

CONTENTS

APPROPRIATION LANGUAGE..... 23
Language Analysis..... 24

GENERAL STATEMENT 25
Program Overview 25
FY 2027 President’s Budget Request 27

BUDGETARY RESOURCES 28
Analysis of Changes 29
New Budget Authority and Obligations by Activity 32

FEDERAL BENEFIT PAYMENTS 33
Purpose and Method of Operation 33
Rationale for Budget Request 33

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES..... 35
Purpose and Method of Operation 35
Rationale for Budget Request 36

BENEFICIARY SERVICES 37
Purpose and Method of Operation 37
Rationale for Budget Request 38
Additional Information on VR Cost Reimbursement and Ticket to Work Programs..... 40

RESEARCH AND DEMONSTRATION42
Purpose and Method of Operation42
Rationale for Budget Request44
Related Funding Sources52
Administration of Our Research Activities.....53
Research Investment Criteria.....55

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	27
Table 2.4—Amounts Available for Obligation	28
Table 2.5—Summary of Changes.....	30
Table 2.6—Explanation of SSI Budget Changes from FY 2026 to FY 2027.....	31
Table 2.7—New Budget Authority and Obligations by Activity	32
Table 2.8—Federal Benefit Payments: New Budget Authority and Obligations.....	33
Table 2.9—Check Payments by Fiscal Year	34
Table 2.10—Administrative Expenses: New Budget Authority and Obligations	35
Table 2.11—Beneficiary Services: New Budget Authority and Obligations.....	37
Table 2.12—SSI VR Cost Reimbursement and Ticket to Work Payments.....	39
Table 2.13—Research and Demonstration Projects: Budget Authority and Obligations by Funding Authority.....	42
Table 2.14—Research and Demonstration Projects: Obligations by Funding Source	43
Table 2.15—Major Research Areas, Demonstration Obligations and New Budget Authority.....	44
Table 2.16—Current Research Projects Obligations through FY 2025	53

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, \$51,588,254,000, 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 \$70,000,000 shall be available for research and demonstrations under sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act, and remain available through September 30, 2029.

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 2028, \$24,000,000,000, to remain available until expended.

Note – This account is operating under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2026 (Division B of Public Law 119-75).

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 2027 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 2028 to ensure the timely payment of benefits in case of a delay in the FY 2028 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, \$51,588,254,000, 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 \$70,000,000 shall be available for research and demonstrations under sections 1110, 1115, and 1144 of the Social Security Act, and remain available through September 30, 2029.</i>	Specifies that not more than \$70 million of the SSI appropriation is available for research and demonstration projects. We may carry over unobligated balances through September 30, 2029, 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 2028, \$24,000,000,000, 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 2028 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 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Enacted	FY 2027 Estimate	Change
Appropriation	\$67,065,042	\$71,552,282	\$75,088,254	+\$3,535,972
Obligations	\$68,893,297	\$72,496,011	\$75,210,263	+\$2,714,252
First Quarter Advance Appropriation for Subsequent Fiscal Year	\$22,100,000	\$23,500,000	\$24,000,000	+\$500,000

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. 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.

Supplemental Security Income Program

Benefit Payments

We estimate we will pay \$70.4 billion in Federal benefits to about 7.4 million SSI recipients in FY 2027. Including State supplementary payments, we expect to pay a total of \$73.9 billion and administer payments to nearly 7.6 million recipients.

Federal benefit payments represent approximately 94 percent of Federal SSI spending. Administrative expenses represent nearly 6 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 \$15.63 per SSI check payment in FY 2026 and is expected to increase to \$16.05 in FY 2027. 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 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 2027 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 2027 President’s Budget request is \$75,088,254,000. However, this includes \$23,500,000,000 appropriated for the first quarter of FY 2027 in the FY 2026 Consolidated Appropriations Act. The appropriation language provides us with our remaining appropriation for FY 2027, \$51,588,254,000, the total amount requested for FY 2027 less the first quarter advance.

Similarly, in addition to the amount above, the request includes an advance appropriation of \$24,000,000,000 for Federal benefit payments in the first quarter of FY 2028. 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 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Enacted	FY 2027 Estimate	<i>Change</i>
Advance for Federal Benefits ^{3,4}	\$21,700,000	\$22,100,000	\$23,500,000	
Regular for Federal Benefits	\$40,403,000	\$44,662,000	\$46,889,000	
Subtotal Federal Benefits	\$62,103,000	\$66,762,000	\$70,389,000	+\$3,627,000
Base Administrative Expenses	\$3,334,800	\$2,899,679	\$2,848,587	-\$51,092
Program Integrity (Base)	\$224,822	\$228,724	\$260,128	+\$31,404
Program Integrity (Adjustment)	\$1,174,420	\$1,495,879	\$1,445,539	-\$50,340
Subtotal Administrative Expenses	\$4,734,042	\$4,624,282	\$4,554,254	-\$70,028
Beneficiary Services	\$137,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	+\$0
Research and Demonstration	\$91,000	\$91,000	\$70,000	-\$21,000
Subtotal Advanced Appropriation	\$21,700,000	\$22,100,000	\$23,500,000	
Subtotal Regular Appropriation	\$45,365,042	\$49,452,282	\$51,588,254	
Total Appropriation	\$67,065,042	\$71,552,282	\$75,088,254	+\$3,535,972
Advance for Subsequent Year	\$22,100,000	\$23,500,000	\$24,000,000	+\$500,000

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 in the previous year’s appropriation bill.

⁴ 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.

Supplemental Security Income Program

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 2027 President's Budget is \$75,088,254,000, including \$23,500,000,000 appropriated for the first quarter of FY 2027 in the FY 2026 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

Table 2.4—Amounts Available for Obligation^{1,2}
(in thousands)

	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Enacted	FY 2027 Estimate
Regular Appropriation	\$45,365,042	\$49,452,282	\$51,588,254
Advanced Appropriation from prior FY	\$21,700,000	\$22,100,000	\$23,500,000
Total Annual Appropriation	\$67,065,042	\$71,552,282	\$75,088,254
Federal Unobligated Balance ³	\$1,656,378	\$351,590	\$328,699
Recovery of Prior-Year Obligations	\$4,020	\$9,838	\$0
Indefinite Authority ⁴	\$454,160	\$847,000	\$0
Subtotal Federal Resources	\$69,179,600	\$72,760,710	\$75,416,953
State Supp. Reimbursements	\$3,419,822	\$3,419,000	\$3,532,000
State Supp. Unobligated Balance	\$280,641	\$285,544	\$294,544
Total Budgetary Resources	\$72,880,063	\$76,465,254	\$79,243,497
Federal Obligations	\$68,893,297	\$72,496,011	\$75,210,263
State Supp. Obligations	\$3,414,919	\$3,410,000	\$3,520,000
Total Obligations	\$ 72,308,216	\$75,906,011	\$78,730,263
Federal Unobligated Balance	\$286,303	\$264,699	\$206,690
State Supp. Unobligated Balance	\$285,544	\$294,544	\$306,544
Total Unobligated Balance	\$571,847	\$559,243	\$513,234

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

² Totals may not add due to rounding.

³ The Federal Unobligated Balances for FY 2026 and FY 2027 do not match the ending balances from the prior fiscal year 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.

⁴ 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.

Supplemental Security Income Program

The SSI annual appropriation was \$67.1 billion in FY 2025. The FY 2026 appropriation is \$71.6 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 \$286 million in Federal unobligated balances into FY 2026. We expect to carry over approximately \$265 million into FY 2027.

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 2027 request represents an increase of approximately \$3.5 billion from the FY 2026 level. We plan to use unobligated balances to partially fund administrative expenses, beneficiary services, and research and demonstration projects in FY 2026 and FY 2027. In total, we plan to use approximately \$97 million in unobligated balances and recoveries in FY 2026 and \$122 million in unobligated balances and recoveries in FY 2027.

Federal Benefit Payments

The FY 2027 request for Federal Benefit payments is approximately \$3.6 billion more than the FY 2026 level, primarily due to the January 2027 COLA and a net increase in recipients, 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 2028 will be \$500 million more than the first quarter advance for FY 2027. 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 2027 and the first quarter in FY 2028 will have four benefit payments.

Administrative Expenses

The FY 2027 request for administrative expenses is approximately \$70 million less than the FY 2026 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 \$65 million in carryover funds in FY 2026 and approximately \$54 million in carryover funds in FY 2027 to cover estimated obligations. For details about program integrity funding and activities, please refer to the Program Integrity exhibit in the LAE section.

Supplemental Security Income Program

Beneficiary Services

We are requesting \$75 million in new authority for FY 2027. This is the same as our FY 2026 level; however, our FY 2027 request funds an estimated 19 percent increase in obligations above the FY 2026 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 \$45 million in carryover funds in FY 2027 to cover our estimated obligations.

Research and Demonstrations

The FY 2027 request for research and demonstration projects is \$21 million lower than our FY 2026 level. We expect to use carryover funds in FY 2026 and FY 2027 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 2026 Enacted	FY 2027 Estimate	Change
Appropriation	\$71,552,282	\$75,088,254	+3,535,972
Obligations Funded from Prior-Year Unobligated Balances and Recoveries	\$96,729	\$122,009	+\$25,280
Obligations Funded from Indefinite Authority	\$847,000	\$0	-\$847,000
Estimated Federal Obligations	\$72,496,011	\$75,210,263	+\$2,714,252

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.

Supplemental Security Income Program

Table 2.6—Explanation of SSI Budget Changes from FY 2026 to FY 2027
(in thousands)

	FY 2026 Obligations	<i>Change</i>
Federal Benefit Payments	\$66,762,000	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COLA – 2.4% beginning January 2027 • Net change due to annualized closings and awards • Projected obligations above estimated outlays • Effect of OASDI COLA for concurrent SSI/OASDI Recipients 		+\$2,175,000 +\$394,000 +697,000 -\$486,000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indefinite Authority 	\$847,000	
Federal Benefit Payments – Carryover	\$0	
Administrative Expenses	\$4,624,282	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in base funding 		-\$70,028
Administrative Expenses – Carryover	\$65,000	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in amount of carryover funding planned for obligation in FY 2027 		-\$11,000
Beneficiary Services	\$75,000	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in base funding 		\$0
Beneficiary Services – Carryover	\$26,000	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in amount of carryover funding planned for obligation in FY 2027 		+\$19,000
Research and Demonstration	\$91,000	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in base funding 		-\$21,000
Research and Demonstration – Carryover	\$5,729	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in amount of carryover funding planned for obligation in FY 2027 		+\$17,280
Total Obligations Requested, Net Change	\$72,496,011	+\$2,714,252

Supplemental Security Income Program

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 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Enacted³	FY 2027 Estimate³
<u>Federal Benefit Payments</u>			
Appropriation	\$62,103,000	\$66,762,000	\$70,389,000
Obligations	\$64,030,240	\$67,609,000	\$70,389,000
Monthly Check Payments	12	12	12
<u>Base Administrative Expenses</u>			
Appropriation	\$3,334,800	\$2,899,679	\$2,848,587
Obligations	\$3,334,800	\$2,964,679	\$2,912,587
<u>Program Integrity (Base)</u>			
Appropriation	\$224,822	\$228,724	\$260,128
Obligations	\$224,822	\$228,724	\$260,128
<u>Program Integrity (Adjustment)</u>			
Appropriation	\$1,174,420	\$1,495,879	\$1,445,539
Obligations	\$1,174,420	\$1,495,879	\$1,435,539
<u>Beneficiary Services</u>			
Appropriation	\$137,000	\$75,000	\$75,000
Obligations	\$80,425	\$101,000	\$120,000
<u>Research and Demonstration</u>			
Appropriation	\$91,000	\$91,000	\$70,000
Obligations	\$48,590	\$96,729	\$93,009
Total Appropriation	\$67,065,042	\$71,552,282	\$75,088,254
Total Federal Obligations	\$68,893,297	\$72,496,011	\$75,210,263

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 2026 and FY 2027 obligations.

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 2027, we estimate benefit payments will total approximately \$70 billion for approximately 7.4 million Federal SSI recipients.

Table 2.8—Federal Benefit Payments: New Budget Authority and Obligations¹
(in thousands)

	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Enacted	FY 2027 Estimate	<i>Change</i>
Appropriation	\$62,103,000	\$66,762,000	\$70,389,000	+\$3,627,000
Obligations Funded from Prior-Year Unobligated Balance and Recoveries	<i>\$1,473,080</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>	<i>\$0</i>
Indefinite Authority	<i>\$454,160</i>	<i>\$847,000</i>	<i>\$0</i>	-\$847,000
Obligations	\$64,030,240	\$67,609,000	\$70,389,000	+\$2,780,000
Advance for subsequent fiscal year	\$22,100,000	\$23,500,000	\$24,000,000	+\$500,000

RATIONALE FOR BUDGET REQUEST

In FY 2027, we are requesting \$70.4 billion in new budget authority for Federal benefit payments, and \$24 billion in an advance appropriation for the first quarter of FY 2028. 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 Actuarial Services.

Supplemental Security Income Program

Table 2.9—Check Payments by Fiscal Year

	Number of Check Payments	Federal Benefit Obligations
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	\$64,030,239,598
FY 2026	12	\$67,609,000,000
FY 2027	12	\$70,389,000,000

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)

	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Enacted	FY 2027 Estimate	<i>Change</i>
Total Appropriation	\$4,734,042	\$4,624,282	\$4,554,254	-\$70,028
Obligations Funded from Prior-Year Unobligated Balance	\$0	+\$65,000	+\$54,000	-\$11,000
Obligations	\$4,734,042	\$4,689,282	\$4,608,254	-\$81,028

Supplemental Security Income Program

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 2027 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 2027 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 \$175 million in FY 2027 to administer SSI state supplementary payments.

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)

	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Enacted	FY 2027 Estimate	<i>FY 2026 to FY 2027 Change</i>
Appropriation	\$137,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	<i>\$0</i>
Prior-Year Unobligated Balances and Recoveries	\$140,141	\$196,716	\$170,716	<i>-\$26,000</i>
Total Budgetary Resources	\$277,141	\$271,716	\$245,716	<i>-\$26,000</i>
Obligations	\$80,425	\$101,000	\$120,000	<i>+\$19,000</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.¹⁷

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,

¹⁷ In 2026, we consider non-blind and blind disabled beneficiaries to be performing SGA if they earn more than \$1,690 and \$2,830 per month, respectively.

Supplemental Security Income Program

and other support services to disabled SSI recipients. The recipients select an EN, and when EN 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 2027. The FY 2027 forecast is based on a model which uses prior payments and macroeconomic factors 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 incorporate current trends in spending and the possible impact of upcoming policy or business process changes on our spending.

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 when the VR services do not meet our criteria, when VR agencies are late in submitting reimbursement claims, or when a VR agency submits their payment request before the client has completed the required nine months of SGA.

In FY 2025, we continued to prioritize program integrity by conducting pre-payment validation reviews (PVR) of reimbursement claims submitted by VR agencies. We conduct PVRs for each VR agency by reviewing the VR's receipts, case notes, and Individualized Plans for Employment, etc. prior to issuing a payment. In FY 2025, we selected 633 claims for review¹⁸ and denied reimbursement claims for those VRs that did not respond to the documentation request in its entirety or in a timely manner. We will use the same methodology to conduct PVRs in FYs 2026 and 2027.

In FY 2024, we reinstated one appeal per denied claim. Coupled with rising unemployment, this change diminished VR claims and payments in FYs 2024 and 2025. In FY 2026, we expect

¹⁸ In FY 2024, we changed our methodology to base the number of PVRs we conduct for each VR to 10% of their previous years' claims. This change increased the number of PVRs we process. We processed 730 PVRs in FY 2024 and about 100 PVRs in FY 2023.

Supplemental Security Income Program

the number of VR claims to increase as VR agencies adapt to programmatic changes. Furthermore, we expect that an increasing percentage of VR claims will be payable, 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 FYs 2026 and 2027.

In FY 2026, we are undertaking several activities to improve beneficiary awareness of and participation in Beneficiary Services programs. These activities include new promotional materials available in field offices and updated information, scripts, and training for operational staff. Additionally, we are recompeting the Ticket to Work Program Manager contract in FY 2026, which provides an opportunity for new informational and marketing ideas to implement in FYs 2026 and 2027.

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 Payments¹⁹
(\$ in thousands)

	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Estimate	FY 2027 Estimate
<u>Vocational Rehabilitation</u>			
SSI Only Reimbursement Payments	3,689	4,764	5,747
SSI/DI Concurrent Reimbursement Payments	1,892	2,443	2,948
Number of Total Reimbursement Awards	5,581	7,207	8,695
VR Obligations	\$63,090	\$81,000	\$98,000
<u>Ticket to Work</u>			
SSI Only Milestone Payments	3,776	4,348	4,696
SSI Only Outcome Payments	22,484	25,892	27,959
SSI/DI Concurrent Milestone Payments	4,619	5,319	5,744
SSI/DI Concurrent Outcome Payments	5,981	6,888	7,438
Number of Total Ticket Payments	36,860	42,447	45,836
Ticket Obligations	\$17,335	\$20,000	\$22,000

¹⁹ Totals may not add due to rounding.

Supplemental Security Income Program

	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Estimate	FY 2027 Estimate
Total VR Reimbursements & Ticket Payments	42,441	49,654	54,531
Total Obligations	\$80,425	\$101,000	\$120,000

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 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 implemented the Payroll Information Exchange (PIE) process for both SSI and SSDI beneficiaries. With PIE, we

Supplemental Security Income Program

obtain wage and employer information from a 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. For SSI, the wage information is processed automatically, and adjustments are made to benefits. For SSDI, the wage information is used to identify beneficiaries who are working above SGA and in need of a work review. 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.

Supplemental Security Income Program

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 Authority¹**
(in thousands)

	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Enacted	FY 2027 Estimate	<i>Change from FY 2026 to FY 2027</i>
Appropriation²	\$91,000	\$91,000	\$70,000	-\$21,000
Prior Year Unobligated Balance and Recoveries ³	\$47,464	\$100,517	\$94,788	-\$5,729
Total Budgetary Resources	\$138,464	\$191,517	\$164,788	-\$26,729
Obligations by Authority⁴				
FYs 2023-2025 Authority	\$4,740	\$0	\$0	
FYs 2024-2026 Authority	\$28,727	\$7,794	\$0	
FYs 2025-2027 Authority	\$15,123	\$79,005	\$0	
FYs 2026-2028 Authority	N/A	\$9,930	\$81,070	
FYs 2027 – 2029 Requested Authority	N/A	N/A	\$11,939	
No-Year Authority	\$0	\$0	\$0	
TOTAL Obligations	\$48,590	\$96,729	\$93,009	-\$3,720
Total Unobligated Balance	\$89,874	\$94,788	\$71,779	-\$23,009

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

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

³ FY 2026 prior year unobligated balance includes total recoveries of about \$10.6 million.

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 2026 and FY 2027 break out is our current projection for how the funds will be obligated.

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

	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Estimate	FY 2027 Estimate
Obligations by Source			
Section 1110	\$47,137	\$95,008	\$91,288
Section 1144	\$1,453	\$1,721	\$1,721
TOTAL Obligations	\$48,590	\$96,729	\$93,009

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 and evaluation; 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:

- Keep pace with advancements in medicine and technology;
- Test work support models;
- Analyze factors influencing program participation;
- Gauge the public’s understanding of the program;
- Test the efficacy of various service delivery models;
- Enhance data quality and disclosure risk measures across our publicly released data, statistics, and research products;
- Conduct research and evaluation for integrating modern technological tools and other technologies in service provision; and
- Measure the impact of program and technology 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 several 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.

Supplemental Security Income Program

RATIONALE FOR BUDGET REQUEST

We are committed to improving the quality, consistency, and timeliness of our disability decisions; maximizing efficiencies throughout the disability program; improving service delivery; understanding program outcomes; 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 areas.

We reassessed all research, demonstration, and outreach initiatives to improve service delivery, fight potential fraud and waste, and improve payment integrity. In support of this effort, we scaled back some of our research and demonstration commitments in FY 2025 and are revising the criteria for new projects in FY 2026.

In FY 2027, we are requesting \$70 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. The table and discussion that follow provide more details on the extramural research and outreach efforts we plan to fund in FY 2027.

Table 2.15—Major Research Areas, Demonstration Obligations and New Budget Authority
(in thousands)¹

Major Research Areas	Obligations ²		
	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Enacted	FY 2027 Estimate
Advisory Services to Assist SSA with Disability Issues	\$2,984	\$4,044	\$4,145
Beyond Benefits Study	\$213	\$0	\$0
Blanket Purchase Agreement for Time-Sensitive Research Projects	\$0	\$2,000	\$2,000
Census Surveys	\$765	\$780	\$796
Data Development	\$50	\$207	\$104
Data Development in an Enterprise Business Intelligence (EBI) Platform	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Disability Analysis File (DAF)	\$1,299	\$0	\$0
Health & Retirement Study (HRS) and Supplement	\$4,575	\$4,575	\$4,575
Medicare Outreach (1144)	\$1,453	\$1,721	\$1,721
New and Emerging Research	\$0	\$32,000	\$32,000
Occupational Data	\$35,250	\$ 35,800	\$ 36,866

¹ Totals may not add due to rounding.

² This amount includes obligations funded from prior-year unobligated balances.

Supplemental Security Income Program

Major Research Areas	Obligations ¹		
	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Enacted	FY 2027 Estimate
Understanding America Study (UAS) Enhancements	\$0	\$13,602	\$8,802
Total Research Obligations	\$ 48,590	\$96,729	\$93,009
New Budget Authority	\$91,000	\$91,000	\$70,000

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 awarded task orders that:

- Created 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.
- Created a consensus committee to explore the medical community’s current standards and best practices for pulmonary function testing (PFT). The committee is examining 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 will 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.
- Created a public workshop comprised of healthcare experts, medical practitioners, and computing and information technology professionals to discuss the identification, and

Supplemental Security Income Program

interpretation of modern technology generated, enhanced, or edited medical evidence 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 by pursuing task order awards to:

- Create a consensus committee investigating patient-worn and home-use 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.

In FY 2027, we plan to award projects that will:

- Create a consensus committee investigating rehabilitation and return to work among youth and younger adults with mental impairments. The committee would offer SSA a deeper understanding of the challenges and paths to success for an individual navigating rehabilitation services and the national job market. Key objectives for this committee would relate to correlating interventions and treatments with the mental impairments and symptomology wherein they are shown to have the greatest effect, and identifying factors SSA should consider as we allocate limited work-support resources.
- Create a consensus committee to discuss and author a report on growth impairments among children with a focus on prognosis and improvements in treatment. The report would allow SSA to ensure our criteria for failure to thrive remain medically appropriate. The insights generated by the committee would provide important guidance on the collection and evaluation of evidence essential to a full understanding of individual children's growth-related medical situations.

Supplemental Security Income Program

- Plan and conduct a public workshop comprised of health care providers, administrators, and digital support professionals to discuss the growing use of digital therapeutics and the feasibility of extracting medical and functional data for use within SSA disability evaluation. This workshop will help us understand the changing landscape of at-home and on-the-go medical services, the efficacy of specific therapeutics, the reliability of the records generated by these therapeutics, how medical providers incorporate these records into their provision of care, and important considerations for SSA in the access and consideration of such records.

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.

In FY 2026, we are planning to make 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.

In FY 2027, we are planning to make BPA awards for the following research topics:

- Integration of modern technological tools into Quality and Disclosure Risk for Program Data – Develop and use tools to replace the manual checking of data privacy, where feasible. Additionally, we are considering building models to create synthetic micro data to replace real data in public use data files which will further reduce the risk of individual disclosure. These efforts aim to modernize the current system tools and automate the process where feasible to increase efficiencies and reduce review burden. This initiative combines our Evidence Act and technological improvement efforts.
- Spatio-Temporal Analysis of SSI Application by the Population – to identify if the declining trend in SSI applications is associated with specific subpopulations' characteristics and demographics across different geographic areas in the U.S. over time. This would support more targeted outreach by SSA and identification of opportunities to improve service provision by eliminating potential barriers to eligible beneficiaries.

Supplemental Security Income Program

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 Agency-wide and Program level research programs 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.

We provide ongoing support to the National Science Foundation (NSF) Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) to continue their invaluable role of supporting the federal statistical system. This support empowers CNSTAT to provide their expertise to SSA in areas such as advanced statistical and computational methods and survey research. The funding also supports several CNSTAT publications, including their flagship reports on Principles and Practices for a Federal Statistical Agency, Innovations in Federal Statistics, and Privacy Protection.

We also partner with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Under a Jointly Financed Cooperative Arrangement, SSA and NCHS each provide support for disseminating and coordinating research by the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics which helps improve the effectiveness of programs carried out or assisted by SSA.

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 completed authentication updates required by changes in our security posture. Additionally, we worked toward the Modernization of Statistical Publication Processes, by upgrading, testing, and migrating OASDI, SSI, and earnings-related tasks with SharePoint.

Supplemental Security Income Program

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

- Testing, validating, and putting into production automated processes around publication of OASDI data;
- Updating input for SSI Monthly and Yearly statistical tables from the Supplemental Security Record dataset to the concurrent dataset; and
- Automating several pieces of the Annual Statistical Supplement publication.

In FY 2027, we will further 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.

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.¹ 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 2025, we mailed approximately 1.0 million outreach letters to those who potentially qualified for the Medicare Savings Program or Extra Help. In FYs 2026–2028, we anticipate mailing a similar number of outreach letters each year. We factor in a contingency amount for possible increases in enrollment, for

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, unless the claimant objects.

Supplemental Security Income Program

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

New and emerging research areas for FY 2026 will advance SSA's service delivery and operational efficiency through the strategic integration of AI, automation, and advanced analytics. Central to this initiative is a focus on evaluating the impact of digital transformation on our varied customer populations, including those differentiated by disability, age, education, and digital and financial literacy. By conducting impact evaluations and experimental studies such as implementing AI tools in customer service, deploying virtual chat agents, and automating claims processing, we will identify the benefits and potential disparities of technology adoption, ensuring innovations improve both efficiency and access to SSA services for all customers.

For FY 2027, planned research includes developing stochastic models to reduce wait times for phone and in-person services and creating AI-augmented tools for disability determination, SSI redetermination, and benefits estimation. Our aim is to leverage AI to improve assessment of wait times in real time and minimize delays in service, whether in person or over the phone. Each project incorporates rigorous evaluation methods, to assess the impact of changes and maintain high-quality data about SSA programs and beneficiaries.

All FY 2026 and FY 2027 initiatives are designed to modernize SSA operations, reduce bottlenecks and backlogs, and deliver tangible improvements for customers and staff. We will uphold high data quality standards, maintain customer trust through strong privacy safeguards, and ensure transparency by sharing data and research results with the public through interactive dashboards, modernized statistical publications, and publishing our research.

Occupational Data

We are collaborating with the BLS on the development of the Occupational Requirements Survey (ORS) to collect updated information on the requirements of work in the national economy.

In FY 2025, BLS completed the second year of Wave 3 data collection, began the third year of data collection, and published preliminary estimates for the first year of Wave 3.

In FYs 2026-2027, BLS will continue to collect data and publish preliminary estimates for Wave 3. Final estimates for Wave 3 are scheduled to be published in FY 2032.

Understanding America Study (UAS) Enhancements

[UAS](#) is an innovative, nationally representative longitudinal internet panel with a sample of over 13,000 U.S. households. It is funded through a jointly financed cooperative agreement with the National Institute on Aging (NIA) at HHS. Our support will allow the grantee to maintain and expand the sample size to 20,000 panel members over the next 5 years. Our support also covers three UAS Social Security surveys to evaluate the public's knowledge and experiences with the Social Security retirement and disability programs and preferences for communicating and interacting with the agency.

In FY 2025, we presented data on every question in the UAS Social Security surveys, including data on public knowledge, customer experiences, and communication preferences broken out by demographics. The UAS data expands the usefulness of the Social Security surveys by making the results easier to publish and disseminate, to support more in-depth research.

In FY 2026, we will 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. We also will update core UAS surveys and evaluate longitudinal data on the public's Social Security retirement program knowledge, disability program knowledge, and communication channels preferences. We will also leverage the UAS' increasing sample size to provide insights into differences in retirement savings, disability participation, and financial security by demographics. We will publish our findings online.

In FY 2027, we will fund focus groups to better understand why individuals who are potentially eligible do not apply and to identify factors that may impact understanding and accessing Social Security benefits. We will also fund a survey on SSI program knowledge that would allow us to gauge public understanding of the program rules and decision making and preferences about claiming SSI 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 2026, we expect to complete all required closeout activities on the following projects:

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 received all the data files. In FY 2026, we began to analyze the data using internal resources.

Supplemental Security Income Program

We will use this information to improve the services provided by our return-to-work programs (see Beneficiary Services section).

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 2026.

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 2026 and 2027, we will continue enrollment and evaluation activities for VRFD, SGCJP, SHIPS, and YTED.

We will not solicit for additional projects.

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 apportions Section 234 funds. Our authority to initiate such projects ended December 31, 2021, and to carry out such projects ended December 31, 2022.

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 benefits by \$1 for every \$2 earned, rather than the current “cash cliff” when beneficiaries lose all

Supplemental Security Income Program

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, training, new regulations, and other areas for an ineffective program.

Table 2.16—Current Research Projects Obligations through FY 2025
(in thousands)¹

Current Research Project Obligations	Years	Total
Advisory Services to Assist SSA with Disability Issues	2008-2025	\$46,196
Beyond Benefits Study	2021/2025	\$2,956
Blanket Purchase Agreement for Time Sensitive Research Projects	2018-2024	\$7,884
Census Surveys	2008-2025	\$13,515
Data Development ²	2008-2024	\$1,569
Data Development in an Enterprise Business Platform	2015-2024	\$19,449
Disability Analysis File	2008-2025	\$21,996
Health and Retirement Study (HRS) and Supplement	2008-2025	\$75,117
Medicare Outreach (1144)	2008-2025	\$21,667
New and Emerging Research	2024	\$659
Occupational Data	2012-2025	\$342,257
Understanding America Survey	2009-2024	\$35,698
Total Section 1110 and 1144 Obligations		\$588,963

ADMINISTRATION OF OUR RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Our primary research components reside in Law and Policy (LP) and under the Chief Information Office (CIO). In Law and Policy (LP), Program Policy and Data Exchange (PPDX), Disability Policy (DP) and Income Security Policy (ISP) use research to support overall policy development, analysis, and implementation. In CIO, Technology, Customer, Data, and Artificial Intelligence (TCDAI) holds responsibility for research planning, statistical programs, evaluation, data governance, and dissemination for increased transparency and trust. All components share responsibility for administering projects funded under our research appropriation.

LP is responsible for activities in the areas of strategic and program policy planning, evaluation, and overall development, analysis, and implementation. Within LP, PPDX, DP and ISP oversee and support the planning, development, evaluation, and issuance of substantive regulations, policies, and procedures for our Title II and Title XVI programs; development and promulgation of policies and guidelines for use by State, Federal, or private contractor providers who

¹ Table 1.4 updated to reflect current research project totals to date only.

² The Data Development line reflects total obligations for current research projects.

Supplemental Security Income Program

implement the provisions of the Social Security Act; and evaluation of the effects of proposed legislation and I to determine the impact on programs. DP uses research to identify opportunities for policy improvement and for keeping medical, vocational, childhood, disability, and continuing disability review policies up to date. ISP conducts demonstrations, analyses, and evaluations that support our goals to improve program effectiveness and efficiency and reduce dependence on disability programs.

CIO is responsible for all major [Evidence Act](#) and AI policy related activities both for strategic planning and implementation. Within CIO, the TCDAI office is responsible for leading the strategy and setting standards across data governance, open data efforts, and all Evidence Act-related responsibilities including the research agenda. Additionally, TCDAI implements standards and responsibilities pertaining to statistical publications and compliance with Trust regulations.

Driven by the [Evidence Act](#), the office manages information around the data lifecycle to enable quality, accuracy, access, and protection of data privacy. TCDAI is also responsible for the production and dissemination of data and analysis regarding our programs and operations producing findings on our retirement, disability, and SSI programs from research and analysis projects, working in collaboration with our Policy and Operations components. It conducts research to evaluate AI integration efforts to increase operational efficiencies and assess differential impact of the use of new technologies on our clients based on their demographics, financial literacy, and socio-economic levels, and maintains a schedule of statistical publications to meet statutory reporting requirements. TCDAI 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, TCDAI develops program and survey data to support our research and statistical objectives.

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](#). 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. 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 Executive Order [14271](#), *Ensuring Commercial, Cost Effective Solutions in Federal Contracts*.

Supplemental Security Income Program

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 reviews help ensure that our 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. Contracting officers, contracting officer's representatives, analysts, and senior executives monitor the progress of all research contracts and agreements. These contracts and agreements are also subject to audits by the Inspector General.

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](#).