Social Security Administration

FISCAL YEARS 2018 - 2022

AGENCY STRATEGIC PLAN

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A Message From The Acting Commissioner

The Social Security Administration touches the lives of nearly every member of the public. For more than 80 years, we have delivered critical services at significant times like birth, marriage, retirement, disability, and death.

In fiscal year 2018, approximately 71 million individuals will depend on the benefits we provide. It is my honor to serve as Acting Commissioner of the agency responsible for this important work. From my first day in this role, I have made it clear that we must be mission-focused and mission-driven.

I am pleased to issue the Agency Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2018–2022, which will serve as a blueprint to achieve our mission. We will focus on:

- Delivering Services Effectively;
- Improving the Way We Do Business; and
- Ensuring Stewardship.

Our programs and services have evolved. We have also updated the ways in which we provide those services, taking advantage of technology while continuing to be the face of government in our communities. We take seriously our job to respond to the public's needs and to be trustworthy stewards of our resources and taxpayer dollars. This strategic plan explains how we will continue to deliver necessary services and maintain the public's trust.

Respectfully,

Nancy A. Berryhill

Baltimore, Maryland
February 12, 2018

Our Mission

Deliver quality Social Security services to the public.

Our Programs

We administer three programs under the Social Security Act: the Old-Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) program, the Disability Insurance (DI) program, and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. These programs provide vital support to some of the most vulnerable members of our society, including people with disabilities, surviving family members, retirees, and the blind and disabled with limited income and resources. In fiscal year (FY) 2018, we expect to pay more than $1 trillion to an average of 71[1] million individuals each month.

- **Old-Age and Survivors Insurance**: Created in 1935, the OASI program provides retirement and survivors benefits to qualified workers and their family members. In FY 2018, we will pay about $851 billion in OASI benefits to an average of 53 million beneficiaries a month, including 88 percent of the population aged 65 and over.

- **Disability Insurance**: Established in 1956, the DI program provides benefits for workers who become disabled and their families. In FY 2018, we will pay about $149 billion in DI benefits to an average of 11 million disabled beneficiaries and their family members a month.

- **Supplemental Security Income**: Established in 1972, the SSI program provides financial support to aged, blind, and disabled adults and children who have limited income and resources. In FY 2018, we will pay approximately $54 billion in Federal benefits and State supplementary payments to an average of 8 million recipients a month.

In addition, we support national programs administered by other Federal and State agencies, as required by law, such as Medicare, Employees Retirement Income Security Act of 1974, Coal Act, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly Food Stamps), Help America Vote Act, State Children's Health Insurance Program, E-Verify, Medicaid, and Federal Benefits for Veterans.

We administer our programs in accordance with law, regulations, and our program policy. We have implemented enterprise risk management processes to improve the effectiveness of our organization. Our goals are informed by both the strategic opportunities ahead as well as our management of risks that threaten our core mission activities.

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[1] The sum total of individuals that we expect to pay in all three programs is greater than 71 million, because some individuals receive benefits from more than one program concurrently. For example, some disability beneficiaries qualify for benefits in both the DI and SSI programs.

Our Organization

Approximately 62,000 Federal employees and 15,000 State employees serve the public from a network of offices across the country and around the world. Most of our employees serve the public directly or provide support to employees who do.

We administer our programs and services through a network of more than 1,200 field offices. Each day, approximately 170,000 people visit and 250,000 call one of our field offices nationwide for various reasons, such as to file claims, ask questions, or update their information.

Our National 800 Number handles over 30 million calls each year. Callers can conduct a variety of business transactions by speaking directly with an agent or through our 24-hour automated services, which include requesting benefit verification letters, ordering replacement Medicare cards, and obtaining claim status updates.

Our processing centers (PC) handle complex Social Security retirement, survivors, and disability claims, as well as provide support to our National 800 Number. State agencies make disability determinations for initial claims, reconsiderations, and continuing disability reviews. Administrative law judges in our hearings offices and administrative appeals judges in our Appeals Council decide appealed cases.

For more information about our organization and its functions, visit our organizational structure webpage at www.ssa.gov/org.

Strategic Goal 1: Deliver Services Effectively

We must be able to deliver our services effectively to the people who come to us for assistance, regardless of whether it is in-person, on the telephone, or online. As we interact with the public every day, our employees experience firsthand the impact of our programs. We understand that doing our work well matters. We also know that our programs are not stagnant and that advancements in technology provide opportunity to do business differently, and often more efficiently and conveniently.

Strategic Objective 1.1 – Improve Service Delivery

Over 1 million people are waiting an average of 605 days for an answer on their hearing request. Although in FY 2017 we began reducing the hearings backlog, these wait times remain unacceptable. Therefore, one of our top priorities will be to reduce the hearings backlog and the time it takes get a hearing decision.

Our PCs handle actions that arise after we determine benefit eligibility and support our field and hearing offices by handling appeals decisions, collecting debt, correcting records, performing program integrity work, and processing other complex benefit claims. In January 2016, the number of actions pending in the PCs hit an all-time high. We will improve service delivery by further prioritizing work and enlisting automation to reduce the PC backlog.

Even as we tackle the backlogs in our hearing offices and PCs, we will continue to enhance our online services. In FY 2018, the public will conduct over 190 million transactions through our online services. As we continue to expand service options and functionality, we expect more people to take advantage of the convenience of online services. To improve service delivery, we will continue to educate the public about our secure online service options.

Strategies

- Advance and update the Compassionate And REsponsive Service (CARES) plan to address the number of pending hearing decisions and lengthy wait times

- Implement a comprehensive approach to reduce the number of pending PC actions

- Increase the use of online services

Strategic Objective 1.2 – Expand Service Delivery Options

Our biennial survey of future customers shows an increasing preference for conducting business with us online or by telephone. We continue to expand our suite of automated and online service options. We are pleased that 7 of our 8 online applications earned scores of at least 80 out of 100 in the Foresee E-Government Satisfaction Index. These high scores help us confirm that we

are providing services people want to use. (Note: A score of 80 or higher is considered the threshold for excellence.[2])

Since it launched in 2012, *my* Social Security, a convenient and safe option for many people who want to handle certain business with us online, has registered more than 32 million users and consistently ranks as one of the top 10 in customer satisfaction for all Federal websites. Over the next five years, we will continue to expand *my* Social Security's capabilities by adding additional services for both individual and third party users and improving existing options.

Strategies

- Respond to customer feedback on how we connect with the public and improve the customer experience

- Strengthen and enhance the *my* Social Security login and registration process

- Add additional services to *my* Social Security

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[2] ForeSee Experience Index: E-Government Q4 2016-Web

Strategic Goal 2: Improve the Way We Do Business

Improving the way we do business is imperative to delivering services effectively to the public. We must continuously evaluate our policies and business processes using data and modern methods to ensure we meet service demands and reinforce efficient and effective service. Recognizing that our current technology infrastructure and existing business systems would not allow us to serve the public the way we wanted or the way they expected us to, we developed a plan to modernize our information technology (IT) systems. This modernization effort is foundational to our overall ability to improve service to the public.

Strategic Objective 2.1 - Streamline Policies and Processes

Over the last 80 years, our programs have expanded and our policies have evolved creating a level of complexity that can be difficult to fully understand. To improve our accuracy and efficiency, create opportunities to implement technology, and ensure the public understands their options, responsibilities, and rights, we must streamline our policies, processes, and procedures. We are using data analytics to identify opportunities to improve our business processes.

Strategies

- Expand our use of electronic medical evidence

- Strengthen employment support programs

- Explore policy and program areas where rules and agency practices need to be modernized

- Modernize the Social Security Statement to increase the public's understanding of our programs

Strategic Objective 2.2 – Accelerate Information Technology Modernization

We maintain the benefit, earnings items, and certain vital records of nearly every member of the public on systems designed over 30 years ago. Technological change is accelerating at a relentless pace and offers us remarkable opportunities to change, transform, and greatly improve the way we serve the public. Yet, these newer technologies can also be disruptive to legacy systems, business processes, and ultimately to the way we work. Our dated IT infrastructure has grown increasingly fragile, costlier to maintain, and more challenging to secure, and it does not efficiently meet current demands for our services.

Our IT Modernization Plan describes a thoughtful and deliberate multi-year agency initiative to modernize Social Security's major systems, using modern architectures, agile software

engineering methods, cloud provisioning, and shared services. We are embarking on an initiative to transform the way we design and build systems and ultimately the way we work and how we serve the public. Our IT modernization vision is to establish a fully integrated IT and Business team that delivers modern business platforms that improve our ability to respond more rapidly to changing needs at a manageable cost. We will provide an enhanced customer experience for millions of beneficiaries across an expanded mix of service options in a cost-effective and secure manner.

Recent breaches at other Federal and State agencies underscore the importance of securing networks and sensitive data. While our cybersecurity program is comparable to that of other Federal agencies, it remains costly and difficult to integrate with our current legacy systems. We use knowledge of the threat landscape, advanced technologies, and skilled cyber professionals to secure our networks from threats, both foreign and domestic. Cyberattacks are ever changing, and we must remain vigilant to prevent any intrusion on our networks.

Strategies

- Modernize IT infrastructure to respond to evolving business needs

- Build modern applications that improve the customer and employee experience

- Strengthen our cybersecurity program and modernize our cybersecurity infrastructure

- Modernize disability case processing

Strategic Goal 3: Ensure Stewardship

We are committed to being good stewards of taxpayer dollars to ensure the public has confidence that we manage their tax dollars wisely. We take the stewardship of our programs seriously, and we will continue to demonstrate a commitment to sound management practices. To ensure stewardship and the efficient administration of our programs, we will focus our efforts in three major areas: improving program integrity; enhancing our fraud prevention and detection activities; and improving workforce performance and increasing accountability.

Strategic Objective 3.1 - Improve Program Integrity

In FY 2017, we paid more than $82 billion in Federal benefits on average across our programs each month. As good stewards of the programs entrusted to us, we must ensure that we pay individuals the correct amount–neither overpaying nor underpaying them. Making the right payment to the right person at the right time has always been one of our priorities. We conduct ongoing stewardship reviews to confirm individuals receive the benefits they are due and to monitor our performance. In the coming years, we will remain focused on the integrity of our programs, including minimizing improper payments, particularly in the SSI program where program complexities pose challenges. We are also committed to continuing our efforts to achieve high payment accuracy while using all available tools to recover overpayments.

Strategies

- Collaborate with partners to address improper payments
- Address the root causes of improper payments to prevent their recurrence
- Modernize our debt management and debt collection business processes

Strategic Objective 3.2 – Enhance Fraud Prevention and Detection Activities

We take seriously our responsibility to prevent and detect fraud. We centrally manage our anti-fraud efforts and are developing consistent anti-fraud policies; refining employee training; and solidifying relationships with other Federal, State, and private partners to identify individuals who wrongfully obtain Social Security and SSI payments.

We plan to expand the use of data analytics and predictive modeling to enhance fraud prevention and detection in our programs. We will integrate data from multiple sources and use industry-proven predictive analytics software to identify high-risk transactions for further review. With these models, we will better identify suspicious and evolving patterns of activities in our workloads and prevent fraudulent actions from occurring.

Strategies

- Expand the use of data analytics and increase internal and external partnerships

- Develop and conduct regular fraud risk assessments of our programs

Strategic Objective 3.3 – Improve Workforce Performance and Increase Accountability

Our employees remain our most important asset. We are accountable for ensuring they have the training and technology they need to take timely, quality actions. Feedback, including clear and measurable expectations, is an important tool to ensure our employees know how they are performing.

Likewise, our managers need to understand how to maximize employee performance so that we can serve the public. We must support them in that effort by establishing expert teams who will be available to provide information and assistance in real time. We will also be requiring additional management training and working with our managers to help them engage and communicate with employees.

While many of our employees are attracted to Federal employment by the benefits and flexibilities we provide, they also specifically choose our agency because they believe in, or have personal experience with, our mission. Our employees have some of the most difficult but also the most rewarding jobs. We must ensure that they remain aware of the importance—to real people in our communities—of a job well done. We must ensure that they know how much we—and the public—value their effort. Therefore, we must be attentive to issues they bring to our attention from requests to simplify policies to demanding that we hold all employees accountable.

Our framework for comprehensive human capital management includes three major focus areas: workforce management, succession management, and performance management.

Strategies

- Enhance accountability for managing performance through program and automation improvements

- Align employee development with agency succession plans

- Invest in training and support for managers to effectively address performance and conduct challenges

Strategic Objective 3.4 – Improve Organizational Effectiveness and Reduce Costs

Our administrative expenses continue to be less than 1.3 percent of the combined Social Security and SSI benefits we pay. We are taking steps to reduce our real estate footprint and to realign our organization to meet the current demands for our services. We are also leading efforts to improve strategic partnerships with other government and private entities and to expand data sharing opportunities with Federal and State agencies for better public service and operational savings.

Strategies

- Align our real estate footprint with current and future business needs

- Streamline our organization and how we manage our workloads

- Improve strategic partnerships with other government and private entities

Appendix 1: Key External Factors We Must Consider

Many macro factors may affect how our agency operates over the next five years.

Social

About 80 million members of the Baby Boom generation have entered their most disability-prone years and retirement years, which has increased our workloads. As we improve and expand our service delivery options, we will continue to consider the increased size and diversity of the population we serve.

Technology

Americans are becoming increasingly reliant upon technology. Nearly 9 of 10 American adults use the Internet, and nearly 4 of 5 use a smartphone, including nearly 3 of 4 Americans between the ages of 50 and 64.[3]

Additionally, sharp increases in the ability to share, store, and analyze data have transformed enterprise-level information technology, but requires substantially different tools and approaches than what we have used in the past. As the digital network of intelligent systems and devices grows more interconnected, enterprises and customers will see significant changes in how they interact.[4]

Workforce Trends

We project that more than 21,000 agency employees will retire by the end of fiscal year 2022. These retirements along with regular ongoing attrition will cause a loss of institutional knowledge and potentially impair succession management and knowledge transfer. We must take affirmative steps to mitigate these effects through effective planning, recruitment, and hiring.

As the Baby Boomers retire, the workforce will continue to include a higher concentration of Generation X and Millennials, requiring a shift toward employment strategies that enhance our ability to retain talent within those generations. To retain talent and remain an employer of choice, we must conduct sound human capital planning and embrace robust workforce initiatives, including a thorough skills-gap analysis. These efforts will help us address the differing generational expectations and capabilities of the future workforce.

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[3] Pew Research Center, "Record shares of Americans now own smartphones, have home broadband." January 12, 2017.

[4] Gartner. "Top 10 Strategic Technology Trends for 2017." March 21, 2017.

Appendix 2: How We Measure Our Progress

We have identified two Agency Priority Goals we plan to achieve in the next two years. These goals are aggressive and directly support our strategic goals. To ensure our success in these areas, we conduct quarterly internal progress reviews and take necessary action to improve our results and reduce costs.

1. Improve customer service in the hearings process by prioritizing those individuals who have waited the longest for a hearings decision.

2. Improve the integrity of the Supplemental Security Income program by focusing our efforts on reducing overpayments.

Other Measurement

The Commissioner and other agency executives review a monthly tracking report, which assesses agency progress in achieving the performance targets in our Annual Performance Plan. We develop monthly performance expectations at the beginning of the fiscal year and use them to assess monthly progress. The lead executive responsible for each measure provides a brief explanation for any performance that is behind expectation.

The Government Performance and Results Act, Modernization Act of 2010 (P.L. 111-352) requires agencies address Federal Cross-Agency Priority Goals in Agency Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans. Please refer to **Performance.gov** for information on Federal Cross-Agency Priority Goals and the agency's contribution to those goals where applicable.

Appendix 3: How We Evaluate Our Programs

We routinely conduct studies and surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs. Continuous evaluation of the collection of program data, research, and analyses assists us in identifying strengths and weaknesses in our programs. Information from the program evaluations assists us in developing strategies to address the major challenges we face and improve the day-to-day administration of our programs. We complete many of our evaluations annually while others may be one-time efforts. The following charts list some of our significant evaluations, a description of these evaluations, and the timeframe for completion.

STRATEGIC GOAL 1 – DELIVER EFFECTIVE SERVICES		
Evaluation	**Description**	**Completed**
ForeSee Experience Index E-Government Report	The ForeSee Experience Index (FXI) E-Government report measures citizen satisfaction with government websites.	Quarterly
Disability Initial Claims Report Card	Measures customer satisfaction with the disability application process at the initial levels in alternate years.	Biannual
Disability Hearings Process Report Card	Measures customer satisfaction with the disability application process at the hearing level in alternate years.	Biannual
Field Office Telephone Service Evaluation	Evaluates our accuracy in handling the public's calls to field offices.	Annually
National 800 Number Telephone Service Evaluation	Evaluates our accuracy in handling the public's calls to the National 800 Number.	Annually
Overall Service Satisfaction Surveys	• Telephone Service Satisfaction Surveys evaluate callers' satisfaction with our National 800 Number and field office telephone services. • Office Visitor Surveys evaluate visitors' satisfaction with our field offices (including Social Security Card Centers) and hearing offices.	Annually
Prospective Client Survey	Surveys people between ages 50 and 64 to identify service expectations and preferences of the upcoming wave of retirees.	Biennial
Retirement Application Survey	Measures customer satisfaction with the retirement application process and identifies service expectations and preferences among recent retirees.	Biennial

STRATEGIC GOAL 2 – IMPROVE THE WAY WE DO BUSINESS		
Evaluation	**Description**	**Completed**
Evaluation of the Ticket to Work and other employment support programs	Examines employment patterns and outcomes of disabled beneficiaries, including those who use employment services such as the Ticket to Work, Partnership Plus, and Work Incentives Planning and Assistance programs.	Continuously
Federal Information Security Management Act Report	Reports to Congress whether our overall information technology security programs and practices comply with the *Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002*.	Annually
Pre-effectuation Review of Disability Determinations	Assesses the accuracy of initial and reconsideration disability allowances made by disability determination services (DDS) as required in the Social Security Act.	Annually
Safeguard Security Report	We provide examples of our policies and procedures to demonstrate how we safeguard personally identifiable information and Federal tax information. We submit this report to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) on an annual basis.	Annually
Safeguard Review	Evaluates the use of Federal tax information and the measures we employ to protect this information. This review is an onsite evaluation completed in collaboration with the IRS.	Triennial

STRATEGIC GOAL 3 – ENSURE STEWARDSHIP		
Evaluation	**Description**	**Completed**
Annual Report of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance and Federal Disability Insurance Trust Funds	Reports annually to Congress on the financial and actuarial status of the two Social Security trust funds.	Annually
Annual Report to Congress on Medical Continuing Disability Reviews	A legislatively mandated report that provides summary information on continuing disability reviews (CDR) conducted for a completed fiscal year, including actuarial estimates of the lifetime savings in Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance; Supplemental Security Income (SSI); Medicare; and Medicaid benefits resulting from the reviews conducted during that fiscal year.	Annually
Annual Report of the Supplemental Security Income Program	Reports annually to the President and Congress on the status of the SSI program and provides 25-year projections of program participation and costs.	Annually

Enumeration Accuracy Report	Assesses the accuracy of original Social Security numbers assigned during the fiscal year.	Triennial
Evaluation of the Continuing Disability Review Enforcement Operation Predictive Model	Evaluates the results of predictive model used to score work issue CDR cases to ensure that cases most likely to result in overpayments are prioritized and worked first.	Annually
Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey	Assesses employee perspectives of organizational performance across several major human capital areas: recruitment, development, performance culture, leadership, job satisfaction, and personal work experiences.	Annually
Human Capital Evaluations	Monitors and evaluates the results of our human capital strategies, policies, and equal employment opportunity programs, as well as our adherence to merit system principles, including cyclical Human Resources Management and Delegated Examining Unit Assessments of components across the agency.	Annually
Management Directive 715 Report	Describes the status of our efforts to establish and maintain effective equal employment opportunity programs under Section 717 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and effective affirmation action programs under Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.	Annually
Targeted Denial Review	Assesses the accuracy of initial and reconsideration disability denials made by DDSs.	Annually
Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Stewardship Review	Measures the accuracy of payments to persons receiving Social Security retirement, survivors, or disability benefits.	Annually
Supplemental Security Income Stewardship Review	Measures the accuracy of payments to persons receiving SSI benefits by reviewing all non-medical factors of eligibility and payment.	Annually
Supplemental Security Income Transaction Accuracy Review	Review of non-medical aspects of eligibility to evaluate the adjudicative accuracy of SSI initial claims, redeterminations, and limited issues to ensure compliance with Operational policy.	Annually
Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Transaction Accuracy Review	Review of non-medical factors of eligibility to evaluate recently processed retirement, survivors, and disability insurance claims to ensure compliance with operational policy.	Triennial

Appendix 4: Communications and Outreach

In developing this strategic plan, we consulted with employees, advisory groups, Congress, and other stakeholders. We solicited feedback from the various groups on our high-level outline. As we implement this plan, we will continue outreach and engagement with appropriate external and internal audiences. Specifically, we will:

- Provide periodic reports on our progress to all interested parties;

- Educate and inform internal and external audiences about our activities to innovate and improve service;

- Collect ideas and feedback from internal and external partners about ways to improve our programs and services;

- Consult with our stakeholders on technological developments aimed at improving efficiencies and customer on-demand service access; and

- Hold advocate meetings, roundtable discussions, and listening sessions, and attend conferences to engage in two-way dialogue with our customers.

We also performed an environmental scan to identify current and emerging trends that directly or indirectly affect our mission, workloads, and business processes. Socioeconomic and demographic changes, as well as advancements in technology, have implications for the future of our programs, workforce, and service delivery.

We continue to use our online site, social media, and mobile presence as a platform for engaging the public. We share information and provide opportunities for collaboration and participation using Internet-based forums such as Facebook and Twitter, and Social Security's blogs and website.

SocialSecurity.gov