



# Agile Development Policy

Version: 0.3

Effective Date: June 30, 2017

## 1.0 PURPOSE

This document establishes the policy for the use of the Agile development approach at the Social Security Administration (SSA). This document provides a starting point for understanding the specific approach to Agile as implemented at SSA. The Policy section below describes the fundamental premise of the SSA Agile approach. It refers the reader to the governing sources that define the requirements, procedures and responsibilities for Agile development.

## 2.0 SCOPE

This policy applies to all employee and contractor resources involved in the planning, development, and deployment of software and systems that are using the SSA Agile development approach.

## 3.0 AUTHORITIES

The following laws, regulations, orders, policies, directives, and guidance authorize and govern this policy:

- The Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars A-130 and A-11
- 25 Point Implementation Plan to Reform Federal Information Technology Management (U.S. Chief Information Officer, December 9, 2010)
- Contracting Guidance to Support Modular Development (OMB, June 14, 2012)
- Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA) Memorandum M-15-14 (June 10, 2015)

In addition, this policy is consistent in spirit with the enablers described in [SSA's Vision 2025](#) and is aligned with the guidance provided by the [USDS Playbook](#).

## 4.0 POLICY

### 4.1 Background

The SSA Agile development approach uses an iterative, incremental process that is characterized by frequent releases developed in close collaboration with the customer. This modular and incremental approach is encouraged by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Our approach allows the ability to quickly respond to changing customer needs and opportunities to implement improvements, thereby reducing the risk of project failure and ensuring that the delivered product performs as intended.

This approach comprises an Agile process optimized for use at SSA, the Agile Lifecycle (ALC), supported by the Modern Development Environment (MDE). Together, this solution provides a practical and comprehensive solution for an effective and efficient Agile implementation.

The following principles are key to Agile at SSA:

- **Product Focus:** Ensuring that all team members and the activities they perform have a singular goal – to deliver a quality product for the customer. To get there, team members must implement Lean Thinking to produce a Minimum Viable Product (MVP).
- **Transparency:** Keeping everything about a project visible to everyone.

- Fail Fast/Fail Often: Trying out new ideas quickly, then rapidly inspecting and adapting. This really focuses on learning fast, learning often, and learning at the least cost.
- Continuous Improvement: Identifying opportunities for streamlining work and reducing waste.

Not all projects at SSA utilize Agile development. Agile projects are selected by DCS Management based on discussions with candidate projects using the Agile Eligibility Scorecard as a guide for those discussions.

#### **4.2 SSA Agile Lifecycle**

The SSA ALC is a practical, lightweight process that defines how Agile teams work at the Agency. The ALC identifies team member roles, defines processes and provides guidance throughout the project lifecycle. By implementing continuous improvement, the ALC is routinely updated to reflect the latest information regarding Agile at the Agency. All information regarding the SSA ALC can be found on the [Agile Resource Center](#).

#### **4.3 Modern Development Environment**

The Modern Development Environment (MDE) was established to enable the SSA ALC. The MDE is a suite of industry-standard tools and engineering practices for supporting Agile development at SSA. All information regarding the MDE can be found on the [Modern Development Environment Wiki](#).

#### **4.4 Policy Statement**

All systems development and maintenance projects at SSA that follow the SSA Agile development approach must deliver usable product to end users in increments not to exceed six months. SSA defines usable product as "a new or enhanced IT capability that customers can use in an operational environment." Also, any Agile projects using the MDE will adopt the Agile and MDE required practices as stated in the governing sources:

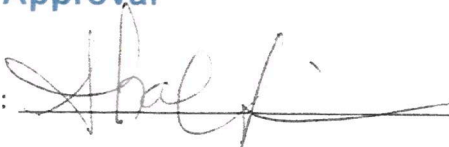
- [Agile Resource Center](#)
- [Required MDE Practices](#)
- [Modern Development Environment Wiki](#)
- [CM Audit Defense Toolkit](#)

Such projects shall include those where software is developed, Commercial-Off-The-Shelf (COTS) products are integrated or configured, or where business intelligence or reporting capabilities are deployed. DCS management will strive to ensure that appropriate training, coaching, and tools are available to facilitate the success of Agile projects.

Any exceptions to this policy must be made via a waiver from the SSA Chief Information Officer (CIO), or his/her designee.

#### **5.0 Approval**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

6/30/17