended. (*Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023.*)

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LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

The appropriation language provides us with the funds needed to carry out our responsibilities under the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. This includes the funds needed to pay Federal benefits, administer the program, and provide beneficiary services to recipients. The budget authority for these activities is made available until expended, providing us the authority to carry over unobligated balances for use in future fiscal years. Furthermore, the language includes three year authority for research and demonstration projects, providing us the authority to carry over unobligated balances into the next two fiscal years.

In addition, the language includes indefinite authority beginning June 15, in the event Federal benefit payment obligations in FY 2024 are higher than expected, and we do not have sufficient unobligated balances to cover the difference. Consistent with previous years, the appropriation also includes an advance appropriation for Federal benefit payments in the first quarter of FY 2025 to ensure the timely payment of benefits in case of a delay in the FY 2025 appropriations bill.

Table 2.1—Appropriation Language Analysis

Language provision	Explanation
<i>“For carrying out titles XI and XVI of the Social Security Act... including payment to the Social Security trust funds for administrative expenses incurred pursuant to section 201(g)(1) of the Social Security Act, [\$48,609,338,000] \$45,717,853,000, to remain available until expended:”</i>	Appropriates funds for Federal benefit payments, administrative expenses, beneficiary services, and research and demonstration projects under the SSI program. We may carry over unobligated balances for use in future fiscal years.
<i>“Provided, That any portion of the funds provided to a State in the current fiscal year and not obligated by the State during that year shall be returned to the Treasury.”</i>	Ensures that States do not carry unobligated balances of Federal funds into the subsequent fiscal year. Applies primarily to the beneficiary services activity.
<i>Provided further, That not more than [\$86,000,000] \$91,000,000 shall be available for research and demonstrations under sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act, and remain available through September 30, [2025] 2026.</i>	Specifies that not more than \$91 million of the SSI appropriation is available for research and demonstration projects. We may carry over unobligated balances through September 30, 2026, at which point, funds are expired.
<i>“For making, after June 15 of the current fiscal year, benefit payments to individuals under title XVI of the Social Security Act, for unanticipated costs incurred for the current fiscal year, such sums as may be necessary.”</i>	Provides an indefinite appropriation to finance any shortfall in the definite appropriation for benefit payments during the last months of the fiscal year.
<i>“For making benefit payments under title XVI of the Social Security Act for the first quarter of fiscal year [2024] 2025, [\$15,800,000,000] \$21,700,000,000, to remain available until expended.”</i>	Appropriates funds for benefit payments in the first quarter of the subsequent fiscal year. Ensures that recipients will continue to receive benefits during the first quarter of FY 2025 in the event of a temporary funding delay.

GENERAL STATEMENT

The SSI program guarantees a minimum level of income to financially needy individuals who are aged, blind, or disabled. Title XVI of the Social Security Act authorized the program, and payments began January 1974. It is Federally-administered and funded from general revenues.

Prior to the establishment of the SSI program, the Social Security Act provided means-tested assistance through three separate programs—Old-Age Assistance, Aid to the Blind, and Aid to the Permanently and Totally Disabled. Federal law only established broad guidelines, with each State largely responsible for setting its own eligibility and payment standards. The SSI program was established to provide uniform standards across States.

Table 2.2—Summary of Appropriations and Obligations¹
(in thousands)

	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Estimate	<i>Change</i>
Appropriation	\$65,513,823	\$64,209,338	\$61,517,853	-\$2,691,485
Obligations	\$65,657,451	\$65,208,110	\$62,882,176	-\$2,325,934
First Quarter Advance Appropriation for Subsequent Fiscal Year	\$15,600,000	\$15,800,000	\$21,700,000	+\$5,900,000

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Eligibility Standards

As a means-tested program, individuals must have income and resources below specified levels to be eligible for benefits. Program rules allow some specific categories of income and resources to be either totally or partially excluded.² The process of evaluating eligibility and payment levels for the SSI program and addressing the accuracy of payments is inherently complex due to the program rules.

An individual’s benefit payment is reduced dollar for dollar by the amount of his or her “countable income”—income less all applicable exclusions—in a given month. Income in the SSI program includes “earned income,” such as wages and net earnings from self-employment and “unearned income,” such as Social Security benefits, unemployment compensation, deemed income from a spouse or parent, and the value of in-kind support and maintenance, such as food and shelter. Different exclusion rules apply for different types of income.

¹ Does not include State supplementary payments and reimbursements or the corresponding State supplement user fee collections; user fees are included in the Limitation on Administrative Expenses (LAE) appropriation.

² The ABLE Act of 2014 created a new type of tax-advantaged account that has a limited effect on an individual’s eligibility for the SSI program and other Federal means-tested programs.

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Benefit Payments

We estimate we will pay \$57.6 billion in Federal benefits to over 7.3 million SSI recipients in FY 2024. Including State supplementary payments, we expect to pay a total of \$60.9 billion and administer payments to nearly 7.5 million recipients.

Federal benefit payments represent approximately 92 percent of Federal SSI spending. Administrative expenses represent about 8 percent of spending; beneficiary services and research and demonstration projects make up the remaining less than half a percent.

Incentives for Work and Opportunities for Vocational Rehabilitation

The SSI program is designed to help recipients with disabilities achieve independence by encouraging and supporting their attempts to work. The program includes a number of work incentive provisions that enable recipients who are blind or disabled to work and retain benefits. The program also includes provisions to help disabled beneficiaries obtain vocational rehabilitation and employment support services. These provisions were revised by legislation establishing the Ticket to Work program, which is discussed in more detail in the Beneficiary Services section.

State Supplementation

Supplementation is mandatory for certain recipients who were on State rolls just prior to the creation of the Federal program on January 1, 1974. Otherwise, States are encouraged to supplement the Federal benefit and may elect to have us administer their State supplementation program. States that choose to have us administer their program reimburse us in advance and we make the payment on behalf of the State. Participating States also reimburse us for the cost of administering their program, based on a user fee schedule established by the Social Security Act. The user fee is \$14.35 per SSI check payment in FY 2023 and is expected to increase to \$14.86 in FY 2024. The Department of the Treasury receives the first \$5.00 of each fee and we retain, as part of our LAE budget, the amount over \$5.00. Additional information regarding State supplementation can be found within the LAE section.

Coordination with Other Programs

We play an important role in helping States administer Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Provisions in the SSI statute ensure that payments made by States or under the Social Security program are not duplicated by SSI benefits.

Generally, SSI recipients are categorically eligible for Medicaid. States may either use SSI eligibility criteria for determining Medicaid eligibility or use their own, provided the criteria are no more restrictive than the State's January 1972 medical assistance standards.

SSI recipients may also qualify for SNAP. Pursuant to section 11 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (P.L. 88-525, as amended through P.L. 116-260), we work with SSI applicants and recipients in a variety of ways to help them file for SNAP, including informing them of their potential benefits, making applications available to them, and in some cases helping them complete their applications in our field offices. We also share applicant data with a number of States in support of SNAP.

Key Initiatives

We continue to pursue efforts to ensure the proper management and stewardship of the SSI program. This includes a focus on reducing the major factors affecting payment accuracy, processing continuing disability reviews (CDR) and non-disability redeterminations, combatting fraud, improving our debt collection tools, and using our data matching systems to detect changes in circumstances that could affect SSI eligibility. Further information on these programs can be found in our Improper Payments exhibit and the Program Integrity exhibit of the LAE section. Additional detail is also included in our Annual Performance Report (APR) and Agency Financial Report (AFR).¹

Outreach to People Facing Barriers

During the pandemic, we experienced a reduction in applications for benefits, particularly SSI and disability benefits. While our field offices are again open to walk-in traffic, we remain concerned that there may be many underserved individuals have greater difficulties accessing our services. We continue our work to expand access to the program through initiatives such as streamlining and digitizing the SSI application, enlisting the assistance of third parties who work with people facing barriers, promoting our programs through paid social media, television, and radio advertising, and sending out targeted mailers to groups most likely to be eligible for SSI. Further information on our efforts to reach underserved communities can be found in the Research and Demonstration section below and in our Outreach Efforts to People Facing Barriers exhibit in the LAE section of this Congressional Justification. These efforts also contribute to our strategic goal to improve equity in SSI through increased outreach and improved benefit delivery, including to communities of color and underserved communities (For additional information on our Agency Priority Goals, please refer to page 149).

¹ Both the APR and AFR can be viewed online at <https://www.ssa.gov/agency/budget-and-performance.html>

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FY 2024 PRESIDENT'S BUDGET REQUEST

The SSI appropriation includes funds for Federal benefit payments, administrative expenses, beneficiary services, and research and demonstration projects. In total, the FY 2024 President's Budget request is \$61,517,853,000. However, this includes \$15,800,000,000 appropriated for the first quarter of FY 2024 in the FY 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act. The appropriation language provides us with our remaining appropriation for FY 2024, \$45,717,853,000—the total amount requested for FY 2024 less the advance.

Similarly, in addition to the amount above, the request includes an advance appropriation of \$21,700,000,000 for Federal benefit payments in the first quarter of FY 2025. This advance is to ensure recipients continue to receive their benefits at the beginning of the subsequent fiscal year in case there is a delay in passing that year's appropriation.

Table 2.3—Appropriation Detail ^{1,2}
(in thousands)

	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Estimate	<i>Change</i>
Advance for Federal Benefits ³	\$19,600,000	\$15,600,000	\$15,800,000	
Regular for Federal Benefits	\$41,091,142	\$43,630,213	\$40,528,000	
Subtotal Federal Benefits	\$60,691,142	\$59,230,213	\$56,328,000	-\$2,902,213
Base Administrative Expenses	\$3,366,002	\$3,320,754	\$3,467,091	+\$146,337
Program Integrity (Base)	\$188,136	\$221,292	\$257,000	+\$35,708
Program Integrity (Adjustment)	\$977,543	\$1,227,079	\$1,237,762	+\$10,683
Subtotal Administrative Expenses	\$4,531,681	\$4,769,125	\$4,961,853	+\$192,728
Beneficiary Services	\$205,000	\$124,000	\$137,000	+\$13,000
Research and Demonstration	\$86,000	\$86,000	\$91,000	+\$5,000
Subtotal Advanced Appropriation	\$19,600,000	\$15,600,000	\$15,800,000	
Subtotal Regular Appropriation	\$45,913,823	\$48,609,338	\$45,717,853	
Total Appropriation	\$65,513,823	\$64,209,338	\$61,517,853	-\$2,691,485
Advance for Subsequent Year	\$15,600,000	\$15,800,000	\$21,700,000	+\$5,900,000

¹ Does not include State supplementary payments and reimbursements or the corresponding State supplementary user fee collections; user fees are included in the LAE appropriation.

² Totals may not add due to rounding.

³ Amount provided or requested in the previous year's appropriation bill.

BUDGETARY RESOURCES

The SSI annual appropriation consists of a regular appropriation made available by the current year’s appropriation bill and an advance made available by the prior year’s appropriation. This advance is for Federal benefit payments in the first quarter of the subsequent fiscal year to ensure recipients continue to receive their benefits in case there is a delay in passing that year’s appropriation bill. The FY 2024 President’s Budget is \$61,517,853,000, including \$15,800,000,000 appropriated in the FY 2023 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

Table 2.4—Amounts Available for Obligation^{1,2}

	(in thousands)		
	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Estimate
Regular Appropriation	\$45,913,823	\$48,609,338	\$45,717,853
Advanced Appropriation from prior FY	\$19,600,000	\$15,600,000	\$15,800,000
Total Annual Appropriation	\$65,513,823	\$64,209,338	\$61,517,853
Federal Unobligated Balance	\$4,649,075	\$4,629,451	\$3,630,679
Recovery of Prior-Year Obligations	\$124,004	\$0	\$0
Subtotal Federal Resources	\$70,286,902	\$68,838,789	\$65,148,532
State Supp. Reimbursements	\$2,835,171	\$3,369,000	\$3,529,000
State Supp. Unobligated Balance	\$201,287	\$11,528	\$528
Total Budgetary Resources	\$73,323,360	\$72,219,317	\$68,678,060
Federal Obligations	\$65,657,451	\$65,208,110	\$62,882,176
State Supp. Obligations	\$3,024,929	\$3,380,000	\$3,275,000
Total Obligations	\$ 68,682,380	\$68,588,110	\$66,157,176
Federal Unobligated Balance	\$4,629,451	\$3,630,679	\$2,266,356
State Supp. Unobligated Balance	\$11,528	\$528	\$254,528
Total Unobligated Balance	\$4,640,979	\$3,631,207	\$2,520,884

The SSI annual appropriation was \$65.5 billion in FY 2022. The enacted FY 2023 appropriation is \$64.2 billion. We have the authority to carry over unobligated balances for use in future fiscal years for Federal benefit payments and administrative expenses, and beneficiary services because the amounts appropriated are made available until expended. We carried over approximately

¹ Does not include State supplementary user fees; user fees are included in the LAE appropriation.

² Totals may not add due to rounding.

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\$4.6 billion in Federal unobligated balances into FY 2023. We expect to carry over approximately \$3.6 billion into FY 2024.

In addition to these appropriated amounts, we have spending authority in the amount of the advance reimbursement we receive from States to pay their State supplementary benefits. Because States reimburse us in advance, we carry over the amount received for the October 1 payment, reimbursed at the end of September in the prior fiscal year, for use in the subsequent fiscal year.

ANALYSIS OF CHANGES

The FY 2024 request represents a decrease of approximately \$2.7 billion from the FY 2023 level, which is primarily due to having 11 payments instead of 12 in FY 2024. We plan to use unobligated balances to partially fund Federal benefits, beneficiary services, research and demonstration projects, and administrative expenses in FY 2023 and FY 2024. Also, we plan to use nearly \$1 billion in unobligated balances and recoveries in FY 2023 and approximately \$1.4 billion in FY 2024.

Federal Benefit Payments

The FY 2024 request for Federal Benefit payments is approximately \$2.9 billion less than the FY 2023 level. We decreased the FY 2024 request for Federal Benefit payments mainly due to one fewer benefit payment in FY 2024, as well as utilizing the anticipated carryover funding from FY 2023. The decrease is partially offset by the January 2024 COLA and bolstered by the impact of Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) COLAs on concurrent SSI/OASDI recipients. Since OASDI benefits are counted as income in the SSI program, the annual OASDI COLA decreases the SSI benefit payment for concurrent recipients.

We estimate the first quarter advance for FY 2025 will be \$5.9 billion more than the first quarter advance for FY 2024. Monthly SSI benefit payments are made on the first of the month, unless the first falls on a weekend or Federal holiday. In that case, the payment is made on the prior business day at the end of the previous month. When October 1 falls on a weekend or Federal holiday, the payment is made in the prior fiscal year at the end of September. This timing of payments results in 11, 12, or 13 payments in a given fiscal year, and three or four in a given quarter. The first quarter in FY 2024 will have three benefit payments, while the first quarter in FY 2025 will have four benefit payments.

Administrative Expenses

The FY 2024 request for administrative expenses is \$193 million more than the FY 2023 level, and includes approximately \$1.2 billion in allocation adjustment funding for program integrity work in the SSI program. We expect to use \$70 million in carryover funds in FY 2023 and \$55 million in carryover funds in FY 2024 to cover estimated obligations. For details about program integrity funding and activities, please refer to the Program Integrity exhibit in the LAE section.

Beneficiary Services

We are requesting \$137 million in new authority for FY 2024. This is \$13 million more than our FY 2023 appropriation. Our estimate reflects a steady level of vocational rehabilitation

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reimbursement awards, and Ticket payments to Employment Networks under the Ticket to Work program. The FY 2024 request funds an estimated 5 percent increase in obligations above the FY 2023 level. We expect to use \$43 million in carryover funds in FY 2023 and \$38 million in carryover funds in FY 2024 to cover our estimated obligations.

Research and Demonstrations

The FY 2024 request for research and demonstration projects is \$5 million more than the FY 2023 level. We expect to use carryover funds in FY 2023 and FY 2024 in addition to our requested appropriation to cover our estimated obligations. For more information, please see the *Research and Demonstration* exhibit.

Table 2.5—Summary of Changes^{1,2}
(in thousands)

	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Estimate	<i>Change</i>
Appropriation	\$64,209,338	\$61,517,853	-\$2,691,485
Obligations Funded from Prior-Year Unobligated Balances and Recoveries net of estimated carryover from appropriation	\$1,009,044	\$1,364,323	+\$355,279
Unobligated Balance Carried Forward into FY 2024	-\$10,272	\$0	+\$10,272
Estimated Federal Obligations	\$65,208,110	\$62,882,176	-\$2,325,934

¹ Does not include State supplementary payments and reimbursements or the corresponding State supplement user fee collections; user fees are included in the LAE appropriation.

² Totals may not add due to rounding.

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Table 2.6—Explanation of SSI Budget Changes from FY 2023 to FY 2024
(in thousands)

	FY 2023 Obligations	<i>Change</i>
Federal Benefit Payments	\$59,230,213	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COLA – 3.6% beginning January 2024 • Net change due to annualized closings and awards • Net decrease due to adjustment to 11 payments in FY 2024, down from 12 in FY 2023 • October FY 2023 payment obligated during FY 2022 • Effect of OASDI COLA for concurrent SSI/OASDI Recipients • October FY 2024 payment obligated during FY 2023 		+\$3,836,000 -\$674,000 -\$4,432,000 +\$4,140,000 -\$961,000 -\$4,431,000
Federal Benefit Payments – Carryover	\$873,787	
Administrative Expenses	\$4,769,125	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in base funding 		+\$192,728
Administrative Expenses – Carryover	\$70,158	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in amount of carryover funding planned for obligation in FY 2024 • Unobligated Balance Carried Forward into FY 2024 		-\$14,919 +\$10,272
Beneficiary Services	\$124,000	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in base funding 		+\$13,000
Beneficiary Services – Carryover	\$43,000	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in amount of carryover funding planned for obligation in FY 2024 		-\$5,000
Research and Demonstration	\$86,000	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in base funding 		+\$5,000
Research and Demonstration – Carryover	\$22,099	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in amount of carryover funding planned for obligation in FY 2024 		-\$5,015
Total Obligations Requested, Net Change	\$65,208,110	-\$2,325,934

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NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY AND OBLIGATIONS BY ACTIVITY

The table below displays budget authority and obligations for the five main SSI activities – Federal benefit payments, administrative expenses, program integrity, beneficiary services, and research and demonstration.

Table 2.7—New Budget Authority and Obligations by Activity^{1,2} (in thousands)

	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Enacted³	FY 2024 Estimate¹³
<u>Federal Benefit Payments</u>			
Appropriation	\$60,691,142	\$59,230,213	\$56,328,000
Obligations	\$60,910,068	\$60,104,000	\$57,582,000
Monthly Check Payments	13	12	11
<u>Base Administrative Expenses</u>			
Appropriation	\$3,366,002	\$3,320,754	\$3,467,091
Obligations	\$3,364,725	\$3,390,912	\$3,519,960
<u>Program Integrity (Base)</u>			
Appropriation	\$188,136	\$221,292	\$257,000
Obligations	\$188,136	\$221,292	\$257,000
<u>Program Integrity (Adjustment)</u>			
Appropriation	\$977,543	\$1,227,079	\$1,237,762
Obligations	\$977,543	\$1,216,807	\$1,240,132
<u>Beneficiary Services</u>			
Appropriation	\$205,000	\$124,000	\$137,000
Obligations	\$134,966	\$167,000	\$175,000
<u>Research and Demonstration</u>			
Appropriation	\$86,000	\$86,000	\$91,000
Obligations	\$82,013	\$108,099	\$108,084
Total Appropriation	\$65,513,823	\$64,209,338	\$61,517,853
Total Federal Obligations	\$65,657,451	\$65,208,110	\$62,882,176

¹ Does not include State supplementary payments and reimbursements or the corresponding State supplement user fee collections; user fees are included in the LAE appropriation.

² Totals may not add due to rounding.

³ We expect to use carryover of prior year unobligated balances and recoveries for FY 2023 and FY 2024 obligations.

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NEW BUDGET AUTHORITY AND OBLIGATIONS BY OBJECT

In the table below, “Other Services” includes administrative expenses, program integrity, and beneficiary services.

Table 2.8—New Budget Authority and Obligations by Object ^{1,2}
(in thousands)

	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Estimate
<u>Other Services³</u>			
Appropriation	\$4,736,681	\$4,893,125	\$5,098,853
Obligations	\$4,665,370	\$4,996,011	\$5,192,092
<u>Federal Benefits and Research</u>			
Appropriation	\$60,777,142	\$59,316,213	\$56,419,000
Obligations	\$60,992,081	\$60,212,099	\$57,690,084
Total Appropriation	\$65,513,823	\$64,209,338	\$61,517,853
Total Obligations	\$65,657,451	\$65,208,110	\$62,882,176

¹ Does not include State supplementary payments and reimbursements or the corresponding State supplement user fee collections; user fees are included in the LAE appropriation.

² Totals may not add due to rounding.

³ The administrative portion of these services includes the SSI’s prorated share of unobligated LAE money that has been converted into no-year IT funds. It is not part of the annual administrative appropriation.

BACKGROUND

AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION

The SSI program is authorized by Title XVI of the Social Security Act. Section 1601 of the Act authorizes such sums as are sufficient to carry out the Title.

Table 2.9—Authorizing Legislation

	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Estimate	FY Amount Authorized
Title XVI of the Social Security Act, Section 401 of P.L. 92-603 and Section 212 of P.L. 93-66, as amended, and Section 405 of P.L. 92-216 ¹	\$65,513,823,000	\$64,209,338,000	\$61,517,853,000	<i>Indefinite</i>
First Quarter Advance Appropriation for Subsequent Fiscal Year	\$15,600,000,000	\$15,800,000,000	\$21,700,000,000	---

¹ Does not include State supplementary payments and reimbursements or the corresponding State supplement user fee collections; user fees are included in the LAE appropriation.

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APPROPRIATION HISTORY

The table below displays the President’s Budget request, amounts passed by the House and Senate, and the actual amount appropriated, for the period FY 2014 to FY 2023. Indefinite budget authority is requested when actual Federal benefit payments exceed the amounts available for Federal benefit payments in a given fiscal year.

Table 2.10—Appropriation History¹

Fiscal Year	Budget Estimate to Congress	House Committee Passed	Senate Committee Passed	Enacted Appropriation
Q1 Advance	\$19,300,000,000		\$19,300,000,000	\$19,300,000,000
Current Year	\$40,737,000,000 ²		\$40,568,741,000 ³	\$41,249,064,000 ⁴
2014 Total	\$60,037,000,000⁵		\$59,868,741,000	\$60,549,064,000
Q1 Advance	\$19,700,000,000		\$19,700,000,000	\$19,700,000,000
Current Year	\$40,927,000,000			\$41,232,978,000 ⁶
2015 Total	\$60,627,000,000			\$60,932,978,000⁷
Q1 Advance	\$19,200,000,000			\$19,200,000,000
Current Year	\$46,422,000,000	\$46,232,978,000 ⁸	\$46,110,777,000 ⁹	\$46,305,733,000 ¹⁰
2016 Total	\$65,622,000,000	\$65,432,978,000	\$65,310,777,000	\$65,505,733,000¹¹
Q1 Advance	\$14,500,000,000			\$14,500,000,000
Current Year	\$43,824,868,000	\$43,162,469,000 ¹²	\$43,618,163,000 ¹³	\$43,618,163,000 ¹⁴
2017 Total	\$58,324,868,000	\$57,662,469,000	\$58,118,163,000	\$58,118,163,000¹⁵
Q1 Advance	\$15,000,000,000			\$15,000,000,000
Current Year	\$38,557,000,000	\$38,591,635,000 ¹⁶	\$38,450,927,000 ¹⁷	\$38,487,277,000 ¹⁸
2018 Total	\$53,557,000,000	\$53,591,635,000	\$53,450,927,000	\$53,487,227,000¹⁹
Q1 Advance	\$19,500,000,000			\$19,500,000,000
Current Year	\$41,208,000,000	\$41,251,000,000 ²⁰	\$41,390,721,000 ²¹	\$41,366,203,000 ²²
2019 Total	\$60,708,000,000	\$60,751,000,000	\$60,890,721,000	\$60,866,203,000²³
Q1 Advance	\$19,700,000,000			\$19,700,000,000
Current Year	\$41,832,000,000	\$41,938,540,000 ²⁴	-- ²⁵	\$41,714,889,000 ²⁶
2020 Total	\$61,532,000,000	\$61,638,540,000		\$61,414,889,000²⁷
Q1 Advance	\$19,900,000,000			\$19,900,000,000
Current Year	\$40,308,177,000	\$40,172,492,000 ²⁸	-- ²⁹	\$40,158,768,000 ³⁰
2021 Total	\$60,208,177,000	\$60,072,492,000		\$60,058,768,000³¹

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Supplemental Security Income Program

Fiscal Year	Budget Estimate to Congress	House Committee Passed	Senate Committee Passed	Enacted Appropriation
Q1 Advance	\$19,600,000,000			\$19,600,000,000
Current Year	\$46,210,256,000	\$46,167,573,000 ³²	-- ³³	\$45,913,823,000 ³⁴
2022 Total	\$65,810,256,000	\$65,767,573,000		\$65,513,823,000³⁵
Q1 Advance	\$15,600,000,000			\$15,600,000,000
Current Year	\$48,828,722,000	\$48,713,576,000 ³⁶	-- ³⁷	\$48,609,338,000 ³⁸
2023 Total	\$64,428,722,000	\$64,313,576,000		\$64,209,338,000³⁹
Q1 Advance	\$15,800,000,000			\$15,800,000,000
Current Year	\$45,717,853,000			
2024 Total	\$61,517,853,000			
Q1 Advance	\$21,700,000,000			
Current Year				
2025 Total				

¹ Does not include State supplementary payments and reimbursements or the corresponding State user fee collections; user fees are included in the LAE appropriation.

² Of this amount, not more than \$54,000,000 is for research and demonstrations under sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act.

³ S. 1284.

⁴ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2014 (P.L. 113-76).

⁵ The President's Budget proposed to provide \$1,200,000,000 in mandatory administrative funding in FY 2014. Of the \$1,200,000,000, the SSI portion totals \$587,000,000.

⁶ Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2015 (P.L. 113-235).

⁷ Of this amount, not more than \$48,000,000 is for research and demonstrations and not more than \$35,000,000 is for early intervention demonstrations under sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act.

⁸ H.R. 3020.

⁹ S. 1695

¹⁰ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 (P.L. 114-113).

¹¹ Of this amount, not more than \$101,000,000 is for research and demonstrations under sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act.

¹² H.R. 5926.

¹³ S. 3040.

¹⁴ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (P.L. 115-31).

¹⁵ Of this amount, not more than \$58,000,000 is for research and demonstrations under sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act.

¹⁶ H.R. 3358.

¹⁷ S. 1771.

¹⁸ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-141).

¹⁹ Of this amount, not more than \$101,000,000 is for research and demonstrations under sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act.

²⁰ H.R. 6470.

²¹ S. 3158.

²² Department of Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations Act, 2019 and Continuing Appropriations Act, 2019 (P.L. 115-245).

Supplemental Security Income Program

²³ Of this amount, not more than \$101,000,000 is for research and demonstrations under sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act.

²⁴ H.R. 2740.

²⁵ The Senate Committee on Appropriations did not report a bill. The Committee posted a draft bill which mirrored the FY 2020 President's Budget request for \$41,832,000,000.

²⁶ Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94)

²⁷ Of this amount, not more than \$101,000,000 is for research and demonstrations under sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act.

²⁸ H.R. 7614.

²⁹ The Senate Committee on Appropriations did not report a bill but provided a draft showing \$40,136,324,000.

³⁰ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (P.L. 116-260)

³¹ Of this amount, not more than \$86,000,000 is for research and demonstrations under sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act.

³² H.R. 4502.

³³ The Senate Committee on Appropriations did not report a bill but provided a draft showing \$46,122,423,000.

³⁴ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 (P.L. 117-103)

³⁵ Of this amount, not more than \$86,000,000 is for research and demonstrations under sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act.

³⁶ H.R. 8295.

³⁷ The Senate Committee on Appropriations did not report a bill but provided a draft showing \$48,644,795,000.

³⁸ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023 (P.L. 117-328)

³⁹ Of this amount, not more than \$86,000,000 is for research and demonstrations under sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act.

FEDERAL BENEFIT PAYMENTS

Authorizing Legislation: Section 1602, 1611, and 1617 of the Social Security Act.

PURPOSE AND METHOD OF OPERATION

The SSI program was established to pay low-income aged, blind, and disabled individuals a minimum level of income through Federally-administered monthly cash payments. In many cases, these payments supplement income from other sources, including Social Security benefits and State programs. In FY 2024, we estimate benefit payments will total approximately \$57.6 billion for approximately 7.3 million Federal SSI recipients.

Table 2.11—Federal Benefit Payments: New Budget Authority and Obligations¹
(in thousands)

	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Estimate	<i>Change</i>
Appropriation	\$60,691,142	\$59,230,213	\$56,328,000	-\$2,902,213
Obligations Funded from Prior-Year Unobligated Balance and Recoveries	\$0	\$873,787	\$1,254,000	+\$380,213
Obligations	\$60,910,068	\$60,104,000	\$57,582,000	-\$2,522,000
Advance for subsequent fiscal year	\$15,600,000	\$15,800,000	\$21,700,000	+\$5,900,000

RATIONALE FOR BUDGET REQUEST

In FY 2024, we are requesting \$56.3 billion in new budget authority for Federal benefit payments, and \$21.7 billion in an advance appropriation for the first quarter of FY 2025. We estimate benefit payments based on a number of interrelated factors including the number of SSI recipients, number of applications, award and termination rates, cost-of-living adjustments, maximum benefit rates, average payment amounts, and number of payments per fiscal year.

¹ Federal benefit numbers reflect the most recent estimates from our Office of the Chief Actuary.

Supplemental Security Income Program

SSI RECIPIENT POPULATION

The number of Federal SSI recipients has decreased from 8 million in FY 2019 to an estimated 7.4 million in FY 2023, and is expected to decrease to 7.3 million in FY 2024. The estimated decrease in Federal recipients in FY 2024 represents a 1.1 percent decrease compared to the FY 2023 level. We estimate the number of SSI recipients by analyzing a number of factors including applications, as well as award and termination rates. Please refer to the Advancing Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility exhibit in the LAE section for additional information on how we are investigating this trend.

Table 2.12—SSI Recipients, Actual ¹
(average over fiscal year, in thousands)

	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022
Aged	1,114	1,109	1,076	1,069
Blind or Disabled	6,842	6,802	6,666	6,450
Total Federal	7,957	7,911	7,742	7,519
<i>Year-to-Year Change</i>	<i>-1.1%</i>	<i>-0.6%</i>	<i>-2.1%</i>	<i>-2.9%</i>
State Supplement Only	151	146	137	133
Total Federally Administered	8,108	8,057	7,879	7,652

In addition to Federal SSI recipients, we currently administer State supplementary payments for 20 States and the District of Columbia. We administer payments for approximately 1.4 million State supplement recipients, of which 137,000 do not receive a Federal SSI benefit and only receive the State supplementary payment.

Table 2.13—SSI Recipients, Projected ¹
(average over fiscal year, in thousands)

	FY 2023 Estimate	FY 2024 Estimate	Change
Aged	1,098	1,112	+1.3%
Blind or Disabled	6,299	6,206	-1.5%
Total Federal	7,397	7,318	-1.1%
State Supplement only	137	137	+0.0%
Total Federally Administered	7,534	7,455	-1.0%

¹ Totals may not add due to rounding.

SSI Disabled vs. Aged Recipient Population

The number of Federal blind or disabled SSI recipients as a percentage of all Federal SSI recipients remained steady at about 86 percent from FY 2019 to FY 2022, and is projected to decrease to about 85 percent in FY 2023 and FY 2024.

Table 2.14—Blind or Disabled Recipients as a Percentage of Total ¹
(average over fiscal year, in thousands)

Fiscal Year	Total Federal	Aged	Blind or Disabled	Blind or Disabled as % of Total
2019	7,957	1,114	6,842	86.0%
2020	7,911	1,109	6,802	86.0%
2021	7,742	1,076	6,666	86.1%
2022	7,519	1,069	6,450	85.8%
2023 Estimate	7,397	1,098	6,299	85.2%
2024 Estimate	7,318	1,112	6,206	84.8%

Concurrent SSI/OASDI Recipients

SSI recipients also receiving Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) or DI benefits have their SSI benefit reduced, less applicable exclusions, by the amount of their OASDI benefit. Approximately 33 percent of all SSI recipients (including those only receiving a State supplement) also receive Social Security benefits. Approximately 57 percent of the SSI aged and 29 percent of the SSI blind and disabled populations receive concurrent payments.

¹ Totals may not add due to rounding.

Supplemental Security Income Program

BENEFIT PAYMENTS

Maximum Monthly Federal Payments

The maximum monthly Federal benefit rate (FBR) is increased each January when there are increases in the cost-of-living. There was an 8.7 percent cost of living increase in calendar year (CY) 2023. An increase of 3.6 percent is projected for January 2024. The FBR increased from \$841 for an individual and \$1,261 for a couple for CY 2022 to \$914 for an individual and \$1,371 for a couple in CY 2023. We estimate the FBR will increase to \$947 for an individual and \$1,420 for a couple in CY 2024. The COLA will be effective in January 2024, raising the maximum benefit rate to higher levels than the first 3 months of the fiscal year.

Table 2.15—Maximum Benefit Rates

	FY 2023		FY 2024	
	First 3 Months	Last 9 Months	First 3 Months	Last 9 Months
Individual	\$841	\$914	\$914	\$947
Couple	\$1,261	\$1,371	\$1,371	\$1,420

Average Monthly Benefit Payments

The amount actually paid to a recipient can vary from the FBR based on their income received (e.g., earnings and Social Security benefits) and the living arrangement of the recipient (e.g., residence in one's own home, the household of another person, or in a nursing home which meets Medicaid standards). The average monthly benefit is expected to increase from \$618 in FY 2022 to \$666 in FY 2023 and \$698 in FY 2024. The increase in the average benefit payment is driven by COLAs and recipient population characteristics.

Table 2.16—Average Monthly Benefit Payments

	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Estimate	FY 2024 Estimate
Aged	\$452	\$489	\$516
Blind or Disabled	\$646	\$697	\$731
All SSI Recipients	\$618	\$666	\$698

Supplemental Security Income Program

Cost of Living Adjustments

When applicable, COLAs increase both the maximum and average monthly benefit payment. However, for concurrent SSI/OASDI recipients, increases in SSI benefit payments are partially offset by increases in Social Security benefits resulting from the same COLA. Social Security benefits are counted as income in the SSI program. Therefore, any increase in Social Security benefits resulting from the annual COLA increases countable income in the SSI benefit computation.

Program Integrity Funding

Annual benefit payment estimates factor in results from our legally-required SSI CDRs and redeterminations. Specifically, in FY 2024, we estimate we will conduct approximately 345,000 SSI CDRs and 2,540,000 non-medical redeterminations using dedicated program integrity funds. For details about program integrity funding and activities, please refer to page 144.

Timing of Monthly Benefit Payments

Monthly SSI benefit payments are made on the first of the month, unless the first falls on a weekend or Federal holiday. In that case, the payment is made on the prior business day at the end of the previous month. When October 1 falls on a weekend or Federal holiday, the payment is made in the prior fiscal year at the end of September. This timing of payments results in 11, 12, or 13 payments in a given fiscal year.

Table 2.17—Check Payments by Fiscal Year

	Number of Check Payments	Federal Benefit Obligations
FY 2015	12	\$54,706,388,183
FY 2016	13	\$59,044,228,391
FY 2017	12	\$54,729,471,841
FY 2018	11	\$50,949,421,097
FY 2019	12	\$55,590,534,196
FY 2020	12	\$56,161,567,718
FY 2021	12	\$55,717,174,588
FY 2022	13	\$60,910,067,748
FY 2023	12	\$60,104,000,000
FY 2024	11	\$57,582,000,000

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ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES

Authorizing Legislation: Sections 201(g)(1) of the Social Security Act.

PURPOSE AND METHOD OF OPERATION

Administrative expenses for the SSI program are funded from general revenues. Section 201(g)(1) of the Social Security Act provides that administrative expenses for the SSI program, including Federal administration of State supplementary payments, may be financed from the Social Security trust funds with reimbursement, including any interest lost, to the trust funds from general revenues.

This appropriation funds the SSI program share of administrative expenses incurred through the LAE account. Amounts appropriated are available for current year SSI administrative expenses, as well as for prior year administrative expenses that exceeded the amount available through this account for the prior year. If those excess prior year amounts were paid out of the Social Security trust funds, then current year SSI funds must be used to reimburse these trust funds with interest.

The legislative history of the 1972 amendments (which established this funding mechanism) indicates a desire to obtain economy of administration by giving us the responsibility for the SSI program because of its existing field office network and its administrative and automated data processing facilities. Because of the integration of the administration of the SSI and Social Security programs, it was desirable to fund them from a single source (the LAE account). This process requires that the trust funds and the SSI account pay their appropriate shares to the LAE account, which in turn manages the administrative expenses on behalf of the paying accounts. The determination is based on a Government Accountability Office-approved method of cost analysis of the respective expenses of the SSI and Social Security insurance programs, and statute mandates a final settlement by the end of the subsequent fiscal year.

**Table 2.18—Administrative Expenses: New Budget Authority and Obligations
(in thousands)**

	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Estimate	Change
Total Appropriation	\$4,531,681	\$4,769,125	\$4,961,853	+\$192,728
Obligations Funded from Prior-Year Unobligated Balance	\$0	+\$70,158	+\$55,239	-\$14,919
Unobligated Balance Carried Forward into FY 2024	\$0	-\$10,272	\$0	+\$10,272
Obligations	\$4,530,404	\$4,829,011	\$5,017,092	+\$188,081

RATIONALE FOR BUDGET REQUEST

Our administrative budget is driven by the programs we administer – both in terms of the amount of work performed and the number of people needed to process it – and by our continuing efforts to improve service, stewardship, and efficiency.

The FY 2024 request for SSI administrative expenses is \$5 billion. This appropriation is used to reimburse the trust funds for the SSI program’s share of administrative expenses. This amount includes \$1.5 billion specifically for FY 2024 SSI program integrity activities.

These amounts exclude funding made available in the LAE account from State user fees for our expenses for administering SSI State supplementary payments. The LAE account assumes funding of up to \$150 million in FY 2024 to administer SSI state supplementary payments.

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SUPPLEMENTAL KEY INITIATIVE

Extend Supplemental Security Income to the U.S. Territories: As noted in the Budget, the Administration looks forward to improving the Supplemental Security Income program to help low-income older Americans and people with disabilities afford their basic needs. This includes working with Congress to extend SSI eligibility to Puerto Rico and the U.S. Territories, providing parity with the rest of the United States.

BENEFICIARY SERVICES

Authorizing Legislation: Sections 1148 and 1615(d) of the Social Security Act

PURPOSE AND METHOD OF OPERATION

Beneficiary services include the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Cost Reimbursement and Ticket to Work (TTW) programs. The objective of the programs is to help disabled individuals return to work. The trust funds and general revenues fund beneficiary services. Section 222(d)(1) of the Social Security Act authorizes transfers from the OASI and DI trust funds to reimburse for reasonable and necessary costs of vocational rehabilitation services for individuals. The OASI and DI trust funds also fund payments to Employment Networks as part of the TTW program. Beneficiary services funded through the trust funds do not require appropriation. The general revenues fund beneficiary services for disabled Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients as described below.

**Table 2.19—Beneficiary Services: New Budget Authority and Obligations
(in thousands)**

	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Estimate	<i>FY 2023 to FY 2024 Change</i>
Appropriation	\$205,000	\$124,000	\$137,000	<i>+\$13,000</i>
Prior-Year Unobligated Balances and Recoveries	\$55,488	\$125,522	\$82,522	<i>-\$43,000</i>
Total Budgetary Resources	\$260,488	\$249,522	\$219,522	<i>-\$30,000</i>
Obligations	\$134,966	\$167,000	\$175,000	<i>+\$8,000</i>

Under the VR cost reimbursement program, we repay VR agencies for the reasonable and necessary costs of services that successfully help disabled recipients return to work. VR agencies are successful when a disabled recipient performs substantial gainful activity (SGA) for a continuous period of 9 out of 12 months.¹

Under the TTW program, authorized by the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-170), we pay Employment Networks (EN) for providing vocational rehabilitation, employment, and other support services to disabled SSI recipients. These recipients select an EN, which we pay when EN services result in prescribed work milestones and outcomes that may reduce reliance on Federal cash benefits.

¹ In 2023, we consider non-blind and blind disabled recipients to be performing SGA if they earn more than \$1,470 and \$2,460 per month, respectively.

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VR agencies can serve as ENs in the TTW program or receive payments under our VR cost reimbursement program. Ticket payments, unlike VR cost reimbursement payments, are not based on the costs of specific services provided by the EN. We pay ENs using either an outcome-milestone payment method or an outcome-only payment method.

We base Ticket payment amounts for SSI recipients on the prior year's average disability benefit payable under Title XVI. While we previously made Ticket payments only upon request, we now also initiate payments to ENs when information in our records indicates the recipient has achieved the prerequisite earnings and all other requirements qualifying the EN for a payment are met.

RATIONALE FOR BUDGET REQUEST

We are requesting \$137 million in new budget authority for beneficiary services in FY 2024. The FY 2024 forecast is based on an econometric model which uses prior payments to predict future spending. This model creates separate estimates for EN and VR payments using quarterly Federal unemployment data, and TTW participation and beneficiary characteristics data from our administrative records through the Disability Analysis File (DAF). We also review various additional factors when budgeting, such as considering the possible impact of upcoming policy or business process changes on the budget and factor in any current trends in our spending. While the COVID-19 pandemic slowed the expected growth of TTW payments in FY 2020, our TTW payments continue to increase each fiscal year as employed Ticketholders remain in the workforce. As a result, we expect the amount of TTW payments to continue to increase in FY 2023 and FY 2024. The FY 2024 request funds an estimated 5 percent increase in obligations above the FY 2023 level.

The integration of VR payments into the Internet Ticket Operations Provider Support System (iTOPSS) in FY 2017 resulted in an increase in the number of claims submitted by VR agencies, which led to an increase of backlogged claims awaiting payment. In August 2022, we achieved two major milestones: we transferred the VR payment workload to the Ticket Program Manager (TPM) contractor and eliminated the backlog. SSA employees have transitioned to performing quality assurance reviews of the contractor, continually monitoring the payments made by contractor staff, and providing additional guidance and training as necessary. As a result, all payments are processed within 30 days of receipt.

In FY 2022, we saw a 27 percent increase in claims from VRs. While VR agencies can submit their claims electronically, supporting documentation has to be sent via fax. Only 66 percent of all submissions were payable, a decrease of 6 percentage points from the 72 percent payment rate in FY 2021. The most common reason claims were denied was because the claim was untimely – VRs submitted their claims more than 12 months after the client earned the 9th month of SGA.

While the number of receipts increased in FY 2022, so did the average cost per claim. We saw a 6 percent increase in the average cost per claim, from \$12,626 in FY 2021 to \$13,424 through the first quarter of FY 2023. The increase in the average cost per claim is due primarily to the increase in the direct cost category of job placement¹. The total amount we reimbursed VR

¹ Direct costs are services the beneficiary receives from the VR to help the beneficiary gain employment and/or become self sufficient.

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agencies for job placement related costs doubled between FY 2021 and FY 2022, from \$8 million to \$16 million. Based on the first quarter of FY 2023, we expect job placement related costs to reach \$21 million. We expect VR claims to continue to increase and VR agencies to be more timely with their submissions, resulting in a 25 percent increase in spending in FY 2023 over FY 2022.

Considering all the factors above, and assuming that more beneficiaries will return to work, we estimate an increase in VR cost reimbursement payments and an increase in the number of milestone and outcome payments in FY 2024. We continue our efforts to improve management and oversight of the VR cost reimbursement and TTW programs to ensure effectiveness. These efforts are solidified in the current EN agreements and include ongoing quality reviews of State reimbursement claims and internal reviews of the agency's payment process.

Table 2.20—SSI VR Cost Reimbursement and Ticket to Work Payments¹

	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Estimate	FY 2024 Estimate
<u>Vocational Rehabilitation</u>			
SSI Only Reimbursement Payments	7,503	9,398	9,782
SSI/DI Concurrent Reimbursement Payments	4,271	5,350	5,568
Total Reimbursement Awards	11,774	14,748	15,350
VR Obligations	\$117,353,356	\$147,000,000	\$153,000,000
<u>Ticket to Work</u>			
SSI Only Milestone Payments	5,579	6,335	6,969
SSI Only Outcome Payments	20,082	22,805	25,085
SSI/DI Concurrent Milestone Payments	6,732	7,645	8,409
SSI/DI Concurrent Outcome Payments	7,028	7,981	8,779
Total Ticket Payments	39,421	44,766	49,242
Ticket Obligations	\$17,612,275	\$20,000,000	\$22,000,000
Total VR Payments & Ticket Payments	51,195	59,514	64,592
Total Obligations	\$134,965,631	\$167,000,000	\$175,000,000

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON VR COST REIMBURSEMENT AND TICKET TO WORK PROGRAMS

Each VR may decide on a case-by-case basis whether to receive compensation under the VR cost reimbursement payment option or one of the two TTW payment methods described below. VRs have 90 days after they open a case (ticket assignment) to decide if they want to be reimbursed

¹ Totals may not add due to rounding.

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for their expenses under the Cost Reimbursement program or if they want to be paid under the TTW program. Regardless of the payment method the VR chooses, the beneficiary must have agreed to assign their Ticket with the VR for the agency to be eligible for either type of payment.

There are two TTW payment methods: Outcome-Milestone and Outcome-Only

Outcome-Milestone Payment Method:

- There are two phases of outcome-milestone payments. Phase I allows 4 payments, and Phase II allows 18 payments.
- We begin paying the EN when the recipient successfully achieves certain predetermined work-related milestones while still receiving Federal benefits.
- We stop paying milestone payments and begin outcome payments when the recipient's monthly Federal cash benefits are not payable because of work and earnings.

Outcome-Only Payment Method:

- Outcome payments are payable for a maximum of 60 months (consecutive or otherwise).
- We begin issuing monthly outcome payments after the individual's monthly Federal cash benefit payments cease and the individual earns above the SGA level in a month.
- The dollar amounts of the monthly outcome payments are larger when the EN elects not to receive milestone payments while the recipient still receives benefits.

When a VR provides services to a recipient under the Cost Reimbursement program, and the recipient later seeks support services from an EN, we may pay the VR and the EN for sequential periods of service. However, the EN is not eligible for Phase I Ticket payments, since the VR would have provided initial services.

We continue to take steps to reduce overpayments incurred by all beneficiaries who work, such as enabling beneficiaries to report earnings and submit work activity reports online. SSI recipients may report earnings and submit paystubs through a mobile app. We are developing a modernized system to process Disability Insurance (DI) work activity and reduce manual keying of data. TTW participants are subject to the same reporting requirements as all other beneficiaries, but have additional opportunities for training and reminders. For example, they often receive benefits counseling which explains how earnings affect their Social Security and other benefits and includes reminders on the importance of reporting their earnings to SSA. Work Incentive Seminar Events teach participants about work incentives and the effects of work on benefits.

This spring we are completing a new study in response to a recent Government Accountability Office recommendation that SSA identify the root causes of overpayments to TTW participants and take appropriate actions as necessary.¹

¹ See: Government Accountability Office. (2021). Social Security Disability: Ticket to Work Helped Some Participants, but Overpayments Increased Program Costs. (GAO Publication No. 22-104031). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-22-104031>.

RESEARCH AND DEMONSTRATION

Authorizing Legislation: Sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act.

PURPOSE AND METHOD OF OPERATION

We conduct extramural research, demonstrations, and outreach under Sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act (Act). We currently fund a range of Section 1110 projects designed to:

- Help us keep pace with advancements in medicine and technology;
- Modernize our vocational rules;
- Test work support models;
- Analyze program trends, gaps, and inconsistencies;
- Gauge the public’s understanding of the program; and
- Measure the impact of program changes.

**Table 2.21 - Research and Demonstration Projects:
Budget Authority and Obligations by Funding Authority¹
(in thousands)²**

	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Estimate	<i>Change from FY 2023 to FY 2024</i>
Appropriation³	\$86,000	\$86,000	\$91,000	+\$5,000
Prior Year Unobligated Balance and Recoveries	\$51,519	\$55,507	\$33,408	-\$22,099
TOTAL Budgetary Resources	\$137,519	\$141,507	\$124,408	-\$17,099
Obligations by Authority⁴				
FY 2020-2022 Authority ⁵	\$9	\$0	\$0	
FY 2021-2023 Authority ⁴	\$37,637	\$784	\$0	
FY 2022-2024 Authority	\$44,366	\$41,634	\$0	
FY 2023-2025 Authority	-	\$62,592	\$23,408	
FY 2024-2026 Authority	-	-	\$74,676	
No-Year Authority	\$0	\$3,089	\$10,000	

¹ Please note, the exhibit does not include a narrative for projects that are using prior year funds.

² Totals may not add up due to rounding.

³ These amounts include \$7,000,000 in base research funding classified as mandatory.

⁴ We are authorized to expend research funds within three years of an enacted appropriation. We have a small balance of prior no-year funding authority that we are carrying over until expended. The FY 2023 and FY 2024 break out is our current projection for how the funds will be obligated.

⁵ The enacted appropriation for research and demonstration projects was \$101,000,000 in FY 2020 and \$86,000,000 in FY 2021.

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	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Enacted	FY 2024 Estimate	<i>Change from FY 2023 to FY 2024</i>
TOTAL Obligations	\$82,012	\$108,099	\$108,084	-\$15
Total Unobligated Balance	\$55,507	\$33,408	\$16,324	-\$17,084

**Table 2.22 - Research and Demonstration Projects:
Obligations by Funding Source
(in thousands)¹**

Obligations by Source	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Estimate	FY 2024 Estimate
Section 1144	\$933	\$1,721	\$1,721
Section 1110	\$81,079	\$106,378	\$106,363
TOTAL Obligations	\$82,012	\$108,099	\$108,084

Section 1110 of the Act provides the Commissioner of Social Security the authority to conduct broad, cross-programmatic projects for the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability (OASDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs. This section provides for waiver authorities for the SSI program, as well as projects dealing with specific SSI issues. Under Section 1110, we fund a range of extramural projects: disability and retirement policy research, demonstration projects to test creative and effective ways to promote greater labor force participation among people with disabilities (including early intervention rehabilitation strategies), evaluations of proposed or newly enacted legislative changes, and projects to maintain and improve basic data about our programs and beneficiaries.

Many of our Section 1110 projects support our [FYs 2022-2026 Learning Agenda](#) and our annual [Evaluation Plans](#) that are required under the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018. Our Learning Agenda describes our evidence-building roadmap to support the goals in our FYs 2022–2026 Agency Strategic Plan (ASP). We identified 10 priority questions for our Learning Agenda that correspond to the ASP goals. The priority questions include short-term and long-term questions related to our mission, strategic plans, and agency operations. We expect that answers to our priority questions will provide valuable information about our agency’s performance and promote evidence-based decision-making, informing our efforts to improve service delivery, enhance the customer experience, and advance equity. Our FY 2023 Annual Evaluation Plan describes the most significant evidence-building activities that we will complete during the fiscal year. We define significant activities as those that are required by law, address the President’s priorities, or support the goals in our FYs 2022–2026 ASP. Performance documents are available here: [Agency Strategic Plan | SSA](#)

Section 1144 requires us to conduct outreach to individuals with Medicare who are potentially eligible for State-administered Medicaid programs or Medicare prescription drug subsidies under

¹ Totals may not add up due to rounding.

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Medicare Part D. We identify these potential beneficiaries, inform them about these programs, and notify State Medicaid agencies. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, within Health and Human Services (HHS), oversees both the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

Section 1115 provides the Secretary of HHS with the funding and authority to waive compliance with Medicaid requirements to enable States to participate in our specific research and disability demonstration projects. There are currently no research projects funded under this section.

Section 234 gives the Commissioner of Social Security the authority to conduct research and demonstration projects testing alternative Disability Insurance (DI) benefit rules. We used trust fund dollars to conduct various demonstration projects, including projects that examined alternative program rules for treating work activity of individuals entitled to DI benefits. Section 234 covered both applicants and current beneficiaries of the program. Our authority to conduct projects under Section 234 expired on December 31, 2022.

RATIONALE FOR BUDGET REQUEST

We are committed to improving the quality, consistency, and timeliness of our disability decisions; maximizing efficiencies throughout the disability program; and enhancing employment support programs to create new opportunities for returning beneficiaries to the workforce. Our research activities are critical to our efforts in all three areas.

In FY 2024, we estimate that we will need \$91 million in new budget authority for traditional research activities under Sections 1110 and 1144.

Our FY 2024 budget request builds upon the progress we have made in previous years with initiatives like our data collection and analysis efforts regarding the Occupational Information System (OIS) and Vocational Information Tool (VIT) project. Our advisory services contract with the National Academy of Sciences' (NAS) Health and Medicine Division (HMD) will help us identify ways to strengthen our disability policy. In addition, Work Disability - Functional Assessment Battery (WD-FAB) studies will help us evaluate the usefulness of the WD-FAB to our continuing disability review (CDR) process. Our demonstration portfolio provides evidence on the effectiveness of potential policies and programs for our current and potential beneficiaries.

Renewal of 234 Authority

We are interested in working with Congress to renew Section 234 authority in order to provide sufficient time to conduct new and ongoing demonstrations.

The table and discussion that follows provides more details on the research and outreach efforts we plan to fund in FY 2024.

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Table 2.23—Major Research Areas, Demonstration Obligations and New Budget Authority
(in thousands)^{1, 2, 3}

	Obligations⁴		
	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Estimate	FY 2024 Estimate
Optimize the Experience of SSA’s Customers	\$42,160	\$55,639	\$54,756
Analyzing Relationships between Disability, Rehabilitation, and Work (ARDRAW)*	\$0	\$900	\$450
Behavioral Insights Studies	\$0	\$0	\$2,000
Blanket Purchase Agreement for Time Sensitive Research Projects	\$977	\$2,000	\$2,000
Census Surveys*	\$750	\$750	\$750
Data Development*	\$1,107	\$1,168	\$1,168
Data Development in an Enterprise Business Platform (EBI)	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Disability Analysis File (DAF)	\$1,323	\$1,237	\$1,510
Disability Perceptions Survey	\$66	\$0	\$0
Disability Research Survey*	\$13,213	\$0	\$8,500
Outreach Evaluation *	\$0	\$0	\$3,000
Health & Retirement Study (HRS) and Supplement*	\$4,575	\$4,575	\$4,575
Interventional Cooperative Agreement Program (ICAP)*	\$73	\$15,087	\$9,080
Medicare Outreach (1144)	\$933	\$1,721	\$1,721
National Beneficiary Survey (NBS)	\$56	\$199	\$0
New and Emerging Research – Disability	\$0	\$2,000	\$1,000
Retirement and Disability Research Consortium (RDRC)*	\$11,990	\$12,000	\$12,000
Ticket to Work Evaluation*	\$0	\$7,000	\$0
Understanding America Study (UAS) Enhancements*	\$5,000	\$5,002	\$5,002
Working Disability Functional Assessment Battery (WD-FAB) Data Collection	\$97	\$0	\$0
Ensuring Stewardship of SSA Programs	\$39,852	\$52,460	\$53,328
Advisory Services to Assist SSA with Disability Issues*	\$2,892	\$6,366	\$4,820

¹ Does not include funding authorized under Section 234.

² Totals may not add up due to rounding.

³ Projects marked with an asterisk support our implementation of Executive Order 13985, [Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#).

⁴ This amount includes obligations funded from prior-year unobligated balances.

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	FY 2022 Actual	FY 2023 Estimate	FY 2024 Estimate
National Institutes of Health Research on Data Analytics and the Functional Assessment Battery Development	\$4,299	\$4,300	\$4,800
Occupational Information Systems (OIS) and Vocational Information Tool (VIT)	\$32,661	\$41,794	\$43,708
Total Research Obligations¹	\$82,012	\$108,099	\$108,084
New Budget Authority	\$86,000	\$86,000	\$91,000

Optimize the Experience of SSA’s Customers

Update for Projects with Funding Requested

Analyzing Relationships between Disability, Rehabilitation, and Work (ARDRAW)

The ARDRAW program supports young and emerging scholars pursuing careers in public policy research who have a special interest in our beneficiaries’ quality of life and disability program issues, challenges, and outcomes. We recruit graduate students, faculty, and administrators of accredited programs with an academic emphasis in public health, social work, economics, occupational medicine, vocational and rehabilitation counseling, public policy and administration, sociology, psychology, education, medicine, and law.

ARDRAW was originally a five-year program, but we extended the current ARDRAW grant agreement by one year due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In FY 2022, we awarded the sixth and final ARDRAW cohort and received final project papers from the fifth ARDRAW cohort, as well as the fourth cohort participants who had received extensions. In FY 2023, we will receive final project papers from the sixth ARDRAW cohort and close out the existing ARDRAW grant agreement.

In FY 2023, we will conduct a competition for a grants management organization to oversee ARDRAW. We will also conduct start up activities for the new grant agreement and request applications for the first cohort of the new program. In FY 2024, we will receive final project papers from the first cohort of the new program and request applications and award the second cohort of the new program.

The renewed ARDRAW will support young and emerging scholars who have a research interest in our beneficiaries’ quality of life and disability program issues, with additional emphasis on access and equity challenges. We will maintain efforts from the current ARDRAW to increase outreach to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and minority-serving institutions (MSIs) to encourage participation, including working with the *White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity through Historically Black Colleges and Universities*.

¹ This amount includes obligations funded from prior-year unobligated balances.

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Behavioral Insights Studies

Since 2015, we have tested new notices to determine the effects of mailings and alternative language on encouraging wage reporting in the SSI program, alerting low-benefit OASDI seniors about potential SSI eligibility, and other studies. In FY 2024, we will conduct studies that utilize behavioral insights to improve the information we provide beneficiaries. We will partner with external experts, such as contractors and the Office of Evaluation Sciences at the General Services Administration (GSA), to test potential solutions to improve beneficiaries' understanding of overpayments in the DI program and to increase the use of Achieving Better Life Experience accounts in the SSI program.

Blanket Purchase Agreement for Time Sensitive Research Projects

In FY 2018, we awarded a blanket purchase agreement (BPA) for policy and program assessments and studies related to social science, medical, or vocational rehabilitation topics. The BPA allows multiple research projects to occur simultaneously within relatively short timeframes. We can expect deliverables in the range of 4 to 6 months, rather than in 18-plus months, which is typical of traditional contracts. We build an interactive process with the contractors as the projects proceed, allowing us to course-correct as the work progresses. We produce effective research objectives and relevant data analysis informed by our researchers' expertise and content knowledge. The BPA also provides the option to contract with a trusted agent to develop and assess research questions, provide subject matter expertise, and evaluate research products to inform policy decisions. The use of a trusted agent is optional and is considered on a case-by-case basis depending upon the nature or sensitivity of the research topics.

In FY 2023, BPA contractors are conducting research for two FY 2022 funded studies:

- The Functional Limitations project which provides medical and vocational experts insights identifying evidence that supports findings of extreme limitations in functional abilities required for most work in the national economy (as indicated by the Occupational Requirements Survey (ORS) published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)).
- A review of the Quick Disability Determination (QDD) predictive model, that screens disability applications and identifies cases for which a favorable disability determination is highly likely and medical evidence is readily available. The purpose of this study is to identify any potential bias in the QDD predictive model.

We plan to fund the following projects in FY 2023:

- Expert medical analysis study to synthesize vocational requirements, occupational tasks, and functional abilities, for the 20 new Standard Occupational Classifications (SOC) identified in ORS data released by the BLS.
- A review of the effectiveness of the Work Smart system, which identifies beneficiaries completing their Trial Work Period or engaging in Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA). We want to assess whether we are achieving our goal of reducing and preventing

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improper payments and completing work CDRs efficiently by identifying earnings earlier.

The current BPA ends in September 2023. In accordance with our [Equity Action Plan](#), we are conducting market research to determine if there are small and disadvantaged research firms, which include woman-owned, or service-disabled veteran-owned research firms, and small research contractors in Historically Underutilized Business (HUB) Zones that can be responsive to our research needs currently sourced through the BPA. Based on our market research, we will move forward with a competition among small disadvantaged contractors, or with competition among contractors of all sizes, with an aim to secure another 5-year BPA by the end of FY 2023. We are planning research projects for FY 2024 under the new BPA, in continued support of Executive Order (EO) 13985 and our [Equity Action Plan](#).

Census Bureau Surveys

The Census Bureau's Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) is foundational for our policy analysis and modeling efforts. We support efforts to improve the quality and content of the Census Bureau's SIPP data to facilitate matching SIPP data to our administrative data on benefits and earnings. We rely upon SIPP data matched to our records to study Old Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI), DI, SSI, and related programs and to analyze the effect of changes to these programs on individuals, the economy, and program solvency. We developed new questions, which the Census Bureau integrated into existing SIPP content in 2021. The new content has been used in SIPP interviews conducted since 2022.

Data Development

We maintain a series of detailed, statistical databases drawn from our major administrative data systems and prepare a broad range of statistical tables. We also publish statistical compilations and develop information for research, evaluation, and modeling that relies on survey data collected by our agency, other Federal agencies, and federally sponsored institutions.

In FY 2021, we entered into a new agreement with the Census Bureau for the "Ask US" Panel (i.e., Census Address-and Probability-Based Online Panel). The focus of the interagency agreement was to collaborate on an address-based, probability-based, online research panel that will be available for the Federal Statistical System to conduct robust public opinion and methodological research. The Census Bureau has entered into a cooperative agreement with RTI International to build this panel. In FYs 2023 and 2024, we will support the Census Bureau's efforts to implement and use the panel. Our partnership will facilitate longitudinal probability-based research that many Government agencies are interested in conducting.

Quality programmatic data on race and ethnicity for research is essential for our assessment of structural barriers that may limit access to our programs, and it is part of our focus in our [Equity Action Plan](#). Our challenge is to determine whether we have sufficiently reliable program data on race and ethnicity. In FY 2022, we assessed the quality of our data, developed metrics and thresholds for reliability, enhanced the data through statistical imputations and other techniques, and published statistics and research on those segments of our populations for which we have adequate data on race and ethnicity. In FYs 2023 and 2024, we plan to develop research data

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files for use by agency researchers and others to produce statistical data products related to equity, race, and ethnicity. For more information on our equity efforts, please see the *Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA)* exhibit in the LAE section.

Data Development in an Enterprise Business Intelligence (EBI) Platform

EBI provides advanced analytics and data integration tools for efficient access and analysis of our records to support data-driven decision making. Section 1110 funds support a subset of activities to enhance research and statistical functions, primarily the publication of statistics from administrative records.

We generate reports and data files monthly, quarterly, yearly, and on an *ad hoc* basis. Some of our legacy systems used for producing statistics still require significant manual intervention. We are improving the report and data production efficiency and accuracy by modernizing and automating the application processes that we use to create statistical data, tables, and reports for research.

FY 2022 work focused on:

- Modernizing and automating processes including validating and streamlining business processes for the OASDI publication data development and monthly statistical publication reports.
- Developing automation processes for generating the OASDI statistical summary data development and yearly statistical publication reports.
- Maintaining the automated publication process for the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP)-Government Pension Offset (GPO), SSI, Earnings Geography (GEO), Earnings Publication, and Representative Payee data.
- Using EBI tools to support the production of statistics or data extracts for ongoing publications and critical, ad hoc research projects.

In FY 2023, we will build tools to enhance our research and statistical reports. Additional work will include:

- Modernizing and automating Cell Suppression methods for OASDI and SSI files.
- Streamlining the business process for our Fast Facts Figures publication.
- Computerizing end-to-end validation process of OASDI and SSI statistical publication tables and reports using modern Statistical Analysis Software (SAS) statistical tools.
- Maintaining and upgrading the publication process for: WEP-GPO, SSI, GEO, Earnings Publications, and Representative Payee data from SAS 9.4 M5 version to SAS 9.4 M7/SAS Viya.
- Continuing to use EBI tools to support the production of statistics or data extracts for ongoing publications and critical, ad hoc research projects.

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In FY 2024, we plan to continue strengthening the integrity of our research and statistical reports by:

- Replacing obsolete data collecting methodologies in the SAS.
- Assessing the inclusion of non-Reporting Tax Year (RTY) data into the current GEO automation process.
- Evaluating Earnings Publications automated process to generate the annual earnings publication tables.
- Developing and implementing Earnings Publications automated applications to support ad hoc requests.
- Maintaining and upgrading software for the publication of WEP-GPO, SSI, GEO, Earnings Publications, and Representative Payee data.

Disability Analysis File (DAF)

Administrative data is critical to our understanding of beneficiaries with disabilities, providing details on the entire population and allowing for the analysis of small subpopulations which we cannot generally study with survey data based on population samples. The DAF takes data from our 10 most relevant administrative files and creates an annual, formatted database that is ready for analysis, easy to use, and well-documented. We create two versions of the DAF each year—a restricted use version for our staff, grantees, contractors, and Federal partners, and a de-identified public use file (PUF) version available to the public through our website. The DAF focuses on data needed to answer questions about disability and work. It complements the National Beneficiary Survey (NBS), which provides information that is not available from our administrative sources, such as veterans status, interest in work, barriers to work, hours of work, wages, and how disability affects activities. When combined, the DAF and NBS provide a more complete picture of demographics, benefits, work, and work attitudes for all SSI and DI beneficiaries with disabilities.

We use the DAF for internal research, to support demonstration development and evaluation, and to answer other questions that may arise. We also use the DAF to support oversight by the Social Security Advisory Board, our Office of the Inspector General, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Congress, the Government Accountability Office, and others. Additionally, we allow non-SSA researchers to use the DAF, primarily through the Retirement and Disability Research Consortium (RDRC), and through a public use version of the DAF available at data.gov.

Since we first published public use data from the DAF in November 2018, there has been significant interest in using this file, with 48 data downloads per month on average. Since its launch, the DAF-PUF documentation has consistently been a popular data download. In the last year, downloads of the DAF data user's guide averaged 42 per month. As a point of reference, downloads of the data user's guide for the National Beneficiary Survey (NBS) averaged 16 per month over the same period. Ten research papers put forth in 2022 utilized either the public or restricted versions of the DAF for their analysis.

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We awarded a competitive contract in FY 2022 to continue building the DAF for FYs 2022-2026. Over this period, we are implementing a transition from mainframe administrative data files to a cloud server environment for construction, storage, and processing. As part of this transition, we will explore opportunities for streamlining the DAF construction process and/or shortening the DAF construction timeline. In FY 2022, we completed the DAF for 2021 and started testing of DAF construction in a new cloud environment. In FY 2023, we awarded the second task order of the new DAF contract which will include construction of the DAF for 2022 data, and continued exploration of cloud computing for the DAF. We are also developing two extensions to the DAF: adding data from the SSI and DI application process; and extending the variables available in the PUF file. We expect to complete our data development for these two extensions to the DAF in FY 2023 and to implement these changes in FY 2024.

Disability Research Surveys (DRS)

In FY 2021, we developed a new survey platform, the DRS, to broaden the scope of information we collect about beneficiaries. The DRS included three separate surveys.

The first of the three DRS surveys was an additional round of the NBS. We awarded the NBS task order in FY 2022, began fielding the NBS in FY 2023, and expect to conclude the survey in FY 2026.

The New Applicant Survey was the second survey developed under the DRS to better understand DI and SSI applicants' experiences, their use of services, and the pathways they take before and after application. We awarded the task order for the New Applicant Survey in FY 2022. We plan to design the surveys in FY 2023 and FY 2024, and field them in FY 2025.

We will determine the topic for the final new survey in the future. Possible topics include, but are not limited to, child and youth beneficiaries (including those transitioning to adulthood), veterans, and underserved populations. We will award the task order for the third survey in FY 2024, start designing the survey in FY 2025, and field it in FY 2026.

Outreach Evaluation

We are committed to increasing outreach efforts to ensure that our services are reaching eligible populations, including to communities of color and underserved communities. In FY 2024, we will award an evaluation contract to assess the effectiveness of these efforts. For more information about our outreach efforts, please see the *Outreach to People Facing Barriers* exhibit in the LAE section.

Health and Retirement Study (HRS) and Supplement

The [University of Michigan's HRS](#) surveys more than 22,000 Americans over the age of 50 every 2 years and provides an ongoing source of longitudinal data for research on retirement and aging. The study provides data on health and economic well-being after retirement not available in our program data. HRS data helps us assess a wide range of issues, including pre-retirement saving, health insurance, employment and retirement patterns, and projected benefits of disabled

and retired workers. Through jointly financed cooperative agreements with the National Institute on Aging (NIA), we have supported the HRS from its inception.

We use the HRS for research by our staff or for projects funded through the RDRC regarding disability, pension participation, differences in contributions to tax-deferred savings accounts among different birth cohorts, and retirement income resources of near-retirees. For example, in FY 2022, our researchers are using the HRS for a study examining the difference in retirement preparedness between Black and White individuals during the pre-retirement period. Research in FYs 2023 and 2024 will use the HRS to further study the accuracy of our *Income of the Aged Population* publications and total retirement resources by race and ethnicity. The HRS data we support is also available for external researchers to better understand the American population aged 50 and older.¹ In FY 2023, RDRC researchers are using the HRS to analyze the wealth of the late boomer and early Generation X population, and using questions related to COVID-19 added in the 2020 HRS survey to examine the effects of COVID-19 excess mortality on Social Security outlays.

Interventional Cooperative Agreement Program (ICAP)

The ICAP encourages employment of individuals with disabilities, through cooperative agreements with States, private foundations, and other stakeholders who have an interest in and ability to identify, operate, and partially fund interventional research.

The research and interventions under this program support efforts to promote equity. Via ICAP, we can systematically review demonstration proposals from outside organizations and enter into collaboration agreements. ICAP is distinct from our other research grant programs – ARDRAW and the RDRC – which focus on “observational” research as contrasted with “experimental” research. The awards for ICAP are tiered, with funding eligibility and funding level based upon the level of evidence that exists for the proposed intervention. Feasibility studies with little or no existing causal evidence are eligible for much smaller awards than studies that are based on or will produce causal evidence.

In FY 2021, we awarded our first two cooperative agreements.² The projects each have a 5-year project period, requiring renewal after the first year based on completion of startup activities. In FY 2022, we conducted start-up activities with the initial FY 2021 awardees. We solicited applications for additional projects in FY 2022 and issued Round 2 awards in the first quarter of FY 2023. One project will conduct a randomized controlled trial to assess the impact of an employment intervention for youth with disabilities who are transitioning into the adult workforce. The second project will be a randomized controlled trial to assess the impact of combining supportive housing with Individual Placement and Support (IPS) supported employment services for people who are recently unhoused experiencing a range of disabilities and mental health conditions.

¹ See [Data Products | Health and Retirement Study](#) for publicly available data.

² We signed a cooperative agreement with the Kessler Foundation to conduct a randomized controlled trial of a Vocational Resource Facilitation Demonstration employment intervention for adults who have experienced a brain injury or spinal cord injury. We awarded the State of Georgia's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council a grant to conduct a feasibility study of the implementation of the SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery model in county jails for incarcerated people across the state who have serious and persistent mental illness.

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In FY 2023, we are implementing projects awarded in FY 2021. We will also conduct start-up activities for the FY 2022 projects and solicit applications for the third and fourth round of projects.

In FY 2024, we will continue the implementation and evaluation of the first round of ICAP projects. We will complete start up activities for the second round of ICAP projects and begin the implementation and evaluation phase. We will also conduct start up activities for the third round of ICAP projects and solicit applications for the fourth round of projects.

Medicare Outreach – Section 1144

We target outreach to income-tested, Medicare-eligible beneficiaries and those who have experienced a decrease in income.¹ We send outreach letters to beneficiaries with incomes below 135 percent of the poverty level. These letters provide help with “traditional” Medicare and include information about Extra Help, when appropriate. Rather than notify all potentially eligible beneficiaries each year, we annually notify 20 percent of those who previously received an outreach letter, have not received the benefits, and continue to meet the income test.

In addition, we share lists of individuals potentially eligible for cost sharing with State Medicaid agencies. The major objective of these projects is to increase the enrollment of eligible low-income individuals into programs that assist Medicare beneficiaries with their out-of-pocket medical expenses, including prescription drug coverage premiums. HHS fully reimburses our costs in an amount not exceeding \$3 million per year.

In FY 2022, we mailed approximately 1.5 million outreach letters to those who potentially qualified for Medicare Savings Program (MSP) or Extra Help. In FYs 2023 to 2025, we anticipate mailing a similar number of outreach letters each year. We factor in a contingency amount for possible increases in enrollment, for beneficiaries who experience a decrease in income, and other expected costs such as an increase in postage.

Outreach efforts outlined in this section are part of our work under Section 1144 only. For more information on our broader outreach efforts, please see the *Outreach to People Facing Barriers* exhibit in the LAE section.

National Beneficiary Survey (NBS)

The NBS collects data from a nationally representative sample of DI beneficiaries and SSI recipients on a wide range of topics not available in our administrative data or in other public databases. The data include health and functional status, health insurance coverage, interest in work, barriers to work, use of services, work history, income, and experience with Social Security programs. The collection of this data improves our ability to conduct useful analysis regarding factors that facilitate DI beneficiary and SSI recipient employment and conversely, factors that impede their efforts to maintain employment.

¹ The Medicare Prescription Drug, Modernization, and Improvement Act of 2003, P.L. 108-173 expanded outreach requirements of Section 1144. The Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008, P.L. 110-275 deemed every Extra Help application filed with our agency to be a protective filing for the State-administered Medicare Savings Program (MSP), unless the claimant objects.

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Our researchers and analysts, along with researchers at other Federal agencies, research organizations, and academic institutions, use NBS data extensively to evaluate the Ticket to Work program and other DI and SSI work incentive programs and policies.

The NBS gathers information through three samples:

- A nationally representative sample of DI beneficiaries and SSI recipients called the Representative Beneficiary Sample, which collects information on health and well-being, employment-related goals and activities, and use of programs and services.
- The Successful Workers Sample (SWS), which focuses on beneficiaries who have attained sufficient earnings to have their benefits suspended due to work.
- A longitudinal sample of successful workers who were part of the 2017 SWS.

In FY 2022, the NBS contractor estimated final statistical weights for prior survey rounds. In FY 2023, we are developing final data files and documentation covering all rounds of the NBS in preparation for contract closeout. Future rounds of the NBS will be included in the DRS project.

Reports and public use files containing data from prior rounds of the NBS are available on our website at: ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/nbs.html.

New and Emerging Research – Disability

Given the size and scope of our research agenda, this category allows us the flexibility to cover unanticipated cost increases and the development of new research projects due to changes in laws, regulations, policy, and agency or administration priorities. Projects under this category typically include studies of program policy issues and the identification of trends in the disability program.

“New and Emerging Research – Disability” covers the costs of small initiatives or initial project development for larger initiatives. If we assess that a project will translate into a larger, multi-year initiative, the larger project will receive its own funding in future budget planning activities. Factors that determine this transition include project scope, duration, and cost.

In FY 2023, we will explore a qualitative study to help us better understand the decline in disability applications we experienced over the past several years, which predates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on applications. We will also seek input from beneficiaries and service providers on their understanding, preferences, and use of work incentive policies.

Retirement and Disability Research Consortium

The RDRC helps us produce a large body of policy-relevant research on our programs. The RDRC comprises four competitively selected research centers based at the University of Michigan, Boston College, the National Bureau of Economic Research, and the University of Wisconsin. We broadly charge these research centers with planning, initiating, and maintaining a high quality, multidisciplinary research program that covers retirement, disability, and Social Security program issues. The centers perform valuable research and evaluation of retirement and

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disability policy, disseminate results, provide training awards, and facilitate the use of our program data by outside researchers.

We awarded the current set of five-year cooperative agreements for the RDRC at the end of FY 2018. We will award the next set of five-year cooperative agreements towards the end of FY 2023 following a competition open to all research organizations, universities, and associations of research organizations and universities in the United States. We are targeting outreach to encourage HBCUs and MSIs to apply to the upcoming round of RDRC. The RDRC actively supports the agency's equity initiatives, both through training and research support. Two of the RDRC's ongoing training programs are co-administered by MSIs: the Junior Scholar Intensive Training summer workshop is a joint effort by the University of Wisconsin and Howard University; and the Social Insurance Undergraduate Research Fellowship is a joint effort by the University of Wisconsin and the University of Illinois Chicago. Other RDRC training programs that specifically recruit scholars from underserved populations include Boston College's Undergraduate Fellowship program and a mentorship program through the University of Michigan in collaboration with the Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research. The RDRC also supports our equity initiatives through funding for research projects by scholars from MSIs or underserved populations, and projects that focus on topics relating to racial or ethnic disparities.

FY 2022 funding supported around 70 projects to be conducted by the end of FY 2023. Focal areas for FY 2023 projects include: Disparities by Race and Ethnicity; Decline in SSDI and SSI Applications; Improving Communication and Outreach; Economic Security of SSA Beneficiaries; Improving Service Delivery; Return-to-Work; and Informing Trust Fund Projections. Within each topic, we provided the centers with specific research questions to consider when developing their research proposals. In FY 2024, we will continue to focus our research on equity issues and disparities by race and ethnicity by including these focal areas in the FY 2023 Request for Applications (RFA) as we solicit new five-year cooperative agreements for RDRC.

Ticket to Work Evaluation

To meet the continued obligations in the *Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999*, P.L. 106-170, for on-going evaluations and to assess the current landscape of the TTW program, we are undertaking an evaluation of the TTW program operations and experiences of TTW users. This evaluation will include consumer and provider experiences for both the Employment Network and the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) projects.

In FY 2023, we are soliciting applications to conduct an evaluation using surveys, focus groups, semi-structured interviews, an analysis of program data, and other data collection methodologies, as appropriate. The topics and questions we intend to answer with this evaluation include, but are not limited to:

- **Program Effectiveness and Opportunities for Improvement:** To what extent are the TTW and WIPA programs working effectively and efficiently? What additional services or program improvements can be helpful to beneficiaries? To what extent are

beneficiaries aware of the programs? Why and why not do beneficiaries use the programs?

- **Consumer Characteristics:** Who is using TTW and WIPA services? What services are most effective for different demographic groups?
- **Service Provision:** To what extent are services keeping up with modern technological changes? Who are the effective service providers and what do they do differently from less effective service providers?
- **Service Equity:** Are the TTW services broadly available to everyone or are there disparities between which populations have access to these services? What barriers exist, if any, to service provision, including service market provider entry, in economically disadvantaged, racially diverse, and rural communities? How do program rules, such as the Ticket payment system, affect service availability?

This evaluation will supplement findings from the previous TTW evaluation. In FY 2024, we expect to work with the contractor to finalize the evaluation design and obtain approval for data collection activities. We expect to field the data collection activities in FYs 2025 and 2026 and expect a final evaluation report in FY 2027.

Understanding America Study (UAS) Enhancements

UAS is an innovative, nationally representative longitudinal internet panel with a representative sample of over 10,000 U.S. households funded through a jointly financed cooperative agreement with the NIA. Our support will allow the grantee to maintain and expand the sample size to 20,000 panel members over the next five years.

In FY 2022, we used longitudinal data to understand the impact of the redesigned *Social Security Statement* and its age-group and earnings-based supplemental fact sheets on program knowledge and communication preferences. In addition, we conducted research on disability program knowledge using the new UAS survey. In FYs 2023 and 2024, we will continue to use the longitudinal data from the UAS to assess whether the redesigned *Social Security Statement* and supplemental fact sheets improve the public's understanding of our programs in the longer-term. We will also use the UAS to better understand Social Security program knowledge and retirement planning by race and ethnicity. External researchers can use the UAS data set to answer research questions. For example, researchers used UAS data to explain financial literacy and financial behavior at older ages and show the moderating role of financial literacy on the relationship between income security and hardship at older ages,¹ explore financial fragility during the COVID-19 pandemic,² build life-cycle models of consumption, savings, labor supply, and Social Security claiming decisions,³ and evaluate the potential impact of policies to reduce Social Security funding shortfalls on consumers.⁴ Researchers have also used UAS data to

¹ Li, Y., Mutchler, J. E., Miller, E. A., Tucker-Seeley, R., & Xiao, J. J. (2022). Does financial knowledge at older ages matter? Placing income and hardship in context. *Journal of Poverty*, 26(3), 181-196.

² Clark, R. L., Lusardi, A., & Mitchell, O. S. (2021, May). Financial Fragility During the COVID-19 Pandemic. In *AEA Papers and Proceedings* (Vol. 111, pp. 292-96).

³ Bairoliya, N., & McKiernan, K. (2021). Revisiting Retirement and Social Security Claiming Decisions. *Available at SSRN 3896031*.

⁴ Perez-Arce, F., Rabinovich, L., & Yoong, J. (2021). The Potential Impact of Policies to Reduce Social Security

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evaluate the association between objective and subjective financial literacy,¹ the evolution of financial literacy over time,² and identify cognitive impairment among older Americans.³ Lastly, we will use the UAS data to publish research papers on changes in Social Security program knowledge, retirement savings behavior, and customer experience with SSA's services, including differences by race and ethnicity.

Ensure Stewardship of SSA Programs

Advisory Services to Assist SSA with Disability Projects/National Academy of Sciences Multi-Year Contract

Current Multi-Year Contract with National Academy of Sciences

We are engaged in a five-year contract, initiated in FY 2019, with the NAS-HMD to conduct research and answer specific questions related to medical and vocational assessment at steps three, four, and five of the sequential disability evaluation process.⁴ Information from HMD assures our disability evaluations reflect the latest knowledge and practice in a wide range of medical disciplines and supports data-driven changes to our regulations and policies. The current contract provides for Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA)-compliant Consensus Committees of medical and other experts to evaluate the effectiveness of our disability programs for adults and children. With the first task order awarded under this contract, HMD established a standing committee of medical, vocational, and other experts to assist with policy issues. We also awarded a task order for a consensus study committee to identify and investigate impairments likely to improve with treatment.

In FY 2022, we awarded task orders to create a consensus committee on the long-term health effects of COVID-19 as it relates to our disability program, and a consensus committee on infants with extremely low birth weight and infants who are small for gestational age.

New Multi-Year Contract with The National Academy of Sciences

In FY 2023, we are going to award a five-year contract to the HMD to continue their work on research into disability issues. The HMD will establish and manage FACA-compliant consensus study committees, organize and lead workshops with subject matter experts, and plan and organize outreach conferences with members of the public. We are also are considering task orders to:

Funding Shortfalls on Consumers' Expected Benefits and Behavior. *Journal of Pension Economics & Finance*, 20(4), 482-495.

¹ Cognac, G.E. (2022). The Association between Objective and Subjective Financial Literacy: Failure to Observe the Dunning-Kruger Effect. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 184, 111224.

² Angrisani, M., Burke, J., Lusardi, A., & Mottola, G. (2022). The Evolution of Financial Literacy over Time and its Predictive Power for Financial Outcomes: Evidence from Longitudinal Data. *G53 Network Working Paper Series, WP 2022-1*.

³ Gatz, M., Schneider, S., Meijer, E., Darling, J. E., Orriens, B., Liu, Y., & Kapteyn, A. (2022). Identifying Cognitive Impairment among Older Participants in a Nationally Representative Internet Panel. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B*.

⁴ See [DI 22001.001](#) for a description of the sequential evaluation process.

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- Create a standing committee of experts to advise SSA on disability issues throughout the five years of the base contract. This will secure our continued relationship with leaders and luminaries in the healthcare sector and provide an avenue to receive timely and unbiased guidance on a regular basis.
- Plan and conduct a public workshop bringing together experts on health disparities for people facing barriers to accessing our services. This workshop would offer a synthesis of information on the health consequences of barriers to service from a health science perspective as well as other social determinants of health. This information will allow us to effectively consider systemic issues in the provision of health services that take place prior to our involvement.

In FY 2023, we awarded a task order to create a consensus committee on sex and gender identification and implications for disability evaluation. This committee will come to consensus on the medical implications of persons' sex assigned at birth, intersex traits, and any sex or gender transition activities. This information is essential to assure we are accurately accounting for sex differences when we complete disability evaluations.

In FY 2024, we are considering task orders to:

- Create a consensus committee on growth impairments in children, including those resulting from congenital disorders. This information will enable us to provide adjudicators with updated guidance for assessing functional limitations in children with disorders that affect their growth.
- Create a consensus committee on absenteeism and time-off-task expectations and requirements in the national economy. The collected information would help refine our vocational evaluation process and assure we are making accurate and well-supported disability determinations.
- Plan and conduct a public workshop comprised of health care and allied professionals to discuss management of chronic pain symptoms in outpatient settings outside of active cancer treatment, palliative care, and end-of-life care. This workshop will help us understand the current medical trends and challenges in managing chronic pain symptoms and evaluate claims involving chronic pain.

National Institutes of Health (NIH) Research on Data Analytics and the Work Disability-Functional Assessment Battery (WD-FAB)

Under an Interagency Agreement, the NIH Clinical Center provides in-depth analysis of our existing data and supports testing the WD-FAB in our continuing disability review (CDR) process. The WD-FAB aims to provide uniform information about individuals' self-reported functional ability that we can use to inform our disability data collection and determination processes.

In FY 2022, NIH conducted an initial focus group to explore the potential added value of WD-FAB data within the medical CDR process. NIH also continued development of natural language processing (NLP) methods to identify functional terminology within the unstructured text of medical evidence. Additionally, NIH initiated an exploration of additional data sources to

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identify the characteristics of beneficiaries most likely to return to work to help inform ongoing TTW program efforts.

In FY 2023, NIH is continuing its WD-FAB related work by providing an analysis of WD-FAB data collected during the first wave of the project's pilot study. NIH will also conduct a second focus group session to explore the potential added value of the WD-FAB data within the medical CDR process. In addition, NIH will continue its NLP research to identify functional terminology within the unstructured text of medical evidence and explore additional data sources to identify characteristics of beneficiaries most likely to return to work.

In FY 2024, NIH will finalize and deliver the analysis comparing Wave 1 and Wave 2 WD-FAB data to our CDR predictive model scores, responses to CDR Mailer (Form SSA-455) questions, and CDR full medical review outcomes for participating study beneficiaries. We will use the evidence and findings in NIH's report to evaluate the value and feasibility of incorporating the WD-FAB into our CDR business process.

Occupational Information System (OIS) and Vocational Information Tool (VIT)

In 1991, the Department of Labor (DOL) stopped updating the Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) and replaced it with the Occupational Information Network, a system that was developed as a career exploration tool. We are developing an Occupational Information System (OIS) that has the potential to replace the DOT as the primary source of occupational information for our disability adjudication.

We began collaborating with DOL's Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) in FY 2012 on development of the Occupational Requirements Survey (ORS) to collect updated information on the requirements of work in the national economy. We will use the ORS data, along with information from other occupational sources, to create the OIS. The OIS will classify occupations using the Federally-mandated Standard Occupational Classification system and include data elements to measure the physical demands, environmental conditions, and mental and cognitive requirements of work, as well as the education and training needed to gain average proficiency in a job. We will house, access, and operationalize the OIS through the Vocational Information Tool (VIT), a web-based information technology platform.

In FY 2022, BLS completed the fourth year and began the fifth and final year of Wave 2 data collection. In November 2021, BLS published estimates from the third year of Wave 2. We worked with BLS to develop the Wave 3 sample design methodology and continued our analysis of the ORS microdata.

In FY 2023, BLS plans to complete Wave 2 data collection and begin data collection for Wave 3. In November 2022, BLS published data from the fourth year of Wave 2. We also published the [60-day notice](#) seeking public comments related to the ORS third wave in the Federal Register in December 2022.

In FY 2024, BLS will complete the first year of Wave 3, begin the second year, and publish the final Wave 2 data collection estimates.

RELATED FUNDING SOURCES

Section 234 of the Act gave us the authority to conduct research and demonstration projects designed to test DI program changes that may encourage disabled beneficiaries to work. Authorized by the 1999 Ticket to Work Act and the Bipartisan Budget Act (BBA) of 2015, we used trust fund monies to conduct various demonstration projects under Section 234, including alternative methods of treating work activity of individuals entitled to DI benefits. These demonstration projects were not part of the annual research appropriation request. OMB apportioned Section 234 funds. Our authority to initiate such projects ended December 31, 2021, and the authority to carry out these projects expired December 31, 2022. We will not incur additional costs, but we continue to evaluate some projects, such as the Ohio Direct Referral Demonstration, for which we will analyze data and release evaluation reports.

Benefit Offset National Demonstration (BOND)

BOND tested the effect of a \$1-for-\$2 offset of benefits for DI beneficiaries when earnings are above the SGA level. We published the [Final Evaluation Report](#) in FY 2019. We provided work incentive counseling services to the remaining BOND participants who were eligible to use the offset until December 31, 2022.

Promoting Opportunity Demonstration (POD)

Section 823 of the BBA amended Section 234 of the Act and instructed us to carry out a demonstration project testing a \$1-for-\$2 benefit offset. This project was different from BOND in several ways; POD applied a monthly offset to earnings above either a standard threshold, (the Trial Work Period level), or an itemized Impairment Related Work Expenses level. Participation was voluntary, and individuals could withdraw from the project at any time.

Participation for beneficiaries in POD ended June 2021, and all participants returned to current law rules as of July 1, 2021. All benefit adjustments for POD offset within the participation period have been completed. The POD implementation contract ended in November 2022. We released the Interim Evaluation Report in FY 2021 and released the [Final Evaluation Report](#) in FY 2022.

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Table 2.24—Current Research Projects Obligations through FY 2022
(in thousands)

	Years	Total
Optimize the Experience of SSA’s Customers		\$496,257
Analyzing Relationships between Disability, Rehabilitation and Work: A Small Grant Program (ARDRAW)	2016-2022	\$1,800
Beyond Benefits Study (previously Exits from Disability) Evidence Study	2021-2022	\$2,743
Blanket Purchase Agreement for Time Sensitive Research Projects	2018-2022	\$6,337
Census Surveys	2008-2022	\$11,250
Data Development ¹	2008-2022	\$3,781
Data Development in an Enterprise Business Platform	2015-2022	\$13,449
Disability Analysis File	2008-2022	\$18,103
Disability Perceptions Survey	2020-2022	\$1,213
Disability Research Surveys	2022	\$13,213
Health and Retirement Study (HRS) and Supplement	2008-2022	\$61,392
Interventional Cooperative Agreement Program	2021-2022	\$4,400
Medicare Outreach (1144)	2008-2022	\$17,307
National Beneficiary Survey	2008-2022	\$19,906
Retaining Employment and Talent After Injury/Illness Network (RETAIN)	2019-2022	\$74,662
Retirement and Disability Research Consortium ²	2008-2022	\$143,025
Supported Employment Demonstration (SED)	2016-2022	\$76,390
Understanding America Survey	2009-2022	\$25,698
Working Disability Functional Assessment Battery (WD-FAB) Data Collection	2020/2022	\$1,588
Ensuring Stewardship of SSA Programs		\$310,837
Advisory Services to Assist. SSA with Disability Issues	2008-2022	\$35,216
National Institutes of Health – Research on Data Analytics/Functional Assessment Battery Development	2008-2022	\$37,128
Occupational Information System and Vocational Info Tool	2012-2022	\$238,493
Total Section 1110 and 1144 Obligations		\$807,094
Benefit Offset National Demonstration (BOND)	2008-2022	\$137,371
Promoting Opportunity Demonstration (POD)	2016-2022	\$49,074
Total Section 234		\$186,445

¹ The Data Development line reflects total obligations for current research projects.

² The Disability and Research Consortium (DRC) and the Retirement Research Consortium (RRC) were separate grant programs until FY 2017.

ADMINISTRATION OF OUR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Our primary research components are housed within the Office of Retirement and Disability Policy (ORDP). ORDP is responsible for all major activities in the areas of strategic and program policy planning, policy research and evaluation, statistical programs, and overall policy development, analysis, and implementation. Within ORDP, the Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support, the Office of Disability Policy, and the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics, share the responsibility for administering projects funded under our research appropriation.

Office of Research, Demonstration, and Employment Support (ORDES) - ORDES conducts research and analysis related to the DI and SSI programs. ORDES implements demonstration projects to test changes to the disability programs primarily aimed at improving program administration and supporting employment. It also conducts research, analysis, evaluations, and statistical modeling that support our goals to strengthen our disability programs and improve program integrity. The Associate Commissioner for ORDES is our Evaluation Officer.¹

Office of Disability Policy (ODP) - ODP oversees and supports the planning, development, evaluation, and issuance of substantive regulations, policies, and procedures for our disability programs; development and promulgation of policies and guidelines for use by State, Federal, or private contractor providers who implement the disability provisions of the Social Security Act; and evaluation of the effects of proposed legislation and legislation pending before Congress to determine the impact on disability programs. ODP uses research to identify opportunities for policy improvement and for keeping medical, vocational, childhood, disability, and CDR policies up to date.

Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics (ORES) - ORES is a statistical unit responsible for the production and dissemination of research and data on our programs. ORES produces findings on our retirement, disability, and SSI programs from research and microsimulation projects supported through intramural and extramural programs. As a principal statistical unit of the agency, ORES develops program and survey data to support our research and statistical objectives. In addition, ORES maintains a schedule of research and statistical publications. ORES statisticians and researchers provide reliable data about our key program variables, information about the design of social insurance programs around the world to support comparative research, as well as social and behavioral research related to our programs. ORES also provides policymakers and stakeholders with research on retirement security. The Associate Commissioner for ORES is typically the agency's Chief Statistical Officer.²

Implementation of the Evidence Act

The *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act (Evidence Act) of 2018* requires us to develop a Learning Agenda, Annual Evaluation Plan, and Capacity Assessment. For more

¹ As described in [M-19-23](#), the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policy Making Act of 2018 requires CFO-Act agencies to designate a senior staff member with authority and responsibility for providing leadership over the agency's evaluation and learning agenda activities. Our Evaluation Officer is Susan Wilschke.

² Chief Statistical Officer role is being reassigned due to staffing changes.

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information on our implementation of the Evidence Act, please see documents posted on <https://www.ssa.gov/data>.

RESEARCH INVESTMENT CRITERIA

We support research that fosters a better understanding of the socio-economic status and other characteristics of Americans covered by the benefits programs we administer; how changes in demography and the economy might alter the well-being of the program and those it covers; the interrelationships between the program and other private and public programs; and the impact of the program on the overall economy. Within this framework, our extramural research program places the best available evidence into the hands of policymakers to inform policy development and program administration. We have established guidelines for developing, managing, and vetting projects for inclusion in our long-term research and demonstration agenda. We employ a variety of methods to ensure we meet the funding requirements of the sections of the Act that authorize our extramural research and demonstration activities and our extramural research activities meet high standards for relevance, quality, and performance.

Relevance

The primary purpose of our extramural research is to support evidence-building to inform the improvement of our programs, especially for individuals facing barriers to economic security. We seek to support research and demonstrations that clearly connect with this goal. A fundamental step in our review is assuring that each project responds to issues facing the OASDI and/or SSI programs, with priority towards contemporaneous challenges. In addition to supporting our [FYs 2022-2026 Learning Agenda](#) and our annual [Evaluation Plans](#) required under the Evidence Act, many of our Section 1110 projects will help us achieve the goals of our [Equity Action Plan in Agreement with EO 13985](#).

Our review process includes obtaining the advice and recommendations of researchers with technical expertise, program managers, and agency executives. We also receive input on our research program from the Social Security Advisory Board. Internal reviews help ensure that funded activities reflect our strategic goals and objectives, and respond to legislative requirements. Many of our research activities are directed toward providing policymakers and the public with the analytical and data resources they need to assess our current programs and the implications of reform proposals.

Our budget request reflects our support of the ongoing goals to provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to maximize their self-sufficiency through work and to increase the American public's basic financial management skills. For example, through the RETAIN project, we are working collaboratively with DOL to test interventions that will improve the ability of individuals to remain in the labor force when they acquire an illness or injury.

We are also working with HHS' Administration for Children and Families to test early intervention and return-to-work services for individuals who may be potential future applicants for DI or SSI.

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Finally, in support of our commitment to supporting individuals with disabilities, we participate in cross-agency working groups, as appropriate. We are supportive of exploring ways to leverage our data and research portfolio to buttress these efforts.

Quality

Our extramural program provides access to analysts at top research institutions from around the country to produce the best evidence in support of our program. We use a competitive, merit-based, peer-reviewed procurement process to ensure that our extramural research program selects the best qualified individuals and techniques to produce high quality results. We award research projects conducted by private-sector organizations through competitive contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements. Our extramural program features internationally recognized scholars including many that have received significant recognition for their research contributions (e.g., the John Bates Clark Medal).

We use Technical Expert Panels to review projects while they are in progress to provide feedback and suggestions to the agency. These panels include internal experts in relevant disciplines, such as statistics, economics, and survey design. They help ensure that our sponsored research projects are methodologically sound and consistent with professional standards. The research projects we sponsor are often discussed in formal seminars or workshops, as well as published in top peer-reviewed scientific journals.¹

Performance

We carry out our extramural research and evaluation projects primarily through contracts, jointly funded cooperative agreements, and grants that identify specific deliverables and timetables. We have sent a strong message to contractors that they must complete projects on time and within budget. Contracting officers, contracting officer's representatives, analysts, and senior executives monitor the progress of all research contracts and agreements. These agreements are also subject to audits by the Office of the Inspector General.

Consistent with our encouragement to support evidence-based evaluations, we produce reports and data files for each research and evaluation project in an effort to determine whether existing or proposed programs work as designed. Where appropriate, we make these reports publicly available or announce their availability in the *Social Security Bulletin* and online. Via the RDRC, we disseminate output at annual meetings, online, and through a variety of publications, workshops, and conferences. Our research projects are widely cited in both peer-reviewed

¹ Our extramural partners often publish supported research in scholarly journals. Recent examples include, but are not limited to: Engelhardt, Gary V., Jonathan Gruber, and Anil Kumar (2022). "Early Social Security Claiming and Old-age Poverty: Evidence from the Introduction of the Social Security Early Eligibility Age." *Journal of Human Resource*, <https://ideas.repec.org/a/uwp/jhriss/v57y2022i4p1079-1106.html>; Hou, Wenliang, and Sanzenbacher, Geoffrey T. (2021). "Measuring Racial/Ethnic Retirement Wealth Inequality;" *The Journal of Retirement*, <https://doi.org/10.3905/jor.2020.1.079>; Hudomiet, Péter, Michael D. Hurd, and Susann Rohwedder (2021). "Forecasting Mortality Inequalities in the U.S. based on Trends in Midlife Health." *Journal of Health Economics*, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhealeco.2021.102540>; Li, Yang (2022). "Pension Plan Types and Social Security Knowledge: New Survey Evidence." *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08959420.2022.2132805>; Knapp, David, and Jinkook Lee (2021). "Institutional Influences on Retirement, Health, and Well-being." *Journal of Pension Economics & Finance*, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1474747221000408>.

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publications and the press. For example, the *Expenditures of the Aged Chartbook* was referenced in the Bloomberg article, “Health, Housing Hit Budgets of Older Americans Even Before Covid,” and the research paper, “Immigrants’ Economic Assimilation: Evidence from Longitudinal Earnings Records,” was cited in the journal, *American Sociological Review*.