

CONTENTS

**APPROPRIATION LANGUAGE..... 23**  
Language Analysis..... 24  
**GENERAL STATEMENT ..... 25**  
Program Overview ..... 25  
FY 2026 President’s Budget Request ..... 28  
**BUDGETARY RESOURCES ..... 29**  
Analysis of Changes ..... 30  
New Budget Authority and Obligations by Activity ..... 33  
**FEDERAL BENEFIT PAYMENTS ..... 34**  
Purpose and Method of Operation ..... 34  
Rationale for Budget Request ..... 34  
**ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES..... 36**  
Purpose and Method of Operation ..... 36  
Rationale for Budget Request ..... 37  
**BENEFICIARY SERVICES ..... 38**  
Purpose and Method of Operation ..... 38  
Rationale for Budget Request ..... 39  
Additional Information on VR Cost Reimbursement and Ticket to Work Programs..... 41  
**RESEARCH AND DEMONSTRATION ..... 43**  
Purpose and Method of Operation ..... 43  
Rationale for Budget Request ..... 44  
Related Funding Sources ..... 53  
Administration of Our Research Activities..... 54  
Research Investment Criteria..... 56

## Supplemental Security Income Program

### TABLES

Table 2.1—Appropriation Language Analysis .....	24
Table 2.2—Summary of Appropriations and Obligations.....	25
Table 2.3—Appropriation Detail .....	28
Table 2.4—Amounts Available for Obligation .....	29
Table 2.5—Summary of Changes.....	31
Table 2.6—Explanation of SSI Budget Changes from FY 2025 to FY 2026 .....	32
Table 2.7—New Budget Authority and Obligations by Activity .....	33
Table 2.8—Federal Benefit Payments: New Budget Authority and Obligations.....	34
Table 2.9—Check Payments by Fiscal Year .....	35
Table 2.10—Administrative Expenses: New Budget Authority and Obligations .....	36
Table 2.11—Beneficiary Services: New Budget Authority and Obligations.....	38
Table 2.12—SSI VR Cost Reimbursement and Ticket to Work Payments.....	40
Table 2.13—Research and Demonstration Projects: Budget Authority and Obligations by Funding Authority.....	43
Table 2.14—Research and Demonstration Projects: Obligations by Funding Source .....	44
Table 2.15—Major Research Areas, Demonstration Obligations and New Budget Authority....	45
Table 2.16—Current Research Projects Obligations through FY 2024 .....	54

APPROPRIATION LANGUAGE

*For carrying out titles XI and XVI of the Social Security Act, section 401 of Public Law 92603, section 212 of Public Law 93-66, as amended, and section 405 of Public Law 95216, including payment to the Social Security trust funds for administrative expenses incurred pursuant to section 201(g)(1) of the Social Security Act, \$49,447,966,000, 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 \$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, 2028.*

*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 2027, \$23,500,000,000, to remain available until expended.*

Note – This account is operating under the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (division A of Public Law 119-4).

## Supplemental Security Income Program

### 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.

In addition, the language includes indefinite authority beginning June 15, in the event Federal benefit payment obligations in FY 2026 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 2027 to ensure the timely payment of benefits in case of a delay in the FY 2027 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, \$49,447,966,000, 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 \$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, 2028.</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, 2028, 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 2027, \$23,500,000,000, 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 2027 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 Obligations<sup>1</sup>**  
(in thousands)

	<b>FY 2024 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2025 Enacted</b>	<b>FY 2026 Estimate</b>	<b><i>Change</i></b>
Appropriation	\$61,165,042	\$67,065,042	\$71,547,966	+\$4,482,924
Obligations <sup>2</sup>	\$63,558,087	\$68,964,798	\$71,682,404	+\$2,717,606
First Quarter Advance Appropriation for Subsequent Fiscal Year	\$21,700,000	\$22,100,000	\$23,500,000	+\$1,400,000

## 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.<sup>3</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Obligations in FY 2026 will not match the President's Budget Appendix due to revised research and demonstration project estimates.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

## **Supplemental Security Income Program**

income from a spouse or parent, and the value of in-kind support and maintenance. Different exclusion rules apply for different types of income.

### **Benefit Payments**

We estimate we will pay \$66.8 billion in Federal benefits to about 7.3 million SSI recipients in FY 2026. Including State supplementary payments, we expect to pay a total of \$70.3 billion and administer payments to nearly 7.5 million recipients.

Federal benefit payments represent approximately 93 percent of Federal SSI spending. Administrative expenses represent nearly 7 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 \$15.22 per SSI check payment in FY 2025 and is expected to increase to \$15.60 in FY 2026. The Department of the Treasury receives the first \$5.00 of each fee and we retain, as part of our Limitation on Administrative Expenses (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

## **Supplemental Security Income Program**

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.

## Supplemental Security Income Program

### FY 2026 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 2026 President's Budget request is \$71,547,966,000. However, this includes \$22,100,000,000 appropriated for the first quarter of FY 2026 in the FY 2025 Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act. The appropriation language provides us with our remaining appropriation for FY 2026, \$49,447,966,000—the total amount requested for FY 2026 less the first quarter advance.

Similarly, in addition to the amount above, the request includes an advance appropriation of \$23,500,000,000 for Federal benefit payments in the first quarter of FY 2027. 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** <sup>1,2</sup>  
(in thousands)

	<b>FY 2024 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2025 Enacted</b>	<b>FY 2026 Estimate</b>	<b>Change</b>
Advance for Federal Benefits <sup>3, 4</sup>	\$15,800,000	\$21,700,000	\$22,100,000	
Regular for Federal Benefits	\$40,528,000	\$40,528,000	\$44,662,000	
<b>Subtotal Federal Benefits</b>	<b>\$56,328,000</b>	<b>\$62,228,000</b>	<b>\$66,762,000</b>	<b>+\$4,534,000</b>
Base Administrative Expenses	\$3,279,742	\$3,230,976	\$2,946,098	-\$284,878
Program Integrity (Base)	\$214,010	\$231,626	\$250,269	+\$18,643
Program Integrity (Adjustment)	\$1,115,290	\$1,146,440	\$1,423,599	+\$277,159
<b>Subtotal Administrative</b>	<b>\$4,609,042</b>	<b>\$4,609,042</b>	<b>\$4,619,966</b>	<b>+\$10,924</b>
Beneficiary Services	\$137,000	\$137,000	\$75,000	-\$62,000
Research and Demonstration	\$91,000	\$91,000	\$91,000	\$0
<b>Subtotal Advanced Appropriation</b>	<b>\$15,800,000</b>	<b>\$21,700,000</b>	<b>\$22,100,000</b>	
<b>Subtotal Regular Appropriation</b>	<b>\$45,365,042</b>	<b>\$45,365,042</b>	<b>\$49,447,966</b>	
Total Appropriation	\$61,165,042	\$67,065,042	\$71,547,966	+\$4,482,924
<b>Advance for Subsequent Year</b>	<b>\$21,700,000</b>	<b>\$22,100,000</b>	<b>\$23,500,000</b>	<b>+\$1,400,000</b>

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

<sup>2</sup> Totals may not add due to rounding.

<sup>3</sup> Amount provided in the previous year's appropriation bill.

<sup>4</sup> The Advance for Federal Benefits, which covers payments for the first quarter of the subsequent fiscal year, can have three or four monthly payments depending on whether October 1 falls on a weekend. This can cause a substantial variation in the Advance and Regular for Federal Benefits budget authority requests when comparing across fiscal years.



## 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 2026 President's Budget is \$71,547,966,000, including \$22,100,000,000 appropriated for the first quarter of FY 2026 in the FY 2025 Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act.

**Table 2.4—Amounts Available for Obligation<sup>1,2</sup>**  
(in thousands)

	<b>FY 2024 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2025 Enacted</b>	<b>FY 2026 Estimate</b>
Regular Appropriation	\$45,365,042	\$45,365,042	\$49,447,966
Advanced Appropriation from prior FY	\$15,800,000	\$21,700,000	\$22,100,000
<b>Total Annual Appropriation</b>	<b>\$61,165,042</b>	<b>\$67,065,042</b>	<b>\$71,547,966</b>
Federal Unobligated Balance	\$3,423,097	\$1,490,372	\$277,498
Recovery of Prior-Year Obligations	\$370,302	\$0	\$0
Indefinite Authority <sup>3</sup>	\$0	\$621,980	\$0
<b>Subtotal Federal Resources</b>	<b>\$64,958,441</b>	<b>\$69,177,394</b>	<b>\$71,825,464</b>
State Supp. Reimbursements	\$3,356,885	\$3,418,000	\$3,516,000
State Supp. Unobligated Balance	\$5,910	\$280,641	\$288,641
<b>Total Budgetary Resources<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>\$68,321,236</b>	<b>\$72,876,035</b>	<b>\$75,630,105</b>
<b>Federal Obligations</b>	<b>\$63,558,087</b>	<b>\$68,964,798</b>	<b>\$71,682,404</b>
State Supp. Obligations	\$3,082,154	\$3,410,000	\$3,505,000
<b>Total Obligations<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>\$ 66,640,241</b>	<b>\$72,374,798</b>	<b>\$75,187,404</b>
Federal Unobligated Balance	\$1,400,354	\$212,596	\$143,060
State Supp. Unobligated Balance	\$280,641	\$288,641	\$299,641
<b>Total Unobligated Balance</b>	<b>\$1,680,995</b>	<b>\$501,237</b>	<b>\$442,701</b>

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

<sup>2</sup> Totals may not add due to rounding.

<sup>3</sup> Any portion of the Federal benefits carryover shown that results from indefinite authority will be returned to Treasury in the new year, as soon as the actual amount is determined.

<sup>4</sup> Total Budgetary Resources and Total Unobligated Balance for FY 2025 and FY 2026 will not match the amounts included in the President's Budget Appendix due to multi-year funding carrying over in the LAE account in one fiscal year and then being made available in the SSI account for a subsequent fiscal year.

<sup>5</sup> Obligations in FY 2026 will not match the President's Budget Appendix due to revised research and demonstration project estimates.

## **Supplemental Security Income Program**

The SSI annual appropriation was \$61.2 billion in FY 2024. The enacted FY 2025 appropriation is \$67.1 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 \$1.4 billion in Federal unobligated balances into FY 2025. We expect to carry over approximately \$213 million into FY 2026.

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 2026 request represents an increase of approximately \$4.5 billion from the FY 2025 level. We plan to use unobligated balances to partially fund administrative expenses, beneficiary services, and research and demonstration projects in FY 2025 and FY 2026. In total, we plan to use approximately \$1.3 billion in unobligated balances and recoveries in FY 2025 and \$134 million in unobligated balances and recoveries in FY 2026.

#### **Federal Benefit Payments**

The FY 2026 request for Federal Benefit payments is approximately \$4.5 billion more than the FY 2025 level. The increase is bolstered by the January 2026 COLA and partially offset 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 2027 will be \$1.4 billion more than the first quarter advance for FY 2026. 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 2026 and the first quarter in FY 2027 will have four benefit payments.

#### **Administrative Expenses**

The FY 2026 request for administrative expenses is approximately \$11 million more than the FY 2025 level and includes \$1.4 billion of the \$2.1 billion adjustment funding for program integrity work in the SSI program. We expect to use \$90 million in carryover funds in FY 2025 and approximately \$65 million in carryover funds in FY 2026 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 \$75 million in new authority for FY 2025. This is \$62 million less than our FY 2025 level; however, our FY 2026 request funds an estimated 4 percent increase in obligations above the FY 2025 level as we obligate available prior year balances. Our request assumes an increased level of vocational rehabilitation reimbursement awards, and Ticket payments to Employment Networks under the Ticket to Work program. We expect to use \$2 million in carryover funds in FY 2025 and \$70 million in carryover funds in FY 2026 to cover our estimated obligations.

## Research and Demonstrations

The FY 2026 request for research and demonstration projects is the same as the FY 2025 level. We expect to use carryover funds in FY 2025 and FY 2026 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<sup>1,2</sup>**  
(in thousands)

	<b>FY 2025 Estimate</b>	<b>FY 2026 Estimate</b>	<b>Change</b>
<b>Appropriation</b>	<b>\$67,065,042</b>	<b>\$71,547,966</b>	<b>+4,482,924</b>
Obligations Funded from Prior-Year Unobligated Balances and Recoveries	\$1,277,776	\$134,438	-\$1,143,338
Obligations Funded from Indefinite Authority	\$621,980	\$0	-\$621,980
<b>Estimated Federal Obligations<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>\$68,964,798</b>	<b>\$71,682,404</b>	<b>+\$2,717,606</b>

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

<sup>2</sup> Totals may not add due to rounding.

<sup>3</sup> Obligations in FY 2026 will not match the President's Budget Appendix due to revised research and demonstration project estimates.

## Supplemental Security Income Program

**Table 2.6—Explanation of SSI Budget Changes from FY 2025 to FY 2026**  
(in thousands)

	<b>FY 2025 Obligations</b>	<b><i>Change</i></b>
<b>Federal Benefit Payments</b>	\$62,228,000	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>COLA – 2.4% beginning January 2026</li> </ul>		+\$2,052,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Net change due to annualized closings and awards</li> </ul>		+\$1,142,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effect of OASDI COLA for concurrent SSI/OASDI Recipients</li> </ul>		-\$499,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Indefinite Authority</li> </ul>	\$621,980	
<b>Federal Benefit Payments – Carryover</b>	\$1,217,020	
<b>Administrative Expenses</b>	\$4,609,042	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in base funding</li> </ul>		+\$10,924
<b>Administrative Expenses – Carryover</b>	\$90,000	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease in amount of carryover funding planned for obligation in FY 2026</li> </ul>		-\$25,098
<b>Beneficiary Services</b>	\$137,000	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decrease in base funding</li> </ul>		-\$62,000
<b>Beneficiary Services – Carryover</b>	\$2,000	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in amount of carryover funding planned for obligation in FY 2026</li> </ul>		+\$68,000
<b>Research and Demonstration</b>	\$91,000	
<b>Research and Demonstration – Carryover</b>	-\$31,244	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in amount of carryover funding planned for obligation in FY 2026</li> </ul>		+\$30,780
<b>Total Obligations Requested, Net Change</b>	<b>\$68,964,798</b>	<b>+\$2,717,606</b>

## 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<sup>1,2</sup>**  
(in thousands)

	<b>FY 2024 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2025 Enacted<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>FY 2026 Estimate<sup>18</sup></b>
<b><u>Federal Benefit Payments</u></b>			
Appropriation	\$56,328,000	\$62,228,000	\$66,762,000
Obligations	\$58,750,373	\$64,067,000	\$66,762,000
Monthly Check Payments	11	12	12
<b><u>Base Administrative Expenses</u></b>			
Appropriation	\$3,279,742	\$3,230,976	\$2,946,098
Obligations	\$3,271,294	\$3,297,976	\$3,011,000
<b><u>Program Integrity (Base)</u></b>			
Appropriation	\$214,010	\$231,626	\$250,269
Obligations	\$214,010	\$231,626	\$250,269
<b><u>Program Integrity (Adjustment)</u></b>			
Appropriation	\$1,115,290	\$1,146,440	\$1,423,599
Obligations	\$1,115,290	\$1,169,440	\$1,423,599
<b><u>Beneficiary Services</u></b>			
Appropriation	\$137,000	\$137,000	\$75,000
Obligations	\$109,174	\$139,000	\$145,000
<b><u>Research and Demonstration</u></b>			
Appropriation	\$91,000	\$91,000	\$91,000
Obligations <sup>4</sup>	\$97,946	\$59,756	\$90,536
<b>Total Appropriation</b>	<b>\$61,165,042</b>	<b>\$67,065,042</b>	<b>\$71,547,966</b>
<b>Total Federal Obligations</b>	<b>\$63,558,087</b>	<b>\$68,964,798</b>	<b>\$71,682,404</b>

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

<sup>2</sup> Totals may not add due to rounding.

<sup>3</sup> We expect to use carryover of prior year unobligated balances and recoveries for FY 2025 and FY 2026 obligations.

<sup>4</sup> Obligations in FY 2026 will not match the President's Budget Appendix due to revised research and demonstration project estimates.

## Supplemental Security Income Program

### 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 2026, we estimate benefit payments will total approximately \$67 billion for approximately 7.3 million Federal SSI recipients.

**Table 2.8—Federal Benefit Payments: New Budget Authority and Obligations<sup>1</sup>**  
(in thousands)

	<b>FY 2024 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2025 Enacted</b>	<b>FY 2026 Estimate</b>	<b><i>Change</i></b>
<b>Appropriation</b>	<b>\$56,328,000</b>	<b>\$62,228,000</b>	<b>\$66,762,000</b>	<b>+\$4,534,000</b>
Obligations Funded from Prior-Year Unobligated Balance and Recoveries	\$2,422,373	\$1,217,020	\$0	-\$1,217,020
Indefinite Authority	\$0	\$621,980	\$0	-\$621,980
<b>Obligations</b>	<b>\$58,750,373</b>	<b>\$64,067,000</b>	<b>\$66,762,000</b>	<b>+\$2,695,000</b>
Advance for subsequent fiscal year	\$21,700,000	\$22,100,000	\$23,500,000	+\$1,400,000

#### RATIONALE FOR BUDGET REQUEST

In FY 2026, we are requesting \$67 billion in new budget authority for Federal benefit payments, and \$23.5 billion in an advance appropriation for the first quarter of FY 2027. 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.

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

## Supplemental Security Income Program

**Table 2.9—Check Payments by Fiscal Year**

	<b>Number of Check Payments</b>	<b>Federal Benefit Obligations</b>
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	\$60,417,887,895
FY 2024	11	\$58,750,372,811
FY 2025	12	\$64,067,000,000
<b>FY 2026</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>\$66,762,000,000</b>

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

	<b>FY 2024 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2025 Enacted</b>	<b>FY 2026 Estimate</b>	<b><i>Change</i></b>
<b>Total Appropriation</b>	<b>\$4,609,042</b>	<b>\$4,609,042</b>	<b>\$4,619,966</b>	<b>+\$10,924</b>
Obligations Funded from Prior- Year Unobligated Balance	\$0	+\$90,000	+\$64,902	-\$25,098
<b>Obligations</b>	<b>\$4,600,594</b>	<b>\$4,699,042</b>	<b>\$4,684,868</b>	<b>-\$14,174</b>



### 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 2026 request for SSI administrative expenses is approximately \$4.6 billion. This appropriation is used to reimburse the trust funds for the SSI program's share of administrative expenses. This amount includes about \$1.7 billion specifically for FY 2026 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 \$170 million in FY 2026 to administer SSI state supplementary payments.

## Supplemental Security Income Program

### BENEFICIARY SERVICES

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

#### PURPOSE AND METHOD OF OPERATION

Beneficiary services consist of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Cost Reimbursement and Ticket to Work (TTW) programs. The objective of the programs is to assist disabled individuals in returning to work. The trust funds and general revenues fund beneficiary services. Section 222(d)(1) of the Social Security Act authorizes transfers from the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) and Disability Insurance (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 (EN) 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 2.11—Beneficiary Services: New Budget Authority and Obligations**  
(in thousands)

	<b>FY 2024 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2025 Enacted</b>	<b>FY 2026 Estimate</b>	<b><i>FY 2025 to FY 2026 Change</i></b>
<b>Appropriation</b>	<b>\$137,000</b>	<b>\$137,000</b>	<b>\$75,000</b>	<b><i>-\$62,000</i></b>
Prior-Year Unobligated Balances and Recoveries	\$112,315	\$140,141	\$138,141	<i>-\$2,000</i>
<b>Total Budgetary Resources</b>	<b>\$249,315</b>	<b>\$277,141</b>	<b>\$213,141</b>	<b><i>-\$64,000</i></b>
<b>Obligations</b>	<b>\$109,174</b>	<b>\$139,000</b>	<b>\$145,000</b>	<b><i>+\$6,000</i></b>

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.<sup>1</sup>

Under the TTW program, authorized by the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-170), we pay ENs for providing vocational rehabilitation, employment, and other support services to disabled SSI recipients. The recipients select an EN, and when EN

<sup>1</sup> In 2025, we consider non-blind and blind disabled beneficiaries to be performing SGA if they earn more than \$1,620 and \$2,700 per month, respectively.

services result in prescribed work milestones and outcomes that may reduce reliance on Federal cash benefits, we pay ENs.

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 \$75 million in new budget authority for beneficiary services in FY 2026. The FY 2026 forecast is based on a model which uses prior payments to predict future spending. This model creates separate estimates for EN and VR payments using quarterly unemployment data from the Office of Management and Budget and TTW participation and beneficiary characteristics data from our administrative records through the Disability Analysis File. 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.

In FY 2024, we discontinued the Consumer Directed Services (CDS) EN business model. CDS ENs reimbursed Ticketholders for purchasing services or products that assisted them in attaining and maintaining employment. After a lengthy quality review of the result of the business model, we determined that Ticketholders would be better served under ENs that provided traditional services such as resume writing and job coaching. Removing this business model led to a decrease in TTW payments in FY 2024 but in FYs 2025–2026, we expect the amount of TTW payments to increase from FY 2024 levels as we encourage Ticketholders to seek ENs providing traditional vocational rehabilitation and employment support services.

We reimburse VR agencies when payment claims are submitted within a 12-month period after a VR client completes their ninth month of SGA, for services that fall within the scope of reasonable and necessary services under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Social Security regulations. We deny reimbursement claims when the VR services provided do not meet our criteria. We also deny payment when VR agencies are late in submitting reimbursement claims, or a VR client has not completed the required nine months of SGA, meaning the VR agency submitted the claim too soon.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we relaxed a long-standing policy allowing only one appeal per denied claim. In FY 2024, we reinstituted this policy, resulting in an increase in denials and a decrease in VR payments. This also led to a decrease in VR claim submissions, as VR agencies are now waiting an extra quarter or two to submit their claims and appeals. The extra

## Supplemental Security Income Program

time increases the likelihood that we have evidence of earnings and that the claims will ultimately be payable.

In FY 2024, we also increased the number of pre-payment validation reviews (PVR) that we conduct on VR agencies. A PVR is a review of the documentation that supports the VR's request for reimbursement like receipts, case notes, Individualized Plans for Employment, etc. To maintain the integrity of our program, we increased the number of PVRs that we processed from approximately 100 in FY 2023 to 730 in FY 2024. As a result, we disallowed a larger percentage of claims for VRs that did not respond to the documentation request in its entirety or in a timely manner.

We expect VR claim submissions to increase as we work with VR agencies to ensure timely and accurate submission of payment claims and assist VR agencies that have had staffing changes. We have conducted a general cost reimbursement program training as well as a training on how to appropriately use claims data to submit claims requests. We are planning to offer additional training in FY 2025. We anticipate that these trainings will lead to an increase in the percentage of claims that are payable.

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 VR reimbursement claims and internal reviews of the agency's payment process.

**Table 2.12—SSI VR Cost Reimbursement and Ticket to Work Payments<sup>1</sup>**  
(\$ in thousands)

	<b>FY 2024 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2025 Enacted</b>	<b>FY 2026 Estimate</b>
<b><u>Vocational Rehabilitation</u></b>			
SSI Only Reimbursement Payments	5,558	7,027	7,273
SSI/DI Concurrent Reimbursement Payments	3,092	3,909	4,046
<b>Total Reimbursement Awards</b>	<b>8,650</b>	<b>10,936</b>	<b>11,319</b>
<b>VR Obligations</b>	<b>\$90,504</b>	<b>\$117,000</b>	<b>\$121,000</b>
<b><u>Ticket to Work</u></b>			
SSI Only Milestone Payments	5,130	6,867	7,208
SSI Only Outcome Payments	23,195	31,050	32,590
SSI/DI Concurrent Milestone Payments	5,701	7,632	8,010
SSI/DI Concurrent Outcome Payments	7,418	9,930	10,423
<b>Total Ticket Payments</b>	<b>41,444</b>	<b>55,479</b>	<b>58,231</b>

<sup>1</sup> Totals may not add due to rounding.

## Supplemental Security Income Program

<b>Ticket Obligations</b>	<b>\$18,670</b>	<b>\$23,000</b>	<b>\$24,000</b>
<b>Total VR Reimbursements &amp; Ticket Payments</b>	<b>50,094</b>	<b>66,415</b>	<b>69,550</b>
<b>Total Obligations</b>	<b>\$109,174</b>	<b>\$139,000</b>	<b>\$145,000</b>

### 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 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 deploying a modernized system, the Payroll Information Exchange (PIE), to process DI work activity and reduce manual keying of data. With PIE, we obtain wage and employer information from a

## Supplemental Security Income Program

payroll data provider (PDP) for beneficiaries who give us authorization and whose employer participates in the PDP's services. PIE will reduce how much information participating beneficiaries need to report. 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, which 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.

In FY 2023, we completed a 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.<sup>1</sup> We found that the underlying circumstances of TTW participants that result in overpayments are similar to those of non-participants, and that the root causes of overpayments resulting from work are the failure of TTW participants to report work and delays in the processing of work reports. With the implementation of PIE, we are attempting to directly address this root cause. We are working to reduce overpayments and improve the integrity of our programs. For information on our efforts to decrease overpayments, please see the Program Integrity and Improper Payment exhibits in the LAE section.

---

<sup>1</sup> 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 and 1144 of the Social Security Act.

## PURPOSE AND METHOD OF OPERATION

We conduct extramural research, demonstrations, and outreach under Sections 1110 and 1144 of the Social Security Act (Act).

**Table 2.13—Research and Demonstration Projects: Budget Authority and Obligations by Funding Authority<sup>1</sup>**  
(in thousands)

	<b>FY 2024 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2025 Enacted</b>	<b>FY 2026 Estimate</b>	<b><i>Change from FY 2025 to FY 2026</i></b>
<b>Appropriation<sup>2</sup></b>	\$91,000	\$91,000	\$91,000	\$0
Prior Year Unobligated Balance and Recoveries	\$50,157	\$43,211	\$74,455	\$31,244
<b>Total Budgetary Resources</b>	<b>\$141,157</b>	<b>\$134,211</b>	<b>\$165,455</b>	<b>\$31,244</b>
<b>Obligations by Authority<sup>3</sup></b>				
FYs 2022-2024 Authority	\$612	\$0	\$0	
FYs 2023-2025 Authority	\$35,329	\$1,857	\$0	
FYs 2024-2026 Authority	\$62,005	\$28,995	\$0	
FYs 2025-2027 Authority	N/A	\$28,904	\$62,096	
FYs 2026-2028 Requested Authority	N/A	N/A	\$28,440	
No-Year Authority	\$0	\$0	\$0	
<b>TOTAL Obligations</b>	<b>\$97,946</b>	<b>\$59,756</b>	<b>\$90,536</b>	<b>\$30,780</b>
Total Unobligated Balance	\$43,211	\$74,455	\$74,919	\$464

<sup>1</sup> This exhibit does not include narratives for projects that are using prior year funds.

<sup>2</sup> These amounts include \$7,000,000 in base research funding classified as mandatory.

<sup>3</sup> 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 2025 and FY 2026 break out is our current projection for how the funds will be obligated.

## Supplemental Security Income Program

**Table 2.14—Research and Demonstration Projects: Obligations by Funding Source**  
(in thousands)

	<b>FY 2024 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2025 Estimate</b>	<b>FY 2026 Estimate</b>
<b>Obligations by Source</b>			
Section 1110	\$96,723	\$58,035	\$88,815
Section 1144	\$1,223	\$1,721	\$1,721
<b>TOTAL Obligations</b>	<b>\$97,946</b>	<b>\$59,756</b>	<b>\$90,536</b>

Section 1110 of the Act authorizes the Commissioner of Social Security 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, evaluations of proposed or newly enacted legislative changes, and projects to maintain and improve basic data about our programs and beneficiaries.

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;
- Gauge the public’s understanding of the program; and
- Measure the impact of program changes.

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 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 the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), oversee both the Medicare and Medicaid programs.

We are committed to safeguarding the personal information that has been entrusted to us and protecting individuals’ privacy. Our use of data for research and analysis is governed by a number of laws and regulations, including the Social Security Act, the Privacy Act of 1974, the E-Government Act of 2002, and related rules and regulations from the Census Bureau and the Internal Revenue Service.

---

### 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



## Supplemental Security Income Program

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.

We are reassessing all extramural research, demonstration, and outreach initiatives to better align with the President’s Executive Orders (EO) and Administration guidance to improve service delivery, fight potential fraud and waste, and improve payment integrity. In support of this effort, we have scaled back some of our research and demonstration commitments in FY 2025.

In FY 2026, we are requesting \$91 million in new budget authority for traditional research activities under Sections 1110 and 1144.

Section 1110 funds must be spent on contracts or grants conducting research related to: 1) preventing or reducing program dependency; 2) coordinating the planning between welfare agencies; and 3) improving the administration and effectiveness of Social Security Act and related programs. We will reorient our focus to initiate in-house research on service delivery and program outcomes.

The table and discussion that follow provide more details on the research and outreach efforts we plan to fund in FY 2026.

**Table 2.15—Major Research Areas, Demonstration Obligations and New Budget Authority<sup>1</sup>**  
(in thousands)

Major Research Areas	Obligations <sup>2</sup>		
	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Estimate
Advisory Services to Assist SSA with Disability Issues	\$2,714	\$3,945	\$4,044
Analyzing Relationships between Disability, Rehabilitation, and Work (ARDRAW)	\$900	\$0	\$0
Behavioral Insights Studies	\$0	\$0	\$0
Beyond Benefits Study	\$0	\$394	\$0
Blanket Purchase Agreement for Time-Sensitive Research Projects	\$605	\$1,700	\$2,000
Census Surveys	\$750	\$765	\$780
Data Development	\$106	\$104	\$104
Data Development in an Enterprise Business Intelligence (EBI) Platform	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Disability Analysis File (DAF)	\$1,297	\$0	\$0
Disability Research Survey (DRS)	\$11,285	\$0	\$0
Health & Retirement Study (HRS) and Supplement	\$4,575	\$4,575	\$4,575

<sup>1</sup> Totals may not add due to rounding.

<sup>2</sup> This amount includes obligations funded from prior-year unobligated balances.

## Supplemental Security Income Program

Major Research Areas	Obligations <sup>2</sup>		
	FY 2024 Actual	FY 2025 Estimate	FY 2026 Estimate
Interventional Cooperative Agreement Program (ICAP)	\$4,574	\$0	\$0
Medicare Outreach (1144)	\$1,223	\$1,721	\$1,721
National Institutes of Health Research on Data Analytics and the Functional Assessment Battery Development	\$4,595	\$0	\$0
New and Emerging Research	\$659	\$750	\$32,000
Occupational Information Systems (OIS) and Vocational Information Tool (VIT)	\$34,253	\$38,800	\$37,610
Retirement and Disability Research Consortium (RDRC)	\$16,801	\$0	\$0
SSI Outreach Evaluation	\$6,609	\$0	\$0
Understanding America Study (UAS) Enhancements	\$5,000	\$5,002	\$5,702
<b>Total Research Obligations</b>	<b>\$97,946</b>	<b>\$59,756</b>	<b>\$90,536</b>
<b>New Budget Authority</b>	<b>\$91,000</b>	<b>\$91,000</b>	<b>\$91,000</b>

## Updates on Projects with Funding Requested

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

In FY 2023, we awarded a new five-year contract with the National Academies of Sciences' Health and Medicine Division (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. Information from HMD ensures 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 contract provides for Federal Advisory Committee Act-compliant Consensus Committees of medical and other experts to evaluate the effectiveness of our disability programs for adults and children as well as organize and lead workshops with subject matter experts and outreach conferences with members of the public.

In FY 2025, we are pursuing the award of task orders to:

- Create a consensus committee on the newest findings regarding recovery and prognosis after Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) including those medically classified as “mild TBI,” such as concussions. This information will enable us to provide adjudicators with updated guidance for comprehensively assessing a claimant’s experiences and limitations from TBI with a focus on the long-term and secondary effects that persist after recovery from acute injury.
- Create a consensus committee to explore the medical community’s current standards and best practices for pulmonary function testing (PFT). The committee will be directed to examine the practical reality of testing procedures in average primary care and specialist

offices. This information will allow us to assure our PFT requirements comport with the reality encountered by the individuals served by our program. Based on the committee's findings, we can make updates to current PFT policy requirements to maintain program accuracy while increasing the efficiency of evidence collection by aligning the supporting information we ask for with the testing capabilities and evaluations performed by a wider scope of medical providers.

- Plan and conduct a public workshop comprised of healthcare experts, medical practitioners, and computing and information technology professionals to discuss the identification, and interpretation of Artificial Intelligence-generated, enhanced, or edited medical evident records. This workshop will help us understand how to make the best possible use of the evidence we receive from increasingly complex medical record systems containing information with provenance outside the traditional paradigm of direct recording by a medical practitioner.

In FY 2026, we will support Administration priorities with envisioned task orders to:

- Create a consensus committee investigating medical devices and their growing use, availability, prevalence, and efficacy in the treatment of various conditions. The committee's findings will support improvements in our disability programs as it will help us consider how to best collect evidence directly from medical devices and the accuracy and reliability of such evidence in our adjudication process.
- Create a consensus committee to discuss the evolving landscape of telemedicine and identify best practices with respect to remote testing or examination. The collected information would help refine our consultative examination guidelines, helping us take first steps towards formulating new processes to lower the time and monetary burden on patients and SSA to gather medical evidence sufficient to allow adjudication of claims while protecting the funds entrusted to us by the U.S. taxpayer.
- Plan and conduct a public workshop comprised of health care and allied professionals to discuss case prognosis and progression in physical or occupational therapy and how care decisions are made. This workshop will help us understand the drivers behind differences in therapy records and functional reports between claimants with similar underlying impairments, allowing for improvements in decisional efficiency and accuracy, particularly with respect to identifying individuals who, with the support of rehabilitation therapy, have regained their capacity for gainful employment

### **Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) for Time-Sensitive Research Projects**

Early in FY 2024, we awarded a 5-year BPA to allow us to quickly award multiple research projects simultaneously to support policy and program assessments and studies related to social science, medical, or vocational rehabilitation topics. The BPA will produce research papers, evidence, and relevant data analysis informed by our researchers' expertise and content knowledge.

## Supplemental Security Income Program

In FY 2025, we are planning BPA awards for the following research topics:

- Program Data Quality Rules – to develop quality assurance and control standards based on the data quality framework of the Federal Committee on Statistical Methods and consistency with the [Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 \(Evidence Act\)](#) requirements. These rules govern how statistical micro and macro data products may be shared with non-SSA colleagues or disseminated to the public (e.g., summary statistics, charts, public use files) along with relevant documentation consistent with metadata standards, to include cover data utility, objectivity, and integrity as well as metadata documentation for public release and archiving.
- Analysis of the Mental Requirements for Wave 2 of the Occupational Requirements Survey (ORS) – to update the mental and cognitive demands of unskilled work in the national economy based on the ORS and other Federal sources of occupational information as part of a new Occupational Information System (OIS). The OIS will use the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) system for classifying occupations. Given the long-term investment in the ORS, we will continue working with the Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to identify lower-cost options for ongoing survey production.

In FY 2026:

- Program Data Disclosure Review – to evaluate the effectiveness of privacy-preserving techniques currently in place and expand the disclosure protection rules across micro and macro data towards strengthening the privacy protection protocols. We will strengthen privacy guidance via the use of the developed rules to guide disclosure review work throughout our review process covering all possible privacy and disclosure rules. This is an effort to support the [Evidence Act](#).

### **Census Bureau Surveys**

We will continue our partnership with the Census Bureau to match Census data to our administrative data on benefits and earnings. We rely upon Census data from Census surveys matched to our records to study OASI, DI, SSI, and related programs and to analyze the effect of changes to our programs on individuals, the economy, and program solvency.

### **Data Development**

One of the main objectives of our extramural research program is to provide information for decision-makers on the OASI, DI, and SSI programs. We develop and maintain a series of detailed, statistical databases drawn from our major administrative data systems and prepare a broad range of statistical tables. We also prepare and publish [statistical and research products](#) and develop internal information for research, evaluation, and modeling that uses 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 is 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 2023–2025, we supported 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.

### **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 publishing statistics from administrative records.

We generate reports and data files monthly, quarterly, yearly, and on an *ad hoc* basis. Some of the legacy systems we use 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.

In FY 2025, we are working on the Modernization of Statistical Publication Processes, including upgrading, testing, and migrating OASDI, SSI, and earnings-related tasks with SharePoint and Z Multi-Factor Authentication updates.

In FY 2026, we will strengthen the integrity of our research and statistical reports by:

- Maintaining and upgrading software for the publication of OASDI and SSI data;
- Maintaining and upgrading software for the publication of Earnings Geography, Earnings Publications, and Representative Payee data; and
- Incorporating enhanced EBI tools to support the production of statistics or data extracts for ongoing publications and critical, ad hoc research projects.

### **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 two 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 [Income of the Aged Population](#), preretirement savings and pension participation, health insurance, employment and retirement patterns, and projected benefits of disabled and retired workers. We use this data to inform research by our staff on disability and retirement income resources of near-retirees. Through jointly financed cooperative agreements with the National Institute on Aging, we have supported the HRS from its inception.

The HRS data we support are also available for external researchers to understand the American population aged 50 and older.

## **Supplemental Security Income Program**

### **Medicare Outreach – Section 1144**

We are required to send outreach letters to income-tested, Medicare-eligible beneficiaries and those who have experienced a decrease in income.<sup>1</sup> These letters provide help with “traditional” Medicare and include information about Extra Help, when appropriate.

We annually notify 20 percent of those who previously received an outreach letter, have not received the benefits, and meet the income test. In FY 2024, we mailed approximately 1.3 million outreach letters to those who potentially qualified for the Medicare Savings Program or Extra Help. In FYs 2025–2027, 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.

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.

### **New and Emerging Research**

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 to respond to changes in laws, regulations, policy, and agency or Administration priorities. We anticipate using this funding for new research to support operational activities that support the Administration’s priorities of improving customer service, fighting potential fraud and waste, and optimizing our workforce.

New and Emerging Research covers the costs of small initiatives or initial project development for larger initiatives. Larger, multi-year initiatives receive their own funding in future budget planning depending on project scope, duration, and cost.

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

We are collaborating with the Department of Labor’s BLS on development of the 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

---

<sup>1</sup> 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, unless the claimant objects.

needed to gain average proficiency in a job. We will house, access, and operationalize the OIS through the VIT, a web-based information technology platform.

BLS determined that a five-year cycle (“Wave”) of data collection is needed for ORS to remain current with changes in the occupational environment. In 2024, BLS published the ORS Wave 2 final data estimates, which we will use to conduct rulemaking. We plan to update our disability adjudication rules over time to keep up to date with new BLS data.

We are descopeing our interagency agreement with BLS to reduce project costs while fulfilling our data needs. We will document a new framework in the upcoming ORS Program Development Plan, a long-term planning document that outlines development activities and timelines for overarching ORS objectives. In FYs 2025-2026, BLS will continue to collect data and publish preliminary estimates for Wave 3.

### **Understanding America Study (UAS) Enhancements**

UAS is an innovative, nationally representative longitudinal internet panel with a sample of approximately 14,000 households. Our jointly financed cooperative agreement with the National Institute on Aging funds the grant awarded to the University of Southern California (USC) to conduct the study. UAS has helped us understand variability in retirement- and disability-related outcomes across the population. Over the last year, SSA has used this data to improve the online version of the SSA Statement and examine and brief SSA leadership about the public’s knowledge of SSA programs and channel preferences.

In FY 2025, we are currently developing tables of results from the retirement and disability Social Security surveys and use the longitudinal data to assess whether the *Social Security Statement* and supplemental fact sheets improve the public’s understanding of our programs. We will also evaluate longitudinal data on the public’s Social Security retirement program knowledge, disability program knowledge, and communication channels preferences. We will disseminate the results of our work online and by sharing with interested internal and external stakeholders working on service delivery and public communications.

In FY 2026, we will conduct research to better understand individuals’ decision-making about when and whether to file for benefits.

### **Updates on Projects with No Funding Requested**

In FY 2025, we cancelled several projects to better align our research and demonstration projects with Administration priorities on statutorily required activities. By the end of FY 2025, we expect to complete all required closeout activities on the following projects:

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

The ARDRAW program supported young and emerging scholars pursuing careers in public policy research who had a special interest in our beneficiaries’ quality of life and disability

## **Supplemental Security Income Program**

program issues, challenges, and outcomes. In FY 2024, we conducted a competition for the program management organization and awarded it to the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. In FY 2025, we cancelled the cooperative agreement with the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System.

### **Beyond Benefits Study**

In FY 2021, we awarded a contract to collect information about the service, medical, and employment needs of working-age adults (i.e., 18 to 64 years of age) exiting Social Security disability programs because of medical improvement, including age-18 redeterminations.

In FY 2024, we began qualitative data collection in the form of a small pilot with 50 participants. We used this data to develop a survey about the needs of beneficiaries who may lose disability benefits or former beneficiaries who no longer collect disability payments. In FY 2024, we completed all data collections (qualitative interviews and focus groups), fielded a national survey to 4,000 individuals, and completed the Motivational Interviewing Pilot. In FY 2025, we will receive data files and end the project.

### **Disability Analysis File (DAF)**

The DAF took data from 10 administrative files and created an annual database. The DAF focused on data needed to answer questions about disability and work.

We used the DAF for internal research on return-to-work issues, and to support demonstration development and evaluation. We awarded a competitive contract in FY 2022 to continue building the DAF over FYs 2022–2026. DAF 2021 and DAF 2022 were completed in FYs 2023 and 2024, respectively. In FY 2025, we ended the contract with the vendor; DAF 2023 was mostly complete at the time of contract termination, with data available from demographics research, annual benefits, and the Ticket to Work files, while documentation files and validation reports for DAF 2023 were pending completion. We are no longer planning to fund a DAF 2024, DAF 2025, and DAF 2026.

### **Disability Research Surveys (DRS)**

In FY 2021, we developed the DRS to broaden the scope of information we collect about beneficiaries. We awarded the DRS in FY 2022 to three separate surveys: the National Beneficiary Survey (NBS), the New Applicant Survey (NAS), and a survey of children and young adults who were current or former SSI recipients. In FY 2025, we terminated the contract with the vendor.

The NBS was fielded in FY 2023, and we received the NBS survey and restricted use data file in FY 2025. In FYs 2023–2024, we developed the NAS but terminated the DRS contract prior to the planned FY 2025 data collection. In FYs 2024–2025, we were developing the survey instruments for the third survey on children and youth before DRS contract termination.



**Interventional Cooperative Agreement Program (ICAP)**

Under ICAP, we reviewed demonstration proposals from outside organizations and entered into cooperative agreements to collaborate with non-Federal entities on demonstration research related to program efficiencies and self-sufficiency.

In FY 2024, we began implementation, enrollment, and evaluation activities for the initial two ICAP projects awarded in 2021, the Vocational Resource Facilitator Demonstration (VRFD) and the SOAR in Georgia County Jails Pilot (SGCJP). We completed start up for the second round of ICAP projects, the Youth Transition Exploration Demonstration (YTED) and the Supportive Housing and Individual Placement and Support (SHIPS) study. In FY 2025, we will continue implementation, enrollment, and evaluation activities for VRFD, SGCJP, SHIPS, and YTED.

We will not solicit for additional projects in FY 2025.

**Retirement and Disability Research Consortium (RDRC)**

We awarded the current set of five-year cooperative agreements for the RDRC at the end of FY 2023. The RDRC was comprised of six competitively selected research centers that were charged with planning, initiating, and maintaining a multidisciplinary research program that covered retirement, disability, and Social Security program issues.

In FY 2024, we outlined funding to support projects starting in FY 2025. In FY 2025, we terminated the grant with the six RDRC centers.

**SSI Outreach Evaluation**

In FY 2024, we awarded an evaluation contract to assess the effectiveness of the SSI Outreach efforts. In FY 2025, we terminated the contract with the vendor to better align our research projects with Administration priorities.

---

**RELATED FUNDING SOURCES**

---

Section 234 of the Social Security Act gave us the authority to use trust fund monies to conduct research and demonstration projects designed to test DI program changes that may encourage disabled beneficiaries to work. Congress extended this authority with the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 and the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2015. These demonstration projects were not part of our annual research appropriation request. OMB apportioned Section 234 funds. Our authority to initiate such projects ended December 31, 2021, and to carry out such projects ended December 31, 2022. We will not incur additional costs, but for some projects, such as the Ohio Direct Referral Demonstration, we will continue to analyze data and release evaluation reports.

Demonstrations help identify the effects of policy changes before they are enacted nationally or in ways that are difficult to repeal if they do not have the intended effects. For example, in prior years, we used Section 234 authority to test alternative post-entitlement policies that offset DI

## Supplemental Security Income Program

benefits by \$1 for every \$2 earned, rather than the current “cash cliff” when beneficiaries lose all benefits. These tests (the Benefit Offset National Demonstration and the Promoting Opportunity Demonstration) showed that implementing such a policy would not induce enough beneficiaries to work to reduce DI Trust Fund outlays. Had these policies been enacted without the test, SSA would have incurred substantial expenses related to systems, trainings, new regulations, and other areas for an ineffective program.

**Table 2.16—Current Research Projects Obligations through FY 2024**  
(in thousands)

<b>Current Research Project Obligations</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Total</b>
Advisory Services to Assist SSA with Disability Issues	2008-2024	\$43,212
Analyzing Relationships between Disability, Rehabilitation and Work: A Small Grant Program (ARDRAW)	2016-2021 / 2024	\$2,900
Beyond Benefits Study	2021-2024	\$2,877
Blanket Purchase Agreement for Time Sensitive Research Projects	2018-2024	\$7,884
Census Surveys	2008-2024	\$12,750
Data Development <sup>1</sup>	2008-2024	\$1,536
Data Development in an Enterprise Business Platform	2015-2024	\$17,449
Disability Analysis File	2008-2024	\$20,697
Disability Research Surveys	2022 / 2024	\$24,498
Health and Retirement Study (HRS) and Supplement	2008-2024	\$70,542
Interventional Cooperative Agreement Program	2021-2024	\$21,055
Medicare Outreach (1144)	2008-2024	\$30,731
National Institutes of Health – Research on Data Analytics/Functional Assessment Battery Development	2008-2024	\$45,946
New and Emerging Research	2024	\$7,921
Occupational Information System and Vocational Info Tool	2012-2024	\$307,007
Retirement and Disability Research Consortium <sup>2</sup>	2008-2024	\$171,826
SSI Outreach Evaluation	2024	\$6,609
Understanding America Survey	2009-2024	\$35,698
<b>Total Section 1110 and 1144 Obligations</b>		<b>\$831,138</b>

### ADMINISTRATION OF OUR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Our research components are housed across the Office of Law and Policy (OLP) and the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO).

OLP is responsible for activities in the areas of strategic and program policy planning, policy research and evaluation, and overall policy development, analysis, and implementation. Within

<sup>1</sup> The Data Development line reflects total obligations for current research projects.

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

OLP, the Office of Disability Policy (ODP) is responsible for administering projects funded under our research appropriation.

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 continuing disability review policies up to date. ODP also conducts research, demonstrations, analyses, evaluations, and statistical modeling that support our goals to improve disability program effectiveness and efficiency and reduce dependence on disability programs.

OCIO is responsible for all major [Evidence Act](#)-related activities both for strategic planning and implementation. Within OCIO, the Office of the Chief Data Officer (CDO) is responsible for leading the strategy and setting standards across data governance and all Evidence Act-related responsibilities, while the Office of Analytics and Improvements (OAI) is responsible for implementing these standards and responsibilities pertaining to the recognized statistical unit leading statistical publications and research.

The CDO is responsible for the provision of governed and trusted data to improve agency outcomes and facilitate data-driven decision making. Driven by the [Evidence Act](#), the office of the CDO is responsible for managing information around the data lifecycle to enable quality, accuracy, access, and protection of data. The CDO is the main point of contact for coordinating with any official in the agency responsible for using, protecting, disseminating, and generating data to ensure that the data needs of the agency are met.

OAI is responsible for the production and dissemination of data and analysis regarding our programs and operations. OAI produces findings on our retirement, disability, and SSI programs from research and analysis projects, working in collaboration with our Policy and Operations components. OAI maintains a schedule of statistical publications to meet statutory reporting requirements. OAI statisticians and analysts 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 evaluation research related to our programs and their outcomes. As a principal analysis unit of the agency, OAI, develops program and survey data to support our research and statistical objectives.

## Supplemental Security Income Program

### Implementation of the Evidence Act

The *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act (Evidence Act) of 2018* requires us to issue an FY 2026 Annual Evaluation Plan. SSA's Evaluation Officer is responsible for coordinating across the agency to develop and execute on this plan. For more information on our implementation of the Evidence Act, please see documents posted on <https://www.ssa.gov/evidence/>.

---

### RESEARCH INVESTMENT CRITERIA

---

We support research that helps us better understand our administrative processes, rules, and policies and the impact they have on beneficiaries, solvency, and program operations and outcomes. Our research also informs many of the priority questions identified in our [Evidence Act documents](#). 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 research and demonstration agenda, such as presented in our 2026 Annual Evaluation Plan and solicitations to deliver on these plans. 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. 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. Our research supports the [Evidence Act](#) and the priorities of this Administration.

Our review process includes obtaining the advice and recommendations of policymakers and researchers with technical expertise, program managers, and agency executives. Internal reviews help ensure that funded activities reflect our strategic goals and objectives and respond to legislative requirements and the priorities of the Administration. We participate in cross-agency working groups, as appropriate, to identify appropriate areas of collaboration, data sharing, and policy change.

Many of our research activities provide policymakers and agency executives 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 Administration goals to minimize reliance on our disability programs through increased work and improve operational efficiency.

### Quality

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. We are ensuring our full compliance with new Federal policies, including EO , and EO 14271, [Ensuring Commercial, Cost Effective Solutions in Federal Contracts](#).

We use Technical Expert Panels prior to beginning projects and Technical Working Groups during project implementation to review projects and to provide feedback and suggestions for improvement 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.

### Performance

We carry out our extramural research and evaluation projects primarily through contracts and jointly funded cooperative agreements 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 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](#).

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK.