Open Government Initiative

Transparency | Participation | Collaboration

Social Security Administration's

Open Government Plan 3.0

Updated: June 1, 2014

Message from the Acting Commissioner

Welcome to our Open Government Plan 3.0. This plan reflects our continuing effort to become more transparent to the American public; invite greater public participation in the policies and decisions of our agency; and foster expanded collaboration with the people we serve, advocates, and many government and non-government groups.

I am proud to lead Social Security's implementation of President Obama's Open Government Initiative and to carry out our 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 second Open Government Plan as well as several new efforts, including a flagship initiative to deliver a Message Center for people using our online services. The centerpiece of this initiative is the suite of services we now offer at *my* Social Security, where you can securely and conveniently access valuable personalized Social Security information. We are excited to offer additional options for getting information and completing business with us online.

Our Open Government Plan 3.0 also outlines our efforts to improve services including wounded warrior collaboration, health information technology, and data exchanges. We encourage you to review the information on our website and on Data.gov and we 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 the public, our employees, and advocates. We appreciate your 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 at www.socialsecurity.gov/open/plan-progress-2014.html, and share your thoughts and ideas by sending us a message to open.government@ssa.gov.

Thank you.

Carolyn W. Colvin
Acting Commissioner of Social Security

Plan Contents

Subject

- Executive Summary
- Mission and Goals

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 in our second Open Government Plan. Overall, we have made strong progress toward our open government goals and objectives.

Transparency: We are committed to sharing information that helps the public understand our programs and hold us accountable for our performance. We release information in a format the public can use. We submit datasets to the Federal Government's document repository at www.data.gov, and we are incorporating feedback on those datasets as we publish additional information. We support the open data initiative, and we are working to build an enterprise data inventory. While we strive to be open and transparent, we must protect 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 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 offer opportunities for participation on our open government website at www.socialsecurity.gov/open and report there on ideas we receive and progress we make. We also use our agency Internet site at www.socialsecurity.gov to share information and provide opportunities for participation and collaboration. We will 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. As of March 2014, the Office of Open Government is part of the Office of the Chief Strategic Officer. Now, agency leadership directing strategic planning and monitoring agency attainment of performance goals also provides direction and oversight of open government goals and 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 for Fiscal Years 2014-2018,

available at www.socialsecurity.gov/agency/asp/materials/pdfs/plan-2014-2018.pdf   - just one example of how we are using open government principles. We plan to use 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, Message Center, and three major projects: Wounded Warrior Collaboration, Health Information Technology, and Data Exchanges. These projects underscore the value of open government and support our agency mission, goals, and objectives.

Mission

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.

Who We Are and What We Do:
We run two of the nation's largest entitlement programs: the Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance program and the Supplemental Security Income program. In fiscal year (FY) 2013, we paid 65 million people an average of $850 each month. 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 at www.socialsecurity.gov/pubs/10024.html.

| How We Served America in Fiscal Year 2013	
Issued 16 million new and replacement Social Security cards	Completed over 3 million overpayment actions
Performed 1.6 billion automated Social Security Number verifications	Reconsidered 803,000 denied disability applications
Posted more than 251 million earnings items to workers' records	Decided nearly 794,000 hearing requests
Completed 53 million transactions on our National 800 Number	Completed over 176,000 Appeals Council reviews

Assisted more than 43 million visitors in our field offices	Registered over 6.3 million users for *my Social Security*, a personal online account
Received approximately 5 million retirement, survivor, and Medicare applications	Oversaw approximately 5.9 million representative payees
Completed about 3 million initial disability claims	Completed nearly 430,000 full medical continuing disability reviews
Completed more than 2.6 million Supplemental Security Income non-disability redeterminations	Provided over 321,000 disability beneficiaries with employment support

For examples of alignment of Open Government Plan 3.0 with our *Agency Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2014-2018*, go to **Appendix A**.

Section I: Progress on 2012 Open Government Plan 2.0 and Development of Open Government Plan 3.0

Accomplishments of Open Government Plan 2.0

- We improved our dedicated open government website at www.socialsecurity.gov/open/ to share information, report on our progress, and encourage public participation and collaboration. We developed our *Open Government Plan 2.0* (www.socialsecurity.gov/open/story-2012-04-09-open-government-plan2.html) based on public input, and tracked our achievements (www.socialsecurity.gov/open/plan-progress-2012.html) against the milestones we developed;

- We fully supported Data.gov (catalog.data.gov/organization/ssa-gov) by updating and releasing information as it became available, including data on our programs, service, and statistical information;
- We launched a campaign using IdeaScale (a tool for soliciting ideas, feedback, and priorities) to solicit ideas from employees to help update our *Agency Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2014-2018*;
- We expanded our social media presence, using agency YouTube (www.youtube.com/socialsecurityonline), Facebook (www.facebook.com/socialsecurity), and Twitter (www.twitter.com/socialsecurity) accounts. we also increased engagement on our Spanish-language Facebook (www.facebook.com/segurosocial) and Twitter (www.twitter.com/segurosocial) accounts;
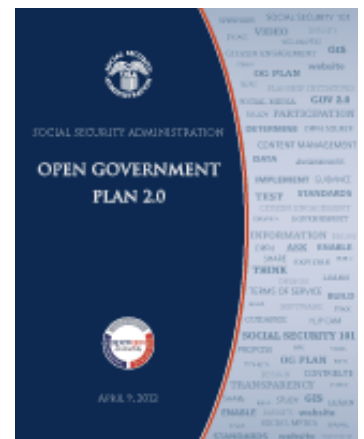
- We oversaw through our Social Media Review Board the creation and posting of daily messages on our Facebook and Twitter sites;
- We launched one flagship initiative and three major initiatives to execute over the past two years; and
- We expanded our web presence using new analytics tools to help guide our efforts.

See **Appendix B** for a status of the flagship and major initiatives in our 2012 plan. View an item-by-item implementation progress chart on our 2012 plan commitments at www.socialsecurity.gov/open/plan-progree-2012.html.

Development of Open Government Plan 3.0

We solicited ideas and comments from various audiences to help us update our Open Government Plan. We reached out to our traditional advocates through our quarterly national advocate conference calls and our online *Social Security Update* newsletter at www.socialsecurity.gov/newsletter/. Those venues reach approximately 14,000 organizations and individuals. We reached out to representatives of non-governmental organizations and institutions who had previously conducted the outside review of our initial Open Government Plan. We also announced on Facebook, Twitter, and our open government portal at www.socialsecurity.gov/openopportunities for providing input for the plan.

We invited the public and our employees to provide ideas and to comment and vote on the relevance of others' ideas through two online engagements:

- Open Government Plan engagement: We solicited ideas about the actions that the agency should take to build greater transparency, participation, and collaboration into our processes; and
- Open Data engagement: We used this engagement to solicit recommendations about the kinds of data that would be useful for external audiences, how they planned to use this data, and the most user-friendly ways to present the data. (This engagement is ongoing to help solicit input for our open data initiatives.)

As of this plan's release, these engagements drew 499 unique visitors, who contributed a total of 92 ideas, 113 comments, and 704 votes.

In order to reach out to our employees across the country, we included links for both engagements in the agency's annual Sunshine Week broadcast.

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

Improving transparency is a multi-faceted effort that includes:

- Expanding and enhancing our public web presence with agency program data and information;
- Providing targeted information for researchers, academics, the press, Congress, and other stakeholders;
- Using social media and other tools more effectively to share information, engage the public, and provide easily accessible and relevant data to the public;
- Conducting data exchanges with researchers and other government organizations;
- Identifying and releasing data in an open, accessible, and machine-readable format to the extent that protection of personal information permits sharing such data; and
- Providing our employees with tools and access to data to be more effective in their jobs.

For more information about our involvement in federal transparency initiatives (Data.gov, eRulemaking, Information Technology Dashboard, Recovery.gov, USAspending.gov, and declassification program (per Executive Order 13526)), see **Appendix C**.

Appendix D describes our Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) program and how we ensure transparency through a presumption of openness.

Objective 1: Provide high-value information that meets the public's needs

The public accesses Social Security information millions of times each year through the agency's website at www.socialsecurity.gov. In 2013, we redesigned our web pages and launched our mobile version. We anticipate additional redesigns and presentation changes to improve ease of use on electronic devices such as tablets and smartphones. We are also exploring the use of web content management systems to enable non-technical employees to update and add new content. In identifying and prioritizing changes to the website, we consider public feedback and satisfaction levels.

We present information and data that the public can easily understand and use. Our partnership with Data.gov began in 2009 and provides a platform for public access to our data. We are expanding the information we make publicly available under the Digital Government Strategy and the Open Data Initiative. We outline our implementation of the Digital Government Strategy at www.socialsecurity.gov/digitalstrategy/, displaying milestones that address our data inventory and publication efforts. Our *Information Resources Management Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2014-2017* includes a two-year plan of action (www.socialsecurity.gov/irm/IRM_2014.pdf#page=65   ) to "incorporate data transparency considerations into the systems development lifecycle so that we can release data in standard formats in a more efficient and automated way."

Changes to the Systems Development Lifecycle to Enable Open Data

In accordance with the Executive Order on Open Data, by June 30, 2014, we will develop checkpoints to capture and promote open data. Our goal is to expand, enrich, and open our data inventory process, by building in automated data publication capabilities early in the systems development lifecycle.

Objective 2: Inform the public about significant planned actions supporting transparency (Public Notice)

We use a variety of communication tools and approaches to support transparency, including our open government portal (www.socialsecurity.gov/open). We foster the use of agency data through ongoing contacts with stakeholders and interested parties. You will find a summary of our communications and outreach actions in **Appendix E**.

Collaborating with the Department of Justice to Make Social Security Information Available

The Department of Justice's Limited English Proficiency (LEP) website (www.LEP.gov)now includes our Asian and Pacific Islander language preferences page at www.lep.gov/demog_data/demog_data.html. LEP.gov's mission is to promote a positive and cooperative understanding of the importance of language access to federally conducted and federally assisted programs.

Objective 3: Provide information to the public on internal management areas

We provide members of the public with information they request either through the FOIA process or through other means, such as our outreach with stakeholders. In addition, we provide information about our programs information about internal management processes, and information people use to make decisions in their lives.

Freedom of Information Act

We operate under a presumption of openness, sharing information with the public about our programs and projects. We believe our FOIA program strongly reflects this commitment. For example, in 2013, we added a link to our FOIA home page (www.socialsecurity.gov/foia/) on every page of our agency's website so that the American people have greater access to the information we release under FOIA. In addition, last year, we redesigned the content, navigation, look, and feel of our public-facing FOIA website, and we updated our existing web-based FOIA Library with information most requested by the public.

In FY 2013, our agency responded to 39,455 FOIA requests. Our backlog at the end of the fiscal year consisted of only 67 pending requests, representing a scant 0.2 percent of our total FOIA workload for the year.

Social Security's Exceptional Performance in Processing FOIA Requests

The Center for Effective Government's "Making the Grade: Access to Information Scorecard 2014" evaluated the performance of the 15 federal agencies that received the greatest number of FOIA requests in FY 2012. The Social Security Administration was the top performer in processing FOIA requests that year, earning a "B" grade.

We plan to conduct further research on commercial and government off-the-shelf software and the collaborative FOIAonline (https://foiaonline.regulations.gov/foia/action/public/home) tracking and processing tool to fit our FOIA support system. We are searching for a system that allows requesters to track requests electronically. We anticipate examining alternatives to our current automated FOIA support system by the third quarter of FY 2015.

See **Appendix D** for more information about our FOIA organization, how we process FOIA requests, and initiatives underway to improve our FOIA program. You may find detailed information about our FOIA program at www.socialsecurity.gov/foia/.

Proactive Disclosures

We created a proactive disclosures web page in our FOIA Library at www.socialsecurity.gov/foia/readingroom.html#a0=0, which provides the public a single location to view the records we have proactively released. Of course, due to the personal nature of much of the information in our records, we are unable to post certain records publicly. We review our records on an ongoing basis and assess the feasibility of proactively disclosing information.

Examples of Proactive Disclosures throughout the Agency:

We provide policy makers at our agency, the White House, Congress, and the public policy community with:

- Projections of how Social Security benefit rules might affect beneficiaries; and
- Information on the latest techniques to help the public make informed choices about planning for retirement, such as when to claim benefits.

We also provide the public with:

- Statistical data on Social Security program benefits, payments, and covered workers;
- Administrative record data and survey data for use in Social Security research and policy analysis; and
- Microsimulation models that estimate the distributional effects of proposed changes in Social Security programs.

Research and statistical material is available in print and online. We make our research and policy publications available on our public website at www.socialsecurity.gov/policy/. You also may find a list of frequently requested statistics at www.socialsecurity.gov/foia/List%20of%20Frequently%20Requested%20SSA%20Statistics.pdf   .

We provide targeted information related to employment support for beneficiaries:

- We offer information on three websites for beneficiaries working or planning to return to work : The Work Site (www.socialsecurity.gov/work/home.html), Choose Work for Beneficiaries (www.choosework.net/), and Choose Work for Service Providers (https://yourtickettowork.com/web/ttw/home);
- We share indicators of earnings likely to qualify the service provider for payment to assist vocational rehabilitation and employment support service providers with billings for beneficiaries who have successfully returned to work; and
- We share our employment support research in a variety of channels, such as professional

research journals and other publications.

Privacy

We have a robust privacy program. Our Office of Privacy and Disclosure leads and participates in a variety of privacy-related activities and workgroups to ensure the agency's overall privacy compliance. Our compliance documents are:

- Privacy information, at www.socialsecurity.gov/privacy.html.
- Internet privacy policy, at www.socialsecurity.gov/privacy.html.
- Privacy Impact Assessments, at www.socialsecurity.gov/foia/pia.html.
- System of Records Notices, at www.socialsecurity.gov/foia/bluebook.
- Privacy and disclosure regulations, at www.socialsecurity.gov/OP_Home/cfr20/401/401-0000.htm.
- Federal Information Security Management Act reports, at www.socialsecurity.gov/foia/annualreports.html#ht=2.
- Biennial Computer Matching Activity Reports, at www.socialsecurity.gov/foia/annualreports.html#ht=2.

NOTE: The Social Security Administration is not subject to the provisions of the Federal Agency Data Mining Reporting Act of 2007; therefore, we are not required to prepare Federal Agency Data Mining Reports.

Records Management

Our Office of Budget, Finance, Quality, and Management maintains and oversees agency policies and procedures governing our records. We are taking actions to meet records management requirements in the M-12-18 issued by the Office of Management and Budget on August 24, 2012 by the required due dates. For comprehensive information about our efforts and our records management program, visit www.socialsecurity.gov/records-management/.

Legislation and Congressional Affairs

We provide online access to 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 our programs. We post testimony and legislation during the current Congress separately from testimony and legislation for prior Congresses (back to the 104th Congress) so that the most recent information is quick and easy to find. Program resources, such as fact sheets, quick links to actuarial cost estimates for solvency proposals, and budget information are also available.

Our Internet home page includes a section titled "Business & Government" with a drop-down menu where you can find a link for "Congress." However, much of the information on our legislative program and activities at www.socialsecurity.gov/legislation is of interest to the public as well. The site also links to the legislative histories of Social Security program-related legislation going back to 1935 (www.ssa.gov/history/legislativehistory.html). These histories are a vital resource for researchers, drafters, and analysts.

In addition to our ongoing effort to update the site as time and resources permit, we continue building our online repository of materials that may be of interest either for historical reasons or to promote transparency. For example, since the publication of our 2012 Open Government Plan, we have added four years of content to our repository of legislation and testimony from previous periods (the 105th and 104th Congresses).

Congressional Requests

We receive congressional inquiries by phone, letter, fax, and via the Internet. The inquiries generally involve constituent-related Social Security issues, 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 services, and our Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs.

In most cases, the office receiving the initial inquiry addresses the questions raised and provides a response to the congressional office. No matter which office handles an inquiry, program experts thoroughly research and respond to all congressional inquiries.

Goal II: Expand Participation

> "*We're also soliciting the best ideas from our 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. We want to expand on the successes we have achieved and further infuse participation principles into:

- The way we develop policy;
- The way we solve problems to better serve the American people; and
- The way we determine public preferences.

We will support public participation by:

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

Follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

Objective 1: Provide the public with easy and visible access to participate with Social Security

In 2012 and 2013, to solicit and prioritize ideas from disability partners and the public on evaluating the disability determination process, we used a crowd-sourcing tool for public engagements. We plan additional outreach efforts for the next several years to solicit input

from disability partners and the public early in the process to help in the development of disability policies and procedures. In the next two years, we will solicit ideas about various topics in the disability determination process, such as documentation requirements for medical listings evaluations and how we decide if disability benefits should continue or end. We will also consider using a crowd-sourcing tool to solicit and prioritize feedback from our agency components about the implementation and use of revised disability determination policies.

We maintain a proactive approach in providing the public with information and engagement opportunities that are easy to access, such as webinars.   In the last few years, we produced and hosted more than 25 interactive web events on a variety of topics, including our representative payee program, Social Security's importance to young workers, and online business services. We presented a webinar titled "Benefit Verification Letters Online, Easy as 1-2-3" to advocates, social service agencies, and other third parties as a way to demonstrate the ease and convenience of our online service options, more specifically the access to benefit verification letters.

Our Ticket to Work Program also presents a recurring series of Work Incentive Seminar Events (WISE), designed to educate beneficiaries about the Ticket to Work program and available work incentives. These WISE webinars cover important topics for Social Security beneficiaries, including self-employment opportunities for people with disabilities, free support services for young adults in transition to work, and choosing appropriate service providers.

We post recordings of webinars on our agency website as well as on our YouTube page. Our more than 60-recorded webinars have received more than 208,000 views to date. You may view our webinars at www.socialsecurity.gov/webinars/.

Objective 2: Provide new and easier methods for public involvement in our program administration

We are using social media tools to engage audiences in discussions about our strategic planning, programs, and services. We strengthened our online communications by forming a Social Media Response Team. Our team moderators respond to comments users post on our Facebook and Twitter accounts, answering questions from the public on a wide variety of our programs and services. The moderator responses to individuals often are helpful to our larger base of Facebook fans and Twitter followers. The Social Media Response Team has responded to over 1,000 inquiries in the last year, providing direct responses to questions and links to our online services or more detailed information to enhance the public's understanding of our programs. Our fans and followers numbers have increased by tens of thousands, and we

believe our more vibrant, interactive forum has contributed significantly to the growth.

To further foster participation, we enhanced our online communication tools to facilitate communications and community building with external audiences. We redesigned our web pages in 2013 as we launched our mobile version of www.socialsecurity.gov. Concurrently we updated our other web pages, including the open government portal at www.socialsecurity.gov/open and the FOIA Library at www.socialsecurity.gov/foia/readingroom.html to help the public more easily find information about our programs and our available online services.

Continuing our efforts to reach our audience, in March 2013, we increased our social media outreach. Building on our success with establishing a Social Media Board to oversee the creation and posting of daily messages on our Facebook and Twitter sites, we added an Internet social media hub (www.socialsecurity.gov/socialmedia/), a directory of digital communication channels that helps us reach a broader audience and engage citizens. We will update our hub with additional information related to policies that govern agency use of social media and social media tools. Information on the hub will support others in the agency who plan to use social media tools to communicate with their external audiences, such as advocacy groups, congressional staff, the press, potential staff recruits, and partners.

We also:

- In collaboration with payroll industry professional organizations, solicited feedback from public and government payroll providers regarding proposed modifications to our Annual Wage Reporting System;
- Published a *Federal Register* notice requesting public feedback on the representative payee criminal bar policy (February 2013);
- Published a Systems of Records notice in the *Federal Register* informing the public of our plan to conduct criminal background checks on persons applying to be representative payees (April 2013); and
- Published a *Federal Register* notice requesting public feedback on ways to improve our administrative finality policy (July 2013).

Compassionate Allowances—Participation and Collaboration in Developing Disability Policy

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. Since 2007, we have collaborated with the public,

the National Institutes of Health, Alzheimer's Association, National Organization for Rare Disorders, policy researchers, and our own expert medical staff to determine which medical conditions to include in the Compassionate Allowance process. In 2008, we developed the initial list of 50 Compassionate Allowance conditions based on information we received at public outreach hearings (we have held seven Compassionate Allowances public outreach hearings), public comments on an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, input from our employees, and the advice of medical and scientific experts. To date, we have approved more than 200,000 people with severe disabilities through this fast-track disability process. We actively work to increase the number of conditions identified as Compassionate Allowances. On January 13, 2014, we announced 25 new Compassionate Allowances conditions, bringing the total list of conditions to 225.

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

Goal III: Increase Collaboration

> *"Creating a more Open Government requires a sustained commitment by public officials and employees at all levels of government; it also requires an informed and active citizenry***."**

---The Second United States National Action Plan, December 2013

We reach out to external organizations in support of public service and greater openness across government. We plan to expand on our to-date progress through additional collaborative efforts.

Objective 1: Improve collaboration with government and non-government entities

We will expand our innovative partnerships and use technology to improve collaboration within and outside our agency.

Here are just a few examples of our ongoing collaboration efforts:

- To improve access to and understanding of our programs, we 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 use 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 regularly engage in outreach and liaison activities with our federal partners to discuss ongoing data exchanges, new data exchange requests, and oversight of data exchange between federal partners;
- We explore the use of Google Hangouts, which is an instant messaging and video chat platform, for more engagement and real-time collaboration; and
- We share annual wage reporting requirements and cooperatively develop joint requirements with the Internal Revenue Service in support of the Combined Annual Wage Reporting system.

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

We will post information at www.socialsecurity.gov/open/ to provide the public with information about collaboration opportunities. In addition to expanding our engagement with the public, we also are committed to increasing employee participation and are building a modern infrastructure necessary to support such efforts.   Our use of a tool called IdeaCAT is one example of how we are collaborating to improve employee satisfaction, openness to new ideas, and overall customer service. The IdeaCAT team was one of the first recipients of our agency's Open Government Honor Award.

IdeaCAT

We developed 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 eCAT. IdeaCAT allows users to vote and comment on the ideas that others submit. This tool helps prioritize improvements to eCAT.

The entire IdeaCAT process is transparent because the IdeaCAT team provides feedback and status on comments via its web page and newsletters. In addition, IdeaCAT 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 1,100 employees

registered to use the tool. Since implementing IdeaCAT, more than 200 users have submitted 610 new ideas. Users have cast over 7,500 votes for these ideas. The IdeaCAT team has incorporated 143 ideas into eCAT. Through further collaboration, the team developed a robust, supportable, web-based tool - known as the electronic Bench Book (eBB) – for our hearing offices to use to help standardize and document the hearing decision process and outcome. The eBB now includes IdeaBench. The purpose of IdeaBench is to foster collaboration while gathering feedback and ideas from the eBB user community. We introduced IdeaBench in the summer of 2012. So far, over 324 registered users posted 383 new ideas with 1,404 votes and 733 comments. We implemented 23 of these ideas.

Goal IV: Internalize Open Government Principles

Our guiding principles of transparency, participation, and collaboration require us to approach our jobs in new ways and learn to think about service in new terms. In keeping with these principles, we are implementing the Digital Government Strategy tenets and requirements across the agency. We update our Digital Government Strategy Report quarterly at www.socialsecurity.gov/digitalstrategy/.

Goal IV provides governance structures to oversee these new approaches and plans for changing the culture of the agency so that we internalize open government principles throughout our workforce.

Objective 1: Infuse Open Government principles throughout the agency

We will remain committed to infusing open government principles into our business processes.
For example:

- We will seek and adopt employee feedback in implementing this refreshed plan;
- We will share our Open Government Plan 3.0 with all employees on the agency Intranet and send them periodic updates about the plan and our open government activities;
- We will provide our employees with easy access to open government materials on our Intranet site; and
- We will encourage employee participation in developing new tools and improving work
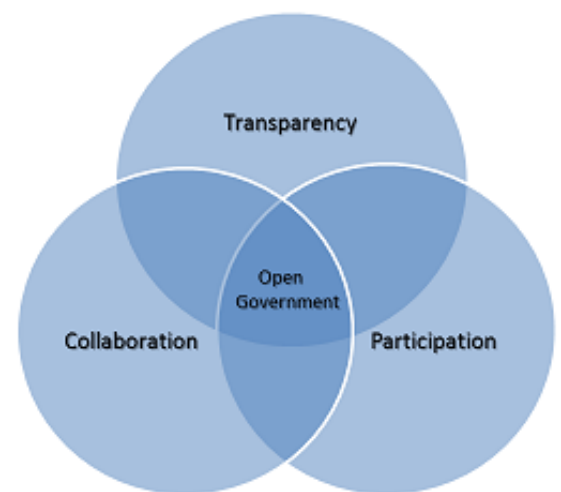
processes.

Open Government Honor Award

In 2013, we honored three teams with our Open Government Honor Award, a Commissioner-level award recognizing employee efforts in promoting an open and transparent government. The three recognized teams were:

The Limited English Proficiency Video Vignette Team, which collaborated with agency components and 13 other agencies to produce a video training series that gives federal employees training to better recognize and provide service to individuals with limited English proficiency; The Health IT Partnership Team, which applied the principles of participation, collaboration, and transparency to establish a health records exchange with 20 providers in 19 states and Washington, DC; and

The Cook County Jail Secure Messaging Team in the Chicago Region, which set up a streamlined approach to prisoner reporting employing the Government Services Online secure messaging system.

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

To understand our executive leadership structure, see the agency organization in **Appendix F, Chart 1**.

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

- The Office of Open Government in the Office of the Chief Strategic Officer coordinates all open government initiatives for the agency **(See Appendix F, Chart 2.)**;
- An Open Government Executive Steering Committee directs the agency's open government activities. This group looks for ways to infuse open government principles into agency practices, processes, and policies; and
- An agency executive appointed by the Commissioner is accountable for the quality and objectivity of federal spending information. **(See Appendix F, Chart 3.)**

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

- Applying a user-centered design process 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;

- Leveraging our data, modern analytical tools, and data warehousing technologies to help us make operational decisions. These tools have improved the quality of, consistency of, and access to the information needed by executives, managers, and analysts; and
- Informing employees about participation opportunities. An example of announcing a participation opportunity was the broadcast message released on April 16, 2014 by our Chief Strategic Officer. She reached out across the agency to all employees encouraging them to provide input for the agency's long-range strategic vision.

A Message to All SSA and DDS Employees

Subject: Imagine the Future: Serving America in 2025 – Let Us Hear from YOU!

Hello, I am Ruby Burrell, SSA's Chief Strategic Officer, and I am pleased to share with you the exciting work we are doing to help the agency map out new paths for serving the American public in the next 10 to 15 years.   We also are eager to get your input on this important topic.

My team, the Office of the Chief Strategic Officer, is working with the National Academy of Public Administration, to develop a long-range vision and high-level strategic plan – we call it "Vision 2025" – to better position us to meet the long-term future service needs of our diverse customer population.   We see Social Security's 2025 service delivery model using new and innovative technologies to deliver great service and value to the American people.   We are thinking beyond smartphones, tablets, and wristwatches to ready ourselves for yet unrealized technology that could lead to service channels and platforms we cannot yet imagine.

Of course, we will continue to need the efforts of our invaluable employees, who will use these high-tech venues, tools, and virtual settings, to process our work and administer our programs and services.

So please join us in imagining the future! We have established an online engagement forum for you to participate in our discussions and contribute your perspective on how we will serve America in 2025.   I invite you to share your ideas through our Vision 2025 forum, which will be available through May 2.

Thank you.

Ruby Burrell
Chief Strategic Officer

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

We incorporated open government principles in developing the plan for our updated *Agency Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2014-2018* (www.socialsecurity.gov/asp/plan-2014-2018.pdf), released in March 2014. We used broad-based internal and external engagements to determine the appropriate goals and strategies. We will infuse open government principles into our implementation of those strategies, and into our methods for measuring our performance against the goals. In addition, the *Information Resources Management Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2014-2017* (www.socialsecurity.gov/irm/IRM_2014.pdf), also released in March 2014, includes the technology framework for supporting our open government efforts.

We are in the process of developing a long-term strategy to help prepare the agency for success in the years ahead. As we develop this strategy, we are asking questions such as, "How should Social Security operate differently in the next 10-15 years to accomplish its mission?" and "How might a changing operational environment affect Social Security's ability to deliver services effectively and efficiently in the future?" Work on a long-term strategy is vital, as it will allow us to proactively anticipate and address challenges, and position us well to take advantage of new opportunities when they arise.

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

- Our open government flagship and major initiatives that support the mission, objectives and goals of the agency, and showcase the value of open government principles;
- **Appendix A,** which cross-walks our open government initiatives against our *Agency Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2014-2018* goals, objectives and strategies; and
- Our *Information Resources Management Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2014-2017* incorporating open government principles and initiatives, including technical support for open government, by:
  - Enhancing our 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
  - Supporting mobile computing and preparing for secure consumer-driven technology.

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

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

- We post our open government milestones and our performance against the milestones on our website;
- We published our *Agency Performance Plan for Fiscal Year 2015, Revised Performance Plan for Fiscal Year 2014, and Annual Performance Report for Fiscal Year 2013* (www.socialsecurity.gov/agency/performance/2015/FY2015-APP-APR.pdf   ), which incorporates open government principles and activities in our performance planning and reflects open government results in our performance expectations; and
- We use American Customer Satisfaction Index surveys, which are publicly available at www.theacsi.org, to monitor the levels of customer satisfaction with our online services.

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

We support the transfer of open government across the agency. Some actions underway include:

- Looking for opportunities to use federally developed open-source solutions in our business applications and public engagement tools;
- Maintaining governance processes and review boards to ensure that we are delivering a clear message when responding to public commentary via social media; and
- Participating in cross-government workgroups and sharing best practices.

Internal Social Enterprise Platform

An organization as large and geographically dispersed as our agency must harness the collective talent and expertise of employees to solve problems. In 2013, we benchmarked the use of innovation management systems at other agencies and in the private sector to identify industry best practices and leveraged the project experience of our staff. We piloted one tool to assess its suitability in 2012 and 2013, which we named SSA Engage. We are using the lessons from that experience to explore the best options for an enterprise platform. Meanwhile, we continue to use SharePoint throughout the agency, as well as crowd-sourcing tools. Recommendations to create an environment for exchange of ideas and to harness collective talent (blogs, social software, etc.) are included in several agency-level human capital plans currently under review. Our *Information Resources Management Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2014-2017*, states our commitment to "explore and expand internal social enterprise platform to allow employees agency-wide to take part in knowledge sharing…"

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 to improve transparency, participation, or collaboration.

Open Government Flagship Initiative—Message Center

Overview - When fully implemented, the public can access alerts, announcements, email, and online notices through our secure Message Center within *my* Social Security accounts. Agency employees will securely communicate with the public through the Message Center application by posting alerts and announcements, emailing, and providing online notices. As a way to expand capability across applications and platforms, we will also provide high-quality support through video communications, click-to-talk, instant messaging features, and screen sharing within *my* Social Security and other parts of our Internet site. The Message Center will allow us to provide online support to anyone, anywhere, at any time. The Message Center supports transparency and responds to customer requests for these services.

By FY 2015, we plan to release generic alerts, such as alerts about office closures or new applications announcements within *my* Social Security. These alerts will not contain personally identifiable information. The public will receive these alerts via their personal email or text messages, per the individual's request. In addition, we will provide an online notice and a click-to-talk feature.

Public outreach - To ensure we are meeting the public's needs; we will elicit user feedback as part of the development for Message Center.

Measurement of improvement – During our first year, we will track usage and develop ongoing metrics. We expect to measure the number of registrants and the level of activity. We anticipate that increased information sharing will provide high-quality service without adding to the backlog of customers seeking service, and reduce the burden on our frontline employees. We may use processing time, accuracy, and customer satisfaction measures to assess improvement in transparency and access to information and services.

Sustainability and continued improvement - The launch of the Message Center is part of an ongoing plan to develop a broad range of online services within *my* Social Security. As public demand for online services increases, the Message Center plays a foundational role in our online communications strategy.

Major Initiatives

1. Health Information Technology (IT)

Health information technology (IT) will reduce the time to obtain the medical records needed to support disability determinations and will help us manage that information more efficiently. Using health IT provides:

- A fully automated request and receipt process for medical evidence;
- More complete and standards-based medical records; and
- Faster disability decisions using extensive rules-based decision support.

We developed this initiative based on input from and collaboration with medical associations, health privacy advocates, medical providers, and state and federal agencies such as Department

of Veterans Affairs (VA) and Department of Defense (DoD). We collaborated with a growing number of partners to prove – in a live production setting – the capability to obtain and process medical records faster using health IT. Health IT fully automates the process for obtaining medical evidence. The 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 2013, we had partnerships with various medical networks and providers in 19 states and the District of Columbia.

We plan to continue our outreach efforts in FYs 2014, 2015, and 2016, to include additional medical providers and connect with VA and DoD on the eHealth Exchange. The eHealth Exchange is a community of partners who share health information under a common trust framework and a common set of rules. We will also continue to collaborate with government-wide health IT policy and standards setting advisory panels, workgroups and task forces. We participate in these committees to ensure that Social Security's unique business needs are included in national standards and policies. For example, we participate on the Office of the National Coordinator's, Policy Committee's Privacy and Security Task Force that focuses on resolving questions related to health care records and the protection of personally identifiable information.

Each year, we make about three million initial disability claim determinations. In FY 2012, about 17,000 initial claims contained health IT medical evidence, about 0.5 percent of the workload. In FY 2013, about 45,000 initial claims contained health IT medical evidence, an increase to about 1.5 percent of the total initial claims. We anticipate this percentage reaching 2.5 percent in FY 2014 and 4 percent in FY 2015.

By the end of 2014, we expect to request and receive up to 70,000 electronic patient files annually from Kaiser Permanente, one of the nation's largest healthcare providers, with the appropriate patient consent. This partnership began in 2012, and by the end of FY 2013, we were requesting and receiving records in five of Kaiser Permanente's seven regions. We completed expansion to all regions in FY 2014. Concurrently, we worked with many other organizations to become interoperable, such as Indiana Health Information Exchange, MedVirginia, and Oregon Community Health Information Network, to name a few. Heath IT will save time and money for both partners and allow us to make faster and more accurate disability determinations.

2. 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-phased approach to improve health information sharing with DoD. The initial phase uses existing electronic data sharing technologies to automate the exchange of medical information. Using this approach, records from all DoD medical treatment facilities are sent via a single request from the state disability determination service. The request goes to a centralized DoD site, which pulls a standard set of information from available electronic records. We implemented this process nationwide at the end of FY 2012. It has proven to be much more timely and efficient for both our agency and the DoD. We have had a similar semi-automated process in place with the VA since 2006.

The phase-two plan reflects our long-term approach and aims to improve medical information sharing by using the federal eHealth Exchange to request and receive medical records from DoD and VA, just as we do with other health IT partners.   We plan to launch a pilot in 2014. In preparation for the pilot, the 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 privacy rule.

Seeking new opportunities to enhance and improve our services to veterans, we launched an initiative allowing us to expedite disability claims for all veterans who have a VA compensation rating of 100% Permanent &Total (P&T), through all levels of adjudication. Currently, identifying and verifying a veteran's status of 100% P&T is a manual process, and the burden of proof lies solely with the veteran. However, we are working diligently with our colleagues at the VA to develop a data exchange agreement that will fully automate this process and eliminate this burden from the veteran. Our goal is to have a fully automated process in place by the end of FY 2015 that will flag and expedite the disability claims of any veteran with a VA compensation rating of 100% P&T.

3. Data Exchanges--Plans for Improvement and Expansion

Background
We share certain electronic information through agreements with federal, foreign, state, local, and private organizations. This data typically contains personal information, and agencies disclose it in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, and specific legal authorities,

using secure transmission methods to protect the information. We share our information to eliminate manual processes, reduce the burden on citizens in obtaining benefits across agencies, reduce improper payments, enhance the administration of our programs as well as other public programs, or for the advancement of research. Detailed information about our data exchange program is located at www.socialsecurity.gov/dataexchange.

We currently have roughly 3,000 data exchange agreements covering over 4,500 data exchanges. Our largest category of agreements is the approximately 2,300 agreements we have with local, state, and federal prisons to receive incarceration reports. We also have over 300 agreements with state agencies to provide Social Security number verifications and benefit information. In addition, we have agreements with private entities for Social Security number verifications, agreements with foreign countries that provide us with death reports, over 40 agreements sharing aggregate data for research purposes, and over 40 agreements with federal agencies to provide primarily Social Security number verifications, benefit information, death reporting, and earnings data. Some of the federal agencies with which we have agreements include the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, Department of Homeland Security, Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Child Support Enforcement, Railroad Retirement Board, and VA.

Current and Planned Enhancements

- **Prisoner Information for the Do Not Pay Portal:** We currently collect prisoner data from over 5,400 correctional facilities using approximately 2,300 agreements. Through these data exchanges, we prevent improper payments to incarcerated beneficiaries. Signed into law on December 26, 2013, section 204 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 requires us to collect additional detailed information on names, taxpayer identification numbers, dates of release, etc.   It also expands our authority to share this prisoner information with federal and state agencies for statistical and research activities and with the Department of the Treasury (Treasury) for tax administration, debt collection, and the Do Not Pay (DNP) initiative. Treasury maintains the DNP portal as a streamlined way for agencies to review information from a multitude of data sources during the pre-award and pre-payment processes to help agencies reduce improper payments. We have chartered agency workgroups to formulate policies and procedures for transmitting prisoner information we already collect to the DNP portal and for collecting the additional information required in the legislation.

- **Death Master File for the DNP Portal:** We receive approximately 2.5 million death reports each year to administer our programs. We also use that data to compile the

publicly available Death Master File (DMF). (Note: The publicly available DMF does not include deaths reported from states in accordance with section 205(r) of the Social Security Act.) The Department of Commerce's National Technical Information Service (NTIS) makes the DMF publicly available online for a fee. NTIS sells the file to the public and to Treasury for the DNP portal. Treasury matches DMF data against agencies' payment records to help identify, decrease, prevent, or stop improper payments due to death. Pending legislation would permit us to share the full DMF containing all state reported death data with Treasury for the DNP portal. If the legislation passes, we will work with Treasury to provide the public and the state reported portions of the DMF to the DNP portal. Furthermore, the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 requires NTIS to certify individuals for immediate access to the DMF within a three-calendar year period beginning on the date of the individual's death. We are working with NTIS on the proper implementation of this legislation.

- **Community of Practice**: In February 2014, we kicked off the first Data Exchange Community of Practice bi-monthly meetings with federal data exchange partners. Agencies represented include the Department of Education, Department of Labor, Treasury's Internal Revenue Service, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, Railroad Retirement Board, and VA. The purpose of the meetings is to collaborate on data exchange activities, share best practices, find common solutions to data exchange challenges, and build a network of federal data exchange partners. Initial meetings will serve as educational sessions about each federal agency's data exchange activities, while also exploring common data exchange processes for streamlining. We plan to help grow this community of practice during the next several years.

Conclusion

We look forward to new opportunities in the coming years to expand on our open government initiatives. Specifically, we will continue to:

- *Increase Transparency* - by sharing and being accountable for information that is of genuine interest and value to the public;
- *Foster Participation* - by offering a variety of channels for multiple audiences to engage with us and provide ideas on how we can improve our programs and services; and
- *Enhance Collaboration* - by working with other agencies and organizations to exchange ideas for improving our service to the public.

Appendix A:

	ASP Goal 1: Deliver Innovative, Quality Services	ASP Goal 2: Strengthen the Integrity of Our Programs	ASP Goal 3: Serve the Public through a Stronger, More Responsive Disability Program	ASP Goal 4: Build a Model Workforce to Deliver Quality Services	ASP Goal 5: Ensure Reliable, Secure, and Efficient Information Technology Services
Examples of Alignment of our Open Government (OG) Plan with our Agency Strategic Plan (ASP) Goals					
OG Goal I: Improve Transparency	Provide direct access to information and notices for individuals and designated third parties	Modernize and improve our system for recording earnings and encouraging workers to verify their earnings	Update appellate and other disability program datasets	Expand use of agency data to enable our adjudicators to improve the accuracy of their decision-making	Produce webinars to increase customers' understanding of our programs, as well as inform them of our policies and requirements
OG Goal II: Expand Participation	Use crowd-sourcing tools for policy development	Use focus groups, usability testing, electronic town hall meetings, and webinars to foster participation	Use focus groups, usability testing, electronic town hall meetings, and webinars to foster participation	Develop and maintain social media policies and practices for our employees	Expand the availability of online applications using responsive design
OG Goal III: Increase Collaboration	Partner with other agencies and	Collaborate with other federal	Work with the Department of Labor to	Update and expand use of IdeaCAT and	Share electronic medical information

	community organizations to provide service to Native Americans	agencies to identify common solutions to protecting and securing customers' information	update our occupational information; partner with other agencies and organizations to further modernize key aspects of our disability process	other adjudicative tools	through data exchanges and expedite processing of disability claims
Goal IV: Internalize Open Government	Foster use of programmatic data internally	Set up various ways to receive and consider employee input on policies and procedures	Support use of internal tools such as IdeaCAT	Maintain Open Government Steering Committee and Commissioner-level open government honor award	Use Work Incentive Seminar Event webinars to reach people with disabilities, as well as educate agency employees on our employment support programs; explore and expand enterprise social media platforms
Flagship: Message Center	Support innovative, quality online services				Build out the infrastructure for enhanced communications around online services

Appendix B

Status of Flagship Initiatives in 2012 Open Government Plan 2.0

View an item-by-item implementation progress web page at www.socialsecurity.gov/open/plan-progress-2012.html#a0=0 reporting on commitments in our Open Government Plan.

We completed the flagship and three major initiatives in our previous Open Government Plan on schedule. Below is a brief summary of each initiative.

Flagship: Enhanced Services for People Receiving Benefits

To make our services even more accessible, this initiative consolidated our existing online services into a single "gateway," which uses a robust and easy-to-use authentication process to safeguard personal identity information. We wanted to provide a common online user experience that is flexible enough to meet the needs of our broad customer base. Our goal was 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.

As we built the gateway to services, we used participatory tools and approaches to evaluate its impact and benefit. We collaborated with industry experts and conducted usability testing with the public. Members of the public, as well as our employees, provided important insight through our online dialogue and by submitting comments and suggestions.

We 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.

<u>Results</u>

- We rolled-out a new, more secure user identification/password protocol for doing business online;
- We implemented *my* Social Security, our suite of online services, on the agency's website and, on May 1, 2012, provided secure access to the Online Statement;
- Building on the new user ID/password protocol, we implemented new services on January 5, 2013 that allow beneficiaries to check their benefits, obtain a benefit verification letter, and change their address or direct deposit information; and
- We began testing streamlined and secure access to our online services and expanded *my* Social Security in the second quarter of FY 2013.

<u>Evaluation</u>

- To get timely and more detailed customer feedback we implemented an American Customer Service Index (ACSI) survey geared toward smartphone users on our mobile Supplemental Security Income wage reporting application. This wage reporting application represents our first mobile transactional application and our first mobile platform ACSI survey. During the pilot, which ran from December 2012 through July 2013, we received more than 13,000 wage reports, and the ACSI score was 89, one of the highest scores in the federal sector. National rollout began in August 2013 and included a systems change to remove the access code restriction based upon feedback from the ACSI surveys. Through the end of FY 2013, we received more than 18,000 wage reports. The ACSI rating in 2014 has remained high, with scores between 91 and 92;
- We use customer service metrics for all service channels. We routinely review and report our ACSI eService Customer Satisfaction scores to management and analyze customer feedback from the ACSI surveys to identify and help prioritize needed changes. We conduct annual surveys to measure customer satisfaction with each of our major service delivery channels: in-person service in our field and hearing offices and at Social Security Card Centers; telephone service on our national 800 number and in field offices; and online transactional services on our website, including initial claims, appeals and post entitlement services.
- We collect customer feedback to measure customer satisfaction and identify opportunities for improvement. To identify opportunities, we are conducting a survey of customers who were unable to establish an online account to determine their level of satisfaction with service they sought via the in-person and telephone channels. We will use feedback to improve our internal registration and customer support functionality. We expect preliminary results by the end of the fiscal year; and

NOTE: We update our customer satisfaction survey results each year on Data.gov at https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/social-security-administration-data-on-overall-customer-service-satisfaction-c9b99.

Standards

We established the following customer service standard: Our quarterly ACSI score average will remain above the level considered as a "top performer" (80) by ACSI.

Health Information Technology Initiative

In the first phase of this initiative, we planned to expand exchange of medical records through health information technology (IT) to various medical networks and providers in 13 States. We completed this milestone in FY 2012. Next, we planned to continue our outreach efforts to onboard additional medical providers and connect with the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on the eHealth Exchange (formerly known as

Nationwide Health Information Network). Efforts are ongoing to capture, prioritize, and implement requirements (technical and policy) for this exchange. In FY 2013, we expanded our efforts with 4 additional partner organizations, bringing the total exchanges to 20 providers in 19 states and the District of Columbia.

Virtual Life Electronic Record Wounded Warrior Collaboration

This initiative supported nationwide expansion of the DoD/Social Security Interim Health Data Sharing Initiative. Nationwide expansion began in April 2012; we completed it in August 2012.

We also planned to pilot health IT exchange with other federal agencies using the eHealth Exchange. We are working with DoD and VA on an ongoing basis to determine how to extract and package clinical data we need and to validate patient authorizations electronically. We expect to pilot this activity by December 2014.

eAuthorization

We planned to make eAuthorization available for claimants filing online. We accomplished this in April 2012. We also planned to make eAuthorization available for claimants who file an online disability appeal. We completed this on August 11, 2012.   Additionally, we wanted to expand eAuthorization (form SSA-827) to first-party appeals filed online. We now offer adults filing an Internet Disability Report - Appeal (i3341) on their own behalf to electronically sign and submit the SSA-827.   Effective December 2012, adults can use our attestation process to sign and submit form SSA-827 during in-office or telephone interviews.

We intended to explore alternatives for third party filers and accomplished this by making available the telephone or in-person attestation process when a third party completes an online application or appeal forms.

As planned, beginning August 2013, the attestation process used for adult telephone and in-person claims is also available for some disability claims filed for children.   Children filing a claim on their own behalf, or individuals with legal authority to act on behalf of a child claimant can sign and submit the SSA-827 using our attestation process when filing by telephone or in person.

Appendix C

Federal Transparency Initiatives

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 Office of Management and Budget

Memorandum M-10-06 and the overall principles outlined in the Digital Government Strategy.

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. We receive ideas and comments from employees and the public about additional datasets and information that they wish to see posted. We 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. The input also helps prioritize our ongoing release of datasets and information not previously available to the public.

eRulemaking

We are 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 other partner agencies in the development of FDMS in June 2004. We and the 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 ongoing development and modifications to FDMS and the public-facing website at www.regulations.gov.

Information Technology Dashboard

In response to evolving Office of Management and Budget (OMB) reporting requirements and enhancements to the Information Technology (IT) Dashboard, we simplified 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 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.

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 and Supplemental

Security Income beneficiaries;

- Dedicating additional resources to processing disability and retirement workloads, including establishing health IT data exchanges; and
- Replacing our National Computer Center.

We completed implementation for nearly all activities funded by ARRA with the exception of construction of our new data center. We expect to complete construction by July 2014 and complete migration to the new data center by the end of fiscal year 2016.

To further transparency, we 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.

System for Award Management - SAM.gov
Social Security is a voting member of and participates in the Change Control Board, a group that approves and prioritizes enhancements across shared services platforms, specifically www.sam.gov.

Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act - FSRS.gov
We provided three individuals to participate on the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) focus group, which will be working on incorporating and improving the FSRS functionality into SAM.gov. We also participate in the Interagency Award Environment focus group.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance - CFDA.gov
We maintain full descriptions for the public about our grant programs on the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance website at www.cfda.gov. Whenever there are major changes to existing programs or new programs are added to our portfolio, we submit this information to the site. Potential grantees can use this site to find out the objectives, proper uses, and eligibility requirements for our programs.

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. To improve transparency and provide the public information regarding how we are using the resources entrusted to our agency, we use USAspending.gov to post details regarding our, contracts, grant activity, and benefit payments. Our benefit payments include those obligated from the Old Age and Survivors Insurance and Disability Insurance trust funds, as well as those under the Supplemental Security Income and

Special Veterans Benefits programs.

OMB issued guidelines for reporting spending data to the USAspending website in Memorandum M-09-19, Guidance on Data Submission under FFATA. In June 2013, OMB issued guidelines requiring agencies to assure the quality of financial data on USAspending.gov by validating information submitted through the portal. We expect to be in full compliance with these guidelines.

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 (DSVT) 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 Memorandum 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 the Office of Federal Procurement Policy's February 2, 2011 memorandum on addressing misconceptions to improve communication with the industry during the acquisition process, we developed and published a formal Vendor Communication Plan at www.socialsecurity.gov/oag/acq/SSA%20Vendor%20Communication%20Plan.pdf . This plan discusses the steps we will take 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 capability

statements and other marketing information to our 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 our vendor repository at www.socialsecurity.gov/oag/Vendor_Repository.pdf   .

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 D

Freedom of Information Act Program

We employ a centralized approach for handling all Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests and appeals submitted to the agency. Our centralized approach fosters uniformity in training, which enhances our ability to consistently apply 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.
OPD's Organization Chart and regional alignment is available at
 www.socialsecurity.gov/foia/OPD_Organization_Chart.pdf   .

How We Process Requests

We receive FOIA requests via the Internet, by fax, by email, and through the mail. Visit our Make a FOIA Request web page at www.socialsecurity.gov/foia/request.html to learn how to make a FOIA request. We capture all FOIA requests in our electronic Freedom of Information Act (eFOIA) system.

We scan and image all requests submitted by mail, email, and fax into eFOIA; requests submitted using our online 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 and provides the requester with their FOIA tracking number. Additionally, the letter supplies a telephone number to an automated voicemail system 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 a FOIA request or to submit their requests and pay the fee online, which accelerates our response and reduces our administrative costs.

We process requests on "first in, first out" basis. We strive to handle each request within 20 days from the date we receive it. However, sometimes it may take us longer depending on the complexity of the request, the volume of records sought, the location of the documents, 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 our agency.

Improvement Initiatives

We are improving our ability to respond to Privacy Act and FOIA requests in an accurate and timely manner. In FY 2013, we convened a FOIA Business Process 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. We immediately implemented the workgroup's recommendations to create a FOIA Desk Guide and an analyst Case Summary sheet. Based on the workgroup's recommendation, we also added a FOIA Library section to our color-coded case tracking sheets.

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. We conducted several in-house training sessions to push our technology advances. These training sessions included an overview of our shared drive to process requests electronically using Adobe Acrobat and e-Discovery software**.**

Technology

We use technology to enhance our FOIA capabilities:

- In early 2014, the Office of the General Counsel procured the Adobe Acrobat Professional software application for its entire workforce. We conducted in-depth Adobe Acrobat Professional training for our FOIA staff and created our own user guide to assist the staff. Adobe Acrobat Professional will enhance our ability to provide electronic releases for large requests. The Adobe Acrobat Professional software provides electronic redactions and several office automation tools that will allow us to move towards an electronic FOIA process;
- In late 2013, we created a FOIA shared drive to begin automating our internal FOIA process. The shared drive provides one platform for our components to save responsive records, our analysts to review the records and process the cases, and our reviewers to review the cases, all in an electronic format. We are currently testing the FOIA shared drive's usefulness on a case-by-case basis; however, we believe the shared drive will save processing time and enhance our efficiency;
- In 2013, we began using the U.S. Army, Aviation and Missile Research, Development and Engineering Center's Safe File Access Exchange to transmit records between federal agencies. Using this tool allows us to send large encrypted files between agencies and reduces the need to burn and mail CDs or DVDs. Ultimately, this tool saves the agency valuable resources; and
- Finally, we procured Autonomy Introspect, an e-Discovery software package. OPD intends to use this tool to assist with processing voluminous FOIA requests. The software will allow analysts to quickly locate duplicate records (e.g., emails), sort the records, and export the records as PDFs. The tool will eliminate significant work hours and will help process requests faster.

You may find more information about our FOIA program at www.socialsecurity.gov/foia.

Appendix E

Open Government Communications Actions

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

- 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.

In order to increase public knowledge and promote public scrutiny of agency services, we foster

the public's use of the information we release. Our activities in this area include in-person meetings, conference appearances, social media, and other electronic participation and collaboration tools.

We 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 use our Intranet as a platform for keeping our employees informed and engaging them in open government ideas and initiatives. We also use GovDelivery for interested members of the public to get notifications automatically when we update certain web pages.

Tools & Tactics

Externally we use:

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

Internally we use:

- Electronic technology repository for collaboration;
- Weekly video news program;
- Commissioner's messages (email, video, audio);
- Broadcast messages;
- 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; and
- Surveys.

Chart 1 - Social Security Administration organization chart

```
                    Chief Strategic Officer/
                 Performance Improvment Officer
                        Deputy CSO/PIO
                                          Senior Innovation Advisor

  Office of Performance      Office of Strategic      Office of Open      Administrative
  Management and Business    Planning and             Government          Services
  Analytics                  Innovation
```
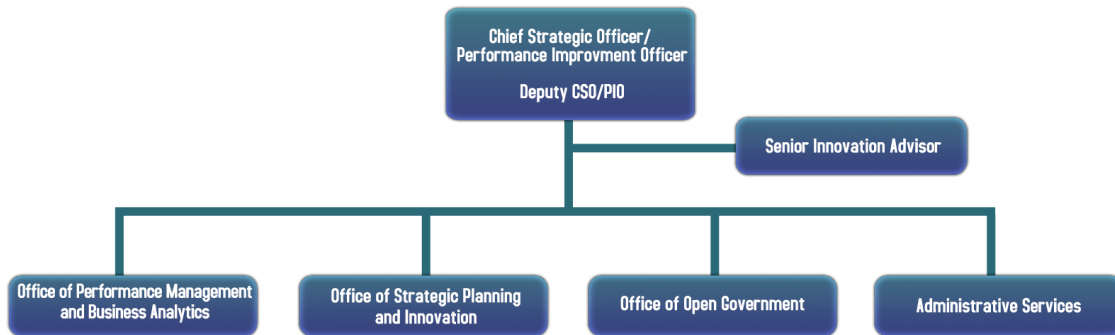
Chart 2 - Office of the Chief Strategic Officer

```
                                 Office of the Commissioner
  Office of Executive            Commissioner of Social Security
  Operations                     Deputy Commissioner
                                 of Social Security

  Office of the Chief        Office of the Chief      Office of the General   Office of the
  Strategic Officer          Actuary                  Counsel                 Inspector General

      Office of the Deputy        Office of the Deputy        Office of the Deputy
      Commissioner, Budget,       Commissioner, Disability    Commissioner, Human
      Finance, Quality and        Adjudication and Review     Resources
      Management

  Office of the Deputy    Office of the Deputy   Office of the Deputy   Office of the Deputy      Office of the Deputy
  Commissioner,           Commissioner,          Commissioner,          Commissioner,             Commissioner,
  Legislation and         Operations             Communications         Retirement and            Systems/ Chief
  Congressional Affairs                                                  Disability Policy         Information Officer
```

Chart 3-Principal Open Government Executives and Components

Executive Lead for Open Government
Alan Lane, *Executive Director of Open Government*

Executive Accountable for Publicly Disseminated Federal Spending Information Integrity
Pete Spencer, *Deputy Commissioner for Budget, Finance, Quality, and Management*

Open Government Steering Committee Components

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

Appendix G

Whistleblower Protection

In August 2013, we published a Whistleblower Protection Ombudsman (WPO) web page to serve as an educational tool for our employees about whistleblower protections. The page includes contact information for the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) WPO, background information on whistleblower protection and answers to commonly asked questions (http://oig.ssa.gov/whistleblower-protection).

In accordance with the Administration's second "Open Government National Action Plan for the United States of America," our WPO is working in conjunction with the agency's Office of Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity (OCREO), to ensure that we and our OIG meet the requirements of the U.S. Office of Special Counsel's Title 5 United States Code section 2302(c) Certification Program.

The WPO, in conjunction with OCREO, will take the following steps to inform our employees of their rights and remedies under the prohibited personnel practices and whistleblower retaliation protection provisions of Title 5 of the United States Code:

- **Postings:** By June 15, 2014, we will display the posters throughout the agency in all personnel and Equal Employment Opportunity offices and other prominent places. We

also will make the posters available on our OCREO and OIG WPO web pages. The WPO prepared two 8½ x11 posters to educate agency employees about the laws regarding prohibited personnel practices (PPP), including whistleblower retaliation, and information regarding the process for making confidential disclosures;

- **New Employees:** Starting June 15, 2014, we and the OIG will provide all new employees with written materials on PPPs, the Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA), the educational role of Social Security's WPO, and Office of Special Counsel's role in enforcing PPPs.   In addition, starting September 1, 2014, we will show all new hires (supervisory and non-supervisory) a WPO-prepared video-on-demand to educate them about the rights and remedies available under the WPA;

- **Employee Notification:** By July 1, 2014, either the Acting Commissioner of Social Security or the WPO will issue a statement to all agency employees outlining their rights and remedies under the WPA and encouraging employees to review the related educational materials on the OIG's WPO website. Employees will receive notification of their rights under the WPA with the annual personnel reminders that the agency issues in October of each year. Further, beginning in May 2015, OCREO will include a statement about the WPA and a link to the WPO website in its Annual Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement;

- **Training:** By August 1, 2014, the WPO will prepare a video-on-demand to be included as part of the orientation for all new employees, as part of the agency's biennial Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act training for all employees, and as part of the training for all new supervisors through the Learning Essentials for New Supervisors training curriculum; and

- **Link:** By June 1, 2014, we will include a descriptive narrative and a link to the WPO and the Office of Special Counsel websites on the OCREO web page. We currently have a link to the Office of Special Counsel website on the WPO website.

Appendix H

Refreshed Plan Milestones and Completion Dates: 2014—2016

To view our progress on the Open Government Plan milestones, please see our implementation progress chart at www.socialsecurity.gov/open/plan-progress-2014.html.

Goals I –IV: Transparency, Participation, Collaboration, Internalizing Open Government

Milestone	Projected Completion Date

Issue refreshed Open Government Plan and share it with public and employees	June 2014
Post new high-value datasets/information holdings to Data.gov in 2014, 2015, and 2016	Ongoing
Foster use of agency data and solicit input from the public for prioritizing future data releases	Fiscal year (FY) 2014 and ongoing
Build an application to register new and update existing data assets	FY 2015
Within the data creation process, develop checkpoints to capture and promote open data	6/30/2014
Incorporate data transparency considerations into the systems development lifecycle so we can release data in standard formats in a more efficient and automated way	FY 2016
Engage the public in providing input for disability program policy development	Ongoing
Provide the public with the opportunity to comment on our proposed regulations	Ongoing
Hold additional engagements on other potential areas for regulations changes	Ongoing
Provide information on other means to provide feedback on various topics	Ongoing
Use focus groups for public input and usability testing before launching online services	Ongoing
Hold engagements with the public and advocates regarding agency's services and programs	Ongoing
Further enhance our Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) website and online reading room	Ongoing
Review FOIA cases to determine practicality of posting information on FOIA Library	Ongoing

Examine alternatives to FOIA system	June 2015
Add items to the Proactive Disclosure web page	Ongoing
Give open government honor awards for employees to recognize achievements in advancing open government principles	Annually
Post our open government goals and our performance against the goals on our website	Ongoing
Build our online repository of congressional and legislative materials that may be of interest either for historical reasons or to promote transparency	Ongoing
Expand the use of social media tools to support transparency, participation, and collaboration	Ongoing
Improve the open government portal	Ongoing
Participate in projects with the Department of Treasury's Do Not Pay Program	FY 2014 and FY 2015
Review the Annual Performance Plan to incorporate open government principles and activities	Annually
Display Whistleblower Protection informational posters throughout the agency and post to appropriate agency intranet pages	Ongoing
Provide new employees with written materials about the Whistleblower Protection Act	June 2014
Issue statement to all agency employees about the Whistleblower Protection Act	June 2014
Prepare and begin to show all new hires a video on demand to educate them about the Whistleblower Protection Act	August 2014
Include Whistleblower Protection Act information with annual personnel reminders	Oct 2014
Flagship: Message Center	
Provide generic updates to *my* Social Security services via personal	FY 2015

email or text messages	
Provide online notices to a specific user group	FY 2016
Add click to talk to *my* Social Security services	FY 2016
Major Initiatives	
Health Information Technology	
Onboard additional medical providers and connect with Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on the eHealth Exchange	FYs 2014 and 2015
Collaborate with government-wide health information technology (IT) policy and standards setting advisory panels, workgroups and task forces	Ongoing
Increase the percentage of initial level claims containing health IT medical evidence We anticipate this percentage reaching 2.5 percent in FY 2014 and 4 percent in FY 2015	FYs 2014 and 2015
Wounded Warrior Collaboration	
Pilot using the nationwide eHealth Exchange to request and receive medical records from DoD and VA	2014
Expedite the processing of Social Security disability claims of all Veterans who possess a VA compensation rating of 100% Permanent & Total, through all levels of adjudication using a manual process	2014
Implement a fully automated process that will automatically flag and expedite claims of all veterans who possess a VA compensation rating of 100% Permanent & Total throughout the disability claims process	2015
Data Exchanges	
Collect and share additional prisoner data as authorized by section 204 of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013	Ongoing
Upon enactment of new legislation, work with the Department of Treasury to provide the public plus state Death Master File to the Do Not Pay List	TBD, based on date and language in the legislation
Help grow the data exchange community of practice	2014-2016

Other SSA Plans and Reports

Service Delivery Plan

Customer Service Plan

Web Improvement Plan

Agency Strategic Plans

Digital Government Strategy Plans

Annual Performance Plan

Information Resources Management Strategic Plan

Federal Data Center Consolidation Initiative Plan

Reports From The Board Of Trustees

Performance & Accountability Report

Data Inventory and Plan for Releasing High-Value Data

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Annual Report