

AGENCY STRATEGIC PLAN

SECURING VALUE FOR AMERICA

FISCAL YEARS 2013 - 2016
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION



Message From the Commissioner

I started working on Social Security issues in the legislative office of the Department of Health and Human Services in 1985, and I remember celebrating Social Security’s 50th anniversary as a new participant in a great tradition. It was thus a special pleasure to oversee our 75th anniversary observances—once I overcame the shock of realizing that a quarter of a century had passed.

For me, the highlight of the anniversary was an emotional ceremony at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park, New York on August 14, 2010, the same date that President Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act in 1935. The ceremony reconfirmed the commitment made to the American people and recognized that, as President Roosevelt stated, it is the “plain duty” of the Federal Government “to provide for the security upon which welfare depends.” I remain particularly touched that Ted Sorensen, the great writer and trusted advisor to President John F. Kennedy, chose to attend the event just a short time before his death.



Social Security is America’s most valued and successful domestic program. With this strategic plan, we honor the legacy of the last 75 years by laying out our best thinking about public service over the next five years. Our challenge now is to maintain and even improve services in a time of fiscal austerity. Our statutory mandates have never been as complex, and our workloads have never been as great. To borrow a metaphor from President Roosevelt, we must renovate a grand old family home to fill the needs of its current residents, while preserving the great features of the past—and we must do it on a tight budget.

To ensure that we can meet our “plain duty,” we will continue to work closely with Congress on the critical issues that affect our programs and our resources. We must work together so that Americans of all ages have confidence that we will continue to honor the great intergenerational contract that is Social Security.

Even as we make great strides to adapt to the demands of the 21st century, we must never lose sight of the fact that behind each Social Security number or application for benefits is a person who deserves quality service. We have deployed a wealth of new technologies to help us cope with our burgeoning workloads, but we need to use them in ways that allow us to be just as conscientious and compassionate as we were when we opened our first field office in Austin, Texas in 1936.

I want to thank everyone inside and outside the agency who contributed to this plan. If you have comments or suggestions, please let us know at OPI.Net.Post@ssa.gov. We will be able to fulfill the promise that Social Security offers only if we continue to listen and learn from the American public.



Michael J. Astrue
Commissioner

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Introduction

Social Security is the most successful and popular domestic program in the history of the United States. From the start, the men and women charged with administering the program did so creatively and effectively and began the proud tradition of attracting America's best and brightest. These dedicated people quickly brought this new and complex program to life—they developed a nationwide infrastructure and began paying lump-sum benefits in January 1937, only a little more than one and one-half years after President Roosevelt signed the Social Security Act into law. Early successes fueled confidence in the agency and resulted in major expansions in the Social Security Act—dependents and survivors benefits in 1939, disability insurance in 1956, Medicare in 1965, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) in 1974.

We have come a long way since those early days when we had just over 900 employees stationed in 65 field offices and in our Baltimore-based recordkeeping operation. Today, we have over 80,000 Federal and State employees who serve the public through a nationwide network of about 1,500 offices. Each day, almost 182,000 people visit our field offices and more than 445,000 people call our offices for a variety of reasons, such as to file claims, ask questions, and update information.

We have worked to meet our responsibilities that have grown over the last 75 years. Some of this growth is in support of our core Retirement and Survivors, Disability, and SSI programs. For example, we have expanded our role in assisting our beneficiaries with disabilities to prepare for and obtain employment. However, a sizeable share of the growth in our work is the result of non-traditional workloads. Over the past decade, Congress, often driven by a desire to use our databases and field office network to assist with initiatives unrelated to the Social Security Act, has continued to expand our statutory responsibilities.

We have been innovative and proactive in adopting strategies to allow us to meet the challenges we face. To the extent resources allowed, we have hired and trained staff to handle our increased workloads, and we have used technology to complement our traditional work processes and make them more efficient. In retrospect, our remarkable successes planted the seeds of many of our current challenges. Congress, confident that those successes coupled with our “can do” attitude meant that we could always find ways to adapt, appropriated less funding than the President requested each year from 1992-2007. At the same time, requests for our core services rose as the population grew, and baby boomers got older, passing through their most disability-prone years before retiring. We managed to maintain our high service levels for some time.

Inevitably, rising workloads combined with declining budgets eventually damaged our service delivery. Throughout most of the past decade, the amount of program integrity work we could handle dropped dramatically, even though we know that historically program integrity work saves the taxpayers about \$10 for each dollar spent. By 2008, the time a claimant waited for a disability hearing decision rose to an average of 532 days, and

some claimants waited as long as 1,400 days. Waiting times for in-person and telephone service increased, as did the public's and Congress's frustration with us.

In the three years prior to fiscal year FY 2011, new initiatives coupled with improved funding allowed us to tackle our hearings backlog, reverse many negative trends, significantly improve service and stewardship efforts, and absorb huge increases in workloads due to the worst economic downturn since World War II. We made real and measurable progress.

FY 2011 was a challenging year; our administrative budget was \$1 billion less than the President requested for us. Nevertheless, our dedicated employees decided over 4.8 million retirement and survivors cases, nearly 3.4 million disability claims, and nearly 800,000 hearings. Despite the continuing pressure of uncertain budgets, growing workloads, and increased public frustration, our employees continue to deliver service with grace and compassion. Through their efforts, in FY 2011, we:

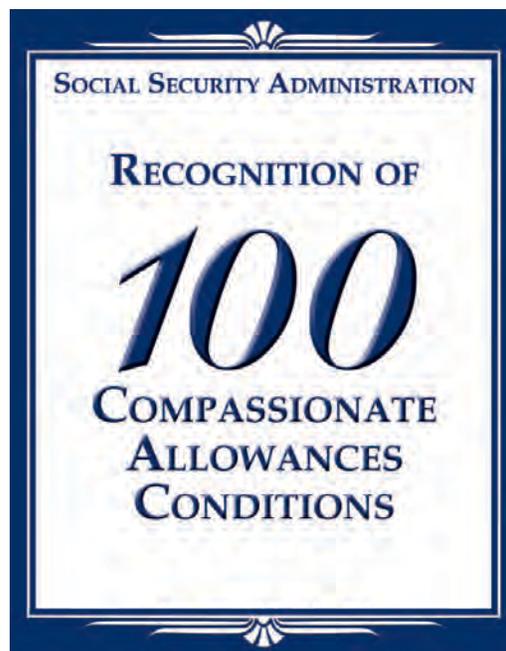
- Reduced the time it takes to get a hearing decision to under one year, the lowest point in eight years
- Decreased the oldest cases awaiting a hearing decision from 1,400 days in 2007 to 725 days at the end of FY 2011
- Improved our Compassionate Allowance and Quick Disability Determination fast-track processes to expedite medical determinations on over 150,000 initial disability cases
- Achieved the lowest average speed of answer and busy rates on our National 800 Number ever
- Increased our cost-effective program integrity work, which led to higher SSI payment accuracy for the second straight year
- Maintained an average annual increase in employee productivity of nearly four percent over the last five years
- Launched a Spanish version of our award winning online Retirement Estimator, the first interactive Spanish online application in the Federal government
- Achieved \$273 million in acquisition savings through strategic sourcing, negotiations, and economies of scale
- Were consistently ranked in the Top Ten Federal Agencies "Best Places to Work" for the past five years

- Received the 2011 W. Edwards Deming Outstanding Training Award for excellence in developing and training our employees in the Office of Appellate Operations
- Achieved savings of approximately \$2.4 million through the consolidation of field offices
- Received resounding endorsements from the Administrative Conference of the United States, a public-private partnership designed to improve government efficiency, for our video hearings process and our electronic case analysis tool (eCAT)

Demographics, rising workloads, and heightened fiscal austerity will make further progress at this level unlikely and threaten the progress we have recently made. Without appropriate resources, we will not maintain current levels of service.

Hard times require hard choices; we accept that we will not be able to live up to all expectations, even our own. This strategic plan lays out what we realistically think we can do and why. Our strategic plan incorporates three priority goals that we will focus on over the next two years.

We are also working to institutionalize the principles of open government (transparency, participation, and collaboration) and to use them in support of our mission. We are releasing information on government-wide websites, such as www.Data.gov, and through our new open government portal at www.socialsecurity.gov/open. We use this portal to engage the public and receive ideas and comments on a variety of topics.



In developing this plan, we consulted with employees, stakeholders, advisory groups, and Congress. We also conducted an environmental scan to identify current and emerging trends that will directly or indirectly affect our mission, workloads, and business processes. Socioeconomic and demographic changes, along with advancements in technology, have implications for the future of our programs, workforce, and service delivery. We believe this plan provides a framework for our efforts and for thoughtful public discussion of our role and priorities.

Our Values

OUR MISSION

Deliver Social Security services that meet the changing needs of the public

OUR VISION

Provide the highest standard of considerate and thoughtful service for generations to come

OUR MOTTO

Social Security Benefits America

OUR SERVICE PRINCIPLES

We serve with empathy, creativity, integrity, and “an unbeatable determination to do the job at hand” by following these service principles:

Adherence to the law

Clarity

Commitment to best demonstrated practices

Cultural sensitivity

Honesty

Prevention of waste, fraud, and abuse

Protection of privacy and personal information

Recruitment and training of the best public servants

Safety of the public and our employees



Summary of Goals

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Deliver Quality Disability Decisions and Services

- I. Reduce the Wait Time for Hearing Decisions and Eliminate the Hearings Backlog*
- II. Improve Our Disability Policies, Procedures, and Tools
- III. Expedite Cases for the Most Severely Disabled Individuals

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Provide Quality Service to the Public

- I. Increase the Use of our Online Services*
- II. Increase Public Satisfaction with Our Telephone Services
- III. Expand the Use of Video Services
- IV. Improve the Clarity of Our Notices

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Preserve the Public's Trust in Our Programs

- I. Increase Efforts to Accurately Pay Benefits*
- II. Recover Improper Payments
- III. Maintain Accurate Earnings Records
- IV. Make Our Administrative Operations Even More Efficient

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: Strengthen Our Workforce and Infrastructure

- I. Strengthen Our Workforce - Recruit, Train, Develop, and Retain Superior Employees
- II. Maintain Secure and Reliable Information Technology Services
- III. Increase Efficiency of Our Physical Infrastructure

*2012 - 2013 Priority Goals

Overview of the Social Security Administration

Our Programs

Few government agencies reach as many people as we do. The programs we administer provide a financial safety net for millions of Americans. We run one of the Nation's largest entitlement programs – the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance program. We also administer the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program, which provides financial support to aged, blind, or disabled adults and children with limited income and resources. In FY 2011, we paid over 60 million people a total of about \$770 billion in Social Security benefits and SSI payments.

For more information on all of our programs and benefits, please visit our *Understanding The Benefits* web page at www.ssa.gov/pubs/10024.html.

How We Served America in Fiscal Year 2011

- Issued 16.4 million new and replacement Social Security cards
- Performed 1.3 billion automated Social Security number verifications
- Posted 216 million earnings items to workers' records
- Completed more than 62 million transactions on our National 800 Number
- Assisted nearly 45 million visitors in our field offices
- Completed 4.8 million retirement, survivor, and Medicare applications
- Completed nearly 3.4 million initial disability claims
- Completed 2.4 million SSI non-disability redeterminations
- Completed over 1.4 million continuing disability reviews
- Completed 3.4 million overpayment actions
- Reconsidered 828,000 denied disability applications
- Completed 127,000 Appeals Council reviews
- Decided over 795,000 hearing requests
- Defended 14,000 new Federal court cases
- Oversaw approximately 6.6 million representative payees
- Distributed nearly \$1.4 billion in attorney fees
- Provided nearly 290,000 disability beneficiaries with employment support

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Deliver Quality Disability Decisions and Services

We are responsible for two of the Nation’s largest Federal disability programs: Disability Insurance and SSI. Over the last five years, our disability workloads have grown significantly, due in part to baby boomers reaching their disability-prone years and an economic downturn with high unemployment. Since FY 2007, initial disability claims have increased by 28 percent; consequently, the number of appeals have grown. In our last strategic plan, we estimated that we would need to decide 630,000 hearings by FY 2013. In fact, we far exceeded that estimate. We decided nearly 800,000 hearings in FY 2011, and the number of requests continues to rise. Despite these increases, we have drastically reduced the average time it takes for a hearing decision and minimized the growth of initial disability claims awaiting decision. We achieved these successes through increased employee productivity, new initiatives and innovations, and increased staffing.

Significant Drop in National Hearings Average Processing Time (APT) Due to Disability Backlog Reduction Plan



We will build on our current successes and continue to improve our disability process. We will continue to direct our National Hearing Centers and Extended Service Teams to assist the most stressed hearing offices and State disability determination services. We will enhance our fast-track processes to expedite even more disability decisions, and we will expand our use of innovative tools such as eCAT, our electronic case analysis tool. We will continue to look for ways to simplify policies and remove barriers that prevent

our beneficiaries from returning to work. While we plan to use technology to improve our productivity and increase efficiencies in our business processes, adequate funding is a critical factor to our success.

TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL WE WILL:

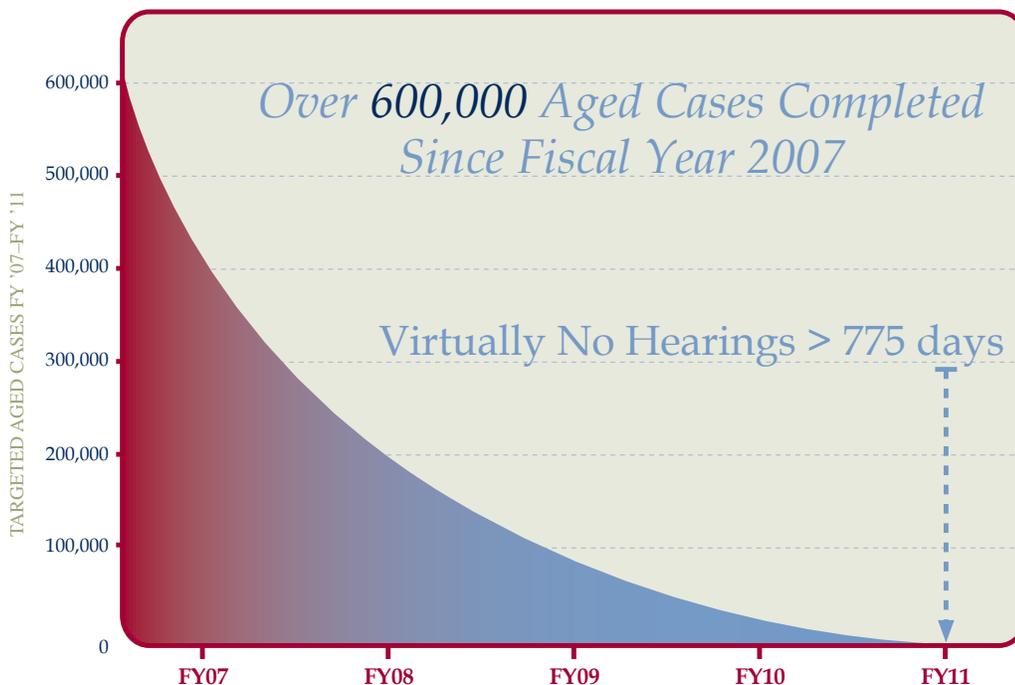
- I. Reduce the Wait Time for Hearing Decisions and Eliminate the Hearings Backlog
- II. Improve Our Disability Policies, Procedures, and Tools
- III. Expedite Cases for the Most Severely Disabled Individuals

Objective I

Reduce the Wait Time for Hearing Decisions and Eliminate the Hearings Backlog

Issue: For some disability claimants, a long wait for a hearing decision can lead to financial hardship, homelessness, and loss of access to medical services. Our number one priority is to reduce the average wait for a hearing decision to 270 days by the end of FY 2013. As we receive and decide more initial disability applications, the number of hearing requests have increased. We have adjusted our backlog reduction plan to factor in this significant increase.

In the last few years, we have made remarkable progress in eliminating the hearing decision backlog. We cut the average time individuals wait for a hearing decision by over six months. In FY 2007, almost half of all claimants who requested hearings had waited more than 270 days for a hearing decision, and some had waited up to 1,400 days. At the end of FY 2011, fewer than 30 percent of hearing requests were over 270 days old, and virtually no cases were over 775 days old. To achieve our goal of eliminating the hearings backlog, we will continue to enhance our proven strategies.



Strategies:

- Eliminate our oldest cases first
- Expedite cases that do not require a hearing
- Enhance electronic tools that improve productivity and quality
- Target our national resources to meet workload demands

Objective II**Improve Our Disability Policies, Procedures, and Tools**

Issue: A complex set of laws and regulations govern our disability determination process and work incentive policies. As such, beneficiaries can find our programs difficult to understand and navigate, and employees, who handle multiple unique workloads, can experience technical challenges with program administration. With the implementation of our automated decision-support tools, such as eCAT, we will improve the consistency and accuracy of disability decisions.

In addition to being complex, our disability policies and procedures have not kept pace with advances in medicine and technology. While we are working to update the medical and vocational information we use to make determinations of disability, we must continually balance our knowledge of emerging trends with our statutory obligations and guidelines.

Currently, each State disability determination service site has its own unique case processing system, which makes it difficult and time-consuming to implement policy changes. We are developing our common Disability Case Processing System (DCPS) that will provide additional functionality, lay the foundation for a state-of-the-art disability process, and make it easier to implement other important technology changes.

To increase opportunities for beneficiaries to return to work, we must also create clear and consistent employment incentives. Our FY 2013 budget includes a disability program innovation, the Work Incentive Simplification Pilot, to test whether simplifying our work rules will encourage beneficiaries to work and reduce our administrative costs.

Strategies:

- Enhance and expand our electronic tools to support policy compliant determinations at all levels of decision-making
- Replace the outdated Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT) with a new occupational information system to aid in the medical and vocational analysis of disability claims
- Develop and implement a common disability case processing system for all 54 State disability determination services
- Review best practices learned from our prototype test and apply them nationwide for a more consistent disability process

- Eliminate the use of paper authorization to request medical evidence
- Regularly update the Listing of Impairments, which describes impairments severe enough to prevent an individual from working, to reflect current medical knowledge
- Develop and test proposals that simplify our disability and work incentive programs

Objective III

Expedite Cases for the Most Severely Disabled Individuals

Issue: We consider it particularly urgent to expedite approval of cases that, given the nature or severity of the claimants' diagnosis or conditions, are likely approvals. Our two initiatives, Quick Disability Determinations (QDD) and Compassionate Allowances (CAL), use technology to identify claimants with the most severe disabilities and allow us to expedite our decisions on those cases. These fast-track initiatives have been two of our greatest successes in recent years. The QDD process uses a computer-based predictive model to identify cases where a favorable disability decision is highly likely. The CAL process helps us quickly identify medical conditions that invariably qualify under the listings of impairments based on minimal objective medical information.

Additionally, we are working closely with the Department of Defense (DOD) to expedite decisions for wounded warriors. We are also working with DOD and the Veterans Administration to improve the transfer of medical records between our agencies. The initial results of our recent small pilot with the DOD and five State disability determination services show promise in improving the timeliness of receiving medical records.

Strategies:

- Expand the number of medical conditions included in the CAL process, allowing us to quickly target the most obvious disabled individuals for allowances based on objective medical evidence that we can obtain quickly
- Refine the QDD predictive model to maximize its capacity to accurately identify cases, and thereby increase the percentage of individuals served by the QDD process
- Expand the current pilot to further improve service for wounded warriors

GOAL 1 KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

- Average wait time from hearing request to decision
- Average processing time for initial disability claims
- Disability Determination Services decisional accuracy rate for initial disability decisions
- Percentage of initial disability claims identified as Quick Disability Determinations or as Compassionate Allowances

STRATEGIC GOAL 2:

Provide Quality Services to the Public

We provide service to the American public through multiple service channels—face-to-face, telephone, and online. In FY 2011, we served nearly 45 million visitors and 25 million callers to our offices, handled 62 million transactions through our National 800 Number, and processed over 15 million personalized online transactions. As our staffing continues to decrease and our work increases, we cannot keep pace with the demand for our help. The only chance we have to handle rising workloads is to expand online services that the public will want to use. This approach improves service for anyone who wants the convenience of interacting with us from home and preserves field office service for situations that require face-to-face assistance.

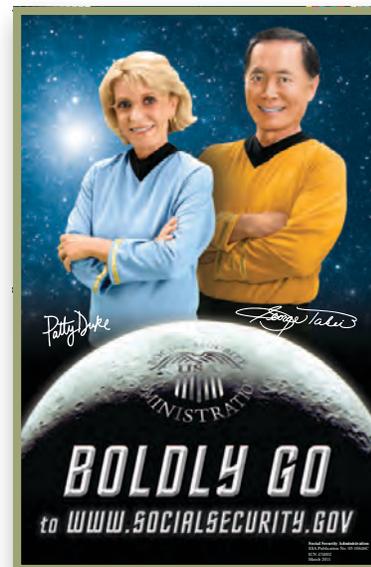
TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL WE WILL:

- I. **Increase the Use of Our Online Services**
- II. **Increase Public Satisfaction with Our Telephone Services**
- III. **Expand the Use of Video Services**
- IV. **Improve the Clarity of Our Notices**

Objective I

Increase the Use of Our Online Services

Issue: As the public expects to complete more business online, we must increase the number and type of Internet service options. The public has responded positively to our current Internet services. In 2007, before we introduced our new, improved online application (iClaim), approximately 10 percent of applicants filed for retirement online. In FY 2011, over 40 percent of retirement applicants and one-third of disability applicants filed online. We have the three highest rated electronic services in the Federal government as measured by the American Customer Satisfaction Index: iClaim, the Retirement Estimator, and Medicare Part D Extra Help with Prescription Drug coverage. Use of our online services continues to increase with these easy-to-use tools. To meet rising public expectations and enhance this service channel, we will focus on the following strategies:



Strategies:

- Develop creative outreach strategies to market online services
- Increase the number of electronic services that enable individuals to file for any benefit and access and update personal information
- Enhance usability and continue to incorporate best-in-business features in our existing online services
- Explore offering online services through mobile devices
- Explore online support options, including click to talk, screen sharing, and instant messaging
- Simplify business processes to maximize the benefits of online services

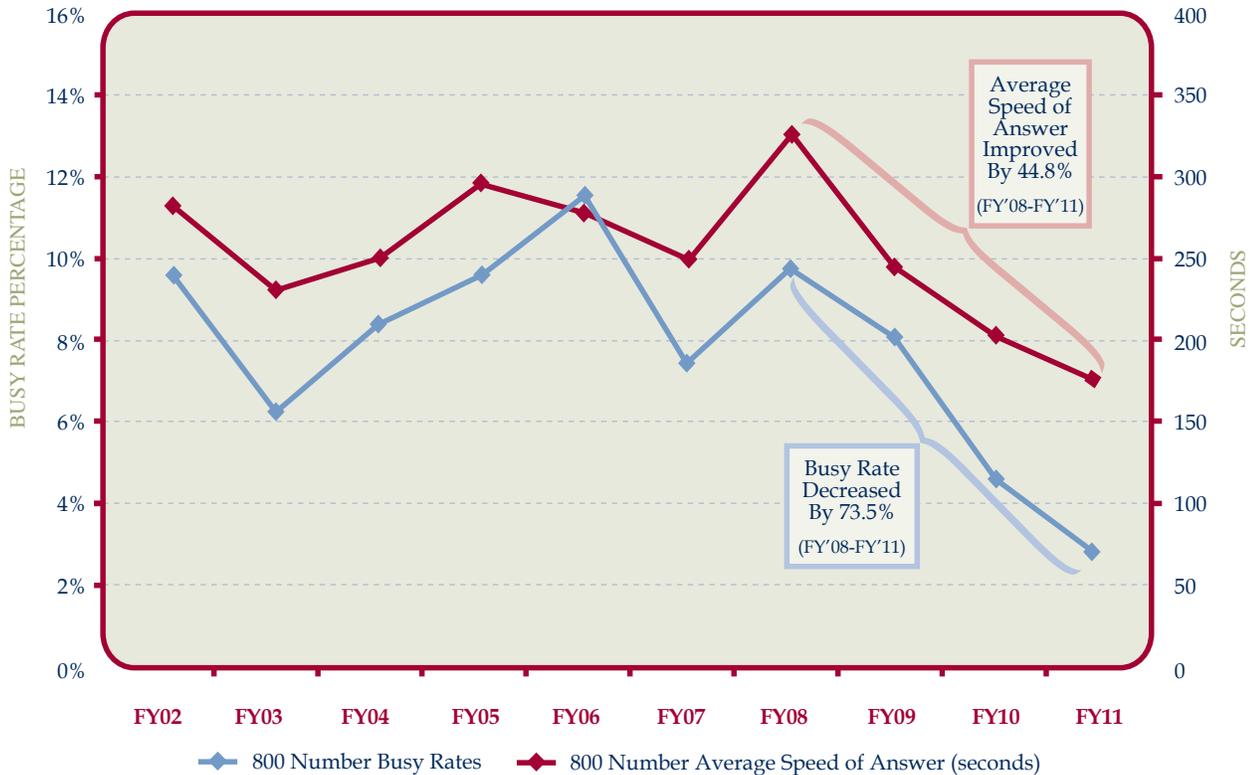
Objective II**Increase Public Satisfaction with Our Telephone Services**

Issue: Our telephone services are the public's primary service option. Callers to our National 800 Number have expressed frustration with navigating our menu and using our automated services. Since FY 2008, we cut our busy rate by over 70 percent. We are replacing our National 800 Number telecommunications infrastructure with a new state-of-the-art system. This system will eliminate lengthy navigation menus that frustrate the public and provide additional lines for callers. We expect the new system to be fully functional in FY 2013.

We are also replacing the obsolete telephone system used in our field offices. The new system includes a forward-on-busy feature, which offers callers, who would otherwise get a busy signal the option, to transfer to our National 800 Number.

We are currently replacing our obsolete field office telephone equipment and our National 800 Number telecommunications infrastructure. These enhancements, as well as the strategies below, will help us achieve our objective to improve public satisfaction with our telephone services.

National 800 Number Busy Rate and Average Speed of Answer at Historic Lows



Strategies:

- Develop and implement best-in-business features that will enhance the caller’s experience, regardless of whether the caller uses automated telephone service or speaks with an employee
- Implement a new post-call survey to obtain immediate feedback on our National 800 Number service
- Develop and evaluate pilots to allow callers to bypass automated phone service
- Increase the use of management information tools to redirect calls from field offices to the National 800 Number to reduce delays

Objective III

Expand the Use of Video Services

Issue: We will use video technology to help us balance workloads across the country, reduce travel for the public and our employees, and better serve remote areas. This is an important part of our efforts to reduce the hearings backlog and prevent its recurrence. Our National

Hearing Centers hear cases from the most-backlogged offices around the country, which is helping to reduce wait times nationwide. Our video technology reduces the need for our staff to travel between offices and to remote sites to hold hearings, which saves travel costs and frees up more time for our judges to decide cases.

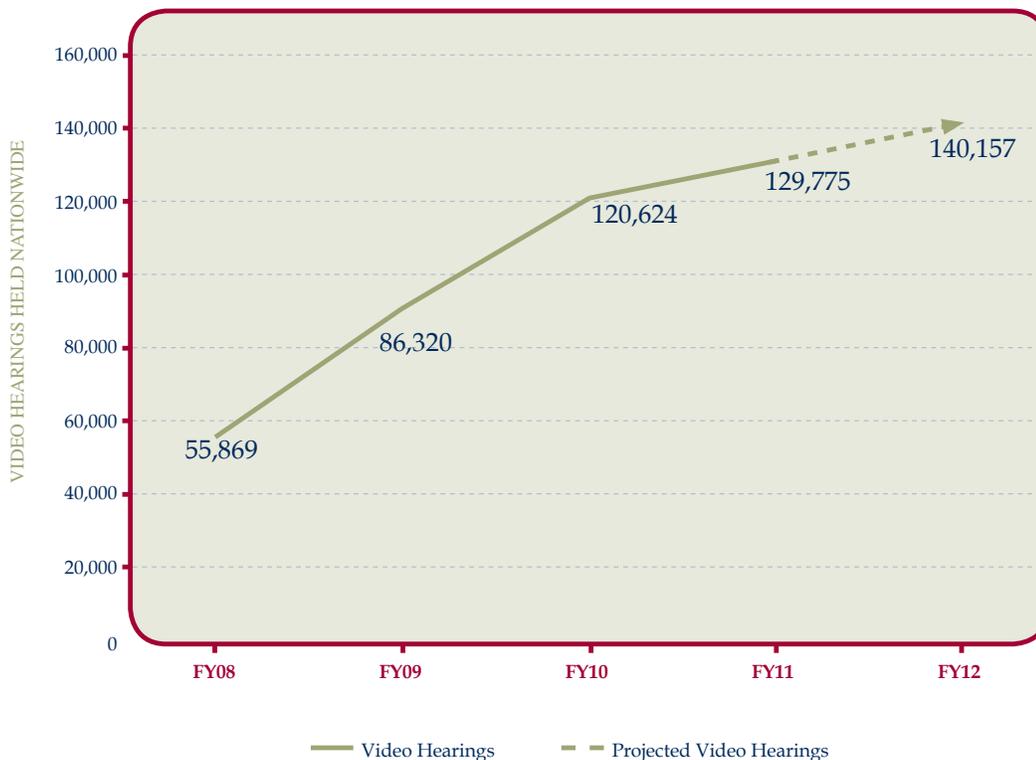
The Administrative Conference of the United States has designated our video hearings efforts as a best practice in the federal government. Looking to the future, video hearings will be a crucial part of our service to the public and will help to dramatically minimize the time claimants have to wait for a hearing.

Video service can also provide an efficient and innovative way to provide service to segments of the public with unique service needs, such as connecting our offices to American Indian Tribal Centers or Veterans Administration hospitals for service provision in those locations.

Strategies:

- Expand the use of video services to balance our workloads
- Expand the use of third-party video hearings

Video Hearings Growth



Objective IV

Improve the Clarity of Our Notices

Issue: We send hundreds of millions of notices to individuals explaining the programs that we administer. Our notices communicate decisions, payment, and other important information. Therefore, it is essential that we communicate in clear, easy to understand language to eliminate confusion and unnecessary calls and visits to our offices.

Strategies:

- Improve the readability, clarity, and tone of our Supplemental Security Income post-eligibility notices
- Revamp our Title II notice system to make notices more complete and easier to understand
- Modernize our notice architecture so that we can implement new or revised language more efficiently and effectively
- Incorporate plain language principles in our notices

GOAL 2 KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

- Percentage of claims filed online
- Speed in answering National 800 Number Calls
- Busy rate for National 800 Number Calls
- Percent of people rating our services as “excellent,” “very good,” or “good”



STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Preserve the Public's Trust in Our Programs

We pay over \$60 billion in benefits each month. Our most important responsibility is to pay the right person the right amount at the right time. We take this responsibility very seriously, and we generally do a good job. We make very few errors in the administration of our retirement and survivors programs. In recent years, our accuracy rate in the retirement and survivors programs has been between 99.7 percent and 99.9 percent.

The disability programs are more challenging, which affects our accuracy rate. The errors that do occur are generally related to the complexity of our disability programs. While the Social Security Act provides payments to claimants who have impairments that will last at least 12 months or result in death, medical conditions often fluctuate, and many people have impairments that are difficult to assess. In addition, SSI benefits can vary from month to month based on changes in a beneficiary's income, resources, and living arrangements. In the Social Security disability program, the accuracy rate is between 99 and 99.3 percent. Our payment accuracy rate with respect to SSI overpayments has been a challenge, and one we have worked hard to address. For the second year in a row, we have increased SSI payment accuracy.

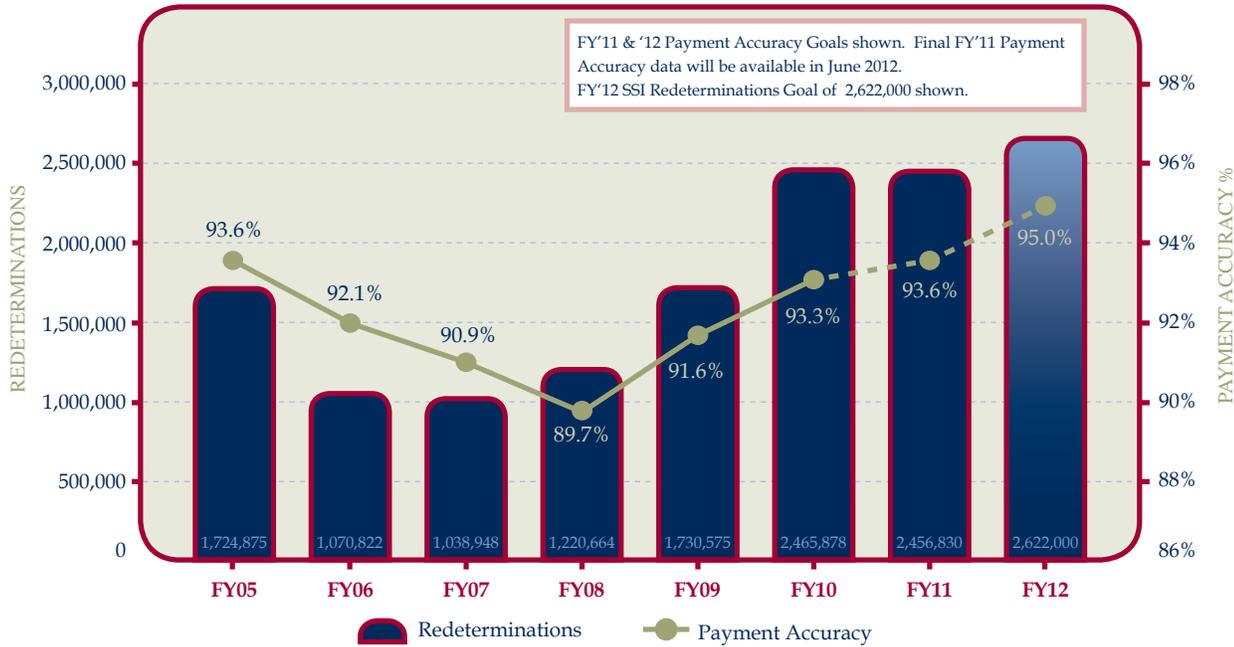
We place special emphasis on program integrity work and addressing improper payments. Our goal aligns with the President's challenge to Federal agencies to aggressively reduce improper payments government-wide.

We operate very efficiently, holding administrative costs to just 1.6 percent of benefit payments. Nevertheless, our stewardship efforts include not only payments made to our beneficiaries, but also our administrative payments to grantees, contractors, businesses, and employees.

For more information on reducing improper payments, visit our website at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/improperpayments>.



SSI Redeterminations Completed and SSI Payment Accuracy



Our goal aligns with the President’s challenge to federal agencies to aggressively reduce government-wide improper payments. We support the current focus across government to reduce fraud, waste, and abuse. We make every effort to confirm that the right recipient is receiving the right payment for the right reason at the right time (Executive Orders 13520 and 13576).

TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL WE WILL:

- I. Increase Efforts to Accurately Pay Benefits
- II. Recover Improper Payments
- III. Maintain Accurate Earnings Records
- IV. Make Our Administrative Operations Even More Efficient

Objective I

Increase Efforts to Accurately Pay Benefits

Issue: The American public expects us to be outstanding stewards of the Social Security Trust Funds. We are committed to protecting program dollars from waste, fraud, and abuse. Notwithstanding the complexity of our program, we have many tools to help us minimize improper payments. Our most important program integrity tools are Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs), which are periodic reevaluations to determine if beneficiaries are still disabled, and SSI redeterminations, which are periodic reviews of non-medical factors of SSI eligibility, such as income and resources. We estimate that historically every dollar

spent on CDRs yields at least \$10 in lifetime program savings, including savings accruing to Medicare and Medicaid. Historically, every dollar spent on SSI redeterminations yields more than \$7 in program savings over 10 years, including savings accruing to Medicaid.

Earlier this decade, we encountered several years where the Congress appropriated less than the President's Budget, and our administrative infrastructure contracted to a point where we could not fulfill all of our responsibilities. During this time period, hearing backlogs rose dramatically and program integrity work declined dramatically. Since 2007, we have made significant progress toward reversing these trends, but we still lack the resources to perform all of our program integrity work on a timely basis. Despite rising workloads, we have been steadily increasing our program integrity efforts.

Beneficiaries are responsible for reporting changes that may affect their payment amount. Unfortunately, not all beneficiaries report changes as required; in turn, we rely on our scheduled reviews and computer matches to detect changes and prevent payment errors. However our computer matches are not always timely. To continue our critical program integrity work, we will work closely with Congress to secure funding.

Strategies:

- Explore new business processes for completing our program integrity activities
- Develop new tools and automated means for beneficiaries to report changes that may affect their payment amount
- Automate internal business processes to make it easier for our employees to make changes quickly and accurately
- Collaborate with other Federal agencies to find innovative ways to detect fraud
- Pursue additional data sharing agreements with private industry and government agencies
- Enhance predictive models and automation tools to help identify elements of benefit eligibility
- Explore innovative methods to communicate reporting responsibilities to beneficiaries

Objective II

Recover Improper Payments

Issue: Although we strive to pay benefits accurately and timely, the complexity of our disability programs can lead to improper payments, including overpayments. We use internal and external collection tools to recover what we are owed. The technique we use most widely is benefit withholding from our current beneficiaries. When we cannot recover a debt on our own, we turn to authorized external debt collection methods. In providing us with these debt collection options, Congress recognized that maximum debt collection

is not the only consideration and should be balanced with compassionate recognition of our beneficiaries' individual situations. As system resources permit, we will enhance our efforts to detect and recover overpayments. For more information on our debt recovery efforts, visit our website at <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/improperpayments>.

Strategies:

- Maximize our use of proven debt collection tools and techniques
- Implement new tools for debt collection
- Develop recommended changes to laws, regulations, and policies to enhance our ability to collect debt

Objective III**Maintain Accurate Earnings Records**

Issue: Each year, we post nearly 216 million earning reports to individuals' records. We base an individual's Social Security benefit amount on his or her lifetime earnings; therefore, our records must be accurate. We receive the majority of these earning reports electronically; however, nearly 15 percent are still paper reports, which make them more error prone, labor intensive, and expensive to process. In addition, the automated systems we use to process this workload are aging.

Strategies:

- Encourage more employers to file W-2s online
- Work with the Internal Revenue Service to improve wage reporting
- Continue to modernize our earnings systems



Objective IV**Make Our Administrative Operations Even More Efficient**

We must ensure that we use every taxpayer dollar invested in our administrative operations effectively and efficiently. We are committed to sound management practices; we conduct rigorous reviews of our business practices to ensure that the taxpayer receives a high return. Our commitment to a strong internal control environment is unwavering, and FY 2011 marked the 18th consecutive year we received an unqualified opinion on our financial statements.

As responsible stewards, we use technology to reduce costs across the agency. For example, video hearings allow us to handle more hearings, transfer workloads between locations, and reduce travel costs. In FY 2011, video technology helped us reduce our travel expenses by over 35 percent and our agency-sponsored conferences by over 80 percent.

We spend about \$1 billion annually to obtain mission essential goods and services. By focusing on reducing high-risk acquisitions and aggressively seeking vendor discounts, we saved over \$273 million in FY 2011 in acquisition costs. We will continue to seek more efficiencies in these and other internal business functions.

Strategies:

- Use technology to achieve savings
- Use efficient acquisition strategies to achieve savings

GOAL 3 KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

- Number of Supplemental Security Income non-disability redeterminations
- Number of full medical continuing disability reviews
- Percentage of Supplemental Security Income payments free of overpayment and underpayment error
- Percentage decrease of paper W-2 forms completed

STRATEGIC GOAL 4:

Strengthen Our Workforce and Infrastructure

Delivery of our services is a daunting logistical and technical challenge. It is through the dedication and commitment of our employees and State partners in the disability determination services that we have sustained dedicated and compassionate public service. Our future success is dependent on strategic investments in our workforce and in the necessary technology to support them.

We are beginning to see a shift in the composition of our workforce as more of our experienced employees begin to retire. We must use recruitment and retention efforts that will attract a multi-generational, multi-cultural workforce with the competencies needed to achieve our mission. It is critical that we find new and innovative ways to transfer institutional knowledge as our experienced employees retire.

Each year, we find ways to work smarter through innovation, automation, and business process changes. As a result, over the last five years, we have improved our productivity by an average of four percent per year. Although we have a long history of productivity improvements, such improvements alone cannot offset the significant increases in our work and staff attrition in 2011.

To meet our service delivery challenges, we rely upon a large and complex information technology (IT) infrastructure, which includes very sensitive national databases, hundreds of software applications, large back-end computer platforms, and thousands of networked computers, printers, telephones, and other devices. We manage our IT operations from two data centers, including our aging National Computer Center (NCC).

Although the NCC equipment is modern, the building itself was constructed in 1979, and the performance of uninterrupted power delivery, cooling, fire suppression, and plumbing systems is at an increasing risk. Congress has supported construction of a new building to replace the NCC, and we will continue to work closely with the General Services Administration on the project.

We must continue to prioritize our employees and our infrastructure—even in challenging economic times. We will explore new strategies for accomplishing work, such as telework, that may attract a more diverse workforce, including people with disabilities and veterans. We will continue to ensure the workplace remains a safe and secure environment for our employees.

TO ACHIEVE THESE GOALS WE WILL:

- I. Strengthen Our Workforce – Recruit, Train, Develop, and Retain Superior Employees
- II. Maintain Secure and Reliable IT Services
- III. Enhance and Increase Efficiency of Our Physical Infrastructure

Objective I

Strengthen Our Workforce – Recruit, Train, Develop, and Retain Superior Employees

Issue: As the public we serve continues to increase and becomes significantly more diverse, we need to ensure that our employees have the tools to work effectively with people of all age groups, educational levels, and cultural backgrounds.

We will employ a number of human capital strategies to ensure our provision of reliable, quality service to an increasingly diverse public. Our strategies align with the President’s commitment to promote diversity and inclusion in the federal workforce.

Strategies:

- Recruit and retain a highly-skilled, multi-generational and multi-cultural workforce, including veterans, individuals with disabilities, and bilingual employees
- Sustain a positive work environment that values diversity and inclusion and encourages employee innovation and input
- Offer high-value learning and leadership development opportunities
- Refresh our training and technical support resources

Objective II

Maintain Secure and Reliable Information Technology Services

Issue: With over six decades of computing experience, we are a pioneer organization in terms of extremely large, centralized, and cost-effective IT service delivery. Technology is essential to everything we do. If our systems are down, we grind to a virtual halt. Moreover, even if our systems are functioning, but not optimally, then the formidable productivity of our workforce immediately declines.

Some of our most important new IT development projects, such as the Disability Case Processing System, are highlighted in previous sections of our Strategic Plan. This objective focuses solely on IT infrastructure. IT infrastructure refers to the computer hardware, computer software, telecommunications, data, and technology-governance components that underlie our entire enterprise.

In order to maintain strong IT performance, we must contend with a constrained budget, increasing growth in IT demand and cyber-security risk, and obsolescence when faced with an aging infrastructure and constant change in the technology industry. Security of our information and systems is critical; therefore, we must continue to enhance our cyber security protections, including continual monitoring. We must also remain focused on the extensive IT challenges associated with the design, construction, and transition to a new national data center in 2015.

Strategies:

- Complete infrastructure changes to restore national IT operations within one day in the event of a disaster affecting either of our two data centers
- Use advanced cyber-security tools and techniques to protect our data and systems
- Utilize proven new technologies to improve IT cost, performance, and data-loss risk
- Incrementally modernize our older software applications based on business opportunity and technical risk
- Maintain systems performance while transitioning to our new data center

Objective III**Increase Efficiency of Our Physical Infrastructure**

Issue: We must provide a professional, safe, and secure environment for our workforce and the public. The security of our employees and the people we serve is one of our top priorities. In light of heightened threats and violence, we will continue to improve security in our facilities.

We are also reviewing our real estate presence to identify opportunities to consolidate offices and reduce our footprint. Strategic cancellation of leases has resulted in cost savings of nearly \$15 million through FY 2012. We are working toward achieving even greater savings during the next five years.

By December 2012, we will complete our Environmental Management System plan, which sets forth ambitious energy and water conservation goals consistent with Executive Orders 13423 and 13514.

Strategies:

- Implement green solutions that improve our environment and make our operations more efficient
- Improve real property management and optimize maintenance costs
- Increase oversight of space acquisition activities to ensure cost-conscious decision making, taking telework opportunities into consideration
- Continue to redesign and equip our offices to enhance security and privacy and foster employee satisfaction and productivity

GOAL 4 KEY PERFORMANCE MEASURES:

- Implement training activities that enhance workforce capabilities
- Percentage of total hiring that represents veterans and individuals with disabilities
- Percentage of enterprise-wide systems availability
- Reduce energy intensity by 30 percent by 2015

Appendices – Table of Contents

Appendix 1 – Our Organization

Appendix 2 – Environmental Factors We Must Consider

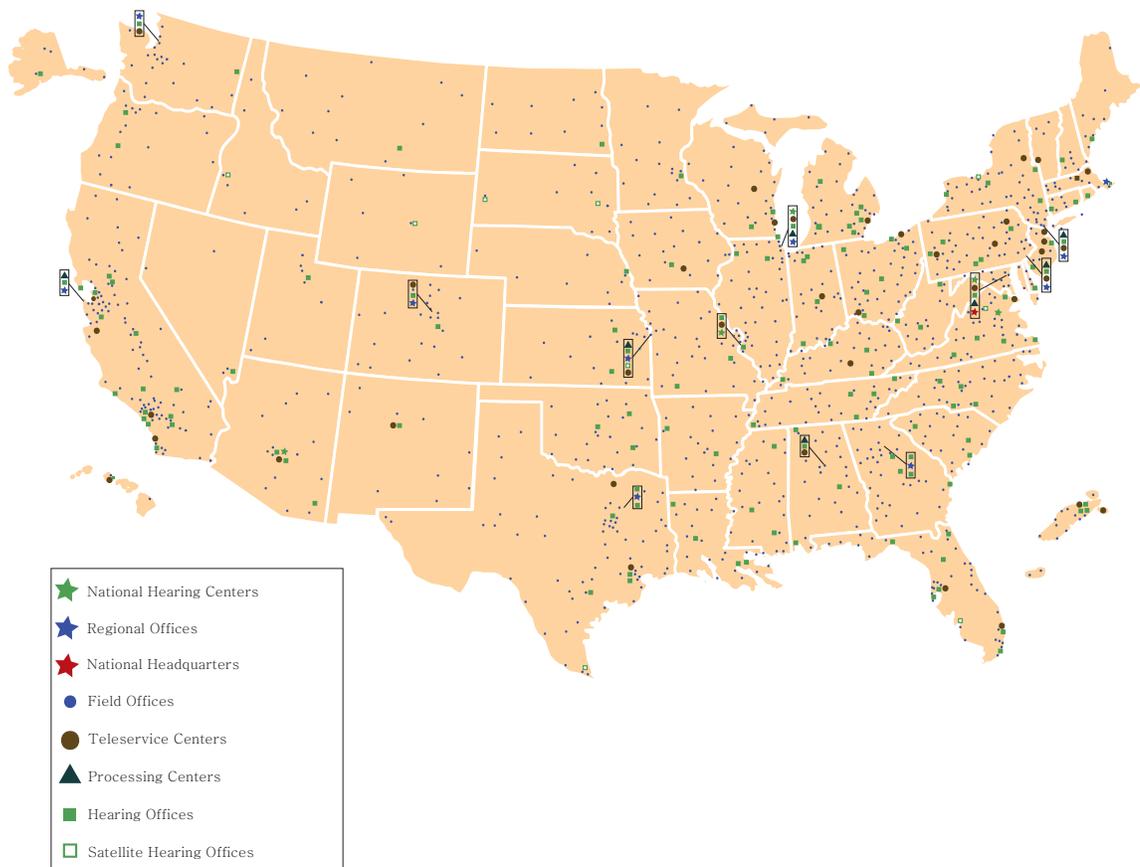
Appendix 3 – How We Measure Our Progress

Appendix 4 – How We Evaluate Our Programs

Our Organization

Our current organization is comprised of over 80,000 Federal and State employees. We deliver services through a nationwide network of 1,500 offices that includes regional offices, field offices (including Social Security card centers), teleservice centers, processing centers, hearing offices (including satellite offices and national hearing centers), the Appeals Council, and our headquarters in Baltimore, Maryland. We also have a presence in several United States embassies around the globe.

Our field offices and Social Security card centers are the primary points of contact for in-person interaction with the public. Our teleservice centers primarily handle telephone calls to our National 800 Number. Employees in our processing centers primarily handle Social Security retirement, survivors, and disability payments but also perform a wide range of other functions, which include answering telephone calls to our National 800 Number. We depend on State employees in 54 State and territorial disability determination services to make disability determinations. The administrative law judges in our hearing offices and the Appeals Council make decisions on appeals of denied Social Security and SSI claims. The vast majority of our employees serve the public directly or provide support to employees who do. A chart illustrating our **organizational structure** and the function of each component is available on our website at www.socialsecurity.gov/org.



Environmental Factors We Must Consider

Fiscal Environment

The economic downturn and high unemployment rates have drastically increased the number of people who turn to us for help. We continue to receive a high number of disability claims, and we will continue to watch these factors as we plan for the future.

The economy has also stressed State budgets. As States must make difficult decisions to balance their budgets, their decisions can affect the State disability determination services employees who we fully fund to make our disability determinations. We will continue to work with States to exempt these employees from State cost-cutting measures.

Finally, the fiscal environment affects the level of funding we receive each year. As our work continues to increase, adequate and timely funding is critical to our ability to maintain a strong level of performance in our core workloads and provide the level of service the public expects and deserves.

Changing Demographics

The population of the United States is changing in many ways. We are already dealing with workload increases as members of the baby-boom generation are passing through their most disability-prone years and beginning to retire.

At the same time, the nation is becoming more diverse. Today, minorities comprise approximately 30 percent of the population, and the Census Bureau estimates that minorities will make up over half of the population by 2050. As we enhance our service delivery strategies, we must continue to consider the increasing multilingual, multicultural population we serve.

Technology

Technology is rapidly changing. Internet services and the use of mobile devices and social media continue to increase. We must continue to evaluate new technology to determine if we can implement it to improve our service, increase productivity, or enhance the security and stability of our systems.

Evolving National Policy

We must continue to watch for potential policy or legislative changes that might affect how we deliver service.

Health Care

Trends in health care affect our disability programs. Increases in the number of people with chronic diseases and rapidly changing medical treatments are challenges to administering our disability programs. Additionally, we are watching the growth of health information technology so that we can take advantage of standardized electronic medical records. Finally, we must watch for changes to the Medicare program as we have a supporting role in the Medicare enrollment and subsidy processes. Finally, we must watch for changes to the Medicare program as we have a supporting role in the Medicare enrollment and subsidy processes and the implementation of the Affordable Health Care Act.



How We Measure Our Progress

FY 2012-FY 2013 Priority Goals

We will continue to meet the challenge to cut waste, save money, and deliver better service. We identified three Priority Goals we expect to achieve in the next two years. Our Priority Goals are aggressive and directly support our strategic goals. To ensure we meet our goals, we conduct quarterly internal progress reviews and take necessary action to improve our outcomes and reduce costs.

- **Goal 1: Faster hearing decisions**

By the end of FY 2013, we will reduce the average time for a hearing decision from 345 days at the end of FY 2011 to 270 days.

- **Goal 2: Reduce Supplemental Security Income (SSI) overpayments**

By the end of FY 2013*, we will increase our SSI overpayment accuracy rate from 93.3 percent at the end of FY 2010 to 95 percent.

- **Goal 3: Increase use of our online services**

By the end of FY 2013, we will increase our online filing rates from 36 percent at the end of FY 2011 to 48 percent.

Other Measurement

The Commissioner and other executives review a monthly Tracking Report, which assesses agency progress in achieving the performance targets contained in our Annual Performance Plan. We develop monthly performance expectations at the beginning of the fiscal year and use them to assess monthly progress using a stoplight approach. The appropriate executive provides a brief explanation for any measures where performance is behind expectation.

Per the GPRA Modernization Act, P.L. 111-352, requirement to address Federal Goals in the agency Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plan, please refer to www.Performance.gov for information on Federal Priority Goals and the agency's contributions to those goals, where applicable.

* FY 2013 data will not be available until April 2014.

How We Evaluate Our Programs

We routinely conduct a variety of studies and surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs. We continue to build on our collection of program data, research, and analyses to identify our program strengths and weaknesses. We use information from program evaluations to develop strategies to address the major challenges we face and improve the day-to-day administration of our programs. We complete many of our evaluations annually while others may be one-time efforts. The following charts list some of our significant evaluations, a description of these evaluations, and the timeframe for completion.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1 – DELIVER QUALITY DISABILITY DECISIONS AND SERVICES		
EVALUATION	DESCRIPTION	COMPLETED
Disability Initial Claims Report Card	Surveys perceptions of the initial disability application process from persons who file for disability benefits	Annually
Evaluation of Ticket to Work Program	Evaluates the progress of the Ticket to Work Program as required under the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999	Continuously
Hearing Process Report Card Survey	Surveys perceptions about the entire hearing process from persons who file for disability benefits	Annually
Quality Review Assessment of Senior Attorney Advisor Disability Decisions	Assesses the accuracy of favorable hearing decisions made by non-administrative law judge decision-makers (e.g., Attorney Adjudicators)	Annually
The Office of Quality Performance Denial Review	Assesses the accuracy of initial and reconsideration-level medical denials	Annually

STRATEGIC GOAL 2 – PROVIDE QUALITY SERVICES TO THE PUBLIC		
EVALUATION	DESCRIPTION	COMPLETED
Field Office Telephone Service Evaluation	Evaluates our accuracy in handling the public's calls to field offices	Annually
National 800 Number Telephone Service Evaluation	Evaluates our accuracy in handling the public's calls to the National 800 Number	Annually
Overall Service Satisfaction Surveys	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Telephone Service Satisfaction Surveys evaluate callers' satisfaction with our National 800 Number and field office telephone services. 2. Office Visitor Surveys evaluate visitors' satisfaction with our field offices (including Social Security Card Centers) and hearing offices. 3. Internet Transaction Surveys evaluate users' satisfaction with online transactional services. 	Annually
Prospective Client Survey	Surveys people between the ages of 50 and 64 to identify service expectations and preferences of the upcoming wave of retirees	Periodic
Special Notice Option Survey	Surveys visually impaired individuals who have requested their Social Security notices in a special format, such as Braille, to measure satisfaction with notices received in the requested format	One-time Survey

STRATEGIC GOAL 3 – MANAGE, PROTECT, AND PRESERVE SOCIAL SECURITY FUNDS		
EVALUATION	DESCRIPTION	COMPLETED
Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Federal Disability Insurance Trust Funds	Reports on the financial and actuarial status of the two Social Security Trust Funds – the Old-Age and Survivors Trust Fund and the Disability Trust Fund	Annually
Annual Report of the Supplemental Security Income Program	Reports annually to the President and the Congress on the status of the Supplemental Security Income program and provides projections of program participation and costs through at least 25 years	Annually
Enumeration Quality Review	Assesses the accuracy of original Social Security Numbers assigned during the fiscal year	Annually
Pre-effectuation Review of Disability Determinations	Assesses the accuracy of disability initial and reconsideration allowances made by State Disability Determination Services as required by the Social Security Act	Annually
Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Stewardship Review	Measures the accuracy of payments to persons receiving Social Security retirement, survivors, or disability benefits	Annually
Safeguard Activity Report	Advises the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) of minor changes to procedures or safeguards described in the Safeguard Procedure Report	Annually
Safeguard Review	Evaluates the use of federal tax information and the measures we employ to protect this information; this is an onsite evaluation completed in collaboration with the IRS	Every Three Years
Safeguard Procedures Report	Details the security measures we are taking to ensure the confidentiality of the federal tax information provided to us by the IRS	Every six years or whenever significant changes occur in our Safeguard program
Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Stewardship Review	Reviews non-medical factors of eligibility conducted to measure the accuracy of payments made to persons receiving SSI benefits	Annually

STRATEGIC GOAL 4 – Strengthen OUR WORKFORCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE		
EVALUATION	DESCRIPTION	COMPLETED
Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (formerly the Annual Employee Survey/Federal Human Capital Survey)	Assesses employee perspectives of organizational performance across several major human capital areas, including recruitment, development, performance culture, leadership, job satisfaction, and personal work experiences	Annually
Federal Information Security Management Act Report	Reports to Congress whether our overall information technology security programs and practices comply with the Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002	Annually
Human Capital Accountability System	Monitors and evaluates the results of our human capital strategies, policies, and programs, as well as our adherence to merit system principles; it includes cyclical Human Resources Management and Delegated Examining Unit Assessments of components across the agency and an annual Human Capital Management Report	Annually
Management Directive (MD)-715	Provides policy guidance and standards for establishing and maintaining effective affirmative programs of equal opportunity and effective affirmative action programs	Annually
New Hire Survey	Monitors employee perspectives on recruitment, hiring, on-boarding, and training activities	Quarterly
Office of Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity Quality Assurance Program	Assesses the effectiveness of our Equal Employment Opportunity programs and our compliance with regulatory requirements, policy, and directives	Annually



SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION