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# SSA Open Data Plan

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**CHIEF DATA OFFICE**

TRUSTED DATA ♦ GREATER KNOWLEDGE ♦ IMPROVED DECISIONS ♦ ENHANCED EXPERIENCE

## Table of Contents

Purpose.....	2
Background.....	2
SSA Open Data Goals .....	2
Agency Data Requirements .....	3
a. Data Collection Processes for Open Formats .....	4
b. Data Usage Information .....	4
c. Collaboration with Data Users .....	5
d. Open Data Point of Contact .....	5
e. Improvement Processes.....	6
f. Open Data Goal Requirements .....	6
g. Prioritizing Public Data Asset Review .....	7
h. Compliance Status .....	8
i. Updating the Strategic Information Resources Management Plan.....	8
Appendix A: Definitions.....	9

## Purpose

This plan satisfies requirements in the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-25-05 regarding public data asset dissemination.<sup>1</sup>

Pursuant to the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018 (Evidence Act), the Social Security Administration (SSA) is committed to improving the breadth and depth of our Open Data Catalog to make SSA data findable, accessible, interoperable, and reusable.<sup>2</sup>

## Background

Title II of the Evidence Act, the OPEN Government Data Act, aims to enhance transparency and accessibility of government data.<sup>3</sup> It requires federal agencies to publish their open data information online in standardized, machine-readable formats, ensuring that metadata is included in the [Data.gov](https://data.gov) Federal Data Catalog. OMB M-25-05 further defines key actions that facilitate improved governance and innovation by making data readily available and accessible to the public.

To date, SSA has compiled metadata on more than 1,000 data assets and published them on [Data.gov](https://data.gov) and the [www.ssa.gov/data](https://www.ssa.gov/data) webpage via the internal Enterprise Data Inventory application. While the Enterprise Data Inventory, developed in 2009, supports open data practices at SSA, modernization efforts are needed to advance the discovery and interoperability of SSA data for staff and public users. To fulfill OMB requirements and promote data access, SSA plans to standardize, formalize, and enhance open data processes and improve the overall data maturity of the Agency.

This Open Data Plan outlines the SSA's goals, requirements, and activities regarding open data management and publication.

## SSA Open Data Goals

Our vision is to create a transparent and accessible data ecosystem that empowers users through improved data discovery and usability, fosters insightful analysis, and builds public trust in the integrity of SSA data. All actions in this plan work towards fulfilling that vision and achieving the following goals:

1. Improving data discovery and accessibility (**Technology**)
2. Enabling data usability and insights (**Process**)
3. Enhancing public trust in SSA data (**People**)

<sup>1</sup> OMB M-25-05 provided guidance on the contents of agency Open Data Plans. See Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, OMB M-25-05 [Phase 2 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Open Government Data Access and Management Guidance](#) (2025).

<sup>2</sup> Public Law No. 115-435 (2019), *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018*, is also referred to as the *Evidence Act*.

<sup>3</sup> Title II of the *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018* is also referred to as the *Open, Public, Electronic, and Necessary Government Data Act* or the *OPEN Government Data Act*.

## Agency Data Requirements

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This plan follows the structure of OMB M-25-05 section 6, AGENCY DATA REQUIREMENTS: OPEN DATA PLAN.

- a. Data Collection Processes for Open Formats**
- b. Data Usage Information**
- c. Collaboration with Data Users**
- d. Open Data Point of Contact**
- e. Improvement Processes**
- f. Open Data Goal Requirements**
- g. Prioritizing Public Data Asset Review**
- h. Compliance Status**
- i. Updating the Strategic Information Resources Management Plan**

The ongoing activities and out-year plans described below also address requirements listed in section 4, AGENCY REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO ALL DATA ASSETS, and section 5, REQUIREMENTS THAT APPLY TO ALL PUBLIC DATA ASSETS of OMB M-25-05.

## a. Data Collection Processes for Open Formats

### VISION

SSA has processes and procedures in place to ensure data is collected in an open format, by default, using digital collection mechanisms.

### ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- Enforce SSA's *Data Release Checklist*, which requires data sponsors to ensure their data asset is in one of the following open formats: JSON, XML, CSV/TXT, KML/KMZ, ESRI Shapefile, or other machine-readable formats to be released to [Data.gov](https://data.gov).

### OUT-YEAR PLANS

- Establish clear rules and guidance for data collection in open formats and maintenance under an open license to maximize access, use, and reuse of public data assets.
- Review current data collection methods to identify gaps in open format usage.
- Identify current tools that facilitate data collection in open formats to make public data assets machine-readable.
- Educate staff on the importance of open formats and promote best practices for how to implement the guidelines.

## b. Data Usage Information

### VISION

SSA collects and analyzes digital information on data asset usage by users inside and outside the Agency.

### ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- Continue to collect, use, and report metrics on [Data.gov](https://data.gov), and ensure a link is prominently provided on the SSA Open Data webpage. The metrics that [Data.gov](https://data.gov) reports on by organization are:
  - *Most Viewed Dataset Pages*
  - *Most Downloaded Dataset Files*
  - *Most Clicked Outbound Links*

### OUT-YEAR PLANS

- Develop the SSA Open Data Catalog on the [data.ssa.gov](https://data.ssa.gov) URL to have the functionality to track and display the number of views and downloads for each data asset, providing users with insights into the popularity and usage of specific datasets.
- Develop Key Performance Indicators to analyze and measure against that will provide insight into data usage from the Open Data Catalog.

## c. Collaboration with Data Users

### VISION

SSA facilitates engagement and collaboration between the public and the Agency to expand the use of public data assets.

### ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- Continue to receive and address issues shared via the [Open.Data@ssa.gov](mailto:Open.Data@ssa.gov) email address, and ensure it is prominently displayed on the SSA Open Data webpage for external stakeholders to contact the SSA with data inquiries.
- Verify the [Open.Data@ssa.gov](mailto:Open.Data@ssa.gov) email address is prominently displayed as the contact on every data asset's page in [Data.gov](https://data.gov).

### OUT-YEAR PLANS

- Create and utilize an Open Data Inquiry Form to solicit data related questions from the public.
- Revive Ideascale as a mechanism for crowdsourcing public input regarding data asset prioritization and other relevant SSA data topics. Moderators will need to implement more guidelines to scope user inputs.
- Collaborate with other agencies to learn how they developed their Open Data Catalogs.
- Coordinate with SSA's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Office to determine specific data assets that receive frequent requests and therefore should be made publicly available on the SSA Open Data Catalog.

## d. Open Data Point of Contact

### ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- Actively manage the [Open.Data@ssa.gov](mailto:Open.Data@ssa.gov) mailbox to assist the public with open data inquiries. The email address is prominently displayed on the SSA Open Data webpage and on [Data.gov](https://data.gov) for external stakeholders to use. Continue to monitor the mailbox, triage questions to the appropriate data owners, communicate input with the Data Governance Body as necessary, and respond to the public in a timely manner.

### OUT-YEAR PLANS

- Continue to monitor engagement with the public and refine internal points of contact to improve answering inquiries regarding a public data asset.

## e. Improvement Processes

### VISION

SSA has a robust process to evaluate and improve the data quality (e.g., timeliness, completeness, consistency, accuracy, usefulness, and availability) of open Government data assets.

### ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- Ensure that data sponsors meet the SSA's *Data Release Checklist* requirement to manage their data assets for data quality.

### OUT-YEAR PLANS

- Clearly define the roles and responsibilities for data owners/stewards/sponsors.
- Standardize data release processes to drive publication:
  - Integrate with internal data documentation processes
  - Integrate with the Data Disclosure review process
  - Establish an Open Data Release Review Board
- Update and modernize the SSA Open Data Catalog to improve data visibility and accessibility to the public while empowering data owners to maintain the quality of their public data assets.
- Standardize metadata tags and categories to enhance searchability of public data assets.
- Conduct an annual audit of the Open Data Catalog requiring data owners to check their data assets for accuracy.

## f. Open Data Goal Requirements

### VISION

SSA manages an innovative information technology environment and a skilled workforce that facilitates open data sharing.

### ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- Comply with current [Data.gov](https://data.gov) reporting requirements through managing the SSA Enterprise Data Inventory, an internal application that serves as the Agency's comprehensive data inventory.
- Launch an Open Data Community of Practice for employee training and support.

### OUT-YEAR PLANS

- Facilitate data sharing opportunities to drive data-driven decisions across the Agency.

## g. Prioritizing Public Data Asset Review

### VISION

SSA evaluates data assets to determine whether they are a priority to the public and deemed a public data asset to be included in [Data.gov](https://data.gov).

### ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- Add entries to the Enterprise Data Inventory when notified of newly published SSA data and ensure current and future data assets are captured in accordance with SSA plans and policies such as the 2010 “SSA Data Inventory and Plan for Releasing High Value Data.
- Respond to public inquiries that come to the [Open.Data@ssa.gov](mailto:Open.Data@ssa.gov) mailbox.

### OUT-YEAR PLANS

- Work with SSA’s FOIA Office to develop rules for prioritizing data assets for public dissemination. For example, if SSA FOIA receives three or more requests for a specific data asset, then SSA shall consider making it publicly available on the Open Data Catalog.
- Collaborate with stakeholders across SSA to integrate open data into data exchange processes to identify potential public data assets.



## h. Compliance Status

### VISION

SSA will comply with all requirements of OMB M-25-05 and the requirements of 44 U.S.C. § 3511 when disseminating a public data asset pursuant to the Evidence Act.<sup>4</sup>

### ONGOING ACTIVITIES

- Manage the SSA Enterprise Data Inventory which creates the JSON file, either monthly or ad-hoc, hosted on [www.ssa.gov/data.json](http://www.ssa.gov/data.json) and collected by [Data.gov](http://Data.gov) for reporting.
- Track monthly implementation progress and publish historical open data progress charts on [www.ssa.gov/data/plan-progress-chart.html](http://www.ssa.gov/data/plan-progress-chart.html). The data chart represents SSA's commitment to improving the breadth and depth of the SSA comprehensive data inventory and supporting [Data.gov](http://Data.gov).

### OUT-YEAR PLANS

- Coordinate with SSA's Chief FOIA Officer, Senior Agency Official for Privacy, Chief Information Officer, General Counsel, Statistical Official, program staff, and other relevant Agency officials, such as other members of their Data Governance Body, to ensure that any public release of data assets is lawful, appropriate, and adheres to data privacy requirements.
- Integrate open data processes and technology with the internal SSA Enterprise Data Catalog to account for all data assets in the possession of the Agency. The data designated as "Public" in the Enterprise Data Catalog should be pushed for publishing on the public-facing Open Data Catalog, thus reflecting a more accurate comprehensive data inventory while streamlining the publication process.
- Establish processes to ensure the internal Enterprise Data Catalog and the external Open Data Catalog both conform with the most recent Data Catalog Vocabulary Version metadata schema to improve the discoverability and interoperability of SSA data.

## i. Updating the Strategic Information Resources Management Plan

### OUT-YEAR PLANS

- SSA should release a separate Information Resources Management (IRM) Strategic Plan and post it on [www.ssa.gov/data](http://www.ssa.gov/data). The IRM Strategic Plan should be updated annually.

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<sup>4</sup> [44 U.S.C. § 3511: Data inventory and Federal data catalogue.](#)

## Appendix A: Definitions

- **Data** — Recorded information, regardless of form or the media on which the data is recorded. (44 U.S.C. § 3502)<sup>5</sup>
- **Data asset** — A collection of data elements or data sets that may be grouped together. (44 U.S.C. § 3502)
- **Federal Data Catalog** — A centralized public online interface dedicated to sharing U.S. government data assets with the public; maintained by GSA and available through [Data.gov](https://data.gov). (OMB M-25-05)
- **Machine-readable** — Data in a format that can be easily processed by a computer without human intervention while ensuring no semantic meaning is lost. (44 U.S.C. § 3502)
- **Metadata** — Structural or descriptive information about data such as content, format, source, rights, accuracy, provenance, frequency, periodicity, granularity, publisher or responsible party, contact information, method of collection, and other descriptions. (44 U.S.C. § 3502)
- **Open Data** — Publicly available data structured in a way that enables the data to be fully discoverable and usable by end users. (OMB M-13-13)<sup>6</sup>
- **Open format** — A file format for storing digital data where the format is platform independent and machine-readable and is maintained (A) at no cost to the public; and (B) with no restrictions on copying, publishing, distributing, transmitting, citing, or adapting such a format. (OMB M-25-05)
- **Open Government data asset** — A public data asset that is—
  - machine-readable;
  - available (or could be made available) in an open format;
  - not encumbered by restrictions, other than intellectual property rights, including under titles 17 and 35, that would impede the use or reuse of such asset; and
  - based on an underlying open standard that is maintained by a standards organization. (44 U.S.C. § 3502)
- **Open license** — A legal guarantee that a data asset is made available—
  - at no cost to the public; and
  - with no restrictions on copying, publishing, distributing, transmitting, citing, or adapting such asset. (44 U.S.C. § 3502)
- **Public data asset** — A data asset, or part thereof, maintained by the Federal Government that has been, or may be, released to the public, including any data asset, or part thereof, subject to disclosure under section 552 of title 5. (44 U.S.C. § 3502)

<sup>5</sup> [44 U.S.C. § 3502: Definitions](#).

<sup>6</sup> “Open data” was last defined in OMB Memorandum M-13-13, which was replaced by M-25-05. See Office of Management and Budget, Executive Office of the President, OMB M-13-13 [Open Data Policy – Managing Information as an Asset](#) (2013).