



SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

OPEN GOVERNMENT PLAN 2.0



FEBRUARY 14, 2013

WEBINARS SOCIAL SECURITY 101
ENGAGE **VIDEO** DATASETS
CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT **GIS**
PORTAL **website**
COLLABORATE
CLOUD FLAGSHIP INITIATIVES
SOCIAL MEDIA **GOV 2.0**
STUDY **PARTICIPATION**
DETERMINE OPEN SOURCE
CONTENT MANAGEMENT
DATA AWARENESS
IMPLEMENT GUIDANCE
TEST **STANDARDS**
CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT
ORGANIZE GOVERNMENT
INFORMATION DISCUSS
OPEN **ASK** **ENABLE**
SHARE EXPLORE PUBLIC
THINK
DESIGN LEARN
TERMS OF SERVICE **BUILD**
SPEAK SOFTWARE TRACK
GUIDANCE OPEN
SOCIAL SECURITY 101
PROPOSE WIKI PUBLIC
TECHNICAL **PLAN** MEET
DESIGN CONTRIBUTE
TRANSPARENCY PUBLIC
SHARE MEET STUDY **GIS** LEARN
ENABLE DATASETS **website**
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MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSIONER



Welcome to Social Security's Open Government Plan 2.0! This plan reflects our continuing effort to become more transparent to the American public; invite greater public participation in the policies and decisions of this agency; and foster expanded collaboration with our many partners, advocates, and people we serve.

I am proud to lead Social Security's implementation of President Obama's Open Government Initiative, and to carry out specific commitments to improve our operations and services in an open and transparent manner. In this plan, you will find a summary of achievements from our first Open Government Plan, as well as several new efforts, including a flagship initiative to deliver Enhanced Services for People Receiving Benefits. The centerpiece of this initiative is the suite of services we now offer at **my SocialSecurity**, where you can securely and conveniently access valuable personalized Social Security information. We are excited to offer this additional option for doing business with us.

Our Open Government Plan 2.0 also outlines our improvement efforts in other major areas, including health information technology, wounded warrior collaboration, and electronic signatures on online disability applications. We also have published 43 datasets on our **Open Government website** and **Data.gov**, with an aim to increase public understanding of our mission, our programs, and the actions we take. We encourage you to review the information on our website and on Data.gov and welcome your thoughts on additional data and information we should make available to the public.

In putting this refreshed plan together, we sought comments from many sources. We appreciate your continued interest and participation, and welcome your additional insight on ways we can improve our programs and service to you.

Please follow our **progress** on the milestones in our plan, and share your thoughts and ideas at open.government@ssa.gov.

Thank you.

Carolyn W. Colvin
ACTING COMMISSIONER
OF SOCIAL SECURITY

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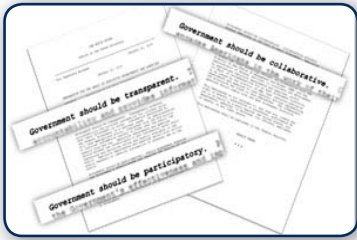
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This plan reflects our commitment to increase transparency, expand participation and collaboration, implement one flagship and three major initiatives, and make open government sustainable at Social Security. We also report on planned actions and commitments contained in our first Open Government Plan. We are pleased to report that we accomplished most of our goals in our original Open Government Plan.

See [Appendix A](#) for public and agency involvement in developing our Open Government Plan.



Transparency: We are committed to sharing information that helps the public understand our programs and hold us accountable for our performance. We published an inventory of our information and evaluated our processes to release information to the public to ensure we could achieve our transparency objectives while maintaining the privacy of personal information. We will continue to release information in a format the public can use. We submitted datasets to

the Federal government's document repository (www.data.gov), and we are incorporating feedback on those datasets as we publish additional information. While we strive to be open and transparent, we must protect vigilantly the personal information the public entrusts to us. We will ensure that transparency does not put that information at risk.

Participation and Collaboration: We will continue to expand on our long history of public participation and collaboration. Our open government communications activities include potential tools and tactics for both external and internal audiences. We will continue to offer opportunities for participation on our open government website (www.socialsecurity.gov/open) and will report there on ideas we receive and progress we make. We will also use our agency Internet site (www.socialsecurity.gov) to share information and provide opportunities for participation and collaboration. To encourage employee collaboration and innovation across the country, we are creating the necessary infrastructure to support existing and emerging web technologies. We will continue to expand the use of social media tools to discuss our programs and services.

Internalize open government principles: Our Office of Open Government is responsible for coordinating and managing open government initiatives. Our Open Government Executive Steering Committee provides guidance on overall strategic direction. We used open government approaches to develop our new Agency Strategic Plan (ASP) for 2013-2016--just one example of how we are using open government principles. We plan to continue an array of communications activities to foster culture change and promote open government principles in our workforce.

Flagship initiative and other major projects: This plan includes a flagship initiative, Enhanced Services for People Receiving Benefits, and three major projects: Health Information Technology (Health IT), Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER)/Wounded Warrior Collaboration, and eAuthorization (to obtain information in connection with filing an application for disability). These projects support our agency mission, goals, and objectives, and showcase the value of open government.

NOTE: For your convenience, at the end of this plan (following [Appendix J](#)), we have included a glossary of certain technical or agency-specific terms.

MISSION AND GOALS

Our Agency Mission: Deliver Social Security services that meet the changing needs of the public.

Our Open Government Mission: Support the agency's core mission through the principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration.

Open Government goals:

- Goal I: Improve transparency
- Goal II: Expand participation
- Goal III: Increase collaboration
- Goal IV: Internalize open government principles
- Implement one flagship and three major open government initiatives

Who We Are and What We Do: We run two of the nation's largest entitlement programs: the Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) program and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. In FY 2011, we paid more than 60 million people a total of about \$770 billion. In addition, we assist people in applying for food stamps and Medicare, including subsidies for the Medicare Prescription Drug Program. For more information on all of our programs and benefits, please visit our [Understanding the Benefits web page](#).

How We Served America in Fiscal Year 2011	
Issued 16.4 million new and replacement Social Security cards	Completed 3.4 million overpayment actions
Performed 1.3 billion automated Social Security number verifications	Reconsidered 828,000 denied disability applications
Posted 216 million earnings items to workers' records	Completed 127,000 Appeals Council reviews
Completed more than 62 million transactions on our National 800 Number	Decided over 795,000 hearing requests
Assisted nearly 45 million visitors in our field offices	Defended 14,000 new Federal court cases
Completed 4.8 million retirement, survivor, and Medicare applications	Oversaw approximately 6.6 million representative payees
Completed 3.4 million initial disability claims	Distributed nearly 1.4 billion in attorney fees
Completed 2.4 million SSI non-disability redeterminations	Provided nearly 290,000 disability beneficiaries with employment support
Completed over 1.4 million continuing disability reviews	

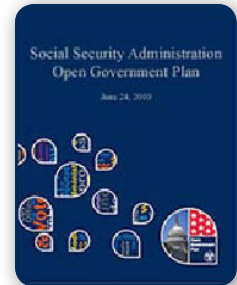
For examples of alignment of Open Government Plan 2.0 with Social Security's 2013-2016 ASP, go to [Appendix B](#).

SECTION I: PROGRESS ON 2010 OPEN GOVERNMENT PLAN 1.0

Two years ago, we published a strategic plan for implementing open government at Social Security. We are pleased to report on our progress and to provide some highlights of our open government work.

Accomplishments

- We established a dedicated open government **website** to share information, report on our progress, and encourage public participation and collaboration.
- We published our **Open Government Plan** based on public input, and **tracked our achievements** against the milestones we developed.
- We published more than 30 high-value datasets and visualizations on our website. We continue to fully support **Data.gov** by updating and releasing information as it becomes available (releases include data on service, Social Security's programs, and statistical information).
- We completed a **Data Inventory & Release Plan** outlining steps for releasing future datasets.
- We established our social media presence, launching agency **YouTube**, **Facebook** and **Twitter** accounts. We also set up Spanish-language **Facebook** and **Twitter** accounts. We recently expanded our social media use; therefore, we have established a social media board to oversee the creation and posting of daily messages on our Facebook and Twitter sites.
- We launched our first public video contest.
- We hosted a webinar broadcast for college students and young workers (**Social Security 101: What's in it for me?**).
- We aired a **Spanish webinar** in February 2012 featuring an overview and interactive session regarding our Spanish Retirement Estimator and online applications for retirement, Medicare, and Extra Help with Medicare prescription drug plan costs.
- We have ensured our new online engagement and collaboration tools are accessible to people with disabilities.



Three Flagship Initiatives Launched

- We launched our online **Spanish Retirement Estimator**, our first non-English online service. We further expanded Spanish online services when we launched the Spanish iClaim, the online application for Social Security retirement, disability, and Medicare benefits, and the Spanish i1020, the online application for extra help with Medicare prescription drug plan costs.
- We unveiled a new service-channeling (Online Service Enhancement) tool to help people more easily find the information and services on our website.
- We published an online **Life Expectancy Calculator** - another tool to help people plan for retirement.
- See **Appendix C** for a status of the three flagship initiatives in our 2010 plan. To view an item-by-item Plan Implementation Progress Chart on commitments in our 2010 Open Government Plan, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/open/plan-progress.html>.

Examples of Initiatives Underway

Expanding our web presence by:

- Formalizing a social media policy for employees.
- Investigating Facebook advertising services to reach greater and more targeted audiences with our messages.
- Using Google Analytics to provide a more granular view of our website visitors' behavior, navigation, and preferences and to help us identify, analyze, and prioritize improvement opportunities and resource expenditures on our website.
- Exploring innovative ways to increase utilization of our online services and to disseminate agency information.
- Launching, in September 2011, an independent cloud-based website sponsored by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) with a wealth of information made available to the public.
- Building on the OIG website, in June 2012, by launching a [blog](#) and unveiling an OIG [YouTube](#) channel, as well as a [Twitter](#) feed, and [Facebook](#) page.

Adopting new technology and using new approaches:

- Establishing, based on testing a variety of Web 2.0 technologies with different segments of our user community, a robust integrated enterprise collaboration platform as a “software-as-a-service” cloud solution to provide a consistent look and feel across the technologies and deliver a superior experience for collaboration and participation.
- Testing open-source software¹ solutions and incorporating open-source business rules engines in several production applications.
- Establishing an enterprise service bus² based on open-source technology and incorporating open-source solutions in our integrated development environments.
- Evaluating open-source technology to data-mine our growing amount of unstructured data.
- Expanding our Business Intelligence (BI) Architecture, a source of information for our Data.gov catalogue.
- To support quality management decision-making, we are leveraging our data, modern analytical tools, and data warehousing technologies in our Business Intelligence (BI) architecture and we are evaluating emerging technology to improve our BI tools, including geographical user interfaces and enhanced self-service options.

Developing standards and enterprise processes:

- Updating our data quality plan for federal spending information.
- Relying on user-centered design to ensure applications developed in-house are accessible and well-tuned to meet the needs of our end users.
- Implementing a centralized lifecycle environment for developers nationwide and deploying applications in this environment.
- Improving the quality, accessibility and usability of our data through well-defined standards, including the use of machine-readable formats such as web services and common metadata tagging schemes.
- Continuing to research and benchmark to data management best practices.
- Increasingly using XML³ and developing a standard approach to storing XML data.

SECTION II: OPEN GOVERNMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal I: Improve Transparency

“In all parts of the world, we see the promise of innovation to make government more open and accountable. And now, we must build on that progress.”

President Barack Obama, September 23, 2010



Social Security will meet the open government principle of transparency through information sharing and accountability

We will continue to provide information to the public to increase their understanding of our mission, our programs, and the actions we take. While we currently share significant amounts of non-personal information through a number of outlets and methods, there is ever-growing public demand for more information and clarity in our processes. We share the President's commitment to make non-personal information known, and have taken steps to make more information available electronically.

On February 6, 2010, we launched our [open government portal](#), where the public can find datasets and information about our overall management and organizational structure. The public may also use this website to contact us and submit comments and ideas. This avenue is one of several we use to get input about information the public wants. See Goals II and III below for more detail about our participation and collaboration activities.

We continue to update and expand the information available from this portal, which is an important tool in our efforts to further transparency.

For more information about our involvement in Federal transparency initiatives (Data.gov, eRulemaking, Information Technology Dashboard, Recovery.gov, USAspending.gov, and declassification program) see [Appendix D](#). [Appendix G](#) describes our Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) program and how we are ensuring transparency through a presumption of openness⁴.

Objective 1: Provide high-value information that meets the public's needs while protecting privacy and ensuring security of personal information

We compiled an inventory of our high-value information and developed a schedule of information and datasets for release to the public. As of August 2012, we had released 40 datasets to Data.gov. We delayed several datasets due to resource limitations, additional reviews of disclosure requirements, and data availability issues. Based on our reviews, and the feedback received through the portal, other feedback methods, FOIA requests, and Data.gov, we will identify additional information to release in future years.

Our Open Government Executive Steering Committee oversees this ongoing review. Our Data.gov point of contact manages the review on a day-to-day basis along with a working group made up of experts in enterprise architecture, data quality, privacy, and security along with agency data stewards. The working group members participate in architectural reviews, tool selection, data mining workgroups, and in the development of data standards to advance open government and open data concepts throughout the agency.

We are working to release new high-value datasets and information holdings. See [Appendix E](#) for a list of anticipated releases for 2012-2014. [View the list of datasets we have released to date.](#) We are also making this process more efficient. To this end, we are incorporating data transparency considerations into the system development lifecycle so we can automate the release of data in standard formats.

“High-value” Defined

High-value information is information that can contribute to increased agency accountability and responsiveness; improve public knowledge of the agency and its operations; further the core mission of the agency; create economic opportunity; or respond to need and demand as identified through public consultation. (OMB Memorandum M-10-06, December 8, 2009).

We strive for transparency in our employment support for individuals receiving disability benefits and provide information to help them make decisions about attempting to work. We hold online Work Incentive Seminar Events, which can be accessed by beneficiaries 24/7. We post an online Employment Network (EN) report card offering comparative information on the various services ENs provide and the different results beneficiaries achieve with their support. Using this information, we believe beneficiaries can better compare ENs in their area. We also are developing a similar tool to help beneficiaries evaluate their State Vocational Rehabilitation Agency services. Finally, we explain in plain language the purposes and expectations of the Ticket to Work (TTW) program to beneficiaries through an open letter, webinars and other means, enabling them to better decide if they should participate in the program.

We are also:

- Evaluating our processes to ensure that the information and data we release are shareable, searchable, accurate, machine readable, and appropriate for release;
- Maintaining Disclosure Review Boards to protect privacy by ensuring that no one can use the data we release to identify individual people;
- Establishing annual action plans to update and release data, in accordance with our strategic planning initiatives and within resource constraints;
- Considering smart disclosure and unstructured information as we develop future data release schedules; and
- Exploring the expanded use of social media to improve transparency.

Objective 2: Provide information to the public in an electronic format

We continue to identify and release in an electronic format high-value data that were not previously available to the public. The data releases will conform to the standards of Data.gov and the Information Quality Act.

Social Security's Office of Research, Evaluation, and Statistics is modernizing the production of our statistical publications. In addition to using a new, efficient, and automated business process to produce statistical tables, the modernization initiative will allow us to make some of the low-level aggregated datasets that we use to produce the statistical tables available for public use. These new types of datasets will allow users to generate their own custom statistical information. Providing opportunities for data "mash-ups," applications, visualizations, and public analysis promotes openness and clearly articulates our commitment to the open government vision of enhancing accessibility and creativity in public use of high-value data.

In addition, we will:

- Provide underlying data as permitted, considering the mosaic effect of multiple data releases throughout government;
- Update data, as available and as appropriate; and
- Continue to use electronic messages to inform key audiences (stakeholders) such as advocacy groups, data users, other public and private sector organizations, and members of the public of the available information.



Social Security—Committed to Excellence in Accessibility

We are committed to making our entire Internet and Intranet content accessible to all persons with disabilities. As a leader in the Federal Government in the area of accessibility, we have made great progress with our public-facing websites and our Information Technology procurements to ensure that the public has access to our services and that our employees with disabilities have the tools and information they need to do their jobs.

With the development of new web-based technologies, we face additional challenges and opportunities in ensuring accessibility. We remain committed to ensuring that our online documents, multimedia, social media, and videos comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

For additional details about our accessibility policy and resources for people with disabilities, please view www.socialsecurity.gov/Webcontent/accessibility.htm.

We support and comply with the requirements of Data.gov, eRulemaking, IT Dashboard, Recovery.gov, and USAspending.gov. See [Appendix D](#) for information about each of these activities. We work with other agencies to release data jointly, when appropriate. For instance, we participated in Data.gov working groups covering such topics as health and disclosure. Going forward, we will continue to consult with the Federal leadership working under the purview of the CIO Council on information sharing.

Objective 3: Inform the public about significant planned actions supporting transparency

We will continue to employ many different communication tools and approaches to support transparency (as well as the other open government principles). One primary communication vehicle is our [open government portal](#). You will find a summary of our communications actions in [Appendix F](#).

We will continue to participate in meetings internally and externally to explain the data we post on Data.gov. We will continue to consult with research firms and peers (e.g., military, private, non-profit) who specialize in business intelligence and information management to benchmark best practices for data inventories and quality assurance. We also will reach out to members of the research community, such as academia, to understand research needs.

We held a series of face-to-face meetings with advocacy organizations, during which we solicited feedback about the data and information they want us to make available. We will continue these outreach meetings and continue participating in national meetings such as library associations and national disability advocate conferences. Based on the feedback we receive, we will publish additional information and evaluate satisfaction levels and use. We also will continue to monitor outcomes related to new applications and new uses of the data.

Objective 4: Provide information to the public on internal management areas

In our efforts to be more transparent, we will release more than statistical data, focusing on the broader definition of “high-value” information under open government guidance. We will provide members of public with information they request either through the FOIA process or through other means, such as our outreach with stakeholders. We also will provide information that shows the results of our programs, release data about internal management processes, and provide information relevant to decisions people make in their lives.

We comply with FOIA requirements, records management obligations, and respond to congressional requests. The following sections provide information on internal management of these areas.

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

We are committed to improving our openness by sharing with the public information about our programs and projects. We believe our FOIA program strongly reflects this commitment. Our Office of Privacy and Disclosure (OPD), a major component of the Office of the General Counsel (OGC), directs all FOIA matters within the agency.

In FY 2011, Social Security responded to 32,445 FOIA requests. Our response timeframes are significantly better than most other large Federal agencies. Furthermore, we reduced our backlog by 55 percent from FY 2010. At the end of FY 2011, our backlog consisted of 38 pending requests, which represents 0.1 percent of our total FOIA workload.



During Sunshine Week 2012, Attorney General Eric Holder recognized us for our exemplary efforts in implementing the Attorney General’s FOIA guidelines. We participated with Attorney General Holder in a Department of Justice event that showcased our FOIA accomplishments over the past year.

SSA FOIA Staff, from left to right: Jasson Seiden, David Lu, Melanie Ann Pustay (DOJ), Tony West (DOJ), Stacy Rodgers, Carolyn Colvin (SSA Deputy Commissioner), Eric Holder (Attorney General, DOJ), Mona Finch, Dawn Wiggins, Patricia Bellamy, Dan Callahan, Anthony Tookes

We are conducting market research to identify software that may provide greater functionality for our FOIA program. As part of our research, we are evaluating technology that other Federal agencies are developing or using that would allow us to update automatically our FOIA reading room with appropriate information at the same time we release the information to the requestor. We anticipate examining alternatives to our current automated FOIA support system by the third quarter of FY 2013.

In the interim, we are updating our systems and our public FOIA website to improve public access to our information. We are redesigning the content, navigation, look, and feel of our public-facing FOIA website. We expect to begin testing a prototype in the third quarter of FY 2012 and will implement the redesign in the 2nd quarter of FY 2013. We will continue to update our existing web-based FOIA Reading Room with information most requested by the public.

You may find more information about our FOIA organization, how we process FOIA requests, and initiatives underway to improve our FOIA program in [Appendix G](#). You also may find more detailed information about our FOIA program at <https://www.socialsecurity.gov/foia/>.

Records Management

Our Office of Budget, Finance, and Management maintains and oversees agency policies, responsibilities, and procedures for the orderly disposition of our records. These policies include governance of vital records and e-mail retention. For comprehensive information about the agency records management program, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/open/our-records-management-program.html. This site contains information about the agency records management program, including scheduling all electronic records for retention and destruction and ensuring timely transfer to the National Archives.

Legislation and Congressional Relations

Our website's home page includes a section called "Information for Congress." However, much of the information in [this section](#) contains information that is of interest to the public, as well.

This site includes agency testimony before Congress, information about pending Social Security-related legislation, legislative proposals and reports we have sent to Congress, and histories of significant recent legislation affecting Social Security programs. We post testimony and legislation during the current Congress separately from testimony and legislation for prior Congresses (back to the 106th Congress) so that the most recent information is quick and easy to find. Program resources, such as fact sheets, links to actuarial cost estimates for solvency proposals, and links to budget information are available here as well.

In addition to our ongoing effort to update the site continuously with the most recent reports and Congressional activity relating to Social Security programs, as time and resources permit, we will continue building our online repository of materials that may be of interest either for historical reasons or to promote transparency. For example, this year we expanded the "Other Materials for Congress" section to include additional reports to Congress, many of which pertain to internal management procedures, and we have added additional packages from prior years to the "Legislative Proposals Sent to Congress" section.



Congressional Requests

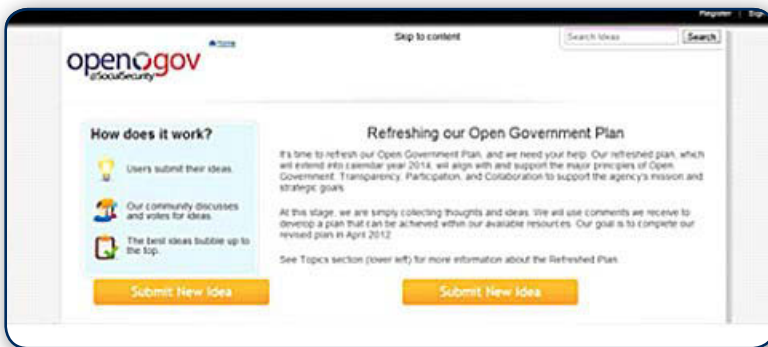
We receive congressional inquiries by phone, letter, fax, and via the Internet. The inquiries generally involve constituent—related Social Security cases, program policies, or requests for program or agency information. These inquiries most often come into the Office of the Commissioner, local Social Security field offices, State Disability Determination Offices, and our Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs.

In most cases, the office that receives the initial inquiry can fully address the questions raised and provide a response to the congressional office. No matter which office handles it, our program experts thoroughly research and respond to all congressional inquiries.

Goal II: Expand Participation

“We’re also soliciting the best ideas from our fellow people in how to make government work better.”

President Barack Obama, September 2011



We will continue to invite the public to participate with us in open government. We greatly benefit from their ideas and opinions. For example, when we consider adding diseases to our Compassionate Allowances initiative⁵ we have held public hearings to gather information from medical experts, advocates, and individuals interested in the disability process. We use the valuable information

and opinions we receive in the forums and other outreach venues to inform our policy decisions. Similarly, when we update the medical listings we use to adjudicate disability claims, we publish an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) to get ideas from the public before we begin to draft the proposed regulatory changes. We want to expand on the successes we have achieved and further infuse participation principles into the way we develop policy, solve problems, and determine public preferences.



We are developing social media policies and instituting practices to use new technologies to support participation and collaboration. As we gain experience and get feedback from stakeholders, we will continue to refine these policies, expand practices, and integrate the tools into our mainstream processes.

Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Objective 1: Provide the public with easy and visible access to existing participatory processes

During our original open government dialogue, we received many ideas about information we should add to [socialsecurity.gov](https://www.ssa.gov). Much of the requested information was already present on our website but some reported it was difficult to find; so we highlighted the links to this information on our [Open Government page](#). In addition, based on the open government dialogue, we posted a “top ideas” list, reflecting public votes and comments on ideas submitted. The list displays the status of our progress on investigating each idea. We will update our progress on these ideas and any others we received during our development of this revised open government plan.

We will continue to offer the public easy access through a variety of channels. One of our newer channels is webinars. In the last few years, we hosted more than 25 of these interactive web events on such topics as retirement planning, applying online for disability benefits, online business services, and benefits for young workers. Our webinar entitled, “Social Security 101: What’s in it for me?,” received the first place Gold Screen Award in the webcast category from the National Association of Government Communicators, a nonprofit professional network of Federal, State, and local government employees. The Gold Screen Award recognizes superior government communication products.



SSA “101 Webinar Team”

From left to right: Dawn Bystry, Darlynda Bogle, Brian Simpson, Jennifer Lohr (NAGC President), Mayela Gillette

This year, we also hosted our first-ever [Spanish webinar](#) to inform the Hispanic community about several new online services offered in Spanish.

Recordings of webinars with current content are posted on our agency website. Our recorded webinars have received more than 153,000 views to date.

Other participatory efforts we plan to continue include:

- Informing the public when we adopt an idea submitted through our collaboration and participation engagements. We will post feedback at www.socialsecurity.gov/open with continued opportunities for participation;
- Providing notice of opportunities for public participation, such as our interactive webinars;
- Providing information about other means to provide feedback on various topics related to our programs and services;
- Providing the public with an opportunity to comment on our proposed regulations at www.regulations.gov, our eRulemaking initiative; and
- Using focus groups for public input and employing usability testing with members of the public before launching online services.

We currently provide the public with an opportunity to comment on our public use forms and information collection requests, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) through email at OR.Reports.Clearance@ssa.gov. ([View a complete list of our data collection projects.](#))

Compassionate Allowances—Participation and Collaboration in Developing Disability Policy

Since 2007, Social Security has collaborated with the public, the National Institutes of Health, Alzheimer’s Association, National Organization for Rare Disorders, and the agency’s own expert medical staff, to determine which medical conditions to include in the Compassionate Allowance process. Compassionate Allowances are a way of quickly identifying diseases and other medical conditions that are so serious that they obviously meet our disability standards, based on minimal objective medical information. This expedited process has already helped about 100,000 people with severe disabilities get benefit decisions within days instead of months or years.

We have held seven Compassionate Allowances public outreach hearings. The hearings focused on rare diseases, cancers, traumatic brain injury (TBI) and stroke, early-onset Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias, schizophrenia, cardiovascular disease and multiple organ transplants and autoimmune diseases. In 2008, we developed the initial list of 50 Compassionate Allowance conditions based on information we received at public outreach hearings, public comments on an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, input from the Social Security and Disability Determination Service (DDS) communities, and the advice of medical and scientific experts. We continue to increase the number of conditions identified as Compassionate Allowances. On April 11, 2012, Commissioner Astrue announced 52 new Compassionate Allowances conditions, taking the list of conditions from 113 to 165. The conditions became effective on August 11, 2012. One of our lead executives received the [2011 Service to America Medal](#) for leading development of the Compassionate Allowances initiative.



For more information on our Compassionate Allowances process, visit:
<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/compassionateallowances>.

We recently announced the Disability Determination Process Small Grant program that will make small stipends available to graduate students for innovative research relevant to our disability program, including the Compassionate Allowances initiative. We awarded an approximately \$1.5 million grant over a five-year period to Policy Research Incorporated to manage the student stipend process and to fund the stipends. In early 2012, SSA awarded the first grants to eight graduate students for research on a variety of disability topics, including improvements to the Compassionate Allowances program. For more information on the small grant program, please visit <http://www.ssa.gov/disabilityresearch/research.htm#DDP>.

Objective 2: Provide new and easier methods for public engagement throughout the agency decision-making processes

We tested a variety of Web 2.0 technologies with different segments of our user community. Based on this testing, we are establishing a robust, integrated enterprise collaboration platform as a “software-as-a-service” (SaaS) cloud solution. This solution will provide a consistent look and feel across the technologies and deliver a superior experience for collaboration and participation.

We are using social media tools to engage audiences in discussions about our strategic planning, programs, and services. When we developed our new Agency Strategic Plan, we used an idea-sharing tool to capture public input and feedback during development.

We are interested in gathering and incorporating public input on our plans to revise outdated medical listings. We plan to test an idea-generating tool to gather ideas from the public before the Advance Notice of Proposed Rule Making (ANPRM) stage of the policy development process. This tool allows the public to submit ideas, review ideas submitted by others, and rank their importance through voting. We will gauge the level of public participation as well as the type of information users submit. We will also assess the value of adding this step in front of the ANPRM process and the impact of this added step on our workload.

Goal III: Increase Collaboration

In our first two years of implementing open government, we made progress in reaching out to collaborate with external organizations in support of public service and greater openness across government. We want to expand on this progress through additional collaborative efforts.

Objective 1: Improve collaboration with Federal and non-Federal government agencies, the public, and non-profit and private entities

We will continue to build innovative partnerships and use technology to improve collaboration within and outside the agency.

Here are just a few examples of our collaboration efforts:

- Based on an employee suggestion, we participated in a collaboration project with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to determine whether we could use some of the school's medical research to streamline disability case decisions. This collaboration provided our first efforts at applying "natural language processing" to disability claims adjudication. While the project was very limited in scope, it provided some promising early findings and should be useful as we integrate Health Information Technology (health IT) into our disability process.
- To improve access to and understanding of our programs, we continue to conduct programmatic seminars with Indian tribes, provide benefits publications to tribal benefit specialists, and develop training guides for distribution to third parties who work with these communities. We also installed over 20 video service delivery terminals on reservations throughout Arizona, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, South Dakota, and Texas. These remote service locations provide a convenient way to file for benefits and access other critical agency services.
- We worked with Medicare advocates to develop and refine the Extra Help application for the Medicare Prescription Drug program. In particular, the advocates provided insight for refining specific questions on the application to make it easier to understand. We also interviewed prospective Medicare and Social Security beneficiaries to determine how to change the language in the application. We conducted 30 interviews in English and nine in Spanish to pinpoint the language issues; we will use this input to change the wording of one of the questions on the application form. The online application is among the highest rated in the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), scoring 90 (or third among government online transactions) in the second quarter of 2012⁶

Objective 2: Collaborate with others to provide new and easier methods for public and employee engagement during agency decision-making processes

In addition to expanding our engagement with the public, we also are committed to increasing employee participation and we will build a modern infrastructure necessary to support such efforts. We will collaborate with appropriate offices to begin using and offering these tools internally, and as we gain experience, we will expand them for public use as appropriate.

In an effort to foster collaboration, avoid duplication, and retain organizational knowledge, we are initiating a partnership with the National Technical Information Service (NTIS) to provide an integrated cloud-based collaboration platform for select subject matter experts as part of our Shared Service strategy. We expect to have the collaboration platform operational by December 2012.

Our use of a tool called IdeaCAT is one example of how we are collaborating to improve openness to new ideas, employee satisfaction, ownership, and overall customer service. The IdeaCAT team was one of the first recipients of SSA's Open Government Honor Award.



We launched IdeaCAT in September 2010 based on lessons learned from the collaborative development of the Electronic Claims Analysis Tool (eCAT), a tool to document the analysis of a disability case. IdeaCAT is a web-based, crowd-sourcing tool that allows users to submit ideas for enhancements to the eCAT tool. IdeaCAT allows users to vote and comment on the ideas that others submit. This tool helps prioritize actions to improve eCAT.

The entire IdeaCAT process is transparent because the IdeaCAT team provides feedback and status on comments via its web page and regular newsletters. In addition, it posts all comments without moderation, permitting the user community to “police” the discussion if necessary.

The user community has actively participated in the process, with over 700 employees registered to use the tool. Since implementing IdeaCAT, more than 120 users have submitted 414 new ideas. Users have cast over 5,000 votes for these ideas. The IdeaCAT team has incorporated 51 ideas into eCAT.

Through further collaboration, the team is developing a robust, supportable, web-based tool—known as the electronic Bench Book (eBB) - for hearing offices to use to help standardize and document the hearing decision process and outcome. When it is released, eBB will include a similar tool to collect ideas for system enhancements.

The IdeaCAT team continues to look for new opportunities to introduce other tools and to support open government principles throughout the agency.

Open Government Honor Award

In June 2012, two teams received SSA's inaugural Open Government Honor Award — one for its achievements in participation and collaboration, and the other in transparency.

The IdeaCAT team received the Open Government Honor Award based on its actions to enhance the quality of the electronic Case Assessment Tool (eCAT). In an environment of strained budgets and reduced staffing, the team worked creatively to find a collaborative solution to improve the eCAT, by drawing on the knowledge and expertise of the many users across the agency and in the State disability determination services. The success of the team's work is evident in the level of participation and the number of suggested improvements we have been able to incorporate into eCAT. The IdeaCAT team used the same approach to develop another collaboration tool that will be available later in 2012 to support hearings offices. The team continues to explore other opportunities to engage both employees and external partners.

The second award-winning team, the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review's (ODAR) Data.gov group, led the way in publishing a large number of high-value datasets. These datasets, which provide statistics and other information about our disability appeals process, received more views and downloads than any of our other open government data releases. The datasets reflect the true value of public data, fostering use that leads to greater agency accountability and responsiveness and increased public knowledge of the agency and its operations. Going forward, the ODAR Data.gov team plans to expand its public data offerings to include appeals and court data.

Open Government Honor Award Recipients



IdeaCAT Team, from left to right: Debi Gardiner, Eric Estes, Gale Nicholson, Chuck Wansor, Brandy Mershon, and Brittny Thompson.



ODAR Data.gov team, from left to right: Shenghui Yang, Charles Gramens, Darrell Rapier, Jaunice Kennedy, and Diana Shelton. Not pictured: Debra Castel and Aaron Hugeback.

Objective 2: Incorporate open government principles into the way we organize and do our work

The Commissioner and top executives provide overall guidance through senior operations meetings. To understand the executive leadership functions of Social Security, see the agency organization in [Appendix H, Chart 1](#).

Highlights of actions related to organizational support for open government include:

- The Office of Open Government in the Office of Communications coordinates all open government initiatives for the agency. See [Appendix H, Chart 2](#) for the organization chart of the Office of Communications.
- The Commissioner created an Open Government Executive Steering Committee to direct the agency's open government activities. This group will continue to look for ways to instill open government principles into agency practices, processes, and policies.
- The Commissioner appointed an executive to be accountable for the quality and objectivity of Federal spending information. See [Appendix H, Chart 3](#).
- The Executive Internal Control Committee serves as the agency Senior Management Council that oversees internal controls, including those controls covering data quality.

We also support open government through internal processes and systems. Some examples include:

- Our user-centered design (UCD) process is a key component of our System Development Lifecycle. We use UCD processes to ensure a high level of usability for new services we make available online to the public or to our employees. We elicit business and user needs and then follow an iterative cycle of design and usability testing to achieve measurable goals.
- We are leveraging our data, modern analytical tools, and data warehousing technologies to help us make decisions. These tools have improved the quality of, consistency of, and access to the information needed by executives, managers, and analysts.

Objective 3: Align open government activities with our mission and strategic goals

We released our [Agency Strategic Plan \(ASP\) for 2013-2016](#) in February 2012. In developing our new plan, we incorporated open government principles in how we perform many of the major activities. Furthermore, [the Information Resources Management Strategic Plan \(IRM Plan\)](#), released in May 2012, includes the technology framework for supporting our open government efforts.

Highlights of actions to foster alignment between agency mission, strategic goals, and major agency efforts and the open government initiative include:

- [Appendix B](#), which shows examples of the open government initiatives' support of the mission, objectives, and current agency goals

- Alignment of the Information Resources Management Plan (IRM Plan) with open government principles and initiatives, including technical support for open government by:
 - Enhancing SSA's audit trail and integrity review processes to ensure they evolve to meet our changing business processes and data storage needs;
 - Improving our oversight of State and Federal organizations and partners requesting or currently receiving our information; and
 - Continuing to support mobile computing and prepare for further consumerization of technology and security
- Social Security's open government flagship and major initiatives - Enhanced Services for People Receiving Benefits (flagship), and three major projects: Health Information Technology, Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record(VLER)/Wounded Warrior Collaboration, and eAuthorization (for disclosure of information in connection with filing an application for disability). These projects support the mission, objectives and goals of the agency, and showcase the value of open government principles.

Objective 4: Provide public access to our open government performance measures and results

We will provide information about open government measures and results. For example:

- We will post our open government goals and our performance against the goals on our website.
- We will review our Agency Performance Plan (APP) to incorporate open government principles and activities.
- We will continue to evaluate results of open government initiatives to understand possible relationship to the achievement of results.
- We will monitor and continue to develop ways to measure the benefits from open government activities.
- We will continue to monitor FOIA requests to identify additional information holdings of high value to the public.
- We will track our efforts in engaging the public and employees by the volume of calls for information and data. Goodwill created by open government activities may result in higher use of electronic services by the public and higher levels of satisfaction for those who transact business with us online.

Objective 5: Support the transfer of open government ideas, tools, and other materials

We are a Federal leader in the use of health IT. Our work with the private sector may yield transferable ideas and tools. We will share our results and products from health IT and from other innovative endeavors as appropriate. Other examples of potential transferable ideas and tools stemming from our innovation efforts include:

- We continue to look for opportunities to use federally developed open-source solutions in our business applications. We continue to deploy open-source solutions such as rules engines, enterprise service bus, and business process modeling into our programmatic applications.
- We introduced governance processes and review boards to ensure that we maximize our use of open-source software where appropriate. Those processes also drive our project teams to use our own adaptation of an internal open-source community—a framework of reusable JAVA classes that provide common application functionality. We will continue our efforts to adopt this framework, which allows for the creation of standardized applications and avoids duplication of development effort.
- We continue to explore managed content solutions (Web Content Management Systems) that will help us promote a shared environment for our content and the code behind it. The separation of these basic elements speeds required maintenance and comports with current best practices.
- We are partnering with the National Technical Information Service (NTIS), an agency of the Department of Commerce, to provide us with a cloud-based collaboration environment as part of our Shared Services strategy. This collaboration environment will allow us to consolidate a variety of solutions that the agency has developed and deployed, and which allow for a single integrated environment for select subject matter experts to collaborate and share knowledge and ideas.
- We look forward to sharing the products of our open-source platform efforts across the growing Federal open-source development community, as well as partnering with other agencies in future endeavors.
- We will continue to actively participate in cross-government workgroups and share best practices.
- We also plan to:
 - Share materials we develop for open government implementation; and
 - Collaborate extensively with public and private partners.

SECTION III: OPEN GOVERNMENT FLAGSHIP AND MAJOR INITIATIVES



Each of the initiatives in this section supports at least one of the open government principles, furthering our efforts in improving transparency, participation, or collaboration.

Flagship

Enhanced Services for People Receiving Benefits

To make our services even more accessible, we will consolidate our existing online services into a single “gateway,” which will use a robust and easy-to-use authentication process to safeguard personal identity information. We also plan to provide a common online user experience that is flexible enough to meet the needs of our broad customer base. Our goal is to enable expanded use of our online services and to make those services easy to use. Because we complete over 100 million actions to keep beneficiaries’ records current each year, we want to offer those people who can help themselves a convenient way to do so.

We provided online access to some of our services for many years, and the demand and usage continue to grow. In FY 2011, people used our electronic services to check benefit information over 2.5 million

times, submit change of address information more than 400,000 times, and submit changes to direct deposit information more than 190,000 times. As the Internet increasingly becomes the preferred method of conducting business, we are committed to further enhancing our online services for the public.

Enhancing services for people receiving benefits is a key feature of [Social Security's Customer Service Plan \(CSP\)](#). As we build the gateway to services, we will use participatory tools and approaches to evaluate its impact and benefit. We will collaborate with industry experts and conduct usability testing with the public. Members of the public, as well as our employees, will provide important insight through our online dialogue and submission of comments and suggestions.

We are working on a new, more secure protocol to authenticate people who are interested in conducting their business online. It is a gateway to allow members of the public online access to their personal information; the first service using the new authentication process is the online Social Security Statement.

The online statement promotes transparency by providing information the public finds useful for financial and retirement planning. Specifically, the online Statement provides:

- Estimates of the retirement and disability benefits a person may receive;
- Estimates of benefits a family may receive when a person receives Social Security or dies;
- A list of lifetime earnings according to Social Security's records;
- The estimated Social Security and Medicare taxes paid;
- Information about qualifying and signing up for Medicare;
- Things to consider for those age 55 and older who are thinking of retiring;
- General information about Social Security; and
- A printable version of the Social Security Statement.

We are working on a variety of other secure, personalized online services for the public, such as checking the status of a benefit application, receiving notices, and requesting certain routine actions, such as a change of address.

We will use surveys and web analytics to evaluate the impact of this initiative and to identify future enhancements. This initiative is a key part of our growing suite of online services, and we will improve it as necessary to meet the changing needs of the public.

We also hope to implement the following activities over the next two years:

- By the end of 2012: rollout our new, more secure user ID protocol and online Social Security Statement.
- By the end of FY 2013: add new services behind the new user ID protocol. We are first focusing on existing beneficiary services, such as change-of-address, direct deposit, benefit verification, and check-your-benefit-status.

Following are other actions we plan to carry out in support of our flagship initiative to enhance services for people receiving benefits:

Increase feedback from beneficiaries and customers

- Collect feedback to measure customer satisfaction and identify opportunities for improvement. (Ongoing)
- Explore new survey tools and approaches to provide more timely and detailed customer feedback. (FY 2013 and ongoing)

Establish, communicate, and use customer service metrics and standards

- Establish and use customer service standards, including customer success rates, to manage the testing and deployment of our enhanced online services. (FY 2013 and ongoing)
- Continue to use customer service metrics for all of our service channels. For specific metrics, see our [APP](#). (Ongoing)

Streamline Agency processes to reduce costs and accelerate delivery

- Begin testing streamlined and secure access to our online services. In some cases, eliminate delays associated with postal mail. (FY 2013 and ongoing)

Major Initiatives

Health Information Technology (IT)

We believe that health IT will reduce the time it takes to obtain the medical records needed to support disability determinations, and will help us manage that information more efficiently.

We developed this initiative based on input from and collaboration between medical associations, health privacy advocates, medical providers and State Agencies. We have collaborated with a limited number of partners to demonstrate the capability to obtain and process medical records more expeditiously using health IT.

Health IT fully automates the process for obtaining medical evidence. The amount of time it takes us to complete a disability claim should decrease as the number of treating sources using health IT increases. By the end of FY 2012, we plan to expand the exchange of medical records through health IT to various medical networks and providers in 13 States. In FY 2013, we plan to continue our outreach effort to onboard additional medical providers and connect with Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DoD) on the Nationwide Health Information Network (NwHIN). We will also continue to collaborate with government-wide health IT policy and standards setting advisory panels, workgroups and task forces.

In late June 2012, we partnered with Kaiser Permanente, one of the nation's largest healthcare providers, to electronically transmit medical records to us, with the appropriate consent. We request about 70,000 patient files from Kaiser Permanente each year, so this seamless new system will save time and money for both partners and allow us to make faster and more accurate decisions.





Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER)/Wounded Warrior Collaboration

We are collaborating with the VA and DoD to improve the transfer of medical information and speed the disability decision process for Wounded Warriors, service members, and veterans. We are using a two-pronged approach to improve health information sharing:

Near-Term Approach: DoD/Social Security Interim Health Data Sharing Initiative:

- Under this interim approach, we use existing electronic data share technologies to exchange medical information. We began a pilot of this initiative in August 2011, allowing five Disability Determination Services (DDS) sites to request electronic medical records from all DoD Medical Treatment Facilities with a single request to a centralized DoD site. Based on the results of the pilot, we are planning a nationwide expansion that will be completed by the end of calendar year (CY) 2012.

Long-Term Approach: VLER Initiative and the Nationwide Health Information Network (NwHIN):

- The second approach to improve medical information sharing involves creating a health IT exchange pilot that uses the NwHIN to provide medical records from DoD and VA to SSA. We plan to begin a pilot in FY 2013. To meet this milestone, DoD and VA will implement solutions to process patient authorizations for the release of protected health information that comply with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule.

eAuthorization

We must review medical evidence to make disability decisions. Our current process for collecting medical evidence uses a signed paper authorization from the applicant. An electronic authorization process supports faster disability decisions, which improves service to the public. With eAuthorization, claimants will be able to complete the online disability application process

in a streamlined online session rather than printing, signing, and mailing paper forms to our offices. In early 2010, we began outreach to medical associations, legal groups, health privacy advocates, and medical providers to obtain input on how to improve our authorization process. After receiving positive feedback, we developed an electronic alternative to the current paper process.

As of April 21, 2012, claimants filing online for disability benefits have the option to electronically sign and submit form SSA-827 (Authorization to Disclose Information to the Social Security Administration). In August 2012, we began allowing an electronic authorization signature process for claimants who complete the SSA-827 as part of the online Disability Appeal. We are exploring options for obtaining electronic signatures on the SSA-827s for individuals that file disability claims either in person or over the telephone. In 2013, we will explore alternatives to develop an electronic authorization process for third party filers.

We based this initiative on input from and collaboration between medical associations, health privacy advocates, medical providers, and Federal and State Agencies.

See [Appendix I](#) for Open Government Plan 2.0 milestones and completions dates through 2014.

CONCLUSION

As we move ahead with our plan to become an even more open agency, we look forward to:

- *Increasing Transparency*, by sharing information that helps the public understand our programs and hold us accountable for our performance;
- *Fostering Participation*, by offering a variety of channels for multiple audiences to engage in dialogues with us and provide ideas on how we can improve our programs and services; and
- *Furthering Collaboration*, by working with other agencies and organizations to exchange ideas for improving our service to the public.

Finally, [Appendix J](#) contains a list of links to Social Security and other websites related to open government. We encourage you to [track our progress on our plan](#).

Appendix A: Public and Agency Involvement in Open Government Plan

We solicited feedback from both the public and employees as we refreshed our Open Government Plan. Deputy Commissioner Colvin's message to all employees (below) invited input from both agency and State DDS employees. Similarly, we invited the public to submit their ideas for our plan using the online tool on our [open government portal](#), and issued an invitation to over 14,000 advocates and interested organizations.

We received ideas from various sources, including the online comment tool on our open government portal. Examples of ideas we have incorporated into our plan include:

- Enhanced Services for People Receiving Benefits
- Health Information Technology (Health IT)
- Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER)/Wounded Warrior Collaboration
- eAuthorization

We have reviewed the ideas received from our employees and the public and have referred them to the appropriate offices for consideration. Examples of some of the feedback we are exploring include:

- Engagement to solicit ideas on improving some of Social Security's public facing web pages
- Using a Website Content Management System (WCMS) that will allow for better management of our web pages
- Suggestions for collaboration with other agencies/organizations to reduce fraud and overpayments
- Additional outreach methods and audiences
- Enhancements to services available online
- Improvements to internal processes

As we refine and implement our plan, we will post the top ideas from our employees and the public on our open government portal, with a brief explanation of how we addressed or plan to address them.

A Message To All SSA And DDS Employees

Subject: Refreshing SSA's Open Government Plan

It's time to refresh our Open Government Plan, and we are seeking input from advocates, the general public, and you - the agency's workforce. Two years ago, in response to the President's call for greater openness across government, we published Social Security's first Open Government Plan. In it, we outlined our steps to increase transparency, expand opportunities for public participation, and enhance efforts to collaborate with other organizations to improve service to the public. You have a unique perspective based on the experience and knowledge you have gained administering Social Security's programs and services. We want to benefit from your insight. We will use comments we receive to develop a refreshed plan that can be achieved within our available resources. To contribute your thoughts and ideas, visit our [Open Government website](#).

Thank you,

Carolyn W. Colvin

*Deputy Commissioner
of Social Security*

Dear Colleague,

It is time to refresh our Open Government Plan, and we are inviting you to help us. Two years ago, in response to the President's call for greater openness across government, we published Social Security's first Open Government Plan. In it, we outlined our steps to increase transparency, expand opportunities for public participation, and enhance efforts to collaborate with other organizations to improve service to the public. To contribute your thoughts and ideas for our refreshed plan, which we expect to publish in April, visit our [Open Government website](#). We want to benefit from your insight.

Thank you,

Kojuan Almond

*Associate Commissioner
for External Affairs*

Appendix B: Examples of Alignment of Open Government Plan with our FY 2013-2016

Agency Strategic Plan Goals

Examples of Alignment between Open Government Initiatives and Agency Strategic Plan				
	<i>ASP Goal 1:</i> Deliver Quality Disability Decisions + Services	<i>ASP Goal 2:</i> Provide quality service to the public	<i>ASP Goal 3:</i> Preserve the public trust in our programs	<i>ASP Goal 4:</i> Strengthen our workforce and infrastructure
OG Goal I: Improve transparency	Hearings and disability datasets posted on Data.gov; additional appellate and disability program datasets planned	Retirement and SSI program datasets posted on Data.gov; additional program datasets planned	Improper payments datasets posted on Dat.gov; additional accuracy and public satisfaction, datasets planned, Disclosure Review Boards	OG portal, Enhance our FOIA reading room; improve electronic FOIA system, statistical modernization effort
OG Goal II: Expand participation	Test idea-generating tool to gather ideas from the public before the Advance Notice of Proposed Rule Making (ANPRM) stage of the disability policy development process	Collaboration tool provided public with opportunity to provide input for goals and strategies for the 2013-1016 ASP	Focus groups, usability testing, electronic town hall meetings, and webinars used to foster participation; exploring use of IdeaScale for policy development	OG portal being expanded and updated continuously, social media policies and practices, Web 2.0 technologies installed and tested
OG Goal III: Increase collaboration	Health Information Technology, electronic Bench Book (eBB)	Collaboration with Indian tribes to improve access to and understanding of our programs	Collaboration with advocates on extra help for Medicare Prescription Drug costs	Agency enterprise collaboration platform, IdeaCAT and IdeaBench
OG goal IV: Internalize Open Government Principles	Set up various ways to receive and consider employee and public comments, foster use of hearings and disability data internally	Set up various ways to receive and consider employee and public comments; foster use of programmatic data internally	Set up various ways to receive and consider employee and public comments, foster use of stewardship data internally	Open Government Steering Committee, open government portal, Office of Open Government organization, open government award

Implement Major Open Government Initiatives:

	<i>ASP Goal 1:</i> Deliver Quality Disability Decisions + Services	<i>ASP Goal 2:</i> Provide quality service to the public	<i>ASP Goal 3:</i> Preserve the public trust in our programs	<i>ASP Goal 4:</i> Strengthen our workforce and infrastructure
Enhance Services for People Receiving Benefits (flagship)		Additional online services enabled	Secure user ID/ password for online services	Supports expansion of online services
Health IT	Expand exchange of records through health IT—quicker processing of disability claims			Expansion of health IT infrastructure
Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) Wounded Warrior Collaboration	Speed up processing of disability claims for wounded warriors			Strengthens partnerships with other agencies
eAuthorization	Faster disability decisions	Improves service to the public	Working closely with health privacy advocates	

Appendix C: Status of Flagship Initiatives in 2010 Open Government Plan

View an [item-by-item Plan Implementation Progress Chart](#) reporting on commitments in our original Open Government Plan.

We completed the three flagship initiatives in our original Open Government Plan on schedule. Below is a brief summary of each flagship initiative, including evaluation results:

Initiative 1: Spanish Retirement Estimator (S-RE)

During our public engagement to develop the 2010 Open Government Plan, we received a suggestion to provide greater access to retirement information. One of the hallmarks of our online retirement planning tools is our online Retirement Estimator, which provides users with instant, personalized estimates of their future Social Security retirement benefits. This popular application has been used millions of times since its launch in 2008 and consistently ranks as one of the top four online Government applications in public satisfaction surveys.

As part of our commitment to provide services that meet the needs of our nation's diverse population, we developed and implemented this online service in Spanish. We engaged both the public and our employees in developing the S-RE, held public focus groups at various locations around the country, and met with national Hispanic community groups to solicit feedback and suggestions. Internally, employees across the agency assisted in technical development, policy decisions, and translation efforts.

Results: We released the S-RE on December 12, 2010. This application has provided almost 29,000 retirement estimates with a satisfaction score of 91 on the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) Survey.

Initiative 2: Online Service Enhancement

We offer our services through a variety of channels. Many of our services are available online at www.socialsecurity.gov or through our automated telephone systems. People can access other services through our toll-free phone number (800-772-1213). Very few services still require a visit to a Social Security office. People who need to visit an office have the option of scheduling an appointment at a time that is convenient for them.

To help the public understand our available service options, we built a new online tool that directs the public to the most appropriate service delivery method for their needs. Through guided search tools, visitors to our website can more readily arrive at the correct service channel, which encourages more people to use our online services. Additionally, individuals who are unable to start a Social Security benefit application online are able to schedule an appointment online with the local field office. As we built this service enhancement, we collaborated with industry experts and conducted usability testing with the public. Members of the public, as well as our employees, provided important insight, participating in our online dialogue and submitting other comments and suggestions.

We used surveys and web analytics to evaluate the impact of this initiative and ensure that users could easily find the services they seek.

Results: We implemented the service enhancement and iAppointment in November 2010. Results show that the average satisfaction score from the ACSI Survey for iAppointment is 78 (very good customer satisfaction).

Initiative 3: Online Life-Expectancy Calculator

We developed and launched a simple online life-expectancy calculator to assist the public with retirement planning. A key factor in considering retirement options is life expectancy, a factor many people substantially underestimate. The tool draws on actuarial assumptions from the annual Social Security Trustees' report and provides the average number of additional years a person can expect to live when reaching a certain age. We designed it for use with our online Retirement Estimator, which provides users with instant, personalized estimates of their future retirement benefits.

Results: We completed this initiative in July 2010. Results show that the total number of visits to the life expectancy calculator was approximately 430,000 for the period through February 2012. There is no ACSI Survey for this tool to gauge customer satisfaction.

Appendix D: Federal Transparency Initiatives

1. Data.gov

We support the President's agenda for the democratization of data. We added datasets to Data.gov in the past several years in accordance with OMB Memorandum M-10-06.

We are active members of the Data.gov community and work with many other agencies to advance transparency throughout the Federal sector. This work includes, but is not limited to the Security and Privacy Working Group and the Metadata Working Group. These joint efforts help expose new insights in the need for data and provide opportunities for data challenges on the use of data. We are mindful of all such opportunities. We are also aware of the need to provide the data and information in a context that is understandable and displayed through visualization tools that make sense to the public.

Ideas and Comments from the Public

We receive ideas and comments from employees and the public about additional datasets and information that they wish to see posted via web portals, idea tools, email, face-to-face meetings, etc. We will continue to use this input, along with executive guidance, in our strategic planning process to ensure that the principle of transparency becomes part of our ongoing operating procedures. It will also continue to inform our ongoing release of datasets and information not previously available to the public.

2. eRulemaking

Social Security is a partner agency in the eRulemaking initiative known as the Federal Docket Management System (FDMS), (publicly accessible at www.regulations.gov). We began working with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the partner agencies in the development of FDMS in June 2004. We and other partner agencies worked with EPA and the contractor to design a user-friendly system where the public can submit comments on pending regulations. We started using FDMS on September 25, 2006.

Staff members from our Office of Regulations actively serve on several committees in the continued development and modifications to FDMS and the public-facing website, Regulations.gov.

3. IT Dashboard

In response to evolving OMB reporting requirements and enhancements to the IT Dashboard, we simplified its processes and procedures for reporting program performance data and ensuring the quality and timeliness of the data. We increased our focus on the initial quality of reports. As a result, while we continue to review at both the program team and program management levels, there are fewer errors to delay processing. In addition, we increased the frequency of our regular updates to Dashboard data in the area of project performance against established performance measures. This change enhanced the accuracy of performance information, project execution data, risks, and all facets of our major IT investment submissions and ensured that Dashboard reporting is as close to real time as possible.

For more information, visit www.whitehouse.gov/open/innovations/it-dashboard.

4. Recovery.gov

Our responsibilities under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) included:

- Issuing a one-time payment of \$250 to nearly 55 million Social Security beneficiaries and Supplemental Security Income recipients;
- Dedicating additional resources to the processing of disability and retirement workloads, including establishing health IT data exchanges, and
- Replacing our National Computer Center.

We developed an overall agency-level plan and three program-specific plans. We submitted our ARRA Plans to the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board. The Board includes the information in these submissions and reports on the Recovery.gov website. In addition, we submit a Major Communications Report to the Board and OMB on an ad hoc basis, as we release major communications to the public.

We submit a weekly Financial and Activity Report to the Board and OMB. This report shows the total ARRA obligations and total gross outlays from ARRA passage through the end of the report week, as well as major completed activities and major planned activities for the week of the report. These reports are posted on the Recovery.gov website.

To further transparency, we also post ARRA-related information on our ARRA website and provide links to Recovery.gov, USAspending.gov, and other sites that may be of interest to the public. For more information, visit www.Recovery.gov.

5. USAspending.gov

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA) requires information on Federal awards be made available to the public via a single, searchable website. Accordingly, OMB established the USAspending.gov website.

OMB issued guidelines for reporting spending data to the USAspending website in Memorandum M-09-19, Guidance on Data Submission under FFATA. We are in full compliance with this guidance, and report our contract data and Federal financial assistance payments data.

Contract Data

OMB M-09-19 requires us to provide contract data to the Federal Procurement Data System Next Generation (FPDS-NG), which posts the data to USAspending.gov. It also requires us to provide a data file containing program source data (i.e., Treasury Account) directly to USAspending.gov via the USAspending Data Submission and Validation Tool (DVST) until USAspending is capable of accepting program source data from FPDS-NG.

Federal Financial Assistance

OMB M-09-19 requires us to submit grant and assistance payments data using the Federal Assistance Award Data System (FAADS) PLUS format. Federal financial assistance includes grants and assistance payments made under Federal domestic assistance programs listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance.

Financial Assistance Awards - Grants

Our grants management system, GrantSolutions, has FAADS PLUS data compilation and formatting capabilities, and we submit our grants data to USAspending.gov via DSVT.

Financial Assistance Payments - Mandatory and Entitlement Programs

OMB M-09-19 requires we report data about our benefit payments to USAspending.gov. We report these data to USAspending.gov in the FAADS PLUS format via DSVT.

Open Procurement and Vendor Outreach

In accordance with the guidance contained in Office of Federal Procurement Policy's (OFPP) memorandum entitled "Myth-Busting: Addressing Misconceptions to Improve Communication with Industry during the Acquisition Process" (dated February 2, 2011), we developed and published a formal **Vendor Communication Plan**. This plan discusses the steps we will undertake to enhance outreach to our industry partners and reduce unnecessary barriers to competition in the procurement process.

Additionally, to further facilitate exchanges with industry and promote internal market research efforts, we created a centralized repository that allows interested vendors to submit capabilities statements and other marketing information to the agency. This tool is a searchable database that will help agency personnel to identify qualified sources of supply and services and to promote exchanges of important procurement information with industry. [View guidance on the use of the SSA Vendor Repository](#).

Declassification Program

The Open Government Directive requires agencies to publish links to information about their declassification programs. We do not have original classification authority and cannot classify any document or system of record. Therefore, we do not have a declassification program.

Appendix E: Open Government Data/Information Planned Releases in 2012-2014

- Statistical and Survey Data
 - National Survey of SSI Children and Families
 - 2006 Earnings file
 - Data modernization files-- SSI Blind and Disabled; all SSI recipients (age, sex, Living Arrangement, State Supplement, type of income)
 - 2009 Benefits and Earnings File
- Hearings and Appeals Data
 - Appeals Council receipts, clearances, and pending
 - Court remands/Appellate remands
 - Volume/percentage of electronic and paper files at the Hearing level
 - Court Case receipts, clearances and pendings
- Other Data
 - Medicare Extra Help Data
 - Public Satisfaction Survey data
 - 800# Caller Survey
 - Field Office Caller Survey
 - Internet Report Card
 - Field Office Visitor Survey
 - Card Center Visitor Survey
 - Hearing Office Visitor Survey
 - DDS Net Accuracy Data, by State
 - Total DDS funding by State by fiscal year
 - National-level Disability Processing Time
 - Help America Vote Act data

Appendix F: Open Government Communications Actions

We will continuously engage external and internal audiences about our efforts and results on transparency, participation, and collaboration. Specifically, we will:

- Educate and inform external and internal audiences about our open government activities;
- Collect ideas and feedback from external and internal sources about ways to improve our openness as well as our programs and services; and
- Report on ideas we receive and any progress or action we take on them.

We will foster the public's use of the information we release, in order to increase public knowledge and promote public scrutiny of agency services. Our activities will include face-to-face meetings, conference appearances, social media, and other electronic participation and collaboration tools.

We will continue to use our Internet site (www.socialsecurity.gov) as a platform for sharing information and providing opportunities for participation and collaboration with the public. Internally, we will continue to use our internal website as a platform for keeping our employees informed and engaging them in open government ideas and initiatives.

Potential Tools & Tactics

External

- Idea tools
- Social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, podcasts, etc.)
- Electronic newsletters
- Email campaign
- Webinars/webcasts
- Video and slide presentations
- National conferences and other speaking engagements
- Advocate and stakeholder meetings
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Mobile applications

Internal

- Electronic technology repository for collaboration
- Commissioner’s messages (email, video, audio)
- Conference phone calls and video teleconferences
- Training
- Presentations and workshops for upper management
- Presentations for the regional offices and public affairs specialists
- Town hall meetings with employees
- Employee newsletter and magazine articles
- Focus groups
- Surveys

Appendix G: FOIA Program

We employ a “centralized” approach for handling all FOIA requests and appeals submitted to the agency. Our centralized approach fosters uniformity in training, which enhances our ability to apply consistently a presumption of openness in our FOIA decisions and administrative appeal processes. The Office of Privacy and Disclosure (OPD) directs all FOIA activities within the agency, including developing FOIA policies and procedures, establishing national guidelines for handling FOIA requests, publishing the Annual Report on FOIA activities, and reviewing FOIA and Privacy Act requests and appeals to determine the proper disclosure of records. Agency offices support OPD’s efforts by providing documents and other information that responds to the incoming FOIA requests. One agency component in the Office of Operations is responsible for responding to all FOIA requests seeking information regarding applications for Social Security cards.

To accomplish our FOIA mission, OPD employs four divisions, including a FOIA and Transparency Division. Each division supports the disclosure needs of specific Social Security Regional Offices. OPD’s Organization Chart and regional alignment is located at www.socialsecurity.gov/foia/OPD_OrgChart.htm. Regional staff may directly consult with the same core set of analysts on disclosure policy and procedure matters, instead of going through a clearinghouse process that randomly assigns inquiries to a “pool” of analysts. This arrangement also allows the OPD analyst to become familiar with privacy and disclosure issues that may be unique to a particular geographic region due to State or local laws, or other influencing factors.

How We Process Requests

We receive FOIA requests via the Internet, by fax, by email, and through the mail. [Visit our Internet submission page](#), or see our [Guide to FOIA page](#) to learn how to make a FOIA request by mail.

We capture all FOIA requests in our electronic Freedom of Information Act (eFOIA) system. We scan and image all paper requests (mail, email, and fax) into eFOIA; requests submitted through our Internet request form go directly into eFOIA. As soon as we enter a request into the system, or a person submits an online request, eFOIA generates an acknowledgement letter.

This letter confirms receipt of the request. It also provides a reference number specifically assigned to the case and supplies a voice mailbox telephone number that the requester can call to inquire on the status of his or her request. OPD maintains a policy of responding to all calls placed to this number within one working day.

We may charge fees to process certain FOIA requests. The eFOIA system provides members of the public with the option to mail in a FOIA request, or to submit their requests and pay the fee online, which accelerates our response and reduces our administrative costs. We strive to handle each request within 20 days from the date we receive it. We process requests under a “first in, first out” basis. However, sometimes it may take us longer depending on the complexity of the request, the amount of records sought, the documents’ location, and our workload. A request may require us to seek paper records that we collectively maintain in multiple geographic locations or in archived storage. Prior to releasing records in response to a FOIA request, OPD conducts a thorough internal review to ensure that we apply our privacy and disclosure rules consistently and accurately. The complexity and nature of each request determines the extent of our level of review, which can include input and review by other offices within Social Security.

Improvement Initiatives

We continue to improve our ability to respond to Privacy Act and FOIA requests in an accurate and timely manner. We developed a FOIA Process Evaluation Work Group that reviewed all aspects of our FOIA workflow, from the time we receive and log in a request, to the final review before we release documents. The workgroup’s recommendations to post procedures on a shared drive for staff, update equipment to improve the intake process, redesign the FOIA tracking worksheet, and pilot a peer review system, will provide better service to the public. You can see the results of our efforts in this area in our [Annual Report](#).

1. Training

OPD maintains an in-house FOIA/Privacy Act training program for analysts that focuses on various technical, legal, and “hands-on” issues involved in processing requests. Some of these sessions focus on processing issues that can cause unnecessary delays in responding. This training provides a formal platform to emphasize the importance of presumptive disclosure, to discuss recent disclosures, and to examine new possibilities for additional disclosures.

OPD maintains a strong commitment to encourage and provide staff the opportunity to attend FOIA training from external sources, such as that sponsored by, or in conjunction with, the Department of Justice, university programs, and not-for-profit organizations. OPD continues to provide Privacy Act and FOIA training at an agency level through our biennial Privacy and Disclosure Training Conference.

2. Technology

We continue to use technology to enhance our FOIA capabilities. In 2007, we implemented a new browser-based platform (eFOIA) designed specifically to automate much of the workflow for handling Privacy Act and FOIA requests. The system automatically provides people with a letter acknowledging our receipt of their request, while also providing a case tracking number and a telephone number they may call for status inquiries. The eFOIA system has greatly improved our ability to respond to FOIA requests in a timely manner. In FY 2010, we released six updates/changes to the system. We are working on several other technology-related initiatives to improve our web-based FOIA reading room and our electronic FOIA system.

You may find more information about our FOIA program, including staffing, organizational structure, request process, and planned improvements on our [FOIA and Open Government page](#).

Appendix H: Charts

Chart 1 - Social Security Administration organization chart

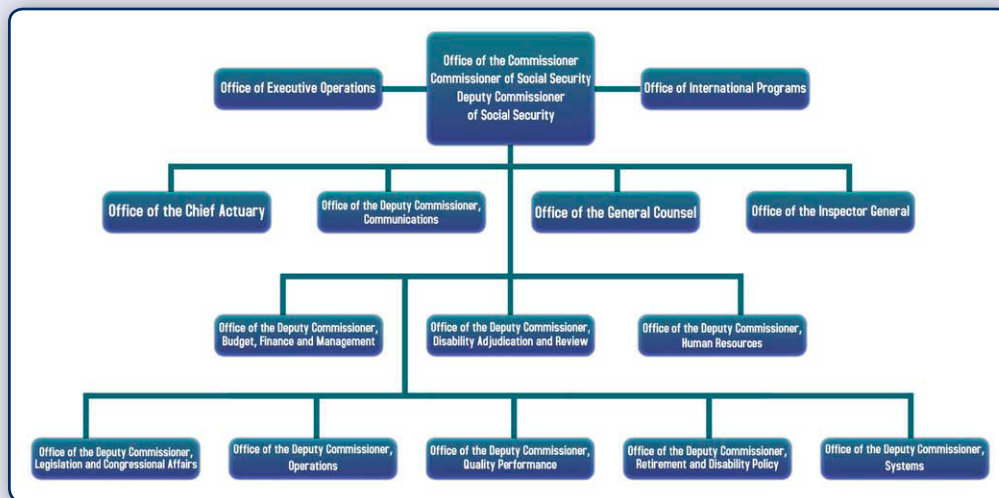


Chart 2 Office of Communications Organization Chart

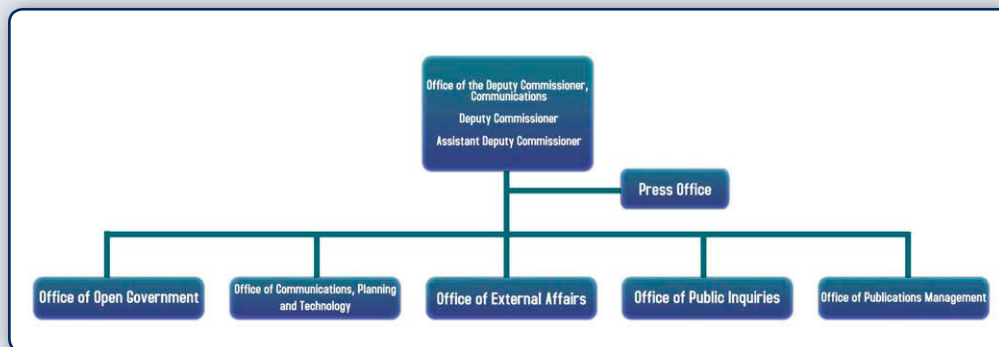


Chart 3 - Offices, executives, and functions relevant to open government

Executive Lead for Open Government

Alan Lane

Associate Commissioner for Open Government

Executive Accountable for Publicly Disseminated Federal Spending Information Integrity

Stephanie Hall

Deputy Commissioner for Quality Performance

Open Government Steering Committee Components

- Office of the Chief Actuary
- Office of the General Counsel
- Office of Budget, Finance and Management
- Office of Communications
- Office of Disability Adjudication and Review
- Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs
- Office of Operations
- Office of Systems
- Office of Quality Performance
- Office of Retirement and Disability Policy

Appendix I: Refreshed Plan Milestones and Completion Dates: 2012—2014

To view our progress on these milestones, please visit our [plan implementation progress chart](#).

Milestone	Projected Completion Date
Goals I—IV: Transparency, Participation, Collaboration, Internalizing Open Government	
Post new high-value datasets/information holdings to Data.gov in 2012, 2013, and 2014	December 2014
Test prototype for new public-facing FOIA website	4th quarter FY 2012
Further enhance our FOIA website and reading room	2nd Quarter FY 2013
Discuss potential electronic FOIA management solutions with other Federal agencies.	3rd Quarter FY 2013
Issue refreshed Open Government Plan and share it with public and employees	Preliminary plan--April 2012 Revised plan--Summer 2012
Launch crowd-sourcing tool, IdeaBench, to collect ideas for enhancements to the eBB tool developed for the hearings offices.	End of CY 2012
Hold public engagement to solicit ideas on improving the open government portal to ensure we are providing the information the public wants	By end of CY 2013
Test engagement with public (includes evaluation of type of responses, impact on resources, feasibility of continuing, etc.)	By end of CY 2013
Use crowd sourcing tool to engage the public and provide participation opportunities in disability program policy development	FY 2013
Hold additional engagements on other potential areas for regulations changes	FY 2014 and ongoing
Continue to host webinars on topics of value to public	Ongoing
Provide information on other means to provide feedback on various topics	Ongoing
Provide the public with the opportunity to comment on our proposed regulations	Ongoing
Use focus groups for public input and usability testing before launching online services	Ongoing

Milestone	Projected Completion Date
Implement Major Initiatives, Including One Flagship	
<p>Flagship: Enhanced Services for People Receiving Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Roll-out new, more secure user ID/password protocol ● Include additional services behind the new user ID/password protocol ● Explore new survey tools and approaches to more timely, detailed customer feedback ● Establish and use customer service standards to enhance online services ● Continue to use customer service metrics for all of our service channels ● Begin testing streamlined and secure access to our online services ● Collect customer feedback to measure customer satisfaction and identify opportunities for improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● End of CY 2012 ● End of FY 2013 ● FY 2013 and ongoing ● FY 2013 and ongoing ● Ongoing ● FY 2013 and ongoing ● Ongoing
<p>Health IT Initiative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expand exchange of medical records through health IT to various medical networks and providers in 13 states ● Continue outreach effort to onboard additional medical providers and connect with VA and DoD on the Nationwide Health Information Network (NwHIN) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● End of FY 2012 ● End of FY 2013
<p>Virtual Life Electronic Record Wounded Warrior Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Nationwide expansion of DoD/SSA Interim Health Data Sharing Initiative ● Pilot health IT exchange with other Federal agencies using NwHIN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● End of CY 2012 ● December 2012
<p>eAuthorization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Available for claimants filing online ● Available for claimants who file an online disability appeal ● Explore alternative for third party filers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● April 2012 ● August 2012 ● FY 2013

Appendix J: Useful Links

Links to Social Security web pages:

- [Agency home page](#)
- [Open government portal](#)
- [Open government plan progress](#)
- [Links to frequently requested information already posted](#)
- [Top open government ideas list](#)
- [FOIA program](#)
- [Records management program](#)
- [Information for Congress](#)
- [Information Resources Management Strategic Plan](#)
- [Agency Strategic Plan 2013-2016](#)

Links to other websites:

- [Data collection projects](#)
- [White House open government](#)
- [Federal public datasets and information holdings \(Data.gov\)](#)
- [General records schedule and National Archives and Records Administration policy](#)
- [Federal IT Dashboard](#)
- [Recovery Act spending reports](#)
- [eRulemaking](#)
- [Federal awards \(USA Spending\)](#)
- [Federal Government Web Reform](#)
- [Federal performance](#)
- [Open Innovator's tool kit](#)

GLOSSARY

Authentication-a process by which a person's identity is verified prior to allowing access to information, services, and/or transactions.

Business Intelligence Architecture-the computer-based techniques, software , and hardware used in identifying, extracting, and analyzing business data, such as sales revenues by products and/or departments, or by associated costs and incomes.

Business process modeling- the activity of representing processes of an enterprise, so that the current process may be analyzed and improved.

Classification authority/classified documents-authority to categorize information or documents held by the government as sensitive and, thereby, restricting access under law or regulation to particular groups of persons.

Cloud computing- the delivery of computing as a service rather than a product, whereby shared resources, software, and information are provided to computers and other devices as a utility (like the electricity grid) over a network (typically the Internet).

Crowd sourcing- a distributed problem-solving and production process that involves outsourcing tasks to a network of people, also known as the crowd. This process can occur both online and offline. The difference between crowdsourcing and ordinary outsourcing is that a task or problem is outsourced to an undefined public rather than a specific other body.

Data steward - a person that is responsible for maintaining a data element in a metadata registry. A data steward ensures that each assigned data element has clear and unambiguous definition, does not conflict with other data elements in the metadata registry (removes duplicates, overlap etc.), has clear enumerated value definitions, is still being used (remove unused data elements), is being used consistently in various computer systems, has adequate documentation on appropriate usage and notes, and documents the origin and sources of authority on each metadata element.

Data-mine- a process of discovering new patterns from large datasets.

Enterprise architecture- the process of translating business vision and strategy into effective enterprise change by creating, communicating and improving the key requirements, principles and models that describe the enterprise's future state and enable its evolution.

Enterprise collaboration platform- a set of software components and services for the entire organization that enable users to communicate, share information, and work together to achieve common business goals. The core elements of a collaboration platform are messaging (email, calendaring and scheduling, contacts), team collaboration (file synchronization, ideas and notes in a wiki, task management, full-text search), and real-time communication (e.g., presence, instant messaging, Web conferencing, application / desktop sharing, voice, audio and video conferencing).

Enterprise service bus- a software architecture model used for designing and implementing the interaction and communication between mutually interacting software applications.

Extensible Markup Language (XML) - a markup language that defines a set of rules for encoding documents in a format that is both human-readable and machine-readable.

Facebook- a social networking service and website.

Focus group- a form of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a product, service, concept, advertisement, idea, or packaging.

Health Information Technology (health IT or HIT)- provides the umbrella framework for the comprehensive management of health information across computerized systems and its secure exchange between consumers, providers, government and quality entities, and insurers.

Information holding- a generic and all-encompassing term for an organization's data and information in all formats.

Internal control- a process affected by an organization's structure, work and authority flows, people and management information systems, designed to help the organization accomplish specific goals or objectives. It is a means by which an organization's resources are directed, monitored, and measured. It plays an important role in preventing and detecting fraud and protecting the organization's resources.

JAVA- a programming language that is currently one of the most popular programming languages in use, particularly for client-server web applications, with a reported 10 million users.

Lifecycle- a process of creating or altering information systems, and the models and methodologies that people use to develop these systems.

Machine-readable formats- a format that can be understood by a computer. There are two types; human-readable data that is marked up so that it can also be read by machines (examples; microformats, RDFa) or data file formats intended principally for machines (RDF, XML)

Mash-up- a web page or application that uses and combines data, presentation or functionality from two or more sources to create new services.

Metadata tagging schemas- the vocabularies used to assemble metadata (metacontent) statements, which are typically structured according to a standardized concept using a well-defined metadata scheme, including metadata standards and metadata models. Tools such as controlled vocabularies, taxonomies, thesauri, data dictionaries and metadata registries can be used to apply further standardization to the metadata.

Mosaic effect- occurs when combinations of data tidbits produce a picture that was not apparent from the individual pieces. This effect is especially an issue when a person's identity or personal information can be "pieced" together from innocuous data elements.

Nationwide Health Information Network (NwHIN, formerly NHIN) - an initiative for the exchange of healthcare information being developed under the auspices of the U.S. Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology.

Open-source - Open-source software is computer software that is available in source code; the source code and certain other rights normally reserved for copyright holders are provided under a free software license that permits users to study, change, improve and at times also to distribute the software. Similarly, other kinds of open-source products are provided free to users who are permitted to alter and adapt them to their own needs and purposes.

Reading room (or FOIA reading room) - an agency repository of information released (or possibly likely to be requested) under the Freedom of Information Act.

Rules engine- a software system that executes one or more business rules in a runtime production environment. The rules might come from legal regulation (“An employee can be fired for any reason or no reason but not for an illegal reason”), company policy (“All customers that spend more than \$100 at one time will receive a 10% discount”), or other sources. A business rule system enables these company policies and other operational decisions to be defined, tested, executed and maintained separately from application code.

Smart disclosure- the timely release of complex information and data in standardized, machine-readable formats in ways that enable consumers to make informed decisions.

Social media- includes web-based and mobile technologies used to turn communication into interactive dialogue.

Software as a service (SaaS)- sometimes referred to as “on-demand software,” is a software delivery model in which software and its associated data are hosted centrally (typically in the (Internet) cloud) and are typically accessed by users using a thin client, normally using a web browser over the Internet.

Twitter- an online social networking service and microblogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based posts of up to 140 characters, known as “tweets”.

Underlying data- the data that underlies the results and is what is used to create a presentation in condensed form.

Unstructured information (or Unstructured Data) - refers to information that either does not have a pre-defined data model and/or does not fit well into relational tables. Unstructured information is typically text-heavy, but may contain data such as dates, numbers, and facts as well. This results in irregularities and ambiguities that make it difficult to understand using traditional computer programs as compared to data stored in fielded form in databases or annotated (semantically tagged) in documents.

Usability testing- a technique used in user-centered interaction design to evaluate a product by testing it on users.

Virtualized environment- the creation of a virtual (rather than actual) version of something, such as a hardware platform, operating system, a storage device or network resources.

Visualization- the use of computer-supported tools to explore large amount of abstract data. Practical application of information visualization in computer programs involves selecting, transforming, and representing abstract data in a form that facilitates human interaction for exploration and understanding.

Web 2.0- a loosely defined intersection of web application features that facilitate participatory information sharing, interoperability, user-centered design, and collaboration on the World Wide Web. A Web 2.0 site allows users to interact and collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community, in contrast to websites where users (consumers) are limited to the passive viewing of content that was created for them. Examples of Web 2.0 include social networking sites, blogs, wikis, video sharing sites, hosted services, web applications, mashups and folksonomies.

Web analytics- the measurement, collection, analysis and reporting of internet data for purposes of understanding and optimizing web usage.

Web content management system- a software system that provides website authoring, collaboration, and administration tools designed to allow users with little knowledge of web programming languages or markup languages to create and manage website content with relative ease. A robust WCMS provides the foundation for collaboration, offering users the ability to manage documents and output for multiple author editing and participation.

Web portal- a web site that brings together information from diverse sources in a unified way.

Web services- a method of communication between two electronic devices over the web (internet).

Webinar- a service that allows conferencing events to be shared with remote locations. In general, the service is made possible by Internet technologies, particularly on TCP/IP connections. The service allows real-time point-to-point communications as well as multicast communications from one sender to many receivers. It offers information of text-based messages, voice and video chat to be shared simultaneously, across geographically dispersed locations.

YouTube- a video-sharing website, on which users can upload, view and share videos.

Endnotes

1 Open-source software is computer software that is available in source code. The source code and certain other rights normally reserved for copyright holders are provided under a free software license that permits users to study, change, improve and at times also to distribute the software. Similarly, other kinds of open-source products are provided free to users who are permitted to alter and adapt those to their own needs and purposes.

2 An enterprise service bus (ESB) is a software architecture model used for designing and implementing the interaction and communication between mutually interacting software applications.

3 Extensible Markup Language (XML) is a markup language that defines a set of rules for encoding documents in a format that is both human-readable and machine-readable.

4 See [March 2009 memo](#) from Attorney General Holder.

5 Compassionate allowances are a way of quickly identifying diseases and other medical conditions that often qualify for disability based on objective medical information.

6 The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is a national economic indicator of customer evaluations of the quality of products and services available to household consumers in the United States. Data from interviews with approximately 70,000 customers annually are used as inputs into an econometric model to measure satisfaction with more than 225 companies in 47 industries and 10 economic sectors, along with over 200 services, programs, and websites of approximately 130 federal government agencies. ACSI results are released on a monthly basis, with all measures reported using a scale of 0 to 100.