

Social Security Administration

FY 2009 E-Government Act Report

January 15, 2010

Executive Summary

The Social Security Administration is responsible for serving the American public by administering the Social Security Act programs of retirement, survivors, and disability benefits. It also administers the needs-based Supplemental Security Income program for the aged, blind, and disabled. The agency issues and maintains Social Security Numbers for virtually all Americans and other non-citizens working in this country. SSA also maintains earnings records for all workers who have countable earnings under the Social Security Program. The agency has over 1,400 community-based offices across the country as well as a full service, toll free 800 Number system, and robust web services

SSA continues to support the E-Government lines of business and initiatives by implementing and administering new and ongoing IT initiatives. These initiatives are linked to our investments and they support our strategic goals and objectives. These initiatives enable us to conduct business, share information and provide services to our citizens, businesses, and other government agencies over the internet.

In the Agency's continued pursuit of excellence in the areas of providing E-Government services to our citizens, SSA uses many types of feedback channels to determine that the information and services available to the public are achieving intended results. These include American Customer Satisfaction Index surveys, focus groups, employee feedback, and public comments received via the 800#, email, letters, and direct contact with the public in our Field Offices.

In the past year SSA has engaged in a number of transparency and reporting initiatives including Data.gov, USAspending.gov, the IT dashboard, FOIA and other outreach programs to members of the public, business, state and local governments, and other federal agencies. There is an active agency innovation program which has been expanded to include research and trials in assistive technologies, geospatial technology, health information technology, and the application and use of the social media and collaborative technologies.

The federal Dashboard has brought another dimension to the Agency's IT investment, management, planning, and control processes. This includes the integration of the Agency Strategic Plan, the IT Strategic Vision, and Enterprise Architecture.

SSA continues to support and comply with the Section 508 requirements. There is continued collaboration and support with NARA on the Agency's records management schedules and processes. The Agency continues to support the needs for privacy, security, and Freedom of Information Act requirements.

With the ongoing effort of pursuing excellence in service to our citizens, SSA launched its Ready Retirement iClaim initiative. Started in December of 2008, iClaim is an internet available

retirement application process. The on line retirement application service is intended to reduce the amount of applications that are made by telephone or in person at an SSA office. This is in support of the Ready Retirement goal of reducing the operational impact that the expected increase in number of retirement applications will have over the next decade.

SSA is committed to and continues to pursue providing high quality services to the American public.

Section I: Transparency, Engagement and Innovation

1. During Fiscal Year 2009, SSA has engaged in a number of transparency initiatives. These include participation in government-wide initiatives such as, Data.gov and posts all required information to USASpending.gov, the IT Dashboard, and to other federal dashboards. SSA operates its FOIA program in accordance with the March 19, 2009 memorandum from Attorney General Holder.

The agency has made very visible its challenges and initiatives for improving the hearings process and disability program. Information about backlogs, waiting times, and other workload information are posted on our website while program improvements are reflected in posted transcripts and web casts. The agency has posted or linked to laws, regulations, and rulings pertaining to the Social Security and SSI programs. We also provide links to the Program Operations Manual System, the operating policies and procedures used in administering programs under our jurisdiction. The agency posts budget and performance information on its website. We provide forms and publications online (and in paper) in English, Spanish and, for some documents, in 15 other languages. Materials are available in Braille, large print, CD, or cassette tape upon request.

We use a service called GovDelivery to reach out to members of the public who have specific interests so they are alerted to updates to web pages that are of interest to them. We also keep the public, national organizations, and advocacy groups informed through E-Colleague Letters and the Social Security Update Newsletters.

Each year the agency mails out approximately 150 million individualized earnings statements to the public showing them what our records contain about their earnings under Social Security, their coverage for Social Security benefits, and estimates of disability and retirement benefits based on current and projected earnings. The individual has an opportunity to review and correct their records prior to filing for benefits.

Activities planned for this year will expand on many of the initiatives already underway. This includes providing additional datasets for public release on Data.gov, continued postings to USASpending.gov, the IT Dashboard, Regulations.gov and other federal dashboards. We plan to continue to use and leverage GovDelivery to reach the public about web page changes. We will continue to conduct public briefings and work closely with advocacy and communities of interest on proposed changes. The agency will be launching

an Open Government portal that will provide a way for the public to provide ideas and feedback to us on SSA programs as well as our Open Government initiatives.

2. SSA has started innovative research, experimentation, and trials in several areas including geospatial, assistive technologies, end user experience, and the application of social technologies. We are also actively participating with the FCC on the National Broadband initiative, a public/private partnership to develop packages and programs that address barriers to adoption of broadband service. At this time we have not identified any initiatives for the Innovations Gallery.
3. During 2009, SSA posted two high value data sets to Data.gov. The agency evaluated the value and appropriateness of additional data sets and after all privacy concerns are resolved, we will make them available in Fiscal Year 2010 in a preferred format.
4. SSA regularly provides updates and new data to usaspending.gov. Included are updates to the agency's Contract and Federal Assistance for Purchase Cards, Grants, Loans, Cooperative Agreements, and Loan Guarantees.
5. SSA has advanced citizen participation and engagement in many ways. We provide a mechanism on our website for the public to submit comments. These comments are reviewed and addressed by agency staff. The FAQs on the SSA website provide for submitting a question to us that is not answered, or not understood by the individual. The Office of Inspector General has a fraud hotline for the public to alert the agency to possible fraudulent activity. Each tip on the hotline is reviewed and, as appropriate, investigated.

We assemble advisory groups under Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) to get advice on program issues. We currently have a FACA panel, the Future Systems Technology Advisory Panel, operating to provide us with insights into the strategic use of information technology. Meetings of this group are open to the public and we have a public web page that provides information about the mission and points of discussion.

We have also held public meetings on improving the disability process. We have held five public hearings on the topic of Compassionate Allowances. The initial list of Compassionate Allowance conditions was developed as a result of information received at public outreach hearings, public comment on an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, comments received from the Social Security and Disability Determination Service communities, and the counsel of medical and scientific experts. We have also held meetings with medical experts and disability advocates and used this information as we have updated the regulations for assessing disability (the medical listings). We routinely have informal meetings with disability advocates to discuss disability program issues and proposed changes. Input from these sessions is held in high regard and considered when policies are being developed or refined. With the input of many mental health professionals, organizations, experts and industry leaders, we have produced a fact sheet that we share with members of the mental health community.

We are planning to use an idea tool and other web 2.0 technologies in the upcoming year. We have joined the Ideation Community of Practice and are benchmarking the experiences of early adopters across the federal sector. We plan to launch at least one public blog this year to get public input on a range of issues related to Open Government, and will continue to use feedback from Data.gov to guide the posting of new datasets.

- 6 SSA is working to meet the M-09-19 FFATA data submission requirements. The agency is currently completing data conversions and a transfer process for meeting the new FAADS Plus data formats. Testing is almost complete and the Agency expects to soon begin transferring data back to 2007. This is an interim process and will be replaced with a newly designed production process that meets all of the requirements of M-09-19.

Section II: Information & Information Management

1. The CIO rates IT investments as required by the Dashboard. CIO oversight has always been embedded in the oversight process. The Dashboard CIO Evaluation brings a new dimension to the oversight and makes the assessment more explicit. And with the implementation of the Dashboard the Commissioner has asked the CIO to brief the core Deputy Commissioners on investment performance as displayed by the Dashboard
2. SSA updates the Federal IT Dashboard on a monthly basis with the previous month's data. The SSA audited and approved in-house Earned Value Management System (EVMS) allows the agency to meet 100% of the reporting requirements for the IT Dashboard, including but not limited to the following:
 - o Approved and Baseline program plans
 - o Cumulative planned and actual costs
 - o Milestone cost and schedule variance
 - o Cumulative planned and actual percent complete

Additionally, SSA has developed a standard template that is reviewed by the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and used as the primary basis for the quarterly CIO Evaluation rating.

3. The SSA CIO evaluation process includes a quarterly review of all major IT Investment Risk Management plans; when a significant investment changes, a review of project scope and requirements occurs; and the monthly evaluation of contractor performance data. Additionally, the CIO reviews historical performance with regards to cost and schedule deviations and begins analytical discussions with the EVM Program Management Office (PMO) and the program management teams. Other factors used to determine the rating include contract award slippage, legislation and their impacts on our major IT investments
4. The SSA Information Resources Management Strategic Plan can be accessed at <http://www.ssa.gov/irm/>. Currently the IRM plan is being updated to reflect the changes made to the Agency Strategic Plan. The SSA Enterprise Architecture Transition Plan for 2009 through 2013 (Version 4.0) has been submitted to OMB via the quarterly reporting requirements.

5. The Social Security Administration's Fiscal Year 2010 Information Technology Capital Planning and Investment Control Process (CPIC) has been submitted to OMB. It describes the three phases of the CPIC process: the Selection Phase, the Control Phase, and the Evaluation Phase.

The SSA IT CPIC process ensures broad Agency involvement in IT investment selection, control and evaluation through a CIO-chaired IT Advisor Board (ITAB) made up of senior executives and through independent CIO-directed review and oversight. The IT CPIC process addresses all Agency IT investments through the Agency's IT planning, budgeting, cost and schedule oversight, and the system development life cycle (SDLC) management processes.

The CIO reviews and approves the annual IT budget in total and at the special expense item (SEI) level. The IT budget includes IT hardware, software and services acquired outside the Agency as well as internal IT staff. The Agency EA plan is closely integrated with these processes and is an integral part of the IT investment evaluation and compliance process.

During budget execution, the CIO oversees the execution of the IT capital plan, provides senior executives and their staffs with real-time budget execution status via an intranet link, and determines whether proposed new items should be included in the IT budget. CIO approval is required for reprogramming requests within the approved budget. Major IT investments receive additional oversight through EVMS project status reporting, monthly Office of Systems project reviews, and quarterly reporting at the ITAB where the investment profiles are shared and available for discussion.

6. The SSA IT modernization roadmap, The EA Segment Architecture Report (EASR v1.3) has been submitted to OMB via the quarterly EA submissions using MAX. It details all the segments, their related milestones, and status.
7. SSA has provided and continues to provide and disseminate information using multiple channels. These include the Internet, Press Releases, Paper Publications, Mailings, Briefings, and Face-to-Face Meetings. The processes and channels used to disseminate this information are carried out in accordance with our communication's tactical plans managed by our Office of Communications. The following lists Internet links that are available to the public.

The primary link is <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/>. This focuses on providing access to general Agency Program and Benefit information and services along with other non-Agency related links. It also contains a link to the website's Policies & Other Important Information page at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/websitepolicies.htm>. This page describes the policies and linking guidelines and includes links to the Web Content Inventory page

The Web Content Inventory page, <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/webcontent/>, describes the priorities and publishing schedules for all information on the web site.

Also the <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/> links to an online Forms and Publications page, <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pgm/formspubs.htm>, a Press Release page <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/pressoffice/pressrel.htm>, and the Office of the Actuary page <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/OACT/>. The Forms and Publication page provides the public with online access to Agency services and online forms. The Press Release page includes links to useful Press Releases and a Facts and Figures page. The Office of the Actuary page provides the public access to Actuarial Publications, Solvency Estimates, Cost of Living Adjustments, Benefits Calculator, and Beneficiary and Trustee information.

8. The following link is to the SSA primary FOIA website <http://www.ssa.gov/foia/index.htm>. It provides access to Agency FOIA Reading Room, including the FOIA Regulations, FOIA Guide, Annual Reports, Frequently Requested Documents, Manuals and Instructions, and Privacy Impact Assessments. This page describes the policies and linking guidelines and includes links to the Web Content Inventory page and the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) page.
9. SSA provides Section 508 compliance oversight for all agency technology procurements and application development efforts for:
 - Web and client/server applications including SQL, HTML, XML, AJAX, JavaScript, WebSphere, Cold Fusion, Hyperion and others
 - CICS mainframe and screen refacing applications
 - Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel and Microsoft PowerPoint electronic documents
 - Adobe Acrobat documents
 - Telecom equipment
 - Video and multimedia equipment
 - Desktop and portable computers and interfaces
 - Assistive Technology Scripts
 - Application Development Tools

In addition SSA

- Prepares and provides quarterly Section 508 compliance reports to the DCS Management Steering Committee.
- Prepares and delivers the agency response for Department of Justice bi-annual Section 508 Survey.
- Provides Section 508 compliance testing for all major technology procurements in excess of \$10 million, or where a significant number of people with disabilities are affected.
- Provides competitive award assessments to determine which product is “most compliant” with respect to Section 508 and FAR regulations.
- Provides pre and post procurement consultations to assist procurement officials with navigating the SSA procurement process with respect to Section 508 compliance, and to work with procurement officials from SSA and other agencies to identify strategies to improve the level of Section 508 compliance for purchased products.

SSA has received the International Social Security Association (ISSA) Good Practice Award Certificate of Merit with Special Mention from the Jury in 2009 for our Accessibility Best Practices Portal.

10. SSA has cooperative agreements with the Retirement Research Consortium (RRC). The RRC is composed of world renowned retirement research centers. SSA has these agreements and provides funds to the RRC to promote retirement research and to inform the public and policymakers about Social Security issues. Information developed by the centers can be found on their individual websites. The <http://mwww.ba.ssa.gov/policy/> page contains information concerning the RRC and provides links to each center
11. SSA shares information, in accordance with laws and regulations, to help others do their business more efficiently and effectively. For instance, SSA has hundreds of data exchange agreements with state and local governments. SSA also has made public statistical information through many public use files and makes these available in a variety of formats.
12. SSA schedules our records under agency specific schedules or the General Records Schedule (GRS). The GRS can be found on the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) public website: <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/ardor/>

SSA maintains a file plan and classification scheme describing the record type, the component owning the record, and the approved disposition. The agency-specific file plan is for internal use only and is not available to the public.

We have 718 applications and systems currently in use. To satisfy the requirement of NARA Bulletin 2006-02, SSA submitted two records schedules in FY 2008 and four in FY 2009. With the submission of these six SF-115s, SSA has scheduled all electronic systems.

A Records Management Questionnaire to inventory electronic records has been developed and is used during the software planning stage of the SSA System Development Life Cycle. Project teams use the questionnaire to identify records management issues, including retention and disposition methods. The questionnaire ensures we incorporate records management requirements into the design of all information systems. This ensures SSA maintains a Records Management program which follows [NARA Records Management Guidance and Regulations](#), including the [DOD 5015.2 Standard](#) as required.

Section III Implementation of E-Government Initiatives

1. In December 2008, the Social Security Administration implemented a streamlined Internet application process, iClaim. This process was created as part of the Ready Retirement project to address significant increases in retirement claims over the next decade. The goal was to significantly increase the number of online applications by improving the user interface and increasing public awareness. Public response has been highly favorable. The implementation of iClaim resulted in an almost immediate increase in online use.

The usage of iClaim has reduced the time and effort required to apply online for retirement benefits. The resulting decrease in walk-in and phone applications provides SSA with additional flexibility to process increasing workloads.

2. Cost savings and cost avoidance for FY2009 for retirement applications were estimated to be \$722,262. Projections for FY2010 through FY2018 are estimated to achieve additional cost savings and cost avoidance of \$52,297,998 (discounted for inflation using OMB Office of Economic Policy Discount and Inflation Rates). These cost savings and cost avoidances are achieved by the reduction in handling time for applications by SSA employees
3. iClaim was developed using collaboration and communication with all stakeholders, including various SSA components and field offices, Capitol Hill, OMB, and advocacy groups. The agency monitors feedback received from users, the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), and other sources to evaluate the effectiveness of iClaim and identify areas for improvement
4. SSA Claims Representatives save about 12 minutes handling an iClaim retirement applications online as compared with walk-in and phone-in claims. For FY2009, the implementation of iClaim resulted in a cost avoidance of \$722,262. Combined with the significant projected increase in retirement applications and marketing campaigns promoting the online application's use, iClaim will help SSA achieve its objective of 50% of retirement applications being submitted online by 2012.
5. The agency committed to a significant amount of public insight early in the design process. The project team was able to design an online application that provided high value with the least cost. With respect to the disabled community, iClaim was also designed and tested for compliance with Section 508 guidelines. For those who do not have access to the Internet, the agency has worked with social organizations, human resource professionals, libraries, and others concerning a user's ability to access SSA systems at locations other than home (e.g., community center, library, place of employment)
6. SSA worked collaboratively with public, business, and private organizations and partners in developing this E-Government initiative. This included citizens, privacy experts, the American Customer Satisfaction Institute, and others.
7. The agency's senior IT investment decision making body, The IT Advisory Board (ITAB), reviewed and approved iClaim as part of the Core Services Portfolio. This process is an essential component of the SSA CPIC process and requires the development of a cost-benefit analysis or business value score. Prior to ITAB review and approval, the Portfolio Manager (Associate Commissioner-level) and Portfolio Executive (Deputy Commissioner-level) assessed the alignment of the investment with the goals and vision of the portfolio, which, in turn, is aligned with the agency's goals and objectives. iClaim was reviewed and approved by the senior SSA executives in a manner consistent with the agency's IT investment management process.

8. iClaim is monitored on an ongoing basis (i.e., by an assessment of usage, customer satisfaction scores, customer comments, and email comments regarding users' current and future behaviors with iClaim). This monitoring enables the agency to identify the improvements that have the highest value and that can be delivered in the most cost efficient manner.
9. We aggressively use information technology to leverage our workforce, enabling us to meet the growing workloads that result from the aging of the baby boomers and the economic downturn. However, we are not able to quantify the total cost savings and cost avoidance achieved through implementation of all new IT programs at this time. We require all IT proposals to quantify their expected savings or cost avoidance as part of their cost-benefit analysis prior to consideration by our IT Advisory Board (ITAB). That amount totals billions of dollars. However, at this time we do not consistently assess the actual savings or avoidance achieved from each project. The Office of the CIO has begun to transform the ITAB process to focus on benefit realization for all IT initiatives. As this new process is implemented we will be able to ascertain whether initiatives have delivered the benefits they promised and what we need to do to improve outcomes. We are beginning the transformation in this current budget cycle.
10. SSA operates two primary data centers using a co-processing model. The National Computer Center is located in Baltimore, MD and the Secondary support Center is located in Durham, NC. SSA collaborates with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Administration for Families and Children (AFDC), and Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) to share the data centers. SSA is also in the process of implementing disaster recovery support for this same workload which will be hosted in one of the centers.
11. The agency's telework program is based on individual negotiated agreements between several of its major operating components and the various unions. There are seven different component telework agreements with AFGE and four telework agreements covering the other unions (three for NTEU and one for NFFE). In each of the agreements, the alternate duty site is the primary residence of the employee, but each agreement also has its own variations (e.g., the maximum number of days that may be teleworked each week, whether overtime or credit hours may be worked at the alternate duty site, how closings or delayed openings are handled). There are three types of telework at SSA:
 1. Flexi place - work is performed at the alternate duty site (ADS) on a regular basis;
 2. Episodic - a specific work assignment is performed at the ADS on an irregular basis; or
 3. Work at home by exception - work is performed at the ADS on a temporary basis due to a medical condition that prevents the employee from readily commuting to the worksite.

During calendar year 2008, over 3,100 employees participated in the telework program. Generally, the telework participants work at SSA headquarters and in our hearing offices. There are two critical factors that have an impact on the widespread use of telework at SSA - public service and information security. The majority of our employees are front-line, public contact employees who are the face of Social Security to millions of people. To most effectively serve individuals needing to conduct business with Social Security, the physical

presence of our employees is required in our field offices, teleservice centers, and processing centers.

Further, SSA is responsible for protecting the extremely sensitive personally identifiable information (PII) of millions of people. As SSA continues to move into an electronic environment with a greater ability to perform work remotely, it needs to continue to safeguard the confidentiality of information entrusted to the agency. The agency believes ensuring the security of sensitive information is best accomplished by controlling the work environment and the access of information through SSA secure systems and devices. The Office of Innovation within the Office of the Chief Information Officer is actively pursuing new technologies, such as thin client, that will facilitate telework while protecting the agency's information resources. These technologies will create a user-friendly interface with the agency's systems while ensuring that personal information remains confidential.