

**Social Security Administration**

**Fiscal Years 1996-1999**

**General  
Business  
Plan**

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SSA's  
General Business  
Plan

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# Part I

# Executive Summary

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## Overview

SSA's *General Business Plan (GBP)* is a new component of SSA's Unified Planning System. It complements SSA's long-range *Agency Strategic Plan (ASP)* and various shorter-term tactical plans and other planning and implementation documents. This GBP represents the first formal, written compilation of the ongoing business planning previously done in SSA on a decentralized basis. It is designed to provide the reader with:

- Understanding of the fundamental drivers of our strategy: the needs and expectations of our customers and the resource and workload challenges we face;
- Awareness of the three interrelated approaches (streamlining, reengineering and automation/continuous improvement) that will enable SSA to maintain current service levels overall while investing some of the resources saved into those areas where we must improve or expand our activities;
- Appreciation of the need to invest in our most critical enablers: the SSA/State Disability Determination workforce and technology; and
- A comprehensive picture of the overall state of our business processes and service delivery modes along with information about the key initiatives that will lead to improvements.

In all that SSA does, three overarching goals remain constant:

- Rebuilding Public Confidence in Social Security
- Providing World-Class Service
- Providing a Nurturing Environment for Employees

Many of the activities described in this plan will rebuild public confidence, including actions that improve stewardship of the programs, and create a better working environment for employees. However, the primary focus at this time is on service delivery.

SSA delivers high-quality service to millions of customers year in and year out. *Since the focus of the GBP is on those activities that SSA is undertaking to improve its services, this document does not detail the many ways in which SSA is successfully delivering its services.* Instead, the GBP provides an assessment of where SSA is today in its basic business processes and service delivery interfaces, the shortcomings in those areas, and SSA's mid-range plans to improve these aspects of its performance.

The SSA strategic planning process has evolved since its beginning in 1975 to an integrated planning and budgeting system. It enables the agency to integrate and assess performance across a wide range of program responsibilities through a national network of facilities. In order to facilitate planning and managing the delivery of services to the American people, the work that SSA does is categorized in five core business processes:

- ▶ Enumeration
- ▶ Earnings
- ▶ Claims
- ▶ Postentitlement
- ▶ Informing the public

As an additional way of planning and managing work, SSA looks across the ways that the public accesses services. There are currently six service delivery interfaces:

- Face-to-Face Service
- Field Office Telephone Service
- 800 Number Telephone Service
- Mail
- Face-to-Face Service Provided by Third Parties
- Automated Self-Service

## **Critical Elements of SSA's Strategy**

### ***A. Strategy Drivers***

The strategy drivers are powerful external factors that shape the focus, timing, and direction of Agency planning and operations. Each factor profoundly influences all SSA activity:

#### **1) Customer Expectations**

To more closely link SSA's plans for service improvements with explicit, high-priority needs of the American people, SSA has undertaken a series of disciplined actions to obtain customer input. These efforts will continue. Those completed thus far include:

- A series of focus groups conducted throughout the country with Social Security beneficiaries and the general public to find out directly from customers what they need and expect from SSA.
- Direct surveys, conducted in-person or by phone, with over 10,000 customers.
- Comment cards sent via mail to 22,000 customers or completed via telephone contact with 4,000 additional customers.
- Questionnaires and discussions about world-class service with external organizations that have a keen interest in how SSA provides service.

Questionnaires were also distributed to all 65,000 SSA employees to seek their views on world-class service, to ask them what barriers prevent them from providing it, and to solicit their ideas and suggestions. In parallel, over 2,500 employees, and their union representatives, from clerical workers to senior managers, participated in interactive group discussions about world-class service at SSA.

From these efforts we confirmed that confidence in the Social Security program is low and knowledge of Social Security programs is limited. At the same time, most customers (almost 80 percent) are satisfied with the service provided by SSA although customer satisfaction with the disability program is significantly lower than for other SSA programs. Being treated with courtesy is clearly the most important characteristic of service for many of our customers.

*There were five strong themes emerging from the customer research that must influence how SSA designs its processes and service delivery interfaces in the future:*

- Providing customers with a choice in how they deal with SSA is important. Although some prefer face-to-face service, an ever increasing number prefer telephone service and would like SSA to provide additional services through its 800 Number.
- Ready access to SSA's services is important to customers, with minimal waits for face-to-face service in field offices and fewer busy signals when attempting to call SSA's national 800 Number or the local office.
- Customers are most satisfied when transactions are completely handled at the first point of contact.
- Customers would like a single point of contact for handling complex transactions.

- Government services should be seamless and provided in a single place for conducting like business.

## 2) SSA's Workload & Resource Challenges

SSA does not have unlimited resources to devote to improved services. SSA recognizes that the taxpayer, as much as the beneficiary/customer, is a key stakeholder in SSA. Our efforts to maintain and improve service must always be done in a manner that promotes economy and efficiency.

Over the next 5 years, significant workload increases are expected to be in the following areas:

- Claims and related appeals for disability benefits;
- Postentitlement work related to increasing numbers of beneficiaries;
- Personalized Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statements (PEBES) to increasingly larger segments of the population;
- Continuing Disability Reviews (CDRs); and
- Provisions restricting benefits to individuals disabled by drug addiction or alcoholism (DA&A).

Because SSA has a strategy for significantly improving the way services are delivered, it will be able to meet the challenges of increasing work and reduced resources. Without this strategy, if SSA were to continue to process its work as it has in the past, its customers would be facing severe service deterioration in all areas.

In accordance with PL 103-226, SSA must reduce the size of its workforce overall. In order to maintain and improve service, the reduction must be managed so that employees are redeployed from types of work (e.g., management and staff positions) as well as from business processes that can be made more efficient to those that are experiencing growing workloads.

## ***B. The Business Approach***

The overall business approach incorporates three related approaches, each responsive to customer expectations and SSA's workload/resource challenge.

### **1) Streamlining**

SSA has begun to streamline and restructure the organization with three objectives: fewer organizational layers, increased employee to supervisor ratios, and fewer positions in offices not providing direct public service. All SSA components are implementing individual streamlining plans. Redeployment and retraining of existing personnel as well as strategic offers of early retirement will be used to achieve these objectives.

Streamlining will result in more employee empowerment and a more flexible organization. SSA plans to save over 1,500 full-time equivalents (FTEs) through streamlining by fiscal year (FY) 1996, and almost 3,500 FTEs by FY 1999.

### **2) Reengineering**

SSA was among the first public-sector organizations to successfully initiate business process reengineering. SSA is currently implementing a reengineered disability claims process, referred to as the Disability Process Redesign Project, which will save over 2,900 FTEs by FY 1999.

As SSA has examined its business and support processes, it has become clear that SSA's ability to successfully implement the disability project and future work is dependent on the process by which SSA develops its policies and disseminates instructions to the workforce. In order to dramatically improve the policy process, a reengineering project is beginning in February 1995.

A broad project, to apply reengineering principles to the entire SSA enterprise, is getting underway. This larger effort will entail very high-level reengineering of all Agency core business processes in a uniform manner at the same time. The intent of the enterprise-wide effort is to identify significant process changes that can be implemented relatively quickly and with a high efficiency and/or service payoff. More in-depth reengineering efforts will be targeted to those processes requiring the most dramatic improvement. This approach will ensure that all Agency initiatives are consistent with an all-encompassing model. This project will be supported by a tandem effort to baseline, document and analyze all SSA core business processes. SSA expects savings of more than 3,200 FTEs by FY 1999 through new reengineering efforts.

### **3) Automation/Continuous Improvement**

SSA continuously improves and automates work processes to maximize efficiency and aid service delivery. As in the past, these process changes will continue to be integrated with automation improvements. This linkage has been key to SSA's ability to downsize to a significant degree in the past.

Current SSA plans project significant efficiency savings from automation/continuous improvement initiatives outlined in this plan—more than 6,500 FTEs in FY 1999, when compared to the FY 1993 base. The most critical of these automation initiatives is the Intelligent Workstation/Local Area Network (IWS/LAN), described in the next section as a key enabler.

## ***C. Key Enablers***

The key enablers are initiatives of such fundamental importance that the SSA business approach cannot succeed without them. The investments required by the enablers will return significant improvements in service and efficiency. The two key enablers for SSA's Business Plan are the workforce and technology.

## 1) Workforce

The SSA and State Disability Determination Services (DDS) workforce will always be the most valuable and enabling resource of the Agency. SSA needs every Federal and State position allotted by current staffing targets to keep up with rising workloads demands, and to realize service improvements in key areas (e.g., the 800 Number and disability claims service). While the workforce is technically skilled and customer focused today, SSA's benchmarking of world-class organizations confirms the view that employees must be empowered, continually trained, and supported with the necessary tools and environment in order to deliver world-class service.

The SSA and State DDS workforce understand the power of modern technology in the workplace and are the greatest advocates of Agency investments in new, enabling tools such as intelligent workstations, local area networks, interactive kiosks, CD-ROM and document imaging devices, video-conferencing, electronic mail, and expert systems and other advanced software. Without modern office automation and the efficiencies that these technology-based tools provide, the ability of SSA employees to keep up with their work will be seriously diminished.

In addition, as business processes are reengineered it is likely that more job functions will be consolidated into generalist job descriptions (e.g., a disability claim manager as envisioned in the Disability Process Redesign). Movement towards employees taking on additional duties is not new to SSA. Employees with multiple skills means a more flexible workforce (e.g., more employees available to handle 800 Number calls on peak days), and more importantly, moves to fulfill a strong desire of SSA customers to be able to deal with one employee throughout the course of even complex business transactions. In order for employees to assume more generalist positions, they must be supported by modern workplace tools such as IWS/LAN, and expert systems software. Otherwise the breadth of knowledge required by complex program rules, and the time demands from "clerical" functions (e.g., filing paper records) that will only disappear through effective applications of technology, will be overwhelming.

Employee empowerment will increase in SSA as work processes are reengineered, and as the organization is streamlined, with fewer layers of management. There will be greater flexibility in work assignments and increased opportunities for employees to perform work in varied capacities. Decision making will become more decentralized, and as a result of the initiative to reengineer the policy process, it is likely that empowered employees will have a more active role in the formulation and delivery of Agency policy.

Ongoing investments in employee training and career development will be crucial to continued workforce effectiveness at SSA. Streamlining plans will result in a number of employees redeploying to direct service positions from management and staff support jobs. All of these people will require new skills training. In fact, the streamlining plan, which results in fewer supervisors, rests on the premise that employees will be well trained and retrained as they need to be redeployed to different work.

Significant training needs will also flow from process reengineering and continuous improvement/automation efforts. For example, a multi-year, phased training approach is an integral part of the Disability Process Redesign Project, and similar large training efforts are also planned in support of technology-based initiatives such as IWS/LAN. These initiatives will only succeed if the workforce is adequately prepared for change by a strong and continuous training program.

SSA is also committed to providing a safe and nurturing workplace environment for employees. Employees are increasingly concerned with wellness issues, and in balancing their personal needs and career demands. SSA will continue to provide services and facilities to as many employees as possible to meet fitness, day care, elder care and other personal, yet job impacting needs. Within the constraints of mission demands to serve the public, SSA will also continue to seek ways to provide employees latitude to arrange their work schedule to accommodate their personal lives. Finally, SSA is currently reevaluating physical security controls in Agency facilities based in part on employee concerns expressed over increased face-to-face public contact opportunities suggested by new features of the Disability Process Redesign.

## 2) Technology

If SSA is to make full use of its first key enabler, the SSA and DDS workforce, it must provide its people with current technology. Currently, SSA staff depend upon outdated equipment that has been long abandoned by the private sector. Timely implementation of the Intelligent Workstation/Local Area Network (IWS/LAN) initiative is essential. Without adequate funding of this project, SSA's technology will become an obstacle to improving service instead of a key enabler.

The benefits from the IWS/LAN investment come in two phases. Benefits are achieved immediately because SSA staff gain access to many new software applications. For example, this technology will support an electronic forms application that can include the entire range of forms used in SSA offices, including those with infrequent usage, making electronic forms available to employees where and when they are needed, and eliminating the entire administrative process and expense of ordering, shipping, receiving, and inventory of forms. IWS/LAN will also eliminate the processes needed today to manage the ordering, receipt, distribution and filing of transmittals to the Program Operations Manual System (POMS), and save administrative costs including \$2 million in printing and mailing, by making POMS available to each employee on CD-ROM. These and other efficiencies gained will enable staff to spend time on service rather than administrative work.

A second phase of benefits are achieved once the IWS/LAN infrastructure has been more fully deployed. In this regard, the IWS/LAN provides critical capabilities that support the streamlining and current and future reengineered processes. Among these capabilities is the totally electronic storage of all claims and postentitlement information, including imaged documents, that can be transmitted to wherever the appropriate employee happens to be located. It also enables two employees in different locations to simultaneously work on a case (e.g., a disability claims manager and a consulting physician) and to jointly interview the claimant when videoconferencing is added. Having the capability to move the work, without manual handoffs, to where the employees are will be essential to meeting customer needs in a streamlined SSA.

SSA's current systems infrastructure is a highly centralized, mainframe-based architecture that relies on very aged, "dumb" computer terminals used by frontline employees to get information to and from SSA's mainframe computers. SSA is moving quickly towards the establishment of a truly cooperative architecture that will use the IWS/LAN as the basic automation platform. (A cooperative architecture is an automated systems configuration that uses both centralized and localized processing platforms.) The cooperative architecture will allow SSA to determine the optimal mode of processing for each workload, and to take advantage of emerging technology in the delivery of services to the public. For example, it is this architecture that will permit SSA, in a cost effective manner, to blend complex tools such as document imaging, expert systems, and multi-media conferencing. IWS/LAN will also improve the availability and timeliness of information to employees and appropriate users, and help build a more reliable capability for backup and recovery in the event of a crisis.

The IWS/LAN technical approach has been successfully tested in SSA over a period of several years, and during that same period, the IWS/LAN concept and operating results have been repeatedly evaluated by external monitors and various consulting experts. These evaluators have generally agreed with both the need for a new technology infrastructure and the basic soundness of the IWS/LAN strategy.

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Given the pervasive relationship of the IWS/LAN initiative to virtually the entire range of SSA business processes and service interfaces, it is impossible to overestimate the potential contribution of this specific initiative to SSA's major goals. By providing options for advanced concepts in process redesign, IWS/LAN creates a real opportunity for dramatic changes in service delivery to move the Agency in fact to world-class service; by offering superior communications technology and simple tools for communicating, it promises quantum improvement in SSA's messages to and between employees and the public to provide the foundation for rebuilding public confidence; and by creating a technical environment for development of the single point of contact our customers seek and many other concepts, IWS/LAN offers a framework for employee empowerment and development. Stated simply, without IWS/LAN the SSA business approach will fail.

### Deployment of IWS/LAN

Working with DDS administrators, and external authorities such as the Office of Technology Assessment and GAO who have provided advice and counsel to the agency, and with widespread comment and input from SSA employees, SSA has developed a deployment strategy for IWS/LAN that:

- Provides the greatest possible productivity gains;
- Supports implementation of the disability process redesign and future reengineering initiatives by concentrating installations to create opportunities for "reinvention/reengineering labs";
- Reduces the time states will be required to run dual software systems; and
- Capitalizes on existing investment and minimizes the administrative expense associated with testing and installation.

All field offices, hearings offices, Regional Offices of Program Integrity and Reviews and DDSs in a given state will be installed over a limited period, along with supporting TSCs and PSC modules, to equip all interacting facilities and set up the concentrated reengineering labs. The first fifteen states chosen for installation are those where baseline IWS/LAN automation has already been installed or funded in the state DDS. This approach capitalizes on investment already made, and also serves the aim of greater productivity since these states represent 44 percent of the national disability workload. The balance of the roll-out is based on the heaviest state disability workloads, and the next four states in the sequence represent an additional 15 percent of the national disability workload, bringing to 59 percent the total percentage of the national disability workload represented by the first 19 States in the installation sequence.

The nationwide IWS/LAN implementation is a very complex logistical undertaking for the Agency, requiring coordination of such tasks as site preparation (electrical wiring/cabling) in over 2,000 remote sites; contractor supplied and installed furniture and intelligent workstation components; and training of over 50,000 employees in SSA and State DDSs. Detailed plans for the entire undertaking, which will begin in January 1996 are being finalized.

## Costs/Benefits

Projecting from the productivity increases demonstrated in the pilot studies, cumulative workyear savings over the 7-year systems life are valued at \$1.2 billion for Phase 1 of the National IWS/LAN Buy. (See Part III, Technology section, for a discussion of the phases of the IWS/LAN implementation). SSA estimates that the total Phase 1 systems life cost of the national IWS/LAN will be \$913 million. This cost includes equipment, operating system software, communications support services, site preparation and ergonomic furniture. The cost is offset by \$405 million that otherwise must be spent to replace aging terminal equipment currently in use with equivalent updated technology and operate it over its systems life and to acquire ergonomic furniture. The net cost of \$508 million compared to \$1.2 billion in savings, make the IWS/LAN platform a cost-effective investment.

BENEFITS FROM THE NATIONAL IWS/LAN IMPLEMENTATION (\$ MILLIONS)*	
IWS/LAN Implementation Costs	\$913
Cost of Replacing Aging Terminals and Furniture	\$405
IWS/LAN Net Costs	\$508
IWS/LAN Projected Savings	\$1,155
IWS/LAN Net Costs	\$508
IWS/LAN Net Savings	\$647

\* Costs/benefits for Phase I of national IWS/LAN acquisitions. See Technology discussion in Part III for a more detailed explanation of the acquisitions.

## Current Agency Assessments

Each core business process has been assessed along with each service delivery interface. In making these assessments, the GBP focuses on those areas where SSA is doing less than customers need and expect. While there are many ways in which SSA currently excels, these are not described here. The key initiatives that are currently underway to improve service are referenced, with further details on these in Part V. In addition to the disability claims process, which is being addressed through implementation of a reengineered process, the most significant problem areas are: continuing disability reviews (CDRs), inquiry workloads resulting from PEBES, DA&A provisions and the telephone service interfaces.

## Conclusion

### *Staffing Requirements*

With the continuing growth in SSA's workloads (e.g., increasing numbers of disability claims), coupled with mandated staff reductions, along with new statutory responsibilities (increased CDRs, PEBES and DA& A workloads), SSA must change the ways in which it does business. If SSA continues to work in the same ways that it does today, it would need to increase its workforce by as many as 12,000 additional full-time equivalents (FTEs) simply to keep up with workload growth. But SSA recognizes that there are alternatives to a "business as usual" approach to deal with these growing workloads. These alternatives are contained in SSA's three key strategies: streamlining, reengineering and automation/continuous improvement. By taking full advantage of these three approaches, SSA can deliver services more effectively and efficiently. And it can do so, by current estimates, with some 4,500 fewer FTEs than are currently in place.

In this initial assessment, SSA projects that it will maintain or improve service in all aspects of its business through streamlining, reengineering and automation/continuous improvement. The following tables summarize the projected impact of these approaches on SSA's core business processes and service delivery interfaces. These tables should be understood as summaries of the narrative assessments contained in Part IV of the GBP, the ratings are not computed based on formal metrics. (The categories are: World Class Aspects, Overall Positive, Mixed, and Overall Negative.)

SERVICE LEVELS FOR CORE BUSINESS PROCESSES			
	Current 1995	By 1997	By 1999
Enumeration (overall)	Overall +	Overall +	World Class Aspects
Earnings (overall)	Overall +	Overall +	World Class Aspects
Claims (RSI & SSI Aged)	Overall +	Overall +	World Class Aspects
Claims (DI/SSIBD)	Overall -	Mixed	Overall +
Postentitlement (overall)	Overall +	Overall +	Overall +
Postentitlement (CDRs)	Overall -	Mixed	Overall +
Inform the Public	Mixed	Overall +	World Class Aspects

SERVICE LEVELS FOR SERVICE DELIVERY INTERFACES			
	Current 1995	By 1997	By 1999
Face-to-Face (field office)	Mixed	Mixed	World Class Aspects
Face-to-Face (third parties)	Mixed	Overall +	Overall +
Telephone (800 Number)	Mixed	Mixed	Overall +
Telephone (field office)	Overall -	Mixed	Overall +
Mail	Mixed	Overall +	Overall +
Automated Self-Help	Minimal*	Mixed	Overall +

\* SSA currently has only minimal services available for this mode of service delivery. These services will be expanded significantly in the years ahead.

ESTIMATES OF SSA's FTE NEEDS		
	Additional FTEs	Total FTEs
SSA FTEs in FY 1995		65,000
Additional FTEs needed in FY 1999 to keep up with workload growth, with no change in the way SSA does business	8,000	
Additional FTEs needed in FY 1999 to deliver improved services, with no change in the way SSA does business and no productivity growth	4,000	
Total FTEs needed in FY 1999 if no change in the way SSA does business		77,000
Total FTEs needed as a result of automation/continuous improvement, reengineering and streamlining		60,500

### *Impact of GBP on Service*

SSA's goal for each of the core business processes and service delivery interfaces is nothing short of world-class service. The assessments described in detail in Part IV of this plan, and summarized in the tables below, describe how far the initiatives and actions identified in this first GBP will take the Agency toward this goal. This first GBP does not identify any of the areas as fully attaining world-class levels by 1999, since the paths from current service levels to world-class levels are not yet fully detailed. However, based on current performance and known customer expectations, there are several areas in which aspects of service will be world class. Subsequent editions of the GBP will describe a sequence of steps that can confidently be expected to result in world-class service levels by 1999 for some or all of the business processes and service delivery interfaces.

As the summary charts indicate, additional work will be required in every aspect of SSA's core business processes and service delivery interfaces in order to produce full world-class service. The absence of a designation of full world-class service in a business process or service delivery interface does not mean that SSA expects less than world-class service in all these areas by 1999. On the contrary, it is SSA's commitment to provide world-class service in all these areas as soon as possible. We fully expect to achieve this level of service in some or all of these areas by 1999. However, the current iteration of the General Business Plan does not yet contain enough planning detail to support an assessment of full world-class service in any of the business processes or service delivery interfaces. As the GBP is developed in the coming years, the detailed planning will be made available and the assessments will be upgraded accordingly.

SSA's General Business Plan presents how the Agency will:

- 1) Pursue its service delivery goals;
- 2) Improve its stewardship of the programs it administers; and
- 3) Provide employees with the tools and training that will empower them to improve performance.

SSA's strategy of streamlining, reengineering and automation/continuous improvement will require up-front investments in the workforce and in technology. The long-term result will be more effective, efficient delivery of services at lower costs to the taxpayers.

# Part II

# Overview

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## **A. SSA's Programs**

SSA is responsible for two major programs:

- ▶ *Social Security Insurance;*
- ▶ *Supplemental Security Income (SSI).*

Under the Social Security insurance program, there are three types of benefits payable: Retirement, Survivors and Disability. In the SSI program, there are three types of benefits: Disability, Aged (paid to those age 65 and older) and benefits for the blind.

SSA also has responsibility for aspects of the Medicare, Medicaid and Black Lung programs. For example, certain Medicare-related hearing requests are processed by SSA's Office of Hearings and Appeals and Medicare enrollments are processed in SSA's field offices.

SSA issues Social Security numbers to eligible individuals and maintains lifelong earnings records for all individuals working under employment covered by Social Security (more than 90 percent of all jobs). SSA takes claims for benefits, adjudicates appeals on disputed decisions, and processes the millions of actions needed each year to keep the beneficiary records current and accurate.

## **B. SSA's Customers**

More than 141 million individuals work under jobs covered by Social Security. About 16 million Social Security number cards are issued each year. Over 48 million beneficiaries receive benefits under the programs administered by SSA. About 42 percent of SSI beneficiaries are concurrent recipients of Social Security insurance and SSI benefits.

TYPE OF BENEFITS	FY 1994 ESTIMATED BENEFICIARIES IN FORCE
Social Security retirement insurance benefits	26.8 million
Social Security survivors insurance benefits	10.9 million
Social Security disability insurance benefits	5.3 million
SSI benefits (Federal)	5.8 million
SSI benefits (State Supplementation)	0.3 million
Black Lung	0.2 million
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48.7 million</b>

BENEFITS BY PROGRAM TYPE	FY 1994 \$ BILLIONS
OASI	\$277.1
DI	\$36.7
SSI (Federal)	\$24.8
SSI (Federally Administered State Supplement)	\$3.5
Black Lung	\$0.8

### ***C. SSA's Organization***

SSA is headed by a Commissioner. It will become an independent agency on March 31, 1995. The central office is located in Baltimore, Maryland. The administrative offices and the computer operations are also housed at this location.

There are regional offices in 10 cities. Approximately 1,300 Social Security offices throughout the U.S., the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, and American Samoa deal directly with the public. Each region also has a number of Teleservice Centers. These offices handle telephone inquiries and refer callers appropriately. Program Service Centers are located in six cities. These offices along with the Office of Disability & International Operations in Baltimore, Maryland, primarily house and service the records of individuals who are receiving Social Security benefits, as well as backing up the 800 Number telephone service.

The Office of Hearings and Appeals administers the nationwide hearings and appeals program for the Social Security Administration in 132 sites. The Appeals Council, located in Falls Church, Virginia, may review hearing decisions. The Office of Central Records Operations maintains records of individuals, earnings and prepares benefit computations. The major operation is in Baltimore, Maryland, currently supported by facilities located in 3 other cities. The States operate 54 State Disability Determination Services (DDSs) offices nationwide that make disability determinations on Disability Insurance and SSI disability cases.

## ***D. SSA's Mission & Goals***

Throughout its nearly 60-year history, SSA has held fast to its basic mission. SSA's current Agency Strategic Plan (issued in 1991) framed that mission this way:

**MISSION:** *To administer national Social Security programs as prescribed by legislation, in an equitable, effective, efficient and caring manner.*

All of SSA's operations, and plans for the future, are mission-driven. While the specific wording of the statement has changed over the years, SSA's values as an organization are encapsulated in this mission statement, and everything SSA does is designed to achieve one or more aspects of this basic mission. It is this mission that shapes the GBP and drives SSA's goals and objectives.

SSA has identified three major goals that serve to organize our efforts:

- *Rebuild Public Confidence in Social Security*
- *Provide World-Class Public Service*
- *Create a Nurturing Environment for SSA Employees*

### **Goal: Rebuilding Public Confidence in Social Security**

Public opinion surveys show that the public's confidence in Social Security is near an all-time low. SSA needs to understand the sources of the public's growing concern and work to dispel it. SSA needs to find ways to rebuild public confidence in programs that provide for the well-being of millions of Americans. SSA is confident that if the public has a complete and accurate understanding of the value of Social Security, both to themselves and to society as a whole, they will continue to support it.

SSA's commitment is to identify those issues that are of concern to our customers and stakeholders (i.e., everyone with an interest in the program), and to address each of those issues in the most appropriate way possible. In some cases this will involve educational campaigns; in other cases it may involve changes in policies or procedures; and in some areas it may require legislation.

### **Goal: Providing World-Class Service**

SSA has a responsibility to provide its customers with service that is of the highest quality possible—not just good service, but “world-class” service. In general terms, this means SSA will provide service equal to or superior to that provided anywhere in the comparable public or private sectors. In each of the programs SSA administers, providing this level of service involves different challenges, but in every area the goal is the same—world-class service.

SSA's customers indicated (through a variety of feedback mechanisms described in the next section) that providing world-class service goes beyond issuing benefit checks accurately and on time. It means reducing the time SSA's customers must wait to receive service. It means completing business for most customers in a single contact. It means ensuring equity of service across geographic lines, program lines, and demographic lines. It means providing comparable service to both our English and non-English-speaking customers. And it means treating all of our customers with equal care and consideration.

### **Goal: Creating a Nurturing Environment for SSA Employees**

SSA serves many different customers: claimants, beneficiaries, taxpayers and employers. Serving these customers well requires that SSA's key resource, its employees, have a working environment that encourages innovation, rewards good performance, provides opportunities for career growth, and makes available the tools and resources its employees need to do their jobs effectively and efficiently.

In order to create this environment, SSA employees must have the tools, training and other resources necessary to perform their jobs well. Such foundational enabling technology as the IWS/LAN computing platform, online programmatic instructions and the Integrated Client Data approach to information retrieval are thus crucial factors in providing the right type of working environment for its employees.

SSA is also committed to a “team approach” in its internal operations and to processes of obtaining feedback from its employees on their ideas to streamline work, add quality to its services and build the world-class service delivery system that is SSA's goal.

## ***E. The Unified Planning System***

As evidenced by this document, SSA has a strong, and mature strategic management and planning system—known as the Unified Planning System (UPS). The two major components of the UPS are The *Agency Strategic Plan (ASP)*, and the Planning and Budgeting System (PBS). The ASP, last updated in 1991, is the most critical element of the UPS and is the cornerstone of all planning efforts at SSA. Through its long-term vision, commitments, service delivery goals and strategic priorities, the ASP establishes the fundamental course of action for all Agency plans.

The PBS is updated each year and details the process through which Agency-level tactical plans and budgets are developed, implemented and monitored. It serves as the bridge between long-range planning at the strategic level, and shorter-term operational or component-level planning that is necessary to fully realize the vision of the ASP.

SSA will continue to plan for the long-term, but will also remain flexible, and be quick to optimize the Agency business approach as needed because of new knowledge, changing circumstances, and new intervening variables. SSA will pursue a strategic management agenda in 1995/1996 that will include:

- ▶ *Renewed Environmental Scanning:* SSA will renew the comprehensive environmental scanning/futuring analysis that has been done for previous strategic planning efforts. This analysis will delve into the probable Agency impact from projected demographic changes, technology and other areas. The analysis will also include a summation of known service expectations from SSA's customers.
- ▶ *Planning System Review:* SSA will analyze, and assess the performance of its current Agency planning system—including the degree that Agency initiatives are successfully integrated towards fulfilling an effective long-term vision. SSA will also examine planning systems with parallel public and private sector organizations to identify the best features, and draw on the practical experiences of others.
- ▶ *Process Documentation and Analysis:* SSA will chart/document each core business process—as they are practiced on the front lines of the Agency today. This baselining work will be transformed into computer simulation models to facilitate future analytical and process redesign efforts. Each business process will be analyzed on the basis of operating efficiency and service performance. Opportunities for improvement under both criteria will be identified. For example, while a process may currently be delivering good service, it may also be inefficient. Ways to improve efficiency, while still keeping service levels high, may be possible. This effort will facilitate future reengineering projects.

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The findings from these efforts, and others, will comprise a significant base of strategic information, and when blended with fiscal outlook, extensive customer, employee and Congressional input and chief executive judgement, will provide SSA with the substance required to refresh the long-term *Agency Strategic Plan* (ASP), and to optimize the Agency business planning approach in future years. The refreshed ASP will be in full compliance with the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA), and be completed well before the 09/30/97 GPRA deadline.

## ***F. Service Standards & Performance Measures***

Providing customers with service that is equal to the best in business is one of the stated goals of the National Performance Review. SSA is committed to not only meeting this goal, but exceeding it by providing what we consider to be *world-class* service.

SSA has recently established a set of customer service standards. These new standards were published in September 1994 and have been posted in all SSA offices throughout the nation. The standards themselves were the result of a comprehensive analysis of customer service needs, expectations and preferences as expressed through a number of data gathering activities that have recently concluded.

These new customer service standards do not represent all that SSA is doing, or needs to do, to define world-class service. Rather, they represent the most recent extension of SSA's service delivery goals and objectives set forth in the 1991 ASP. Additionally, they represent specific commitments that SSA is making to respond to the expectations of our customers and stakeholders.

## SSA's Customer Service Pledge

We will administer our programs effectively and efficiently to protect and maintain the Social Security trust funds and to ensure public confidence in the value of Social Security. We are committed to fair and equitable service to our customers. We promise to respect your privacy and safeguard the information in your Social Security record.

We are equally committed to providing you with world-class public service. When you conduct business with us, you can expect:

- ▶ We will provide service through knowledgeable employees who will treat you with courtesy, dignity and respect every time you do business with us.
- ▶ We will provide you with our best estimate of the time needed to complete your request and fully explain any delays.
- ▶ We will clearly explain our decisions so you can understand why and how we made them and what to do if you disagree.
- ▶ We will make sure our offices are safe, pleasant, and our services are accessible.
- ▶ When you make an appointment, we will serve you within 10 minutes of the scheduled time.
- ▶ If you request a new or replacement Social Security card from one of our offices, we will mail it to you within 5 working days of receiving all the information we need. If you have an urgent need for the Social Security number, we will tell you the number within 1 working day.

We know that you expect world-class service in all of your dealings with us. Today, we are unable to meet your expectations in some areas, but we are working to change that. We are revising all our critical work processes to make them simpler, quicker, and more customer-friendly. When we redesign our processes, you can expect:

- ▶ When you call our 800 Number, you will get through to it within 5 minutes of your first try.

*Today we often are not able to meet this pledge. During our busiest days you will get a busy signal much of the time.*

- ▶ When you first apply for disability benefits, you will get a decision within 60 days.

*Today we often are not able to meet this pledge, but we are getting better. In 1994, we made disability decisions two weeks faster than we did in 1992. We do pledge to give you our best estimate of how long it will take to get your disability decision at the time you apply.*

Currently, all existing measures of service delivery and overall Agency performance are being reexamined from the customer-satisfaction perspective. This review will lead to the development of a revised performance management system for the Agency. Ultimately, SSA plans to establish a systematic, integrated approach to developing consistent measures, responding to external requests and subsequently tracking performance against goals and objectives. SSA's Annual Financial Statement will continue to be the principal reporting mechanism for the revised Agency-level performance management system. From this point forward, the process of performance standard development and measurement will be one of continuous improvement and refinement focused clearly on our ultimate customer—the American public.

# Part III

# Critical Elements of

# SSA's Strategy

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## *A: Strategy Drivers*

The strategy drivers are powerful external factors that shape the focus, timing, and direction of Agency planning and operations. Each factor profoundly influences all SSA activity:

### **1. Customer Expectations**

SSA has done extensive customer survey activities to gauge satisfaction with existing services, link customer expectations to specific service areas, assess opportunities for improvement and establish customer service standards. As SSA reengineers processes and automates to improve service and increase efficiency, there are general themes, which customers repeatedly identify as important, that are driving factors in the development of SSA strategy. Although SSA will likely not be able to meet all customer expectations during the FY 1995-99 planning cycle, targeted efforts, including careful resource investments, should improve key services as noted below.

- Public confidence in the Social Security program is low and customer knowledge of Social Security programs is limited. For example, an annual survey by the American Council of Life Insurance found that in 1993 only 39 percent of those surveyed said they were either "very confident" or "somewhat confident" in the future of Social Security. To improve, SSA plans to accelerate efforts to send an annual personalized benefit and earnings statements (PEBES) to all workers over the age of 25 by 10/01/99. In addition, SSA plans to conduct substantially more continuing disability reviews (CDRs), and to fully implement new provisions which impact on disability customers who are entitled on the basis of drug addiction and/or alcoholism (DA&A).
- Annual surveys by the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) report that most customers (almost 80 percent) are satisfied with the service provided by SSA, although customer satisfaction with the disability program is significantly lower than for other SSA programs (68 percent for disability clients versus 87 percent for non-disability clients). To improve, SSA is implementing a completely reengineered disability determination process, that will dramatically improve claim processing time, and will have many other customer oriented features.

- ▶ Being treated with courtesy is an important characteristic of service for many of SSA's customers (ranking second only to job knowledge in a list of eight factors in an SSA survey). In addition, OIG's Client Satisfaction Survey noted a strong correlation between clients ratings of staff courtesy and their overall satisfaction with SSA's services. The SSA workforce has a long tradition of courteous service, and this area is part of a new customer service pledge (see Part II) that is openly displayed, and followed, in all SSA facilities.
- ▶ Providing customers with a choice in how they deal with SSA is important. Although some groups prefer face-to-face service for filing claims (approximately 43-50 percent in SSA's Customer Satisfaction Survey), an ever increasing number prefer to use the telephone for non-claims business and would like SSA to provide additional services through its 800 Number. For example, 23-31 percent of customers surveyed who had recently filed a claim with SSA, said they would prefer to file another claim by calling SSA's 800 Number. This is a service that SSA currently does not provide. OIG's Client Satisfaction Survey also found that 75 percent of respondents state they will use their telephone before visiting or writing SSA in the future. SSA remains committed to providing service delivery options for our customers, and plans to improve telephone service.
- ▶ Ready access to SSA's services is important to customers. People desire minimal waits for face-to-face service in field offices, and fewer busy signals when attempting to call the 800 Number. For example, the OIG Client Satisfaction Survey found that callers who reached the 800 Number in 1 attempt had an 82 percent overall level of satisfaction with SSA's services compared to callers who needed more than 3 attempts to reach the 800 Number (a 56 percent satisfaction level). OIG noted a similar correlation between waiting times in field office and customer satisfaction. To improve, SSA plans to redeploy workpower from management and staff support positions into front-line service jobs, and to shift employees no longer needed as a result of improved processes into telephone service.
- ▶ Customers are most satisfied when transactions are completely handled at the first point of contact, regardless of whether the customer visits one of SSA's field offices or calls the 800 Number. Recent surveys conducted by SSA indicate that handling calls to completion is the aspect of service that most positively impacts customer satisfaction with SSA's 800 Number service. Another survey noted that lower overall service ratings seemed to be related in some measure to the existence of a recontact to complete the transaction. In addition, customers do not like to explain the same story over and over again and would like a single point of contact for handling complex transactions. To improve, SSA plans to continue reengineering processes, and to empower, and provide better technology (e.g., IWS/LAN and video conferencing) to front-line employees.

- Government services should be seamless and provide a single place for conducting like business. Focus group participants said that SSA should be able to provide "one-stop shopping" for other benefits and a wider range of off-site services. The National Performance Review in its report also noted a similar need. To improve, SSA will work with other Federal, State and local agencies to find the best way to coordinate services and provide one-stop shopping for customers.

SSA's Customer Service Pledge clearly targets two major mission areas for service improvements and sets explicit mission goals that are linked to customer expectations. These areas are SSA's toll-free 800 Number service and the initial disability claims process. In targeting these areas SSA noted specific mission problems and corresponding opportunities for improvement. Service improvements in these areas will be closely linked to the general customer themes previously noted and will provide the biggest payoff for SSA in terms of increased customer satisfaction.

SSA has also identified its 800 Number service as a major mission area for benchmarking performance against comparable public and private organizations. SSA has been working closely as part of a consortium with other Federal agencies and the National Performance Review to identify outcome-based measures and opportunities for improvement in meeting customer expectations for improved telephone service.

## 2. Resource and Workload Challenges

In accordance with PL 103-226, SSA must reduce the size of its workforce overall. In order to maintain and improve service, the reduction must be managed so that employees are redeployed from types of work (e.g., management and staff positions) as well as from business processes that can be made more efficient to those that are experiencing growing workloads.

Traditionally, the volume and type of work generated by customers (e.g., applications for benefits, beneficiary status changes, etc.) have been the key factors used to determine SSA's resource needs. Workload growth will be the most significant in the following areas:

- Disability work, which consumed over 50 percent of SSA's resources in FY 1993, will continue to grow. Disability claims and appeals are projected to increase by approximately 14 percent from FY 1993 to FY 1999.
- Postentitlement workloads will increase by about 19 percent over the FY 1993-1999 period, commensurate with the growth in SSA's beneficiary population.

- As required by legislation, SSA will provide personalized earnings and benefit estimate statements (PEBES) to increasingly larger segments of the population. The increased issuance of PEBES is expected to generate follow-up work in the form of public inquiries and requests for earnings corrections.
- To improve program integrity and meet provisions of recent legislation requiring SSI CDRs, SSA plans to increase the number of CDRs performed from under 100,000 in FY 1993 to 500,000 annually by the end of FY 1999.
- Provisions of recent legislation placing restrictions on disability benefit payments to individuals disabled by DA&A, will create substantial new work for SSA.

Because SSA has a strategy for significantly improving the way services are delivered, it will be able to meet the challenges of increasing work and reduced resources. Without this strategy, if SSA were to continue to process its work as it has in the past, its customers would be facing severe service deterioration in all areas.

## ***B. The Business Approach***

SSA has developed an effective and comprehensive business approach with three primary parts. Productivity of the workforce will be enhanced by streamlining: reducing management and staff support positions and restructuring the organization. Processes will be reengineered to improve customer service and to function more efficiently. And ongoing efforts to make effective uses of automation, and to continuously improve Agency operations will continue. When taken as a whole, the business approach will allow SSA to keep up with workload growth, overcome resource constraints, and improve service levels in targeted areas.

### **1. Streamlining**

SSA has begun to streamline and restructure the organization with three objectives: fewer organizational layers, increased employee to supervisor ratios, and fewer positions in offices not providing direct public service.

All SSA components are implementing individual streamlining plans which will consolidate sub-organizations and reduce internal controls, and identify the extended use of employee teams as a method for functioning in the future. Overall, SSA plans to decrease supervisory ratios, and eliminate 30 percent of staff support positions by FY 1999.

Targeted buy-out and discontinued service retirement provisions, and redeployment incentives are tools that SSA is already utilizing to aid the streamlining effort. SSA has completed almost all of approximately 1,200 buyouts nationwide targeted primarily to GS-12 and above managers and supervisors, and employees in staff support positions. Other employees will be transitioning away from management and staff jobs into positions that provide more direct services to the public.

Streamlining will result in more employee empowerment and a more flexible organization. SSA plans to save over 1,500 FTEs through streamlining by FY 1996, and almost 3,500 FTEs by FY 1999.

## 2. Reengineering

SSA was among the first public-sector organizations to successfully initiate business process reengineering. SSA is currently implementing a reengineered disability determination process (fully described later in the GBP) that, when fully enacted, will prove that complex government operations can deliver dramatically better customer service at a lower cost. SSA plans to save over 2,900 FTEs through disability reengineering by FY 1999. It is important to note that the full extent of service improvements and efficiency gains from this key initiative are dependent on timely implementation of IWS/LAN technology.

A new reengineering effort to improve the policy development and delivery process will begin in February 1995. Although not a core business process in the traditional sense, the efficient and effective development and dissemination of policy is a key enabler for the implementation of the Disability Process Redesign, and will also be for future reengineering projects. Recent internal studies have indicated that the current SSA policy process is too slow and cumbersome to accommodate the kinds of major process and structural changes that are associated with redesign efforts. A reengineered policy-making process should also prove valuable in support of streamlining efforts at headquarters policy-making components.

A project to apply reengineering principles to the entire SSA enterprise is getting underway. This larger effort will entail high-level reengineering of all Agency core business processes in a uniform manner at the same time. The intent of the enterprise-wide effort is to identify significant process changes that can be implemented relatively quickly and with a high efficiency and/or service payoff. More in-depth reengineering efforts will be targeted to those processes requiring the most dramatic improvement. This approach will ensure that all Agency initiatives are consistent with an all-encompassing model. SSA expects savings of more than 3,200 FTEs by FY 1999 through new reengineering efforts.

### 3. Automation/Continuous Improvement

SSA continuously improves and automates work processes to maximize efficiency and aid service delivery. Effective uses of automation, when coupled with tandem process improvements, have been key to SSA's ability to downsize to a significant degree in the past and have freed up resources to invest in workload growth and service improvements.

As in the past, current SSA plans project significant efficiency savings from automation/continuous improvement initiatives outlined in the GBP—more than 6,500 FTEs in FY 1999, when compared to the FY 1993 base. These savings, along with savings from streamlining and reengineering, will be redeployed in direct workload operations, including investing in activities to improve service.

However, in order for SSA to accomplish FTE savings, it is essential that current and future requests for automation resources—especially for IWS/LAN—be fully funded. SSA cannot achieve FTE savings dependent on automation improvements without the hardware and software needed to automate processes made more effective through continuous improvement and reengineering.

### C. Key Enablers

The key enablers are initiatives of such fundamental importance that the SSA business approach cannot succeed without them. The investments required by the enablers will return significant improvements in service and efficiency.

#### 1) Workforce

The SSA and State Disability Determination Services (DDS) workforce will always be the most valuable and enabling resource of the Agency. SSA needs every Federal and State position allotted by current staffing targets to keep up with rising workloads demands, and to realize service improvements in key areas (e.g., the 800 Number and disability claims service). While the workforce is technically skilled and customer focused today, SSA's benchmarking of world-class organizations confirms the view that employees must be empowered, continually trained, and supported with the necessary tools and environment in order to deliver world-class service.

The SSA and State DDS workforce understand the power of modern technology in the workplace and are the greatest advocates of Agency investments in new, enabling tools such as intelligent workstations, local area networks, interactive kiosks, CD-ROM and document imaging devices, video-conferencing, electronic mail, and expert systems and other advanced software. Without modern office automation and the efficiencies that these technology-based tools provide, the ability of SSA employees to keep up with their work will be seriously diminished.

In addition, as business processes are reengineered it is likely that more job functions will be consolidated into generalist job descriptions (e.g., a disability claim manager as envisioned in the Disability Process Redesign). Movement towards employees taking on additional duties is not new to SSA. Employees with multiple skills means a more flexible workforce (e.g., more employees available to handle 800 Number calls on peak days), and more importantly, moves to fulfill a strong desire of SSA customers to be able to deal with one employee throughout the course of even complex business transactions. In order for employees to assume more generalist positions, they must be supported by modern workplace tools such as IWS/LAN, and expert systems software. Otherwise the breadth of knowledge required by complex program rules, and the time demands from "clerical" functions (e.g., filing paper records) that will only disappear through effective applications of technology, will be overwhelming.

Employee empowerment will increase in SSA as work processes are reengineered, and as the organization is streamlined, with fewer layers of management. There will be greater flexibility in work assignments and increased opportunities for employees to perform work in varied capacities. Decision making will become more decentralized, and as a result of the initiative to reengineer the policy process, it is likely that empowered employees will have a more active role in the formulation and delivery of Agency policy.

Ongoing investments in employee training and career development will be crucial to continued workforce effectiveness at SSA. Streamlining plans will result in a number of employees redeploying to direct service positions from management and staff support jobs. All of these people will require new skills training. In fact, the streamlining plan, which results in fewer supervisors, rests on the premise that employees will be well trained and retrained as they need to be redeployed to different work.

Significant training needs will also flow from process reengineering and continuous improvement/automation efforts. For example, a multi-year, phased training approach is an integral part of the Disability Process Redesign Project, and similar large training efforts are also planned in support of technology-based initiatives such as IWS/LAN. These initiatives will only succeed if the workforce is adequately prepared for change by a strong and continuous training program.

SSA is also committed to providing a safe and nurturing workplace environment for employees. Employees are increasingly concerned with wellness issues, and in balancing their personal needs and career demands. SSA will continue to provide services and facilities to as many employees as possible to meet fitness, day care, elder care and other personal, yet job impacting needs. Within the constraints of mission demands to serve the public, SSA will also continue to seek ways to provide employees latitude to arrange their work schedule to accommodate their personal lives. Finally, SSA is currently reevaluating physical security controls in Agency facilities based in part on employee concerns expressed over increased face-to-face public contact opportunities suggested by new features of the Disability Process Redesign.

## 2) Technology

If SSA is to make full use of its first key enabler, the SSA and DDS workforce, it must provide its people with current technology. Currently, SSA staff depend upon outdated equipment that has been long abandoned by the private sector. Timely implementation of the Intelligent Workstation/Local Area Network (IWS/LAN) initiative is essential. Without adequate funding of this project, SSA's technology will become an obstacle to improving service instead of a key enabler.

### IWS/LAN

#### *The Importance of IWS/ LAN*

It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of timely implementation of the IWS/LAN initiative. The key SSA strategic investment, IWS/LAN is the basic foundation for critical initiatives and redesign activities throughout Agency business processes and service delivery interfaces, and as a consequence IWS/LAN is the linchpin for both SSA's customer service program and the entire business approach. Without IWS/LAN, many of the workyear savings SSA is counting on to close the workyear shortfall and to target service improvements will simply not occur. Without IWS/LAN, there is no reengineered disability process that can be characterized as meaningful. And without IWS/LAN there is no platform to support the enterprise reengineering and redesign effort necessary to advance to a service delivery environment consistent with the expectations of our customers.

Among the critical capabilities that IWS/LAN provides is the totally electronic storage of all claims and postentitlement information, including imaged information, that can be transmitted to wherever the appropriate employee happens to be located. It also enables two employees in different locations to simultaneously work on a case (e.g., a disability claims manager and a consulting physician) and to jointly interview the claimant when videoconferencing is added. Having the capability to move the work, without manual handoffs, to where the employees are will be essential to meeting customer needs in a streamlined SSA.

SSA has already successfully tested the IWS/LAN concept for several years. Beginning with 15 pilot offices, the Agency has expanded "interim" installations of the technology to roughly 100 separate field facilities, where the contrasts in productivity and efficiency between offices with and without IWS/LAN have been studied and documented. During this same pilot period, the IWS/LAN concept and operating results have been repeatedly evaluated by external monitors and various consulting experts. These authorities have uniformly agreed with both the need for a new technology infrastructure and the basic soundness of the IWS/LAN strategy.

SSA's current systems infrastructure is a highly centralized, mainframe-based architecture that relies on very aged, "dumb" computer terminals used by frontline employees to get information to and from SSA's mainframe computers. SSA is moving quickly toward the establishment of a truly cooperative architecture that will use a distributed processing platform comprised of intelligent workstations (IWS) on employee desktops, connected by local area networks (LAN) to each other and SSA mainframe computers.

A cooperative architecture is an automated systems configuration that uses both centralized and localized processing platforms. It will allow SSA to determine the optimal mode of processing for each of our workloads, and to take advantage of emerging technology in the delivery of services to the public. For example, such an architecture will permit SSA, in a cost-effective manner, to use complex tools such as document imaging, expert systems, and multi-media conferencing. IWS/LAN will also improve the availability and timeliness of information to our employees and appropriate users, and help SSA build a more diverse capability for backup and recovery in the event of a crisis.

Even without the more sophisticated capabilities, IWS/LAN can provide benefits today to field offices struggling to improve productivity with insufficient numbers and quality of personal computers. Most SSA field offices have one or two personal computers and these are primarily older-technology machines, with slower speeds and substantially less storage and memory than is required to support modernized software. The effect of this antiquated technology in limiting service and productivity improvements is profound.

Today, each time an office wishes to produce a professional quality notice, reference procedures on CD-ROM, prepare a travel voucher, use the CDR program or work a Zebley case involving a personal computer based computation, an employee must move to the personal computer and lose time and productivity waiting to complete the task.

Although a few quality notices and forms can be produced today on those single personal computers, that capability pales by contrast to what is possible in the more advanced IWS/LAN environment. For example:

- SSA will be testing new electronic forms software in the next few months which will eventually allow us to call up a far greater number and variety of electronic forms images rather than having to stock, inventory, order, ship, receive, unpack and store these items.
- IWS/LAN will also eliminate the processes needed today to manage the ordering, receipt, distribution and filing of transmittals to the Program Operations Manual System (POMS), and save in administrative costs and in printing and mailing by making POMS available to each employee on CD-ROM

As these examples illustrate, the IWS/LAN environment is more flexible and efficient, thereby increasing productivity for each field office employee. It also frees up management resources devoted today to administrative processes to focus on doing a better job serving customers. Similar dramatic advances in capability and productivity are possible for other applications.

As another example, although E-Mail is available in field offices today, its use must be sharply curtailed because the one or two office personal computers are so heavily and urgently required for the few available applications. SSA has already restricted the number and length of E-Mail messages that can be sent to SSA field offices, to reduce traffic and make as much personal computer time as possible available for customer support. As a consequence, the use of E-Mail has been limited in training, public information and administrative processes. Its value in sharing information and easing communication between employees to improve customer service and create an atmosphere of employee empowerment has to date been entirely lost.

With IWS/LAN, SSA can also use the ideas and skills of employees throughout the country to supplement the Agency's programming capacity. Field offices are today using locally-developed software (within the limited personal computer environment described above) to support local resource management, and SSA has in place a disciplined process to move locally developed software applications to the LAN. In the rich capacity environment of IWS/LAN, offices around the country will be able to take advantage of the following, and new applications which will inevitably develop when the tools which make them possible are widely available:

- The ability to develop and use nationally, software programs with special local applications, such as the Computation of Military Income, which is used primarily by field offices parallel to military bases for SSI Computations. Having these programs means both faster and more accurate service to citizens.
- The development of software to support control and processing of cases covered by court rulings where special rules and notice language are needed but a national application is not necessary.
- Garnishment and Tax Refund Offset programs used only in the SSA PSCs.
- A regionally developed CDR work-issue program that has an estimated annual program dollar savings of \$3.6 million as a result of improved accuracy.

Given the pervasive relationship of the IWS/LAN initiative to the entire range of SSA business processes and service interfaces, it is impossible to overestimate the potential contribution of this initiative to SSA's major goals. By providing options for advanced process redesign, IWS/LAN creates opportunity for dramatic improvements in service delivery to move the Agency to world-class service. By coupling a superior technology with simple tools for communicating, the IWS/LAN promises major improvements in SSA's messages to and between employees and the public, to provide the foundation for rebuilding public confidence. By creating a technical environment for development of the single point of contact our customers seek, and many other concepts, IWS/LAN offers a framework for employee empowerment and development.

### *Project Sequence*

#### • Pilots

A pilot was conducted in 15 IWS/LAN pilot sites to gain experience in live operational settings and to develop detailed cost/benefit estimates. The sites included eight field offices, one TSC unit, one PSC module, the Model District Office test facility, the System Zero test facility at the National Computer Center (NCC), one hearing office, the Federal DDS office, and an Office of Program and Integrity Reviews site. On the basis of simple productivity measurements taken before and six months after implementation of IWS/LAN, a study by SSA's Office of Workforce Analysis found a 5 percent employee productivity increase in the pilot offices. The study also predicted additional productivity increases as employees moved beyond the early learning curve and gained the computer literacy needed to take full advantage of the benefits of the technology. The study also noted that benefits from the enhanced communications capabilities of the technology are dependent on the capabilities being available throughout SSA and the State DDS sites.

► **Interim Buy (Pilot Expansion)**

During FY 1994-1995 SSA has completed installation of 9,000 workstations and 165 LANs to bring the number of IWS/LAN-equipped offices to 100. SSA estimates savings of 238 workyears through these interim installations.

► **Phase I Implementation**

In this national IWS/LAN acquisition, equipment requirements of the field offices, hearing offices, TSCs, Processing Centers and State DDS sites (States not included in DDS baseline automation) will be met with the installation of up to 56,500 workstations, 1,742 LANs and 2,567 notebooks. These devices replace aging terminals and provide a standardized infrastructure enabling service and productivity improvements.

*Costs/ Benefits Through Phase I*

Projecting from the productivity increases demonstrated in the pilot studies, cumulative workyear savings over the 7-year systems life are valued at \$1.2 billion for Phase 1 of the National IWS/LAN Buy. SSA estimates that the total Phase 1 systems life cost of the national IWS/LAN will be \$913 million. This cost includes equipment, operating system software, communications support services, site preparation and ergonomic furniture. The cost is offset by \$405 million that otherwise must be spent to replace aging terminal equipment currently in use with equivalent updated technology and operate it over its systems life and to acquire ergonomic furniture. The net cost of \$508 million compared to \$1.2 billion in savings, make the IWS/LAN platform a cost-effective investment.

<b>BENEFITS FROM THE NATIONAL IWS/LAN IMPLEMENTATION (\$ MILLIONS)*</b>	
IWS/LAN Implementation Costs	\$913
Cost of Replacing Aging Terminals and Furniture	\$405
<b>IWS/LAN Net Costs</b>	<b>\$508</b>
IWS/LAN Projected Savings	\$1,155
IWS/LAN Net Costs	\$508
<b>IWS/LAN Net Savings</b>	<b>\$647</b>

\* Costs/benefits for Phase 1 of national IWS/LAN acquisitions.

The total costs of \$913 million displayed in the chart preceding, consist of \$768 million in acquisition, telecommunications and maintenance costs through FY 1998 and \$145 million in ongoing telecommunications and maintenance expenses for the remaining system life beyond FY 1998. The \$768 million in costs through FY 1998 will be funded from the \$1.105 billion Automation Investment Fund (AIF), leaving a balance in that fund of \$337 million which will be used toward document management and data base equipment required for Phase 2 implementation of the Reengineered Disability System (RDS) software, and additional IWS/LAN workstations.

• **Phase 2 Implementation**

A separate series of acquisitions under the National IWS/LAN Buy will "piggyback" on the previously installed infrastructure. It will provide SSA with document management and data base equipment needed for the Reengineered Disability System (SSA's first software application specifically designed for the cooperative processing architecture) and provide the functionality and capacity to allow for further reengineering of our current business processes. Under these acquisitions, SSA will obtain data base and facsimile servers, imaging devices, bar code scanning hardware and software, optical storage devices to complete national implementation of the Reengineered Disability System and a final complement of a minimum of 8,000 IWS/LAN workstations.

These Phase 2 acquisitions will be conducted in parallel with the Phase 1 acquisitions, with release of the Requests for Proposal scheduled for July, 1995, and contract awards targeted for June, 1996, just two months following the start of the full performance phase of the Phase 1 contract installations.

**Deployment**

Working with DDS administrators, and external authorities such as the Office of Technology Assessment and GAO who have provided advice and counsel to the agency, and with widespread comment and input from SSA employees, SSA has established the following principles to govern the national IWS/LAN deployment process:

- The deployment strategy must be structured to provide the greatest possible productivity gains;
- To support implementation of the disability process redesign and future reengineering initiatives, the deployment strategy must concentrate installations to create opportunities for "reinvention/reengineering labs";

- ▶ The deployment strategy must reduce as much as possible the length of time states will be required to run dual software systems; and
- ▶ The deployment strategy must capitalize on existing investment and minimize the administrative expense associated with testing and installation.

Based on these general principles, SSA has developed a deployment strategy and schedule which calls for:

- ▶ Installation in all field offices, hearings offices, Regional Program and Integrity Reviews Offices and DDSs in a given state, staged over a period of months to allow neighboring field offices to support one another during disruptive times of installation and training. Supporting TSCs and PSC modules will also be included at appropriate points in the schedule. This element of the strategy equips all interacting facilities and the supporting PSC over a limited period of time, consequently reducing the time dual software systems are required in the State DDS and to set up the concentrated reengineering labs.
- ▶ Initial installation in the fifteen states where baseline IWS/LAN automation has already been installed or funded in the state DDS. This approach capitalizes on investments already made, and also serves the aim of greater productivity since these states represent 44 percent of the national disability workload. Rhode Island is also included in this group because it has been a leading State in testing disability process improvements and innovations.
- ▶ Selection of Virginia (among the 15 baseline automation states) as the Reengineered Disability System (RDS) software pilot site. Proximity to the Baltimore headquarters facilitates the access of programmers and software engineers and technicians to the pilot sites, and minimizes administrative expenses and time lost in travel.
- ▶ The balance of the roll-out is based on state disability workloads, with priority in sequence assigned to states with heaviest disability claim volumes and the greatest potential productivity gain. The first four States in the current schedule represent an additional 15 percent of the national disability workload. This will bring to 59 percent the total percentage of the national disability workload represented by the first 19 States in the installation sequence.

Based on a September, 1995 award of the IWS/LAN national buy, installations are slated to begin with small volumes in January, 1996, "ramping up" to full contract performance levels of 75 offices per month beginning in April, 1996. Final installations under this contract will be completed in May, 1998.

As the IWS/LAN hardware deployment proceeds, piloting and national deployment of the Reengineered Disability System (RDS) software will occur in parallel. Pilot activity begins in a limited number of Virginia field offices in April, 1996, expands to the rest of Virginia in November, 1996, and subsequently moves through national deployment, following the sequence of IWS/LAN installations. The coordinated scheduling positions each field office for RDS implementation roughly three months after IWS/LAN installation, following training and a learning curve period in each office. The schedule also prepares offices for implementation of the 800 Number Expert System approximately three months after IWS/LAN installation.

Nationwide IWS/LAN implementation is a very complex logistical undertaking for the agency, requiring coordination of such tasks as site preparation (electrical wiring/cabling) in over 2,000 remote sites; contractor supplied and installed furniture and intelligent workstation components; and training of over 50,000 employees in SSA and state DDS components.

### **Electronic Service Delivery**

Because of increasing public acceptance of technology and expanding demand by customers to receive information and transact business electronically, SSA has established the Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) project as the next generation and logical extension of the technology advances the Agency will realize through IWS/LAN. Where IWS/LAN provides technology to streamline and reengineer processes and operations, ESD incorporates applications to be used directly by the customer, as well as applications to be used administratively by SSA to improve customer service.

Because of the increasing prevalence of electronic information processing equipment and communications networks capable of transmitting data, voice and images, opportunities for creating new service delivery choices for customers are now possible. Self-service options accessible via telephone, personal computer or publicly-located kiosks, using well-designed electronic menus and easy-to-follow instructions, can potentially make services available to clients virtually anywhere 24 hours a day.

While many electronic service concepts promise tantalizing service and efficiency advances, SSA has chosen a deliberately cautious approach to ESD. Despite growing public enthusiasm for electronic transactions, neither the technologies nor the public's tastes have matured sufficiently to support long-term decisions. Consequently, the SSA approach to ESD incorporates both an aggressive program of technology research and a significantly more cautious strategy toward implementation which includes an exhaustive program of piloting and evaluation. While developing public preferences and the potential for advances in service delivery demand action now to build a base of knowledge and experience around these technologies, SSA believes a sensible level of investment in research and gradually expanded testing will best position the Agency for prudent decisions as distinct advantages and opportunities materialize.

For example, video conferencing increases access and reduces travel costs for geographically distant participants when used to conduct administrative meetings, employee training, or client interviews, such as those planned in the reengineered disability process. SSA has pioneered in the administrative use of video conferencing, and in November, 1993, video conferencing systems were installed in the Wilmington, Delaware DDS and the New Castle, Delaware field office to demonstrate the feasibility of using the technology for initial disability and pre-denial interviews conducted between field office and DDS locations. The concept is being continued as a pilot and expansion is planned for offices in Wisconsin and Iowa.

Similar early feasibility and customer acceptance testing is planned or underway for a wide range of technologies and devices including imaging, remote LAN access, kiosks, and interactive cable TV. Additional information and scheduling data can be found in the more detailed Electronic Service Delivery project description contained in Part V.

# Part IV

# Current Agency

# Assessments

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## *A: Core Business Process Assessments*

The GBP focuses on five core business processes and six service delivery methods used by SSA to interface with the public.

### **Core Business Processes**

- Enumeration
- Earnings
- Claims
- Postentitlement
- Informing the Public

### **Service Delivery Modes**

- Face-to-Face Service
- Field Office Telephone Service
- 800 Number Telephone Service
- Mail
- Face-to-Face Service Provided by Third Parties
- Automated Self-Service

As with any large organization, SSA has other processes that serve as critical enablers for administering SSA's programs. Examples include the policy process (see Key Initiative #14 in Part V), the administration of human resource services for employees, computer software design and development, budgeting, procurement and financial accounting.

Although not described in the GBP, SSA is pursuing some significant initiatives to improve the operation of other selected enabling processes; e.g., replacement of its financial accounting and human resources information management systems and development of a new electronic commerce capability wherein goods and services can be purchased and delivered electronically.

## **Business Process: ENUMERATION**

### **Description**

Enumeration is the process by which SSA assigns Social Security numbers (SSNs) to identify workers and beneficiaries, issues replacement cards to people with existing numbers and verifies SSNs for employers and other government agencies.

The SSN is used to record earnings covered by Social Security and/or Medicare and to process and pay claims for Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits. Even if a person does not have wages or self-employment income that is covered by Social Security, an SSN may be needed to report other income to the Internal Revenue Service. Currently, any person age one or older who is claimed as a dependent on a Federal tax return must have an SSN. A provision of the General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATT) legislation extends this requirement to all persons claimed as dependents, regardless of age, effective with tax year 1995. Countless other organizations, both public and private, also use the SSN for identification and administrative purposes.

An SSN is obtained by submitting an application and documentary evidence of age, identity and U.S. citizenship or legal alien status. While customers may request an SSN application by telephone, they must submit the application and appropriate documentation to local SSA offices by mail or in person. Local offices are the primary points for processing applications because of the need to examine documents to verify identity.

SSA verifies the validity of SSNs (that a given name and number match our records) for employers for payroll purposes or as part of the employment eligibility verification process, and for government agencies for purposes of ensuring accuracy of the SSN information used in other Federal and State benefit programs. SSNs may be verified by calling the 800 Number or local offices, or by mailing to SSA large-volume requests on magnetic tape for batch processing. Many requests from government agencies are handled through automated data exchange systems.

## Workloads

SSA processed 16.1 million requests for new or replacement Social Security cards in FY 1994. About 39 percent of all SSN requests are for new numbers and 61 percent for replacement cards for people with existing numbers. Requests for new SSNs are projected to decrease slightly through FY 1999 and replacement card requests are expected to remain level. Depending on the outcome of an immigration reform proposal to improve the employment eligibility verification system, SSA may be required to assume additional work in the enumeration area related to verifying SSNs for employment eligibility purposes.

Of the new SSNs issued in FY 1994, about 25 percent were assigned to foreign-born individuals. Of those issued to persons born in the U.S., about 48 percent were assigned to newborns when the parents apply for SSNs at the time they are registering the birth at the hospital. Hospitals forward the data needed to assign SSNs to State vital statistics offices, which key and transmit the data to SSA. The percentage of new SSNs issued at birth has steadily increased since the Enumeration at Birth (EAB) process was initiated in FY 1988. Upon full participation of all 50 States, expected to be achieved by mid-FY 1995, SSA projects that about 60 percent of all new SSNs will be issued through the EAB process.

## Service Delivery Performance

The Agency's customer service plan sets two service standards for the enumeration process. One is to issue new or replacement cards within 5 working days of receiving all necessary documentation. The other is to tell customers their SSN within 1 working day of receiving all needed information, when they have an urgent need for a number.

Another Agency service objective is to issue SSNs cards accurately. SSNs can be issued inaccurately in two ways: an applicant is issued an SSN that belongs to someone else, or an applicant already has an SSN but is assigned another original SSN and the SSNs are not cross-referred.

MEASURE	CURRENT PERFORMANCE
% SSNs issued within 5 days of receiving all information	94.6% (FY 1994)
% Applicants who can be notified of SSN within 24 hrs.	86.6% (FY 1994)
% SSNs issued accurately	99.7% (July '92-June '93)

## Operational Efficiency

About 3 percent of SSA's administrative resources are expended on enumeration activities. Cost and productivity indicators for the enumeration process are shown below for FY 1994.

MEASURE	VALUE
SSNs Issued (including replacements)	16,142,409
Workyears Expended	2,559
SSNs Processed per Workyear	6,307
Unit Cost	\$10.30

## Assessment

Input recently obtained from its customers confirms that, overall, SSA's current performance measures correctly define what customers consider to be good service regarding issuance of SSNs. Modernization of the enumeration system, which is essentially complete, has dramatically improved processing times and enabled the Agency to meet its customer service standards most of the time.

Frequently, SSA is unable to completely handle requests for SSN cards at the first point of contact as its customers prefer. Those many customers who request a new or replacement SSN card by telephone must make a second contact with SSA, either through the mail or an office visit, to submit documents required to prove age, citizenship and identity.

Also, there are particular groups of customers for which service could be improved, including: those served by the EAB process, foreign-born individuals and employers who have an immediate need to verify SSNs for hiring or payroll purposes.

For parents who request SSNs through the EAB process, it can take up to 120 days for some States to transmit the data needed by SSA to process these requests. This lengthy delay generates duplicate SSN requests and follow-up inquiries, an inconvenience to the public and added operational cost to SSA. These problems will be further exacerbated when parents are required to have an SSN for children under age one in order to claim them as dependents on their FY 1995 Federal tax returns. It has been successfully demonstrated in certain States that the time to transmit SSN data to SSA can be reduced to 30 days by implementing an electronic birth certificate process.

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Foreign-born individuals residing in the U.S. must visit a local SSA office in person to apply for an SSN because, as proof of identity and citizenship, they must submit Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) documents that must be kept with them at all times. In addition to the increased number of people coming into a local office, and the resultant long waiting times that this causes in some metropolitan offices, the authenticity of INS documents is difficult for SSA employees to verify.

Employers who have an immediate need to verify SSNs for hiring or payroll purposes may do so by calling the 800 Number or local offices. However, it is not practical for employers, or for SSA, to handle large numbers of SSN verification requests in this way. High-volume requests may be sent to SSA on magnetic tape for processing through the enumeration verification system (EVS). Because this process takes about 4 weeks, it does not effectively serve employers who have an immediate need to verify employment eligibility.

## General Business Approach

In the long-term, expansion of current electronic verification capabilities, as well as other technological means of identification that will become available in the future, offer possibilities for enabling most SSN requests to be handled in one contact. SSA is currently engaged in a pilot to provide SSA employees direct access via terminals or IWS/LAN to State vital statistics data bases. This capability will expedite validation of information needed to issue a new or replacement SSN card. We also are exploring the use of kiosks and other technology to allow customers to request SSNs electronically in order to free employees to interact with customers on other SSA business. In the meantime, several efforts are being pursued that focus on improving service for the particular customer groups discussed in the assessment section.

To reduce the time it takes to assign SSNs at birth, efforts are underway to increase the number of States that use electronic birth certificate processes. SSA must accelerate these efforts in order to avoid potential service problems and additional resource demands that could result from the new requirement that all persons, regardless of age, who are claimed as dependents on Federal tax returns have an SSN beginning with tax year 1995. Currently 34 States have agreed to meet a 30-day processing time objective in return for funding to implement electronic birth certificate processes. By FY 1996, SSA intends to have cooperative agreements in place with the remaining States.

SSA has initiated discussions with the Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS) about ways that we can provide one-stop service to foreign-born customers who need SSN cards. Options being considered include out-stationing SSA employees at INS facilities to take SSN applications or having INS employees take the applications, review supporting documents and forward the information to SSA for processing. We also continue to work with INS to improve telecommunications linkages, so that our employees can electronically verify alien status.

Improvements are planned that will make it easier for employers to verify SSNs for employment eligibility purposes. SSA is expanding the capacity of the Enumeration Verification System (EVS) to handle greater numbers of inquiries from employers and State and local agencies who need to verify SSNs of applicants for public assistance benefits. A prototype online verification system is being developed to test the feasibility of providing employers online verification of an employee or job applicant's SSN. These improvements also will broaden the Agency's verification capability so that it is better equipped to handle more work, and thus avoid a further resource strain, in the event that SSA is required to assume a greater role in employment eligibility verification.

*The following Key Initiatives discussed in Part V are relevant to improving the enumeration process:*

7. Integrated Client Data
12. Electronic Service Delivery
14. Reengineering the Policy Process

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## Business Process: EARNINGS

### Description

Social Security benefits are based on an individual's earnings as reported to SSA. Reports of earnings must be filed annually with SSA by every employer who is liable for Social Security and Medicare taxes. It is through the earnings process that SSA establishes and maintains a record of an individual's earnings for use in determining insured status for entitlement to retirement, survivors, disability and health insurance benefits and in calculating benefit payment amounts.

Employers may submit wage reports to SSA on paper or magnetic media. The process for recording wages is a centralized annual operation performed by employees in SSA's Office of Central Records Operations. To ensure completeness of earnings data, wage items are matched yearly against employer tax data reported to IRS. Record corrections may be initiated by an employer or by SSA.

Individuals may request statements of their earnings records and corrections to those records by contacting SSA in person, by phone or through mail. Historically, correction requests were sent to the Office of Central Records Operations for handling. As a result of recent systems enhancements, much of this work now can be completed wherever it is initially received. Local offices and Processing Centers are typically involved in the more complicated correction cases and those identified in connection with claims for benefits.

### Workloads

In FY 1994, SSA processed about 222 million earnings items. This workload is projected to increase to over 252 million items by FY 2000. Legislation requiring SSA to issue earnings statements annually to taxpayers age 60 and over beginning in FY 1995 and age 25 and over beginning in FY 2000, will generate additional work for the Agency, mostly in the form of public inquiries and requests for earnings corrections. Based on a recent test mailing of FEBES, SSA expects that in FY 2000, when statements must be issued to taxpayers age 25 and over, the number of requests for earnings corrections will be more than double the FY 1994 level.

## Service Delivery Performance

The Agency currently measures its accuracy and timeliness in posting wages and is developing the capability to measure how timely earnings corrections are made.

MEASURE	PERFORMANCE
% reported earnings posted accurately	98.8% (FY 1994)
% wage reports posted within 6 months following close of tax year	62.6% (FY 1994)

SSA steadily increased the number of annual wage postings made within 6 months (from 67 percent in FY 1989 to 83 percent in FY 1993), largely through automation improvements to the earnings process. In FY 1994, start-up problems with new software enhancements caused a significant decrease in the timeliness of the earnings postings. We expect to return to the previous level of performance next year. The accuracy rate has remained consistent at about 99 percent over the past 5 years.

## Operational Efficiency

The earnings process currently consumes 3 percent of SSA's administrative resources. Most of these resources are devoted to the annual wage posting operation, a relatively low-cost, batch-processed workload. As earnings corrections and other fallout workloads are generated from the annual issuance of PEBES, the earnings process will demand a greater proportion of SSA's resources. However, this increased resource demand should be tempered somewhat by further productivity improvements that will be realized from systems enhancements currently being implemented.

FY 1994 cost and productivity data for the annual wage report and individual earnings corrections workloads are shown below.

	ANNUAL WAGE ITEMS	INDIVIDUAL CORRECTIONS
Earnings Items Processed	221,949,522	107,435
Workyears (WY) Expended	1,556	430
Items Processed per WY	142,652	250
Unit Cost	\$0.51	\$272.29

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## Assessment

SSA has implemented major features of the Modernized Earnings System (MES) that are improving the service and operational efficiency of the earnings posting and corrections functions. By the time the Agency faces substantial growth in earnings inquiries and corrections requests, anticipated from the required annual issuance of earnings statements, a vastly improved earning corrections process will be fully in place.

Prior to earnings modernization, the earnings corrections process involved up to 15 technicians, as many as 29 processing steps and the completion of an average of 14 separate paper forms. This lengthy resolution process, in many cases, took 1-2 years to complete, generating duplicate requests and follow-up inquiries from our customers. With the most recent software enhancement implemented during FY 1994, virtually all earnings corrections can be made online, all paper forms were eliminated and the most complex corrections require no more than 3 technicians and 5 steps. It is now possible for many corrections to be made within 2 days.

During FY 1995, online correction capability will be extended to local offices, Teleservice Centers and Processing Centers, increasing the Agency's capacity for handling earnings inquiries and corrections requests. With this latest enhancement, hand-offs to the Office of Central Records Operations will be reduced and many corrections requests will be completed at the point of initial contact.

SSA also recently implemented a more automated earnings posting process supported by new imaging equipment that eliminates much of the overhead associated with handling paper earnings reports (W-2s) and enables the consolidation of annual wage reporting operations into one Data Operations Center (DOC). (The mission of the DOCs previously consisted primarily of processing paper earnings reports.) As a result, SSA is redeploying employees in the other two DOCs to help improve the 800 Number service performance.

A high earnings posting accuracy rate of 99 percent still translates to over 2 million unposted earnings items and potential earnings corrections requests. Consequently, SSA has instituted continuing efforts to further improve the quality of employer reporting. When earnings reports cannot be posted to an individual earnings record, they are placed in the Earnings Suspense File. Ongoing analysis of the Earnings Suspense File is conducted to identify problem employers in need of training. SSA has expanded public relations and education activities with employer, employee and professional groups to improve the quality of their W-2 reports and direct them to the proper Agency contacts for assistance in resolving problems. In a recent survey, many employers who contacted SSA with wage reporting questions or problems reported a high level of satisfaction with the services they received. However, some employers expressed dissatisfaction with service from SSA headquarters, indicating it was difficult to locate a person who was knowledgeable about their particular problem.

## General Business Approach

SSA has completed major improvements to the earnings process that have freed resources for other uses and better positioned the Agency to handle the increased work that will result from the annual issuance of PEBES. The new earnings posting process has enabled SSA to consolidate posting operations into one site and redeploy employees to improve telephone service. As the earnings corrections process has become more automated, SSA has retrained and redeployed employees in central records operations to other jobs in teleservice, disability operations and local offices. This practice will continue as automation allows more earnings correction work to be completed in local offices.

Further incremental improvements are planned to make the earnings process easier to use and more efficient. For example, SSA is piloting the use of optical disk storage to eliminate dependency on microfilm and make more earnings documentation available online. This automated approach will be combined with unique software, reliant on the IWS/LAN platform, designed to locate records that traditionally elude computer searches. Such capability will allow more earnings inquiries and corrections requests to be handled in one contact and free employees now manually searching microfilmed employer records to do other priority work.

Several activities are directed at improving the quality of employer wage reports. SSA is evaluating the cost-effectiveness of using the EVS for annual payroll verification purposes. Preliminary analysis of pilot data indicates that the accuracy of wage postings improves dramatically when employers use the EVS to verify employee SSNs prior to submitting wage reports. Additional alternatives will be made available to the business community to allow employers to file their wage reports electronically using SSA software standards and edits. To improve service to employers who call SSA about wage reporting problems, SSA plans additional training for headquarters employees and is considering the establishment of a specialized unit in headquarters to answer employer wage reporting questions.

An initiative recommended by the National Performance Review to simplify wage reporting government-wide is one that may have major implications for SSA's earnings process in the future. SSA is participating in an effort led by IRS to establish a single system for employers to file Federal and State wage and tax information, in order to reduce employers' wage reporting burden and increase compliance and accuracy.

*The following Key Initiatives discussed in Part V are relevant to improving the earnings process:*

12. Electronic Service Delivery
14. Reengineering the Policy Process

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## Business Process: CLAIMS

### Description

To become entitled to benefits under any of the programs that SSA administers, an individual must file an application and submit proof of eligibility. Those who are dissatisfied with SSA's decisions may request further review. The claims process comprises the actions that SSA takes to determine an individual's eligibility for benefits, beginning with the individual's initial contact with SSA through payment effectuation or the three levels of administrative appeal that a claimant may request.

The process for determining eligibility for benefits involves certain basic functions that are consistent across each of the programs that SSA administers: outreach and information, intake, evidence collection, determination of eligibility, notification of award or denial and initial payment. However, eligibility requirements, service and cost performance vary considerably by program and type of benefit. For this reason, the analysis that follows provides distinct information about the claims processes for the four major types of benefits that SSA administers: the OASI, DI, SSI Aged, and SSI Blind/Disabled programs.

### Workloads

In recent years, the Agency has experienced unprecedented increases in both DI and SSI disability workloads. About 3.9 million disability claims were filed in FY 1994, a 53 percent increase over FY 1990 levels. Appeals workloads, which are largely generated from disability claims, have similarly grown. In FY 1994, about 550,000 hearings requests were filed, a 77 percent increase over FY 1990 levels. Over the same period, OASI claims have decreased slightly, while SSI Aged claims have declined by over 14 percent.

Disability claims and appeals workloads are projected to continue to grow over the FY 1993 to FY 1999 period by about 14 percent. OASI and SSI aged claims are not projected to increase during this period.

## Service Delivery Performance

The Agency measures performance in processing claims and appeals in terms of both accuracy and timeliness. The "initial payment accuracy rate" is the measure of accuracy of the first payment made to newly awarded OASI and SSI claimants (without regard to the determination of disability). The "index of dollar accuracy rate" measures the dollar accuracy of initial adjudicative decisions over the retrospective, current and prospective lifetime of the payment. For DI and SSI initial blind/disability claims, the "decisional accuracy rate" is the net average of the percent of accurate decisions made by the DDSs regarding medical eligibility, as determined by SSA's Office of Program and Integrity Reviews.

	INITIAL PAYMENT ACCURACY RATE (FY '93)	INDEX OF DOLLAR ACCURACY (FY '93)	DECISIONAL ACCURACY (FY '94)
OASI	90.8%	99.8%	n/a
SSI	94.0%	96.2%	n/a
DI and SSI combined	n/a	n/a	96.8%

\* n/a = not applicable

Timely service in determining benefit eligibility is currently measured relative to the service level objectives that are set in the ASP. These service objectives may be revised as SSA is able to better determine from customers what they consider to be timely service. In its customer service plan, SSA has made a pledge to improve service in the disability area by redesigning the disability claim process so that, ultimately, customers can expect to receive a decision within 60 days of filing for disability benefits.

As indicated by the FY 1994 performance data shown below, the greatest gaps between current performance and service level objectives are in the disability and appeals areas. Processing times, on average, are much further from Agency service objectives for disability claims and appeals than for OASI and SSI Aged claims.

AGENCY SERVICE LEVEL OBJECTIVE	PERCENT MEETING OBJECTIVE	AVERAGE PROCESSING TIME (DAYS)
Complete initial OASI applications before first regular payment due or within 15 days from effective date of filing, if later (FY 1994)	81.1%	15
Pay or deny initial SSI Aged claims within 14 days of filing date (FY 1994)	63.2%	17
Pay or deny initial DI claims within 6 months after onset or within 60 days of effective filing date, whichever is later (FY 1994)	45.4%	87
Pay or deny initial SSI disability claims within 60 days of filing date (FY 1994)	23.4%	110
Make and send notice of reconsideration decision within 60 days after filing date SSI DI (Sept 94)	57.4% 54.2%	N/A 64
Make and send notice of hearings decision within 120 days after filing (FY 1994)	8.6%	306
Make and send notice of Appeals Council review decisions within 90 days after filing date (data for FY '94 thru July)	40.4%	126

### Operational Efficiency

Approximately 67 percent of SSA's total administrative resources are used to process initial claims and appeals—including about 15 percent for OASI and SSI Aged benefits and about 52 percent for DI and SSI Blind and Disabled benefits. About 95 percent of all appeal requests result from claims for disability benefits. The following two tables provide FY 1994 costs and productivity data for initial claims by type of benefit and for each administrative level of appeal. Figures include both Federal and State resources (workyears and dollars) expended in processing disability work.

FY 1994	OASI	SSI AGED	DI	SSI BLIND & DISABLED
Initial Claims Processed	3,205,793	204,402	1,888,807	2,052,347
Workyears (WY) Expended	8,836	675	12,043	11,084
Initial Claims Processed Per WY	363	303	157	185
Unit Cost per Initial Claim	\$189.18	\$228.12	\$498.43	\$420.35

FY 1994	RECONSIDERATION (OASDI/SSI)	HEARINGS*	APPEALS COUNCIL REVIEWS*
Appeals Processed	1,152,322	421,129	70,063
Workyears (WY) Expended	4,497	8,436	583
Appeals Processed Per WY	256	50	120
Unit Cost	\$287.15	\$1,158.09	\$481.48

\*Includes Medicare cases.

## Assessment

The costs for processing disability determinations are enormous—consuming more than half of SSA's total \$5.2 billion administrative budget in FY 1994. Unprecedented disability workload increases have severely strained Agency resources. Large numbers of pending cases and long processing times are the result. High workloads will continue with disability claims and resultant appeals increasing by 14 percent from FY 1993 to FY 1999.

The current disability process, essentially designed in the 1950s, is fragmented, paper-bound, burdened by overly complex policies, has too many steps, makes little use of technology, and is clearly not customer-oriented. Faced with workload growth and limited resources, SSA has determined that significant service-level improvements cannot be realized without completely reengineering the process for receiving and deciding disability claims and appeals.

When the redesign is fully implemented, it is expected that average processing time to pay or deny initial claims will improve to 60 days and processing time through the hearing stage will improve to 225 days. However, because of the complexities and investments involved in making all of the changes needed to attain these levels, it will take approximately 5 years to achieve these processing time goals. To achieve some near-term results in reducing disability case pendings and processing cases in less time, SSA has developed a Short Term Disability Project Plan that is designed to expedite claims processing in a way that will support the redesigned disability process. The plan is a temporary initiative with targets for significantly reducing pending cases in the State DDSs and hearings in SSA's Office of Hearings and Appeals, by December 1996.

### *Other Claims Processes*

The OASI and SSI Aged claims processes are not nearly as complex as the process for determining disability. Because eligibility factors, such as insured status, income and resources, are more clear-cut, appeals are infrequent and there are significantly fewer processing steps overall. For OASI claims, hand-offs between locations are generally limited to those cases that cannot be fully processed electronically. The SSI claims system was designed at its inception to allow claims to be processed completely in the local offices.

While these processes are considered essentially sound and SSA's service is good, there is room for further improvement in the OASI and SSI aged claims areas. SSA's approach for improvement focuses on completing more claims at the initial point of contact and increasing efficiency through paperless processing. The IWS/LAN is the requisite platform for tools such as document imaging and document workflow management software, that will enable paperless processing. Key efforts include completing the modernization of the programmatic systems and data bases that support the claims processes and establishing an entirely electronic claims file. The benefits of doing so are many. For example:

- ▶ Employees will be freed to focus on serving customers rather than processing paper;
- ▶ Customers will only need to provide information once when filing for benefits under more than one program;
- ▶ Most applications can be fully processed at the point of contact;

- ▶ Employees will have immediate access to customer information whenever a customer requires subsequent service;
- ▶ Authorized employees will be able to access files, no matter where they work, on a need-to-know basis;
- ▶ Work can be redirected to where it can most appropriately and efficiently be completed;
- ▶ The tremendous costs (several hundred million dollars each year) of moving and storing paper files will be reduced; and
- ▶ Third parties can provide information electronically that is entered directly to the claims record, e.g., State vital statistics information.

Four key initiatives are planned that will promote paperless processing. One is to redesign the Title II system to enable automation of the remaining claims and postentitlement actions that are now processed manually. The redesigned Title II system and a second initiative to modernize the SSI system will also provide more data online so that employees can more frequently handle customer requests in one contact. The third initiative involves a pilot to test the use of imaging and document management technologies in combination with the IWS/LAN in support of paperless processing. A fourth initiative is to establish a "whole client" record by integrating SSA's various programmatic data bases so that client information can be shared among systems.

SSA has completed several activities and a number of others are underway that set the stage for eliminating paper entirely. Evidence-retention criteria have been refined, new practices for discarding unnecessary paper have been established and electronic record formats have been created. The practice of certifying the most critical data from a paper record and recording that data onto an electronic data base is being expanded to all public records needed to document a claim. The feasibility of extending this certification policy to non-public records is being explored, as well as alternative ways, such as imaging, to eliminate the need to retain paper documents that are not appropriate for electronic certification. Finally, and key to a totally paperless environment, the Agency is developing a strategy for handling signature documents critical to fraud deterrence and prosecution.

In addition to these efforts, SSA will explore new ways for individuals to file claims and provide claims information through, for example, automatic entitlement and electronic access to our claims systems software. Electronic access could be extended not only to individuals, through personal computer connections or kiosk machines, but also to third parties such as personnel offices of large employers.

Finally, SSA recognizes that implementing specific changes to the disability process has implications for the way its other claims processes or programs are administered. This is particularly true with respect to claims intake procedures and the administrative appeals process. As the disability process redesign is implemented, SSA will consider whether parallel process changes or modifications are necessary or appropriate in its other claims processes or programs.

*The following Key Initiatives discussed in Part V are relevant to improving the claim process:*

1. Disability Process Redesign
2. Short-Term Disability Plan
5. Title II Redesign
7. Integrated Client Data
9. SSI Modernization
10. Notice Improvements
11. Paperless Processing
12. Electronic Service Delivery
14. Reengineering the Policy Process

## Business Process: POSTENTITLEMENT

### Description

Once individuals become entitled to Social Security or SSI benefits, any changes in their circumstances that affect the amount or continuation of payment must be reflected in SSA's records. The postentitlement (PE) process encompasses the actions that SSA takes, after an OASDI or SSI claim is processed to an initial award, to ensure continuing eligibility and timely and correct payment of benefits. Examples of these actions include change of address, non-receipt of checks, change of payee and review of payee accounting information, benefit recomputations, overpayments and reviews of continuing eligibility.

A PE activity may be customer-initiated or it may be generated from internal Agency processes based on existing or updated automated data. A client is usually contacted through the mail when SSA initiates the action. Clients may contact SSA by telephone, mail or in person to report an event. Employees throughout the Agency, in SSA's local offices, hearing offices, Teleservice Centers, Processing Centers and central record operations, and in the State DDSs, are involved in varying aspects of processing PE actions.

### Workloads

Over 90 million PE transactions were processed in FY 1994, including over 11 million SSA-initiated reviews conducted to ensure program integrity. Postentitlement workloads, which generally grow commensurate with the growth of the Social Security beneficiary population, are projected to increase by about 19 percent from FY 1993 to FY 1999.

Recent legislation will generate significant additional workloads in the postentitlement area. The *Social Security Independence and Program Improvements Act of 1994* includes provisions placing new restrictions on disability benefit payments to individuals who are disabled, and for whom drug addiction or alcoholism is a contributing factor material to the determination of disability, and requires that SSA perform CDRs for a minimum number of SSI recipients each year for 3 years.

## Service Delivery Performance

SSA does not presently measure the dollar accuracy rate for all postentitlement actions, but is developing the capability to do so in the future. Specific measures of accuracy, however, do exist for SSI redeterminations and CDRs.

For postentitlement, an indicator of timely service is the number of continuing payments that are made on the scheduled delivery date. SSA also is developing the capability to track how quickly replacement payments are made in situations involving non-receipt of benefit checks. The average processing time of PE actions is measured for certain workloads at the component level, but is not available for the Agency overall.

MEASURE	PERFORMANCE	
Index of Dollar accuracy rate for SSI redeterminations (FY 1993)	96.8%	
Performance accuracy rate for CDRs (FY 1994)	96.2%	
% continuing monthly payments made on schedule (FY 1993)	OASDI	99.9%
	SSI	99.9%

## Operational Efficiency

About 24 percent of SSA's administrative resources are expended to process postentitlement transactions. Over half of these resources are devoted to making record changes, both in response to customer-reported events (e.g., address changes and non-receipt of checks) and SSA-initiated events such as benefit recomputations or overpayment detections. The remaining amount is used to conduct various SSA-initiated reviews to ensure continuing eligibility. These reviews include annual reports of earnings, verifications of school attendance, SSI redeterminations of income and resources, representative payee accountings and CDRs. The following cost and productivity figures for FY 1994 include both Federal and State resources (workyears and dollars) expended in processing record changes and continuing eligibility reviews.

FY 1994	RECORD CHANGES	CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY REVIEWS
PE Actions Processed	78,962,547	11,228,722
Workyears (WY) Expended	10,343	8,017
PE Actions processed Per WY	7,634	1,401
Unit Cost	\$8.69	\$48.46

## Assessment

SSA is delivering the "basics" of good service to its customers in the postentitlement area—continuing monthly payments are made on schedule 99.9 percent of the time. Even so, the payment delivery problems experienced by the remaining .1 percent of our customers generate a considerable amount of work for SSA. Check non-receipt is one of the most frequent reasons that customers call the 800 Number and SSA expends considerable administrative resources, over 2,200 workyears in FY 1993, to resolve non-receipt issues and handle other payment-related work such as returned checks. Many of the situations that cause check non-receipt and other payment-related work could be avoided through the use of electronic funds transfer. Beneficiaries who use direct deposit to receive their payments are 10 to 15 times less likely to experience a problem with their payment being lost, stolen or delayed than are check recipients. In addition, SSA is able to more efficiently recover payments that are not due (e.g., payments issued after death) when they are issued electronically.

The Agency's performance in managing debt is also strong. Overpayments as a percentage of benefit payments are approximately 0.6 percent. Annual debt detections average about \$2 billion, with debt collections and debt write-offs being about \$1.3 billion and \$.4 billion respectively. SSA collects \$8 for every dollar invested in its debt management program; about 3,200 workyears are expended annually on overpayment work.

It is not so clear how well the Agency is doing in other facets of PE service. While average processing time for PE actions taken in the Processing Centers is measured, there is no overall Agency measurement of the timeliness of PE record changes, that is from the time of the initiating event (e.g., customer reports, cyclical updates and data matches initiated by SSA) to final resolution. Although the accuracy of CDRs, SSI redeterminations and 800 Number calls is measured, no Agency-level measurement of the overall accuracy of PE record changes presently exists.

As our customers prefer, SSA completely handles many PE transactions at the customer's first point of contact. Most Title II address changes and annual reports of earnings are prime examples. However, significant numbers of PE transactions require that subsequent actions be taken, many in a location other than the one that received the original report. TSCs refer to local offices any reports that cannot be handled to completion over the telephone, such as those requiring submission of verification documents or forms signed by the customer. Processing Centers resolve Title II automated processing exceptions that result when actions input by the local offices or Teleservice Centers cannot be processed through the automated system. The hand-offs inherent in the current process, often necessitated by documentation requirements and present automation limitations, affect how quickly the Agency is able to process PE actions.

Many PE events have no immediate customer origin, but are initiated by SSA to ensure correct payment of benefits. SSA performs various cyclical operations to update payment amounts, such as cost-of-living adjustments, benefit recomputations based on additional earnings, and annual earnings enforcement actions. Most of this work related to the OASDI program is handled in the Processing Centers when it cannot be processed through the automated system.

For OASDI, and more extensively for SSI, SSA maintains regular computer interfaces with other Federal and State agencies (e.g., Internal Revenue Service, Veterans Administration, Railroad Board, State unemployment and workers compensation offices). SSA also has computer interfaces with the Medicaid program (nursing home admissions) and Federal and State prisons to determine changes of living arrangements that affect SSI payment amounts. As the number of beneficiaries continues to increase, the PE workload increases as well. The investment in electronic interfaces helps to protect the integrity of the programs but also creates more work because of the number of cases to be investigated.

The SSI program PE environment requires constant monitoring, since eligibility for each month must be established or presumed at regular intervals. In addition to using computer interfaces to detect income and resources, SSA regularly conducts continuing eligibility reviews to ensure the integrity of the rolls. Our redetermination process is based on profiles of beneficiaries established by research on the experience of initial claims and past redeterminations. Beneficiaries are categorized as "high error" potential (reviewed annually by personal contact), "mid-level error" potential (reviewed annually by personal contact or through completion of a mailed form) and "low error" potential (reviewed every 6 years by personal contact or through completion of a mailed form).

Of the various continuing eligibility reviews conducted by the Agency, CDRs are the most resource intensive. SSA is required to complete periodic reviews of disability beneficiaries to determine their continuing eligibility to benefits. However, since 1991, the pressures of the growth in disability claims and resource constraints have significantly hampered the Agency's ability to complete CDRs in any significant number. GAO has estimated that 30,000 ineligible beneficiaries were receiving payments at the end of FY 1990, a cost to the Trust Funds of about \$2.5 billion through FY 1997. To improve this situation, SSA has implemented a new CDR mailer process to eliminate non-productive reviews and allow the Agency to conduct a greater number of CDRs with the same level of resources. Even with the new, more cost-effective CDR process, SSA is unable to complete many CDRs that come due.

In addition to the currently required periodic CDRs, the *Social Security Independence and Program Improvements Act of 1994* requires that SSA process 100,000 more SSI CDRs, along with CDRs on one-third of SSI children at age 18 for FY 1996 through FY 1998. Other provisions of the legislation place a further substantial administrative burden on SSA. These include a 36-month payment limitation where substance abuse is material to disability, suspension for non-compliance with treatment requirements, limits on the size of retroactive payments, and extension of existing SSI representative payee requirements to DI beneficiaries. The specifications for these new workloads are discussed in greater detail under the initiative titled "Legislated Provisions Related to Drug Addiction and Alcoholism" in Part V.

Since 1988, many changes in SSA's representative payment business policies and processes have enabled us to improve service performance in such areas as beneficiary due process, payee investigation/selection, and payee oversight. Central to these improvements has been the development of a new automated database to track payee performance. Further automation of representative payee workloads is needed to enhance service performance. The payee database, the Master Representative Payee File, does not yet contain information on more than 1 million beneficiaries with payees. This information is needed to track the performance of these payees and is a prerequisite to eliminating the less efficient systems now used to control the current accounting process.

Unlike many of SSA's other processes, the trend in representative payment has been toward more face-to-face public contact and folder documentation in response to the need to promote protection of a vulnerable clientele. With the increase in the disabled population (among whom payee turnover also is especially great) has come a rapid increase in the representative payment rolls. This growth is expected to continue outpacing growth in the rolls as a whole, and, along with a concomitant increase in administrative costs, signals a need for streamlining efforts.

SSA operates a rehabilitation reimbursement program in which State vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies are reimbursed for the costs of the services they provide to SSA's beneficiaries if the services result in a return to work at the substantial gainful activity level for 9 continuous months. In FY 1994, SSA reimbursed the State VR agencies \$63.5 million for successfully rehabilitating about 6,000 beneficiaries with disabilities.

## General Business Approach

The Agency's approach for improving the postentitlement process focuses on: providing better customer service primarily by enabling more business to be handled in a single contact, freeing resources for other priority or increasing workloads by automating more PE work and more effectively handling program integrity work to help restore public confidence.

One key effort involves exploiting the many service features and payment processing efficiencies that can be made possible through electronic funds transfer, and increase the number of customers using this more reliable and convenient means of receiving their payments. Doing so allows us to not only provide better service to our customers, but also reduce payment-related workloads and the costs associated with disbursing checks.

The electronic payment services initiative encompasses a range of activities designed to move SSA toward an all electronic payment environment, consistent with the goals of the NPR. SSA will more aggressively market the advantages of direct deposit to the public and financial community. In accordance with recently established government-wide policy, SSA will presume the use of direct deposit by all beneficiaries who have bank accounts. We will establish the capability to provide payments electronically to beneficiaries who do not have bank accounts. Use of the national Automated Clearinghouse (ACH) system to communicate with financial institutions will be expanded. New uses include automated enrollment for direct deposit and electronic verification of bank account resources for SSI recipients in lieu of the current paper process.

The focus of other Agency efforts to improve the postentitlement is on automation enhancements that will reduce the hand-offs and manual work effort now required to effect many status and payment changes. These enhancements will also provide more data online to enable work to be handled at the first client contact. The key initiatives for doing this are essentially those that also contribute to claims process improvements and the achievement of the electronic claims file, most importantly:

- ▶ IWS/LAN;
- ▶ Paperless Processing;
- ▶ Title II Systems Redesign;
- ▶ Integrated Client Data;
- ▶ SSI Modernization; and
- ▶ Reengineering the Policy Process.

In addition, an initiative to provide clearer notices should help to reduce PE work that occurs when customers do not understand our correspondence, and as a result, do not properly report changes or make additional contacts with SSA for explanations.

The combination of increasing automation and the public's growing preference for reporting changes by telephone rather than by mail, has significantly reduced the volume of traditional work performed by the Processing Centers. In response to these changes, the Processing Centers have downsized considerably over time and taken on new workloads. For example, they now perform a direct service role in answering 800 Number calls on peak calling days.

The redesigned Title II system, when fully in place, will have the effect of further reducing the workloads that are currently performed in the Processing Centers. There will continue to be residual systems fallout work and other high volume work that can be best accomplished in a centralized operation. However, predicted reductions in Processing Center work resulting from planned automation are of such a magnitude that it will be necessary for SSA to redefine the role the Processing Centers will have in future Agency work processes and determine what organizational structure can best support that role.

Consistent with the goals of the NPR, SSA plans to increase the number of CDRs that it will conduct annually beginning in FY 1995. In addition to continually refining the current CDR mailer process, SSA will process a sample of SSI CDRs in FY 1995 to evaluate how best to proceed with the additional reviews recently mandated for FY 1996 through FY 1998.

The NPR also called for the Congress to provide SSA greater authority to use standard debt collection tools such as those available to other Federal agencies. Specifically, it called for permitting SSA to use private collection agencies and credit bureaus, to charge interest and penalties on delinquent debts and to permit recovery by offsetting other Federal payments to which debtors are entitled. The Domestic Employment Reform Act of 1994 granted SSA limited access to some of these tools. SSA will take the steps necessary to implement these additional debt collection tools in order to enhance its performance. In addition to the new legislation, SSA plans to expand on existing authorities as well. This includes broadening the universe of debtors who can be referred to the Internal Revenue Service for offset of their tax refunds, expanded use of credit cards as a repayment mechanism and modernized remittance processing.

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We are working with the Office of Inspector General (OIG) on a review of the payee accounting process that focuses on risk assessment. Though it is generally agreed that the current process, while providing some deterrence effect, does little to detect misuse, the Agency spent some \$60 million in FY 1993 on a process that is burdensome to the public and our employees alike. Changes based on the OIG recommendations will require the approval of a Federal district court with oversight in this area due to a recent court case, and the Congress.

As SSA is sensitive to the need to avoid incurring unacceptable risk in the payee area (of harm to beneficiary property or persons), SSA also is exploring establishing a special advisory committee to hold public hearings on representative payment and recommend changes to existing policies and processes. The committee's deliberations would focus on protecting beneficiary rights, promoting beneficiary well-being and self-sufficiency, and setting appropriate standards for payee performance as well as sanctions for malfeasance.

SSA is expanding the reimbursement program for vocational rehabilitation by implementing regulations that were published in March 1994 that permit SSA to refer a beneficiary to an alternate provider when the State vocational rehabilitation agency is unable to provide services. This new process will improve the services available to SSA's beneficiaries by increasing the number of providers participating in the reimbursement program. SSA is also in the process of developing a comprehensive employment strategy to increase the number of current and potential beneficiaries with disabilities who choose employment instead of income maintenance.

*The following Key Initiatives discussed in Part V are relevant to improving the postentitlement process:*

5. Title II System Redesign
6. Payment Cycling
7. Integrated Client Data
8. Legislated Provisions Related to Drug Addiction & Alcoholism
9. SSI Modernization
10. Notice Improvements
11. Paperless Processing
12. Electronic Service Delivery
13. Electronic Payment Services
14. Reengineering the Policy Process

## Business Process: INFORMING THE PUBLIC

### Description

In addition to its core processes involving issuing SSNs, maintaining earnings records, and processing claims and postentitlement actions, SSA also undertakes significant work that involves the dissemination of information about the programs it administers and the processes and procedures we use in administering these programs. This fifth business process is summarized under the heading *Informing The Public*.

Informing the public about Social Security programs, and educating them about the value and operation of these programs, is a basic Agency responsibility. Public support for Social Security depends on the public having an accurate understanding of the basic principles of social insurance programs, of the value of these programs to themselves and society as a whole, and an appreciation of the role Social Security programs play in the nation's income security system. The public also needs accurate and understandable information about key public policy issues, such as the role of the Trust Funds in financing Social Security benefits, the value of Social Security to younger workers, and the scope and nature of potential changes to the programs. And the public needs to know that SSA is a careful custodian of the taxpayers dollars and the beneficiaries' benefits. In general, the public needs accurate and understandable information about any aspect of Social Security that is of concern. In short, robust public support for Social Security depends on an informed and educated public, and this is the responsibility of the business process SSA describes as *Informing the Public*.

This business process involves SSA's extensive public information activities as well as data exchanges with other Agencies and the statistical and other program data SSA provides to support research and policy making throughout the government and in the private sector. The customer end-product resulting from this business process is essentially "information," broadly construed.

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## Workloads

### *Personal Earnings & Benefit Estimate Statements (PEBES)*

Since 1988 SSA has offered a PEBES to members of the public, upon request. These statements provide a report of the life-long earnings record maintained by SSA on each worker participating in Social Security, and an estimate of the worker's potential future Social Security benefits. Annually SSA receives and processes about 4 million such requests. In addition to their general role of informing specific members of the public about an important collection of information SSA maintains regarding their participation in the Social Security program, the PEBES statements are also expected to play an important role in SSA's goal of rebuilding public confidence in Social Security. The expectation is that as workers receive periodic information about their Social Security contributions and potential future benefits, that this will make more concrete the value of Social Security and instill a greater sense of confidence in the future receipt of benefits.

### *Public Information Materials*

SSA publishes pamphlets, newsletters, booklets and other informational materials about its programs, policies and procedures so that the public can be fully informed about Social Security programs. SSA also produces informational materials in audio, video and computer media. SSA publishes about 50 consumer pamphlets, booklets and factsheets to inform the public about Social Security programs and policies. SSA also produces about 40 administrative publications that are sent as "stuffers" with notices sent to Social Security beneficiaries. These "stuffers" contain information that beneficiaries need to know so that the official notices can be kept shorter and easier to understand. In total, SSA produces an annual volume of more than 95 million of these 90 or so publications.

SSA also produces a monthly camera-ready newsletter that is sent to more than 15,000 nonprofit and governmental organizations; a quarterly newsletter (the *SSA/IRS Reporter*) distributed to more than 6 million employers to inform them about the procedures and policies involved in the Annual Wage Reporting process; a monthly package of public information materials (newspaper articles, scripts for radio programs, etc.) which is distributed to all 1,300 Social Security field offices; a series of radio spots; about 90 videotape programs each year; and SSA operates a live satellite broadcast network for internal communications and training purposes. SSA has also produced a *Teachers' Kit* for use by secondary schools. Currently the *Kit* is in limited test marketing of 3,000 copies nationwide. If the test indicates the kit is useful and in demand, SSA intends full-scale distribution.

### *Online Computer Access*

SSA is beginning to disseminate its public information materials via the latest online computer technologies. SSA now has an online service over the world-wide Internet telecommunications network, that makes available the text of many of SSA's publications. SSA also operates a forum on the Compuserve online network. Since 1993 SSA has also operated an electronic bulletin board service for the nation's employers and other interested parties, to provide information about annual wage reporting.

### *Data Exchanges*

SSA's programmatic data, while critical to the administration of Social Security programs, is important to other government agencies as well. The Social Security Act and other statutes provide for the dissemination of Social Security data to other agencies for legitimate government purposes, such as administering State benefit programs. SSA currently maintains about 20 computer matching operations by which we provide programmatic data to other Federal, State and local agencies. More than 30 States also have the ability to make indirect electronic inquiries to SSA's main data bases, with appropriate safeguards in place on the security and privacy of the data.

### *Statistical and other Research Data*

As part of its role in fostering knowledge about Social Security, SSA distributes statistical and research data in several forms. SSA publishes about a dozen standard reference reports. SSA also makes available statistical data in electronic form for use by other government agencies and researchers.

### *Public Inquiries*

SSA receives millions of inquires from the public each year via its 800 Number telephone network and its 1,300 local field offices. (These operations are discussed below under Service Delivery Interface). In addition to these two sources of inquiries, SSA's centralized Office of Public Inquiries (OPI) responds to written or phone inquiries that are received in SSA headquarters. Each year, OPI handles about 100,000 inquiries of this type.

SSA also receives formal requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Last year SSA received almost 27,000 requests under FOIA and also processed about 100 appeals on requests that could not be granted. The Congressional Relations Staff answers inquiries from members of Congress and their staffs. And SSA's Press Office handles inquiries from the media. The primary source for the distribution of SSA's public information materials is SSA's network of local field offices.

## Service Delivery Performance

For most of its public information activities SSA does not have specific performance measures. SSA assesses its performance more in terms of the accessibility of products to various audiences and in terms of the volumes of materials distributed. For example, one performance goal is to make SSA publications available in other languages in addition to English. All major publications are now available in Spanish and a number of our *Social Security Factsheets* are available in the five most common Pacific-Asian languages. Many local field offices also conduct public information activities in non-English languages prevalent in their service area.

In assessing public service announcements and similar materials SSA monitors the number of "placements" these materials achieve in radio or television outlets and use this as an assessment of the success of the product. SSA also conducts occasional feedback surveys and focus groups to obtain customer input on its public information materials.

## Operational Efficiency

Generally speaking, SSA does not capture budget resources and efficiency data separately for this business process. Resources and efficiency data are captured as part of the data reported on the other business processes described above, since the bulk of SSA's efforts to inform the public take place through the day-to-day work associated with the first four business processes. However, some staff resources are devoted to public information activities and some workloads can be separately identified.

ORGANIZATION	APPROXIMATE ANNUAL WORKLOAD
Press Office	1,700 media inquiries (FY '95 estimate)
Office of Public Affairs	(millions of public information materials)
Office of Public Inquiries	102,000 Congressional and public inquiries (FY '94)
Congressional Relations Staff	18,000 Congressional inquiries (Calendar '93)
FOIA Staff	27,000 FOIA requests (Calendar '93)

This is only a partial listing of resources and workloads involved in Informing the Public, and much of this work has impacts larger than the numbers suggest on their face. For example, when the Press Office answers a single media inquiry this can be an indirect way of informing millions of people. Also, many public information inquiries are responded to in field offices and via the 800 Number as part of routine questions.

## General Business Approach

In contrast to SSA's other business processes in which we have a multitude of performance measures, it is more difficult to assess the effectiveness of public information activities. The usual approach is to measure the number of publications produced, the number of placements of a public service announcement (PSA), the number of organizations to which a newsletter is mailed, etc., rather than measuring how successful the publication, newsletter or PSA is in communicating the desired messages. In other words, organizations typically measure *efforts* rather than *results*. In its ASP, SSA committed to developing measures of the effectiveness of its efforts to inform and educate the public. The work to develop and implement a set of measures for this business function is still underway.

Also, the redesigned disability process places a major emphasis on better-informed applicants and on better-informed medical record providers to facilitate the development of medical evidence for disability claims. This will be a major area for emphasis for SSA's public information efforts as the redesign is implemented.

### *Key Technology Enablers*

Since information is the "product" produced by this business process, those technologies that facilitate access, retrieval and dissemination of information are key enablers for informing the public. Among the technology initiatives critical to improving this business function are:

- The IWS/LAN platform
- Title II Systems Redesign
- Integrated Client Data
- SSI Modernization
- Notice Improvements
- Paperless Processing
- Electronic Service Delivery

These initiatives provide the tools SSA needs to do a better job of responding to inquiries from the public and disseminating vital information quickly and efficiently. For example, one recent highly-effective innovation at SSA is the capability for the Commissioner to communicate directly with field facilities through electronic mail. When important, time-critical, information needs widespread distribution, the Commissioner can send an "all hands" message via electronic mail. However, the E:Mail system is a personal computer based system, only available to those employees with ready access to networked personal computers. Presently, in those offices without IWS/LAN technology, the message is transmitted to a single employee who must print the message, make photocopies and hand-deliver the photocopies to each employee. In the IWS/LAN sites, every employee receives an instantaneous and direct communication from the Commissioner.

Within this overall management approach, there are five areas in which SSA will make significant improvements.

### *Rebuilding Public Confidence*

The biggest shortcoming in SSA's efforts to inform the public involves the public's low level of confidence in the future of Social Security. Overall confidence in Social Security is low and has been declining for several years. There are many reasons for this decline, but shortcomings in SSA's efforts to educate the public about the true value of Social Security, is clearly one of the key reasons. SSA is finalizing a comprehensive plan to rebuild public confidence that will provide the framework to address this shortcoming.

### *Improve Accessibility of Public Information Materials*

SSA's network of field offices is the primary vehicle for distributing much of the public information materials prepared by SSA. It is also these same frontline employees who answer the public's questions and provide the bulk of the effort involved in Informing the Public. Materials and information that originates in one of SSA's central office or regional components also often goes to the field offices for subsequent dissemination to the public.

### *Provide More Material for the Non-English Speaking*

Just as SSA has recognized the need to make special efforts at delivering service to the non-English speaking, so too, it needs to make special efforts to successfully inform those members of the public who lack proficiency in English. Many of the publications SSA produces are currently produced in Spanish, but by no means all of them. Only one of the 90 or so video productions crafted by SSA last year were produced in a Spanish-language version, although two of the five videos produced for the general public last year were also produced in Spanish versions. Material in languages other than Spanish is relatively limited. SSA will be working to expand the material available in languages in addition to English.

### *Satellite Network*

SSA's satellite network is a vast untapped resource that could play a much fuller role in the dissemination of some types of information. Currently there are only 46 downlink sites that have a maximum potential of reaching only about 4,000 of SSA's 64,000 employees. Twenty-one States have no downlink site within their borders. The network is also currently limited in its mission to internal communications. Other organizations use their satellite networks to distribute materials to the media and to other broadcast outlets in order to reach vast numbers of the public. SSA is considering the feasibility of expanding the role and reach of its satellite network.

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*Expand the Direct Availability of Information in Electronic Formats*

SSA is just entering the onramp of the "National Information Superhighway." SSA's three main online access points are its Internet presence, its forum on Compuserve and its annual wage reporting bulletin board service. The wage reporting bulletin board is a specialized service that is limited in scope, but has been quite successful. The Compuserve and Internet services aspire to be general interest sources of information regarding Social Security. SSA will continue its expansion into additional avenues of electronic access and consider expanding the role and use of these electronic services. SSA will continue its current innovative direction and will expand the types of materials and services available via this type of electronic dissemination.

*The following Key Initiatives discussed in Part V are relevant to improving the Informing the Public business process:*

1. Disability Process Redesign
4. SSA-Initiated Personal Earnings & Benefit Estimate Statement (SIPEBES)
5. Title II System Redesign
7. Integrated Client Data
9. SSI Modernization
10. Notice Improvements
11. Paperless Processing
12. Electronic Service Delivery
14. Reengineering the Policy Process

## ***B. Service Delivery Interface Assessments***

Common to each of the business processes is an interaction between the public and SSA. Typically, this interaction occurs at the beginning of a process when customers contact SSA to request a service and at the end of a process when the service is delivered. SSA also can initiate the contact.

Customers expect to have a choice in how they conduct business with SSA. SSA has responded by offering customers the choice of:

- ▶ Visiting or calling one of SSA's field offices or hearing offices;
- ▶ Calling SSA's national 800 Number;
- ▶ Meeting with a third party intermediary who provides services on SSA's behalf;
- ▶ Contacting SSA through the mail; or
- ▶ Automated self-service options.

Overwhelmingly, customers prefer to talk to a person, either face-to-face or over the telephone. Customers are least likely to request services through the mail. (Since most are still in the exploratory or pilot phases, automated self-service options are too new yet to assess their popularity.)

In meeting its goal of providing world-class service, SSA faces significant challenges:

- ▶ The number of SSA customers and the size of associated workloads are growing. At the same time, SSA does not have unlimited resources to devote to improved services.
- ▶ Customer service demands follow distinct, cyclical patterns. As the number of customers grow, the volume of visits to field offices and calls to the 800 Number will climb higher during peak demand periods.
- ▶ Customers repeatedly express certain themes in surveys conducted by SSA. One theme associated with choice is that an increasing number of customers prefer telephone service and would like SSA to provide additional services through the 800 Number.
- ▶ Two other important customer expectations are to complete business during the initial contact, where possible, and to have a case manager when repeat contacts are necessary.

- ▶ Because they are a key to world-class service, SSA must create front-line, direct service delivery jobs which are attractive for its employees.

In the remainder of this section, each service delivery interface is examined in terms of workloads, customer expectations and satisfaction, cost and how SSA will meet its service delivery challenges.

## *Face-to-Face Service*

SSA has a long tradition of providing face-to-face service for customers in its field offices. SSA has 1,300 field offices nationwide which provide a full array of services for customers, from answering general questions about programs to making complex eligibility determinations. Field offices are open to the public generally from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. every business day. Field office representatives also make regular visits to outlying areas to serve SSA customers who live at a distance from a local office or who cannot visit due to illness. In addition to serving customers, field office employees disseminate public information in their communities to heighten awareness of and increase confidence in Social Security programs.

SSA also has a tradition of cooperating formally and informally with other agencies to provide a single place to conduct related business so that mutual customers do not have to go to multiple locations and furnish similar information multiple times. Some of these "one-stop" service agreements involve SSA employees in the field offices helping to administer other programs, including establishing entitlement to Medicare benefits for the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA); some tier I benefits for the Railroad Retirement Board; and Black Lung, Part B benefits for the Department of Labor. In certain situations, SSA takes food stamp applications for the Department of Agriculture and the SSI application and eligibility determination serve to establish Medicaid eligibility in some States.

Under other cooperative agreements, SSA field office employees are out-stationed in other agencies to serve mutual clients. Examples are:

- ▶ The Greenville, NC Field Office has established a contact station at the University Medical Center of Eastern North Carolina that is open 1 day each week to take disability claims from patients and their families. Hospital social workers identify potential claimants, schedule appointments with the SSA representative and collect necessary medical reports. The SSA Claims Representative uses the hospital's online system to immediately initiate processing of the claim.
- ▶ In Los Angeles, Dallas, and New York City, SSA employees and State Disability Examiners are out-stationed at the Veterans Affairs (VA) hospitals to expedite SSI disability and Disability Insurance claims for homeless veterans. A VA social worker assists in the scheduling of consultative examinations. Many of the medical records are available from the VA hospital.

- A District Office in New York City and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) have collaborated to out-station SSA field office employees with INS. Immigration documents are authenticated by INS agents before SSN applications are taken by SSA representatives. Over 40,000 SSN requests were processed at the INS location in the first year.

Although service is available in offsite locations, most face-to-face interaction with SSA customers takes place in the field offices. One important exception is hearings. Clients who appeal unfavorable decisions for SSA programs, and HCFA's Medicare program, can request a face-to-face hearing with an SSA Administrative Law Judge. The face-to-face hearing is a statutory right for claimants who desire this opportunity. While 60 percent of hearings are held in one of the 132 hearing offices throughout the country, ALJs also travel to approximately 325 remote sites to conduct the remaining 40 percent of the hearings.

## Workloads

During FY 1994, an estimated 24 million people visited SSA field offices. SSA anticipates additional calls and visits during FYs 1995-1996 resulting from the implementation of legislated requirements relating to drug addiction and alcohol and the SSA-initiated PEBES. Historically, the vast majority of visitors (93 percent) walk in without appointments, making it difficult to fit resources to daily traffic.

A growing segment of walk-in visitors is made up of non-English speaking and SSI clients. According to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) client satisfaction surveys, non-English speaking persons (87 percent) are more likely to visit offices as compared to English speaking persons (56 percent). SSI clients also are more likely to visit (65 percent) as compared to insurance program clients (56 percent).

Non-English speaking and SSI clients need more personal service; e.g., face-to-face interviews, assistance in obtaining documents, and referrals to other agencies for additional services. These workloads are higher in offices serving low income areas, often located in inner cities. Offices in economically advantaged areas have fewer non-English speaking clients, higher insurance program workloads, and clients who are more likely to request appointments, complete forms without assistance and use the telephone in conducting business.

Over 50 percent of walk-in traffic involves new or replacement SSN cards. One of the reasons clients prefer face-to-face contact for this business is that the required proofs of identity and immigration status (e.g., birth certificate; driver's license, immigration papers) can be returned to them immediately. Alternatively, these important documents would have to be mailed to SSA and returned through the mail.

Another important workload factor is the increasing volume of claims, particularly those involving disability. These are labor-intensive workloads, taking an average of 62 minutes to complete a retirement or survivors claim to 97 minutes for a disability claim. To maximize the use of client and interviewer time, field offices encourage claimants to make appointments.

Offices offer clients the choice of conducting the claims interview over the telephone. Although nationally 45.7 percent of claims are initiated this way, 8.3 percent of these clients come to the field office to complete the claim rather than use the mail to submit important proofs and signed applications.

Historically, client visits are not evenly distributed throughout the month. SSA currently sends payments to 43 million insurance program beneficiaries on the same day (usually the third of the month) and to 6 million SSI recipients (usually the first of the month). This payment delivery pattern results in workload surges during the first 10 days of every month due to beneficiary questions concerning non-receipt of checks, the amount of payment, etc. SSA is considering ways to smooth peak workloads by spreading, or cycling, payments over additional days in the month. SSA also is stepping up its efforts to market direct deposit. Clients who have payments directly deposited to their financial institutions are about 15 times less likely to report problems with benefit receipt than those receiving checks.

In the hearing offices, over 417,000 hearings were processed during FY 1994. ALJs met face-to-face with claimants in about 78 percent of the hearings. Like initial claims, hearings are labor-intensive and the volume continues to climb.

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## Service Delivery Performance

Up-to-date IWS/LAN technology is critical to ensuring availability and improvement of face-to-face service delivery. With installation of IWS/LANs, aging office equipment will be replaced with new equipment which is less prone to failure and easier and cheaper to maintain. Enough equipment will be acquired so that employees interacting directly with customers will no longer have to share workstations to process customer actions. The new technology will support new and more efficient processes which will enable employees to serve customers better. For example, employees using IWS/LAN equipment will be able to display client information on their workstation screens and, at the same time, process the actions needed to serve clients faster; access electronic reference materials stored on CD-ROM, expert systems and help screens to serve clients more knowledgeably; produce clearer letters which are easier for customers to read using word processing capabilities; and quickly request and receive client information located outside of SSA using electronic mail and fax capabilities, saving customers time.

The older equipment also is not capable of supporting reengineering and automation efforts, such as the reengineered disability process and paperless processing.

Customers say it is important that service is readily accessible. For face-to-face service, accessibility is related to the number and location of field and hearing offices. SSA regularly reviews all field facilities to determine if action should be taken to open new sites, close existing ones, or collocate a site within another facility. During recent years, the overall number of field facilities has been very stable. Although there have been few openings or closings, sites may expand or contract significantly in size, and most of the field facility actions during FYs 1993-1994 were of this type. We anticipate a few field office consolidations and/or openings in FYs 1995-1996.

Accessibility is more of an issue for claimants who request face-to-face hearings. Claimants and ALJs in sparsely populated areas often travel long distances to reach hearing sites. In fact, claimants may be required to travel up to 75 miles to attend a hearing. (If travel over 75 miles is necessary, SSA will pay the travel expenses for the claimants and their representatives and witnesses.) To increase accessibility, SSA is testing the feasibility of using video conferencing to bring claimants and ALJs together without the need to travel long distances.

Customers also expect minimal waits for service in field offices. Today, SSA does not always meet this expectation. For clients scheduling appointments, up to 4 weeks can elapse between the time an appointment is requested and the date it takes place. After arriving at an office for an appointment, many clients wait again to be served. In FY 1994, SSA's performance measures show that 17 percent of customers with appointments waited more than 10 minutes after their scheduled time. Customers without appointments have even longer in-office waits. In FY 1994, 31.2 percent of visitors without appointments waited more than 30 minutes after arrival to be served. Waiting times should improve as workyears are freed up through streamlining, reengineering, automation and other process improvements. Field and hearing offices must have IWS/LAN technology, however, before some of these efforts to improve productivity are possible.

**Waiting Times**

FY 1994	WITH APPOINTMENTS	WITHOUT APPOINTMENTS
Wait longer than 10 minutes	17 %	n/a
Wait longer than 30 minutes	n/a	32 %

n/a indicates data not captured

Part of the waiting time experienced by non-English speaking customers is due to the unmet demand for bilingual service. Based on a recent comment card survey, almost 30 percent of aged SSI customers, up to 10 percent of SSI Blind/Disabled customers, and 15 percent of SSN customers, want to conduct business in a language other than English, usually Spanish. In FYs 1993 and 1994, SSA moved to meet the demand by hiring more bilingual employees. The use of technology is also being explored.

Customers expect their business to be completed at the point of first contact. Today, this is not always possible, especially when employees must request information located elsewhere, refer actions elsewhere for decision, or defer final action because manual processing is required. Without a final outcome, a client is more likely to call or revisit an office to request status, adding to office workloads and lengthening waits for service. SSA will address this customer expectation through enterprise process reengineering and automation efforts, including implementation of IWS/LAN technology.

Customers want to deal with a single person when conducting complex business which may involve several contacts, like filing a disability claim. Current processes do not address this customer preference. In the redesigned disability process, SSA responded to customer expectations and provided a case manager to assist claimants and their representatives.

Staffing constraints have affected service in the community. The overall number of contact station visits and personal visits to homes has declined from traditional levels since the early 1980s. Public relations activities have lessened, as well, and the decreased level of community involvement may be contributing to the decline in confidence in the Social Security programs. Field offices are increasingly maximizing their offsite efforts by building cooperative arrangements with local agencies that increase service to the target population while leveraging assistance from other agencies to increase SSA productivity and reduce in-office traffic.

## **Operational Efficiency**

At the end of FY 1993, almost 30,000 full-time equivalents (FTEs) were dedicated to the field offices and the area offices supporting them. The number of field office FTEs has declined 15 percent since FY 1984. The reduction was achieved through attrition, and the overall effect was field office staffing imbalances, particularly in urban offices. Over the past few years, SSA has been addressing the imbalances by shifting available FTEs to offices with the greatest need.

The Office of Hearings and Appeals used 6,380 FTEs in FY 1994. The number of FTEs was increased by 5 percent from the FY 1993 level to handle the growing number of hearings.

## **General Business Approach**

SSA's strategy to improve face-to-face service delivery reflects all three aspects of the general business approach: streamlining, reengineering, and automation/continuous improvement. In addition, SSA is working to manage demand better and offer alternatives to face-to-face service in field offices.

Waiting times are longer than customers expect in some offices, particularly in urban offices where the number of SSI claimants and non-English speaking customers generally are higher. In recent years, SSA directed additional FTEs to these offices through its Metropolitan Office Enhancement Project. To improve service for non-English speaking customers, over half of the field office and teleservice center employees hired during FYs 1993-1994 were bilingual. With continuing resource constraints, however, other initiatives will be necessary to keep pace with the growing number of customers. Through streamlining, SSA is improving the supervisor-to-employee ratio in field offices. Workyears freed up can be used to meet growing workloads.

SSA also is reengineering, automating and continuously improving its processes to increase employee productivity, thereby freeing up additional workyears to serve more customers. Many of these initiatives were described in the Core Business Process Assessments and include disability process redesign, SSI modernization, Title II system redesign and integrated client data.

SSA is using reengineering, automation and continuous improvement to meet customer preferences for more business to be completed in one contact and for a single person to assist with complex business. In the redesigned disability process, a case manager is being provided to assist claimants and their representatives with claims development. SSA needs to do better, however, to enable more business to be completed within the initial contact. SSA will be examining its processes through enterprise reengineering to identify likely candidates for change. Automation and continuous improvement initiatives which will facilitate more one-contact completions by making more client data available online are in progress, including integrated client data and paperless processing. Both initiatives were discussed under the Core Business Process Assessments. Implementation of many reengineering, automation and continuous improvement initiatives are dependent upon installation of new IWS/LAN technology.

Up-to-date IWS/LAN technology in field and hearing offices is critical to ensuring the availability and improvement of face-to-face service. SSA is replacing aging equipment in its offices with more reliable IWS/LAN technology and providing enough workstations so that employees dealing directly with customers will no longer have to share equipment. The new IWS/LAN technology also will support electronic tools, such as multitasking, E-mail, fax, expert systems and CD-ROM, which will enable employees to work more efficiently and knowledgeably. Even in advance of the completion of these efforts, the IWS/LAN technology has demonstrated through pilot tests that employee productivity can be increased through improved dissemination and access to essential reference materials on CD-ROM.

SSA also is testing technology to improve access to face-to-face hearings. Given the growing volume of requests for face-to-face hearings and the Agency's expectation that the number of field facilities will remain stable, SSA is exploring the feasibility of video conferencing to bring claimants and ALJs together without the need to travel long distances. Video conferencing is part of SSA's reengineered disability process and electronic service delivery efforts and will be piloted in Wisconsin using SSA facilities, and in Iowa using a combination of SSA facilities and the State's communication network. If the pilots are successful and SSA expands the use of video conferencing in the hearings process, the number of remote hearing sites could be reduced in the long-range period beyond FY 1996.

SSA also is exploring the feasibility of various technology solutions to lower waiting time for non-English speaking customers. On a test basis, SSA plans to place courtesy telephones in selected field office reception areas which would connect customers to bilingual employees at other locations. Kiosks utilizing multi-language scripts to provide program information and assistance in completing forms are also being tested in field offices and other public locations.

To manage demand for face-to-face service, SSA is using several approaches. Payment cycling is being considered to spread payment-related inquiry workloads more evenly throughout the month. To improve payment reliability and reduce the need for customers to call or visit SSA regarding nonreceipt of checks, SSA will more aggressively market direct deposit to customers and the financial community. Electronic payment alternatives will be developed for beneficiaries without bank accounts. SSA also is continuing to improve the clarity of its notices to reduce the number of customers who call or visit with questions concerning content. Informing the public better about documents and proofs that are needed to complete claims and other business also will help decrease the number of customer who must revisit. Short-term disability improvements will increase the number of disability claims and hearings processed which should reduce the need for clients to contact SSA for status.

Finally, SSA will continue to develop convenient alternatives to face-to-face service. In improving the 800 Number, SSA will identify additional business which may be feasible to conduct using this service delivery interface. In addition, SSA is exploring automated self service options, including using community-based kiosks, touch tone telephone capabilities, the Internet and commercial online services as options for conducting business. SSA also will continue to seek opportunities to expand current activities and develop new cooperative efforts with third parties. As more customers take advantage of these options, the number of customers visiting field offices should decrease and waiting times should shorten as employees are increasingly available to help customers. Cooperative efforts with third parties provide an additional benefit to customers by providing seamless government services in one place.

*The following Key Initiatives discussed in Part V are relevant to improving face-to-face service:*

1. Disability Process Redesign
2. Short-Term Disability Project
3. 800 Number Improvements
5. Title II System Redesign
6. Payment Cycling
7. Integrated Client Data
9. SSI Modernization
10. Notice Improvements
11. Paperless Processing
12. Electronic Service Delivery
13. Electronic Payment Services
14. Reengineering the Policy Process

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## *Field Office Telephone Service*

Instead of visiting, customers can receive most of the full range of services by calling a field office during regular business hours. Field offices serving high numbers of clients with hearing impairments can communicate through telephone devices for the deaf. For non-English speaking callers, some bilingual employees are available.

Generally speaking, the workload, staffing, equipment and service delivery issues involved in face-to-face service apply to field office telephone service. There are some differences, and these are discussed below.

### **Workloads**

Data about field office telephone workloads is not systematically collected. Therefore, it is difficult to know how many customers try to reach field offices or how many calls are handled. Although this data is collected for the 800 Number, similar data at the field office level would be costly due to the number of local telephone companies involved in providing service for 1,300 field offices.

Some demographic information about calling preferences is available from the SSA Service Delivery Evaluation. When asked how they would like to conduct business in the future, 26 percent of recent OASDI awardees, 42 percent of recent SSI awardees and 38 percent of respondents with recent enumeration business said they would call the field office. In assessing this information, it is important to compare customer preferences for calling versus visiting field offices since the same employees serve both sets of customers. The SSA study indicates that 19-20 percent of recent OASDI awardees, 28 percent of recent SSI awardees and 40 percent of respondents with recent enumeration business would prefer to visit a field office when conducting future business.

### **Service Delivery Performance**

A significant number of customers want to conduct business with local offices by telephone. As with face-to-face service, accessible telephone service is important to customers. Today, SSA cannot always meet this expectation.

SSA implemented the 800 Number in 1989 in order to increase access by telephone through providing dedicated personnel to answer calls. To facilitate this, SSA stopped publishing field office telephone numbers and cut back the number of phone lines going into field offices to permit staff to concentrate on in-office clients. Subsequently, Congress required SSA to restore the number of phone lines in the field offices and publish the field office phone numbers. However, additional funds for staffing and telecommunications costs were not provided for these purposes. An SSA study conducted after the restorations indicated that call volumes built quickly and that it appeared that offices affected did not have sufficient personnel or incoming lines to handle the calls. Relying on anecdotal information, it appears that telephone access to field offices continues to be poor. Objective measurement of field office teleservice accuracy and courtesy is not yet possible in some field offices due to technical limitations.

## **Operational Efficiency**

Telecommunications usage and maintenance costs were approximately \$30 million in FY 1994. The same employees providing face-to-face service in the field office provide the telephone service. SSA estimates that approximately 1 workyear per office is needed to handle general inquiries from callers. As more kinds of business are conducted over the telephone, additional workyears will be required.

## **General Business Approach**

Customer preference for telephone service is increasing, and a significant number of customers want that service from the local office. Because the same resources are involved, the same business approach being used for face-to-face service will apply for field office telephone service.

In addition, to improve access, SSA began testing several automated telephone services in selected field offices in January 1995. One service will enable callers to key in the extension of an employee and leave a message if the employee is not available. The second feature will give callers self-service options for requesting general program information, forms, etc.

Courteous and knowledgeable employees are also important to customers. SSA is in the process of installing upgraded telephone systems in field offices, and new functionality incorporated in these systems will allow measurement of call courtesy and accuracy. Systems have been replaced in approximately 500 offices.

*The following Key Initiatives discussed in Part V are relevant to improving field office telephone service:*

1. Disability Process Redesign
2. Short-Term Disability Project
3. 800 Number Improvements
5. Title II System Redesign
6. Payment Cycling
7. Integrated Client Data
9. SSI Modernization
10. Notice Improvements
11. Paperless Processing
12. Electronic Service Delivery
13. Electronic Payment Services
14. Reengineering the Policy Process

## ***800 Number Telephone Service***

Since 1989, a single toll-free 800 Number has provided customers an alternative to field office contact for conducting simple business. Service is available from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., local-time, every business day. Bilingual Teleservice Representatives (TSRs) are available to assist non-English speaking callers. For the hearing-impaired, equivalent teleservice can be reached through a separate 800 Number utilizing a text telephone network system.

For many people, the 800 Number is the entry point for requesting services from SSA. TSRs can furnish directions to local offices, make appointments for claims interviews in local offices, send general program information and application forms, release letters verifying benefit amounts, make simple corrections to benefit records, and help clients with other matters that can be handled quickly. Clients wishing to file claims and conduct other complex, lengthy business are redirected to the field offices.

Callers in some areas also are offered the option to select automated self-service in lieu of waiting for a TSR. This option is discussed under "Automated Self-Service" below.

### **Workloads**

Call volumes have increased greatly since the 800 Number's inception. In FY 1994, the volume of calls received increased by 12 percent over FY 1993 to 64 million calls. (Note that the number of calls made to SSA is greater than the volume of calls SSA is able to handle.) For the same period, about 2 million calls were handled from non-English speaking individuals, and 40,000 calls were handled using the text telephone network for the hearing impaired.

During FY 1994, call volumes rose on certain "peak days" to over 2 million calls offered on a single day, compared to the daily average of 425,000 calls offered. Although individual daily volumes are hard to predict, there are distinct cyclical calling patterns. The heaviest workloads occur on the first day after a weekend or holiday, the first week of the month and the first three months of the year.

These patterns are typical for 800 Number usage, industry-wide. Factors unique to SSA, however, intensify the patterns. SSA payments are released at the beginning of each month, and tax-related Social Security Benefit Statements are issued in January. These events elicit numerous questions about non-receipt of checks and the amount of payments. Approximately 9 percent of calls during "check week" concern non-receipt compared to 3 percent during the rest of the month.

Other frequent reasons for calls are requests for SSN applications and PEBES forms, general inquiries (including requests for program information, location of nearest local office, verification of client data, etc.), reports of change (such as address) and requests to file a claim.

## Service Delivery Performance

Customers are generally satisfied with how their calls are handled. Teleservice Representatives are courteous, and most are knowledgeable. Some improvement is needed in response accuracy. While information given in 97 percent of calls leads to correct payments, only 85 percent of calls are handled accurately enough to avoid inconvenience to the customer (e.g., being referred unnecessarily to a field office for further information).

To address this problem, SSA has employed expert systems technology to develop a set of prompts to guide TSRs and spike unit employees through frequently asked questions. (The system is updated periodically to reflect changes in policies and procedures.) The expert system has been piloted and is ready for national implementation. Implementation, however, is dependent on installing the IWS/LAN technology in the TSCs and spike units of the Processing Centers.

It is important to customers to be able to reach SSA with fewer busy signals, and SSA has pledged to enable callers to get through to the 800 Number within 5 minutes of their original attempt.

SEPTEMBER 1994	PEAK DAY	REGULAR DAY
% of calls to national 800 Number answered within 5 min.	71.6%	73.8%

Since 1989, SSA has used non-TSR, temporarily-assigned employees known as "spike" employees to increase call-taking capacity on peak calling days. Spike employees are located in the Processing Centers and normally process postentitlement and certain manual claims actions. Additional actions are being taken to increase access:

- Regional readiness plans have been prepared for the 1995 peak season (January-March). These plans will maximize the number of employees available to answer 800 Number calls.

- ▶ Additional spike employees have been trained and will be available for the 1995 peak season.
- ▶ Central office and regional office pilots are planned to assist telephone representatives with transcription workloads in FY 1995.
- ▶ Two Data Operations Centers will be remissioned and operating as TSCs in FY 1996.

SSA is also exploring technology as a way of increasing call taking capacity. Automated self-serve options are available in some locations for certain actions that do not need assistance from a TSR. New network prompt technology is being assessed as a means of accepting more calls, as well as a platform for further automated call features, such as automated transcription which would eliminate this manual workload.

Customers have indicated an increasing preference to conduct business over the telephone. According to the SSA Service Delivery Evaluation, 50 percent of recent insurance program awardees would like to conduct future business over the 800 Number, and 32 percent of this same group would prefer to file a future claims application using the 800 Number. The 800 Number service was created to provide customers with a convenient way to handle simple business. Even with the current policy of using the 800 Number service for simple business actions, SSA has not kept pace with customer demand. Addition of complex transactions, like claims, would exacerbate capacity limitations in the current environment.

Nonetheless, SSA will find ways to adapt telephone service delivery to meet expectations. Recently, SSA visited eight well-known companies to benchmark their telephone service. SSA plans to implement the best practices where feasible and cost-effective. SSA has begun the process of initiating a fundamental change in telephone service delivery to respond to customer expectations.

## Operational Efficiency

At the end of FY 1994, a little over 3,000 TSRs were on duty in the TSCs, the lowest number since 1989. Approximately 200 redeployed employees will be available in FY 1995 to help TSRs transcribe the messages left by callers using the automated self-service options. Many of these employees will be retrained and equipped to answer calls by January 1996.

In addition to the personnel and equipment costs, SSA pays the long distance telephone charges for its 800 Number customers. For FY 1994, line charges were roughly \$45 million, and telephone maintenance added another \$4.6 million. Although total 800 Number costs (personnel and other costs in addition to telecommunications charges) are not routinely collected, reconstructed estimates for prior years suggest substantial growth from \$105 million in FY 1989 to \$203 million in FY 1993.

Thirty percent of the line charges are due to calls on hold (in large part because our customers tend to prefer holding to hanging up and possibly receiving a busy signal). To manage these costs better, SSA has begun to temporarily deactivate lines exceeding the number of personnel available to answer calls. This reduces calls on hold, but also increases the busy signal rate.

## **General Business Approach**

For the short term, substantial improvements will continue to be a function of the resources that can be allocated to increase intake capacity, particularly for FTEs. To improve 800 Number access, the number of TSRs will be increased from 3,063 to 3,200 over the next 5 years. In the interim, the number of spike employees assisting during peak calling periods will be increased to 1,200 in FY 1995. In FYs 1995-1996, the Salinas and Albuquerque DOCs will be remissioned as Teleservice Centers. Until the new employees can be trained and equipped to answer 800 Number calls, they will be redeployed to handle caller message transcription. Transcription duties will be offloaded from the TSRs, freeing them up to handle more calls. Emphasis will continue to be placed on hiring bilingual employees to handle calls from non-English speaking callers.

As new employees are hired and employees are redeployed through streamlining to telephone work, training and easily accessible reference materials will be increasingly important. IWS/LAN technology for teleservice employees will be essential to support electronic procedures on CD-ROM and the 800 Number expert system. SSA will also explore long distance video training technology, which can be delivered via the IWS/LAN platform, as a way of delivering uniform training quickly and inexpensively to employees involved in teleservice.

In order to assure high-quality service, SSA must improve the TSR job in other ways to attract and retain employees. Recently, SSA upgraded the position and assigned other priority work away from the telephone to reduce burnout and turnover.

While human resource management will always be critical, longer-term improvements in telephone access will come from reengineering, automating and continuously improving processes, particularly by enabling more business to be completed in one contact and by expanding telephone service to include more complex business. Approximately 16 percent of 800 Number calls are not handled to completion but are referred to field offices for answers, inconveniencing callers and diverting field office employees from visitors. Another 18 percent of callers want SSN cards and PEBES. TSRs can mail request forms but they cannot input requests over the phone, causing customer delays and SSA multiple handling.

As SSA redesigns processes for the telephone environment to complete more business in one contact and evaluates the feasibility of undertaking more complex actions, TSRs will need the same IWS/LAN technology as field office employees to access online client information and automated processes. Other initiatives, like Title II system redesign, integrated client data and paperless processing, will increase the amount of online data available to respond to more caller inquiries.

SSN verification is another potential process for redesign. Employers and social services agencies are calling the 800 Number more frequently to check SSNs for job applicants and clients. By redesigning the verification process, it may be possible to allow callers to directly access the enumeration verification system, thereby freeing up TSRs for other callers. One of the obstacles to increasing the amount of business that can be concluded on the telephone is a reliable method of authenticating callers. SSA is pursuing ways to authenticate client identity, and once the problem is solved, more telephone-based business may be possible.

SSA is also assessing technology for other ways of improving 800 Number service. To increase access, automated self-service options are available now to certain callers. Additional options are being evaluated as part of the electronic service initiative. To improve productivity and efficiency, automated transcription of caller requests received via the self-serve options is also being studied.

As with face-to-face service, SSA is pursuing ways to manage demand better. Payment cycling and electronic service delivery should help reduce the number of incoming calls, smoothing the demand for service and lowering the busy signal rate early in the month. Notice improvements also should reduce the number of callers and resulting busy signals.

*The following Key Initiatives discussed in Part V are relevant to improving 800 Number telephone service:*

3. 800 Number Improvements
5. Title II System Redesign
6. Payment Cycling
7. Integrated Client Data
10. Notice Improvements
11. Paperless Processing
12. Electronic Service Delivery
13. Electronic Payment Services
14. Reengineering the Policy Process

## **Mail**

The public can initiate requests for all information and services by writing to SSA. As noted earlier, mail is the public's least preferred option for contacting SSA. SSA, on the other hand, frequently interacts with clients by mail. Payment checks are delivered by mail to beneficiaries who do not use direct deposit. General program information is mailed to requestors. Notices are sent to explain eligibility and payment decisions and to inform clients of their rights and responsibilities. Forms are mailed periodically for beneficiaries to report changes affecting eligibility or payments.

Spanish-language versions are available for most high-volume public forms and some systems-generated notices. SSA codes the beneficiaries' records to show that they prefer their notices in Spanish when the notices are available in Spanish. Similarly, for blind clients, records can be coded to receive special notice services. SSA can also produce Braille versions of some notices. General program information is available in several foreign languages.

## **Workloads**

Visiting or calling are clearly preferred over correspondence when clients are asked what method they would use for their next contact with SSA. Nonetheless, SSA's Office of Public Inquiries receives almost 100,000 written inquiries annually from clients, members of Congress and organizations seeking information about Social Security programs or resolution of client problems. The regional and field offices also receive written inquiries, but workload data is not collected.

SSA authorizes about 18 million paper checks to be sent each month to OASDI beneficiaries and about 5 million to SSI recipients. This represents 43 percent and 76 percent respectively of the two populations which do not have direct deposit. SSA also mails an estimated 240 million notices and forms a year to claimants and beneficiaries.

In FY 1995, SSA will begin sending PEBES automatically to certain workers. The workload is expected to be 8.9 million statements in the first year and will climb to an estimated 123 million statements by FY 2000.

## Service Delivery Performance

An ASP objective is to respond to inquiries from the public within 15 days. According to OIG client satisfaction surveys, only 39 percent of clients who have sent SSA requests report receipt of replies within 15 days. Twenty-five percent report replies taking over 30 days.

SSA also strives to make notices and forms easy to read and easy to understand. Clarity is particularly important. Customers can take actions timely, and telephone calls and visits to field offices for explanations can be avoided, if customers understand the notices and forms they receive. SSA estimates that \$100,000 can be saved for every 1 percent reduction in notice-related inquiries. With the help of experts and focus groups, SSA has developed notices standards and regularly tests notices to see how well they can be understood.

Despite SSA's efforts, 15 percent of customers who responded to the most recent OIG satisfaction survey found notices difficult to understand and 39 percent asked someone for help. A higher number of disabled clients (22 percent) found mail hard to understand. Comprehension was also harder for non-English speaking customers (34 percent).

SSA sends more than 3.5 million Title II overpayment notices each year. This is the largest category of unimproved notices and among the most criticized. With the recent removal of a court restriction on language changes, the notices have been revised and will be used for correspondence beginning in FY 1996.

One of the barriers to notice improvement is the fragmentation of SSA's notice programs. Notices are now developed from 20 different software applications which contain thousands of paragraphs. Selections from these paragraphs are combined into a single letter, often in a haphazard order. SSA is redesigning the way notices are generated and improving the paragraph language. The new notice software will also permit electronic versions of the notices to be retrieved online, increasing employees' ability to answer questions about customer-specific issues.

## Operational Efficiency

In FY 1994, charges for mailing OASDI and SSI checks were \$72.6 million. Postage for all other mailings in FY 1994 was \$103 million. Due to a postage rate increase and implementation of SSA-initiated PEBES, total mailing costs are expected to increase in FY 1995 by roughly \$39.4 million or 22 percent. SSA uses 9-digit ZIP Codes, bar coding and other mail management techniques to contain these costs to the extent possible.

## General Business Approach

Customers should understand how decisions are made and what actions to take as described in notices sent to them. To meet this expectation, SSA is continuously improving the clarity of notices using input from focus groups and by removing technical barriers which prevent clear notices from being generated from SSA's automated systems, as in Title II systems redesign. SSA is also translating more notices into Spanish and is evaluating the ways to address other languages.

As notices are improved, face-to-face and telephone service delivery also should improve. By making notices clearer, fewer customers will have to contact SSA for an explanation, reducing the number of contacts and freeing employees to serve other customers.

Because of increasing postage costs, SSA continues to look for viable alternatives to mail. One way is to reduce the number of benefits paid by check using direct deposit and other alternatives. A description of SSA's electronic payment efforts is included in the Core Business Process Assessments. Greater use of electronic mail and fax for requesting and receiving medical services and evidence is planned in the reengineered disability process. SSA is also exploring the use of kiosks, electronic mail, fax and other electronic service delivery methods to disseminate information to customers.

*The following Key Initiatives discussed in Part V are relevant to improving mail service delivery:*

1. Disability Process Redesign
5. Title II System Redesign
10. Notice Improvements
12. Electronic Service Delivery
13. Electronic Payment Services
14. Reengineering the Policy Process

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## *Face-to-Face Service Provided by Third Parties*

SSA has informal and formal agreements with private and government organizations to provide service on SSA's behalf. Third parties supplement SSA's service delivery in important ways. First, they assist target populations with completing application forms and developing the evidence needed to establish eligibility. Many field offices have informal arrangements with large employers, hospitals and advocacy groups to provide these services to varying degrees. In addition, SSA has formal grant agreements with private and government organizations to perform outreach to selected, hard-to-reach populations, such as the urban and rural elderly; persons with AIDS; the homeless; the severely mentally ill; and members of minority and ethnic communities. These grantees identify individuals potentially eligible for SSI and provide assistance during the claims process, including transportation or translation services, completion of forms, development of evidence and finding representative payees. Third-party claims taking also will play an important part in SSA's reengineered disability process.

Second, SSA cooperates with private organizations and other government agencies to deliver related program services to mutual clients at one convenient location. This so-called "one stop" service reduces the burden on the customer of having to go to multiple locations to furnish similar information multiple times. For example:

- ▶ SSA customers living outside of the U.S. and its territories can receive services from foreign nationals employed by the Department of State in 39 foreign service posts around the world.
- ▶ As a result of Enumeration at Birth agreements, parents have the option of filing SSN applications for newborns while at the hospital as part of the birth registration process in 47 States and the District of Columbia.
- ▶ Many financial institutions collect direct deposit enrollment information for mutual customers, sending it to SSA for action.

## Workloads

About 3 million requests for new SSNs, or 48 percent of the total workload, were processed by the States under EAB agreements in FY 1994. With the exception of SSN requests processed by the States, work for SSA performed by third parties represents a small portion of the total workload. Based on an SSA analysis of third-party claims taking, an estimated 1 percent of OASDI and Medicare claims, 6 percent of DI claims and 7 percent of SSI claims are developed for SSA by third parties. As SSA expands current relationships and develops new arrangements under the reengineered disability process, the number of claims taken by third parties will increase.

When viewed as a percentage of work performed for the target population, the figures are more reflective of the significance of third party services. In FY 1994, 24,000 claims were taken by the foreign service posts and sent to SSA for adjudication. This represented 71 percent of the total claims received by SSA from persons living abroad. The foreign service posts also handled approximately 15,600 applications for new or replacement SSNs, or 28 percent of the total SSN applications received from foreign residents.

## Service Delivery Performance

Customers expect that government services should be seamless and provided in a single place. SSA's cooperative efforts with other organizations are helping us meet this expectation. SSA intends to continue to work with Federal, State and local agencies to find better ways to coordinate services. For example, in the Georgia Common Access Application Project, in which SSA, the Health Care Financing Administration, the Administration for Children and Families, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (Food and Nutrition Service), the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Georgia Department of Human Resources are testing a consolidated intake application that will enable customers to apply for related, needs-based programs in one visit. The common application reduces the number of form pages from 64 to 8.

Little data is currently collected to assess service quality or customer satisfaction. The cooperative efforts clearly offer clients choice and convenience and save SSA resources, but they may not result in faster processing times where application information and supporting evidence is on paper and must be faxed, mailed or hand-carried to SSA for review, data entry and processing. Conversely, in those arrangements where agencies have ready access to required evidence, such as hospitals having needed medical evidence, time saved developing claims could outweigh time added due to hand-offs.

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To speed up the transfer of claimant information and eliminate data entry workloads for SSA, SSA is considering technology to give third parties access to its automated claims system. SSA also is planning to procure new software to provide an interactive completion capability for forms now available on CD-ROM. Placement of electronic forms on publicly accessible computer bulletin boards is also being studied. The feasibility of these options is dependent on installation of SSA's IWS/LAN technology which will give SSA employees the capability to receive electronic claims via fax and e-mail.

Although the number of claims developed by third parties is small, the populations served by third parties can be difficult to reach and otherwise might not receive adequate service. Outreach is particularly important in the SSI program, where SSA estimates that up to 40 percent of aged persons eligible for SSI may not be receiving benefits. With hard-to-reach populations, third parties have proved effective in assisting clients through the completion of the application process because of the individualized attention they can give clients.

To date, third parties have posed little risk of program fraud and abuse. Because of the high degree of interaction between SSA, and the altruistic nature of their assistance, SSA has loosely supervised most third parties, excepting SSI outreach grantees who adhere to oversight and reporting requirements as conditions of their agreements. A few third parties have begun offering assistance for a fee, and some "middlemen" assisting non-English speaking SSI applicants may have used fraudulent practices. To prevent abuse, SSA may have to step-up oversight of certain third parties and increase public awareness that SSA services can be obtained without paying fees to "middlemen."

## Operational Efficiency

SSA pays for certain third party services provided under formal agreements. Since FY 1990, Congress has made available \$6 million each year in grant monies for SSI outreach demonstration projects. Most third party assistance has been arranged informally and is provided *gratis* as a convenience to customers.

Except for the outreach grant projects, little data is systematically collected about the savings and costs of cooperative projects. As a result, the effect of cooperative agreements on SSA's resources is unknown. Presumably, SSA workyears that would have been spent processing additional SSN and claims actions would be available to serve other customers, reducing wait times. A recent SSA study estimates 1-3 workyears can be saved for every 10,000 claims taken by other agents, depending on the complexity. However, the quality and timeliness of work performed by other agents must be good or part of the savings will be offset by SSA personnel answering client inquiries and reprocessing actions.

For example, the savings to SSA from EAB are expected to be \$22 million for FY 1994. While the cost of processing SSNs through EAB is significantly lower than the costs to process SSNs in field offices, the delay in issuing the SSN cards in States where transmission of data to SSA is slow, results in follow-up inquiries and duplicate requests, decreasing operational savings somewhat. SSA is addressing the timeliness issue by assisting those States to improve performance.

## General Business Approach

Customers expect that government services should be seamless and that services should be provided in a single place. SSA's cooperative efforts with other organizations are helping us meet this expectation. SSA intends to continue to work with Federal, State and local agencies to expand efforts and find better ways to coordinate services. In particular, third parties will continue to be an important way of assisting customers in developing disability claims in the reengineered disability process.

*The following Key Initiatives discussed in Part V are relevant to improving face-to-face service provided by third-parties.*

1. Disability Process Redesign
12. Electronic Service Delivery
14. Reengineering the Policy Process

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## *Automated Self-Service*

Opportunities for creating new service delivery choices for customers are possible with the increasing prevalence of electronic information processing equipment and communications networks capable of transmitting data, voice and images. Self-service options accessible via telephone, personal computer or publicly-located kiosks, using well-designed electronic menus and easy-to-follow instructions, can make services available to clients virtually anywhere 24-hours a day. SSA is in various stages of testing and applying new technologies, as follows:

- SSA now offers automated services during the business day to about 60 percent of its 800 Number callers. Customers with touch-tone telephones can choose these self-serve options in lieu of waiting for a TSR to request program literature and forms for SSN cards and PEBES. After business hours, automated services are available for all calls. The services are in both English and Spanish, in selected geographic areas.
- Other technologies under consideration include: Fax on Demand to allow callers to request and receive SSA forms by fax and Voice Recognition combined with automated service to respond to the customer's spoken words and generate requested information for mailing.
- SSA *Online* makes information about SSA programs and services accessible to the public through the Internet and commercial online services.
- SSA is using an electronic bulletin board to enable employers to access updated software and filing instructions and transmit annual wage reports.
- Separately, and in cooperation with other agencies, SSA will be installing demonstration kiosk systems for the public to use in accessing general information about programs and services. SSA is developing scripts in four languages—Vietnamese, Navajo, Spanish and English—to learn if kiosks can increase the level of service provided to the non-English speaking.
- SSA also is assessing the feasibility of using kiosks and personal computers for the public to verify data in their records, complete program-related forms and transact other business. To test these applications, SSA will first develop reliable methods to authenticate user identities and to protect data integrity.

- In Iowa, SSA is exploring the possibility of one-stop government shopping centers which collocate Federal and State social service agencies to process claims for monetary benefits. At the Indian Hill Community College in Ottumwa a state-wide fiber optics network to link government services through a network of computers and automatic teller machines will be tested. This network would allow customers to access information about Social Security, tax services, Federal benefits, government loans, and other services. Customers could receive faster information and service with less cost for travel and time.

## Workloads, Service Delivery and Operational Efficiency

The electronic service delivery initiatives are highly diverse and relatively new. Many are still experimental. The client satisfaction, performance and cost data that are available largely have been collected during the evaluation phase of those initiatives.

The only reliable data readily available was collected by SSA in evaluating the automated self-serve features for the national 800 Number. During FY 1994, 4.7 million calls were handled by telephone response units, representing about 7.3 percent of the total national volume. Customers requesting forms and program information record their names and mailing addresses. These voice messages are later retrieved and processed by SSA employees. Because of the manual transcription step, the total cost of processing an automated call request is slightly higher (\$2.40) than one handled live by a TSR (\$2.30).

The study suggests that 800 Number callers have a strong preference against using automated self-serve features. Eighty-five percent of those surveyed chose to speak to a TSR. Of those who recognized that their business could be conducted using the self-serve options but chose not to use them, 60 percent said that they did not like to listen to recorded messages; 15 percent said that they thought the recordings would not be able to help them or answer their questions; and 10 percent had rotary dial telephones.

The data also indicates that service delivery is better if business is conducted with a TSR. Satisfaction was similar between callers who used self-service and those that spoke to a TSR, but significantly fewer callers who used self-service had received the requested materials by the time of the study.

## General Business Approach

The use of telephones, fax machines, personal computers and e-mail is common in business today. Many individuals do some banking at automated teller machines (ATMs) located throughout communities. Most people have telephones in their homes, and there is a steady increase in the percentage of households owning personal computers with modems which can access local public networks, the Internet or commercial online services. The Information Superhighway will multiply opportunities through schools, libraries and other public sites.

Given the public's increasing familiarity with technology, SSA has begun to demonstrate the feasibility of automated self-service options as convenient, effective alternatives to traditional assisted service. At present, customers have not displayed strong preference for automated self-service, but as the types and number of options grow and customer exposure increases, usage is expected to gradually increase.

Over the long term, automated self-service has the potential to absorb significant workloads, enabling employees to serve more customers. SSA has implemented an automated self-service option for the 800 Number and is testing and planning others. Kiosks, fax on demand and electronic access to information are other alternatives to traditional assisted service being explored.

One of the obstacles to increasing the amount of business that can be conducted is a reliable method of authenticating callers or users accessing SSA electronically. SSA is considering ways to check client identity as a first step in issuing PEBES via kiosk. Once the problem is solved, SSA will be able to pursue with customers a wide range of self-service options, such as replacing SSN cards and requesting PEBES by telephone, interactive kiosks or personal computer.

As promising as automated self-service appears, there can be drawbacks. Telecommunications networks and equipment supporting the services are expensive to implement and maintain. SSA must be sure that enough customers seeking assisted service today will choose self-service tomorrow, or SSA risks substantially increasing costs without commensurate service improvement for its traditional customers.

In developing automated self-service options, SSA will partner with Federal and State agencies to distribute costs and to utilize existing networks, equipment and expertise to the extent possible and tap into experienced customer bases likely to have SSA clients. Several cooperative projects are in the planning stages.

*The following Key Initiatives discussed in Part V are relevant to improving automated self-service:*

3. 800 Number Telephone Improvements
12. Electronic Service Delivery
13. Electronic Payment Services
14. Reengineering the Policy Process

# Part V

## Key Initiatives

The following key Agency initiatives are described in this section:

1. Disability Process Redesign
2. Short-Term Disability Project
3. 800 Number Improvements
4. SSA-Initiated Personal Earnings & Benefit Estimate Statements (SIPEBES)
5. Title II System Redesign
6. Payment Cycling
7. Integrated Client Data
8. Legislated Provisions Related to Drug Addiction & Alcoholism
9. SSI Modernization
10. Notice Improvements
11. Paperless Processing
12. Electronic Service Delivery
13. Electronic Payment Services
14. Reengineering the Policy Process

The relationships between these key initiatives and the business processes and service delivery interfaces previously described, are summarized in the following matrix, which indicates which of the initiatives support each of these business areas:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<b>SSNs</b>							X					X		X
<b>Earnings</b>												X		X
<b>Claims</b>	X	X			X		X		X	X	X	X		X
<b>PE</b>					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Informing the Public</b>	X			X	X		X		X	X	X	X		X
<b>Face-to-Face</b>	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Field Office Phone</b>	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
<b>800 Number</b>			X		X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X
<b>Mall</b>	X				X					X		X	X	X
<b>3-RD Parties</b>	X											X		X
<b>Automated Self-Service</b>			X									X		X

# 1. Disability Process Redesign

*Lead SSA Official:* Director, Disability Process Redesign Team

Major components of the new disability process are:

- ▶ Process entry and intake;
- ▶ Disability decision methodology;
- ▶ Medical evidence development;
- ▶ Administrative appeals, and
- ▶ Quality assurance.

## Process Entry and Intake

### *Making Program Information Available*

SSA will make available comprehensive public information packets about its disability programs. Included will be information about the purpose of the disability program, the definition of disability and the basic requirements for eligibility, the adjudication process, evidence needed to establish entitlement and the claimant's role in pursuing a claim.

### *Claimants Will Choose Mode of Entry*

Claimants and their representatives will be allowed maximum flexibility in deciding how they will participate in the claim process. Contacts via telephone, mail, face-to-face interviews or electronic mediums will be available. Claimants will also have the option of relying on third parties for assistance in dealing with SSA or may choose to appoint a representative to act on their behalf. Electronic entry into the claim process, either directly by claimants or via third parties, depends on access to SSA's IWS/LAN network and other systems.

### *Disability Claim Manager*

This will be a new position whose incumbents will be responsible for the complete processing of an initial disability claim and, therefore, will be the focal point for claimant contacts throughout the claim intake and adjudication process. We view the ideal approach to the Disability Claim Manager (DCM) as vesting all functions for this position in one person. (Even with a single person serving as the DCM, there will still be a "team" approach to disability adjudication in that the DCM will still work with medical consultants and other personnel in processing cases.) However, until the following key enablers are in place, we expect to have these duties carried out by more than one person in a team environment :

- ▶ Automated claim processing system (the Reengineered Disability System (RDS)) that permits full electronic claim processing (such a system will be dependent on SSA's IWS/LAN technology being in place);
- ▶ Simplified disability decision methodology that is standard through all adjudicative levels of the process;
- ▶ Ready access to internal medical and nonmedical experts in a team environment; and
- ▶ Intensive training to ensure the Disability Claim Managers are highly trained and fully equipped to handle the position.

### *Claimant Partnership*

Building on the information packets and Disability Claim Manager concepts, SSA will encourage claimants to be full partners throughout the claim process in pursuing the claims. When necessary, SSA will assist claimants and/or engage third-party resources.

### *Third Parties*

SSA will permit qualified third party organizations to complete all application and related forms for disability claims. SSA will monitor third party performance to ensure quality service to claimants and to prevent fraud.

### *Personal Interview with Claimant*

When the evidence does not support an allowance of the claim, the disability claim manager will issue a predecision notice advising the claimant of what evidence has been considered and providing an opportunity to submit further evidence and/or have a personal interview within 10 calendar days. If a personal interview is requested, it will be conducted in person, by video-conference or by telephone, as appropriate.

### *"Statement of the Claim"*

In support of the initial claim determination, the "statement of the claim" will set forth the issues in the claim, the relevant facts, the evidence considered and the rationale in support of the determination. To support this feature of the redesign, the IWS/LAN technology as well as the automated claim processing system (the Reengineered Disability System) and the Decision Support System are requisites.

## **Disability Decision Methodology**

### ***Four-Step Evaluation Process***

The methodology for evidence collection and the disability decision making will consist of four steps that flow from the statutory definition of disability. This will enable a standardized approach to disability decisions and will result in more consistent decisions. The IWS/LAN technology and the reengineered disability system that will be supported by this technology are critical enablers to effective implementation of this feature of the redesign plan. Decision support systems are also required to fully enable this implementation.

(Note: A similar process will be used for childhood disability claims.)

## **Medical Evidence Development**

Medical evidence will be guided by the four-step decision methodology. By focusing on these elements extraneous medical evidence material will be reduced and the decision process streamlined.

Primary emphasis will be placed on obtaining medical information from treating sources. SSA will develop and use a standard form that tailors a request for evidence to the specific diagnostic and functional assessment information necessary to make a disability decision. A national fee reimbursement schedule for medical evidence will be established, using a sliding-scale mechanism to reward providers for submitting quality evidence and submitting it promptly.

In concert with the decision methodology approach of the redesign, consulting sources will be able to perform function assessments that will be considered probative evidence.

## **Administrative Appeals Process**

The first level of administrative appeal after the initial determination will be the hearing. The reconsideration will be eliminated.

An adjudication officer will conduct an interview with claimants who request an ALJ hearing and will have full authority to issue a revised favorable decision if the evidence so warrants.

For hearings, the evidence will be more fully developed and presented to the ALJ. The primary burden of compiling additional evidence for the hearing will be shifted to the claimant's representative (if one is appointed) or the claimant (if he/she is able to do so) with assistance from SSA as necessary. The ALJ will, therefore, be able to close the record at the end of the hearing and render a prompt decision.

If a claimant is dissatisfied with the ALJ's decision, the next level of appeal will be to Federal District Court. As with the current process, the Appeals Council will evaluate all claims in which a civil action has been filed and decide within a fixed time limit whether SSA wishes to defend the ALJ's decision. The Appeals Council will also conduct its own motion reviews of ALJ decisions as part of an in-line quality assurance process.

## **Quality Assurance**

### *Investment in Employees*

SSA will develop comprehensive national training for employees. As part of the quality assurance effort, SSA will rely on targeted in-line quality reviews and monitoring of adjudicative practices for all employees.

### *End-of-Line Reviews*

To ensure the integrity of the administrative process and to promote national uniformity at all levels of disability claims adjudication, SSA will institute comprehensive, end-of-line quality reviews of the whole adjudicatory process.

### *Customer Satisfaction Surveys*

Customer surveys, periodic focus groups, surveys of claimant representatives and third parties, and employee feedback will all be used to measure customer satisfaction.

## Implementation Strategy

### *Teamwork*

SSA will work in conjunction with the National Partnership Council and various internal advisory groups and task teams in a coordinated approach to implementation.

### *Redesign Testing*

SSA will establish test sites to incrementally implement and evaluate redesign features and process changes. All redesign initiatives will continually be evaluated or measured against the five overall objectives of the disability redesign:

- 1) The process is user-friendly for disability applicants and those who assist them;
- 2) The right decision is made the first time;
- 3) Decisions are made and effectuated quickly;
- 4) The process is efficient; and
- 5) Employees will find the work satisfying.

### *Enabling Technology*

Successful implementation of the redesign plan is dependent, among other things, on the Intelligent Work Station/Local Area Network (IWS/LAN) infrastructure and an automated claim system that provides full electronic claim processing. The RDS will greatly enhance the redesign implementation efforts. In fact, timing of implementation of some features must be deferred awaiting IWS/LAN and RDS availability, but realization of the redesign total vision assumes automated support, both hardware and software with data base and imaging capabilities beyond that expected for the initial implementation of RDS. Expert system support for decision-makers, electronic collection and storage of medical evidence, and video-conferencing for certain interviews, are some of the automated expectations inherent in the redesign. Full benefits of the disability claim process redesign cannot be achieved unless the technological support presumed in the vision is available.

### *Coordination with Other Agency Initiatives*

Although disability redesign is an Agency priority, it will not be accomplished in isolation from other Agency initiatives or workloads. SSA will ensure that redesign implementation activities are accomplished in the context of overall SSA goals and strategies, including the Agency Strategic Plan, the Human Resources Plan, the Information Systems Plan, the Customer Service Plan, streamlining initiatives, partnership, short-term initiatives to reduce pending disability workloads and other reengineering efforts.

*Legislation*

SSA has identified statutory areas where changes might be necessary in order to fully implement the new disability process vision. These include statutory requirements regarding who makes disability determinations, the 12-months of evidentiary documentation required for making determinations, and the requirements for Federal review of State determinations. As SSA proceeds with refining its implementation plan, expectations regarding necessary legislation could change. An exact timetable has not yet been established for submitting specific legislative changes to implement the new process.

## Schedule

(A more complete schedule and fuller descriptions of these initiatives can be found in SSA's "Disability Process Redesign: Next Steps Implementation Plan.")

1995-1996	1997-1998	1999-2000
<p>Develop consumer-oriented publications and educational material on the disability process</p> <p>Increase applicant participation in evidence collection</p> <p>Develop a single presentation of substantive policy guidance</p> <p>Establish joint training programs for all disability decisionmakers in the DDSs and in SSA components</p> <p>Implement an initial release of the reengineered disability system (RDS) in pilot sites</p> <p>Test ways to facilitate Claims Representative and Disability Examiner interaction and teamwork in taking and adjudicating claims</p> <p>Initiate several prehearing activities to streamline the administration appeals process: 1. prehearing reviews to identify possible allowances prior to hearing, 2. prehearing conferences to narrow hearing issues, 3. test elimination of Reconsideration</p>	<p>Implement options for third parties to assist in the completion and development of disability claims</p> <p>Implement Claims Representative/Disability Examiner teams for disability intake, adjudication and payment effectuation</p> <p>Provide predecision notice and opportunity for a personal contact with the decisionmaker prior to issuing an initial denial determination</p> <p>Implement standardized forms for medical evidence collection, including fraud prevention measures</p> <p>Implement Adjudication Officer position and publish regulations to eliminate Reconsideration</p> <p>Implement a comprehensive end-of-line review system and a revised in-line quality review system at all levels</p> <p>Implement RDS with enhanced decisional support</p>	<p>Establish the Disability Claim Manager position as the single point of contact for disability claims intake, adjudication and payment effectuation</p> <p>Establish an Index of Disabling Impairments to replace the Listing of Impairments and publish regulations for new disability decision methodology</p> <p>Implement fully integrated disability claims processing system with paperless claims processing</p>

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## 2. Short-Term Disability Project

*Lead SSA Official:* Regional Commissioner, Philadelphia Region

The Short Term Disability Project plan includes 19 actions designed to significantly reduce pending disability cases and hearings by the end of calendar year 1996. (See table below for list of initiatives and see SSA's "Short Term Disability Project Plan" for detailed descriptions of the initiatives.) The project began at the start of FY 1995. At that time, there were 729,000 cases pending in the State DDSs and 486,000 hearings pending in SSA's Office of Hearings and Appeals (OHA). The plan calls for a net reduction in pending case levels in the DDSs of 100,000 cases by or before December 1996 and a net reduction in the pending hearings in OHA of 111,000 hearings by that same date.

Actions to reduce the number of claims pending in the DDSs include:

- Diverting additional funds as they can be identified over the course of the year to increase DDS case processing capacity;
- Redirecting central office staff to assist in processing disability workloads; and
- Enlisting the assistance of local offices to increase claimants' participation in obtaining the medical evidence needed to support their claims.

The strategy for reducing hearings pendings focuses on stemming the flow of claims into the hearings process by assuring that allowable claims are paid earlier in the process and increasing capacity to handle those claims that must be passed on for a hearing. Actions will be taken to increase the effectiveness of screening units in identifying cases for which a fully favorable modified determination can be made on-the-record and to expand the Pre-Hearing Conference process by providing temporary authorization to staff attorneys to issue fully favorable decisions. Resources from other Agency components will be added to assist OHA in preparing cases for hearing and drafting hearing decisions.

The initiatives undertaken by the Short-Term Disability Project are integrated with the long-term disability redesign strategy and all the initiatives in the short-term project are supportive of the longer-range goals of the redesign.

**INITIATIVES IN SSA'S SHORT-TERM DISABILITY PROJECT**

1. Publication of Workload Reduction Targets
2. Informal Denials for Nonimpairment Cases
3. Reduction of Pre-effectuation Review Reconsideration Sample
4. Increase DDS Review of Reconsideration Claims
5. Rescind DDS Adoption of Initial Level Residual Functional Capacity or Psychiatric Review Technique Form for Reconsideration Decision
6. Increase Effectiveness of Screening Units
7. Expand the Prehearing Conference Initiative
8. Assure Effective Utilization of Necessary Automation in OHA
9. Increase OHA Case Preparation Capacity
10. Increase OHA Decision Drafting Capacity
11. Implement Standardized Folder Assembly Format
12. Increase DDS Systems Purchases Flexibility
13. Enlist Field Office Cooperation in Medical Evidence Collection When Hearing is Filed
14. Implement Field Office Medical Evidence of Record Process
15. Make Office of Disability & International Operations Examiners Available to Assist OHA
16. Identify FY 1995 DDS Costs that can be Forward Funded
17. Front-load FY 1995 DDS Budget
18. Redirect Central Office Staff to Process Disability Workloads
19. Continue Office of Disability Evaluation of Process Improvement Suggestions

**Schedule**

	<b>DECEMBER 1996</b>
Net Reduction in DDS Workloads	100,000 cases
Net Reduction in OHA Hearings	111,000 hearings

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### 3. 800 Number Improvements

*Lead SSA Official:* Deputy Commissioner for Operations

#### Description

The national 800 Number achieved the purpose for which it was established—to provide all members of the public an inexpensive, convenient point of entry for conducting their business with Social Security. In fact, most Americans initiate their business with SSA by calling the 800 Number.

As originally conceived, the 800 Number was designed to provide answers to general information type questions and to conduct brief, one-contact business with customers requiring these types of services. Customers' expectations and their use of the 800 Number has changed over the years. During the last 12 months, SSA has surveyed or monitored the calls of over 50,000 members of the public. The preliminary analysis of this customer input indicates that SSA's customers increasingly prefer to use the 800 Number for more and more of their business, including more complex transactions. The next step will be to analyze more closely all of the information we have from the public, determine what it tells us about customer expectations, and create new methods of obtaining other important information if it is needed and not available.

Because of these changes in customer expectations, the demand for 800 Number telephone service is much greater than anticipated. Many customers are unable to get through easily, and some are unable to do so at all. In FY 1994, of the 109 million calls made to the 800 Number, only 64 million were answered by SSA. Based on surveys of customer expectations, SSA is defining a key dimension of world-class telephone service as making certain that our callers can get through to SSA within 5 minutes. We are unable to meet this pledge today. The purpose of this initiative is to improve SSA's 800 Number telephone service so that we are able to fulfill our pledge of world-class service.

#### Major Activities

In December 1994, SSA's top executives and selected employee groups, began planning a comprehensive approach to improving SSA's telephone service. Included was a discussion of the barriers to providing world-class service. Over 60 items were identified as barriers to world-class telephone service at SSA and as an outcome to this effort an executive-level workgroup has begun the process of initiating a fundamental change in service delivery to respond to customer expectations.

Recently, SSA visited eight well-known companies to benchmark their telephone service. We plan to implement their best practices where feasible and cost-effective.

In the near-term, SSA will provide more call-answering capacity. Among the actions being taken to increase capacity are:

- ▶ Regional readiness plans have been prepared for the 1995 peak season (January-March). These plans will maximize the number of employees available to answer 800 Number calls.
- ▶ Additional spike employees have been trained and will be available for the 1995 peak season.
- ▶ Central office and regional office pilots are planned to assist telephone representatives with transcription workloads.
- ▶ Two Data Operations Centers are being remissioned and operating as Teleservice Centers in FY 1996.

SSA is also exploring technology as a way of increasing call-taking capacity. Automated self-service options are available in some locations for certain actions that do not need assistance from a teleservice representative. New "network prompt" technology is being assessed as a means of accepting more calls, as well as a platform for further automated call features, such as automated transcription which would eliminate this manual workload. Customers who reach an open line may be placed on hold until the next TSR is available to take their call. To help them decide whether to wait or call again later, customers are given an estimate of the waiting time via the electronic "Intelligent Queue" feature.

SSA has developed an 800 Number expert system to guide personnel through responses to frequently asked questions and is examining ways to streamline procedures. (The system is updated periodically to reflect changes in policies and procedures.) PSC personnel will benefit significantly in their role as spike units when the IWS/LAN platform is available to them since it can support the 800 Number expert system that is a key tool available in the IWS/LAN environment.

Additional initiatives will be forthcoming in the immediate future as SSA continues to plan better ways to provide improved service in all aspects of its telephone service delivery.

**Benefits**

Improving telephone access to SSA and the service SSA provides, will provide major benefits of convenience, accessibility and timeliness to SSA's customers.

**Schedule**

Completed	FY 1995	FY 1996
Regional readiness plans for FY 1995 peak period	Mission statement & service objectives established	DOCs remissioned
	Implementation plans written	
	Additional spike-unit employees trained and in service	
	Pilots to assist TSRs with transcription workloads	

#### 4. SSA-Initiated Personal Earnings & Benefit Estimate Statement (SIPEBES)

*Lead SSA Official:* Deputy Commissioner for Programs

In addition to the 4 million PEBES that the public requests each year, SSA will issue about 138 million additional PEBES over the next 6 years. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (OBRA) of 1989, with amendment in OBRA 1990, requires that SSA begin issuing SSA-initiated statements (known as SIPEBES) to various eligible individuals. *Eligible individuals* are defined as persons age 25 and older who have a Social Security number (SSN), who have wages or net earnings from self-employment, who are not receiving benefits under Title II, and for whom SSA can determine a current mailing address.

The legislation requires SSA to issue first-time statements in FY 1995 to individuals age 60 and older and in FYs 1996-1999 to persons who turn age 60 during these fiscal years. No later than October 1, 1999, the process must expand to include workers age 25 and older and must be repeated annually.

SSA expects the initial statements to produce significant general inquiry, earnings correction and other public-contact workloads, particularly when the process is extended to the workers under age 60 in FY 2000. To assess the workpower demands this additional workload will generate, SSA recently completed a special study of more than half a million SIPEBES that were mailed to selected individuals. The table shows the projected workyear requirements to issue the mandated SIPEBES and to respond to any inquiries received as a result.

CATEGORY	TIME	VOLUME	FREQUENCY	WORKYEARS REQUIRED
Workers age 60 or older	FY 1995	8.9 million	once	340 workyears
Those attaining age 60	FY 1996	1.6 million	once	60 workyears
Those attaining age 60	FY 1997	1.7 million	once	60 workyears
Those attaining age 60	FY 1998	1.8 million	once	70 workyears
Those attaining age 60	FY 1999	1.8 million	once	70 workyears
All workers age 25 and older	FY 2000	123 million	annually	1,400 workyears
TOTAL	--	138.8 million	--	2,000 workyears

We also conducted a public opinion survey of the recipients of the pilot mailings to ascertain our customers' views on the usefulness and frequency of the SIPEBES. Three out of four individuals indicated they were glad to receive the information. Nine out of 10 found the information useful. Although 40 percent of the responders prefer SIPEBES every year, 60 percent believe the statement should be sent less often. Overall, only 27 percent of the responders thought the SIPEBES should be sent to those age 25 and older, although 60 percent of the age cohort 26-30 thought age 25 was appropriate.

In March 1995, SSA will initiate a follow-up public opinion survey and a second workload impact study. These studies will be designed to assess the reaction of the recipients to receiving a SIPEBES in 2 consecutive years, and to assess the workload impacts upon SSA. Findings from these studies will be of value as the Agency begins to implement its long-range plans for the delivery of SIPEBES.

## Implementation Activities

Statements will be released on a phased basis. In preparation for the release of the first statements in mid-February 1995, several activities have already come to fruition. The PEBES processing system has been expanded to provide for selection of eligible individuals from SSA's SSN data base, procurement and association of address information and creation of an issuance history file. A vendor contract for printing and distribution of the statements has been awarded. High-speed communication lines have been installed between SSA and the vendor site for transmission of the personal data to be imprinted on the forms. Public focus group input was used to redesign the format of the statements and make the content more understandable and useful to the recipients.

An extensive public information campaign is underway now to prepare the public for the SSA-initiated PEBES mailings and to answer many of the general questions the statements are likely to generate. Once the mailings begin, SSA will monitor public reaction closely to determine if changes may be needed for subsequent issuances of the statements. Additional focus group discussions with younger workers will identify any need for additional explanatory information or shifts in emphasis in the messages presented. Systems enhancements will be considered where necessary.

### *Issues Related to Implementation Activities*

Most of the workloads resulting from the PEBES initiative are expected to come from the first statement each worker receives, since this is the first time most of them will have seen their Social Security records. SSA's new online earnings correction capability will permit this workload to be distributed among several operational components for more efficient handling. In addition, to the extent resources allow, SSA will even the annual workloads by issuing initial SIPEBES to individuals under age 60 during the FY 1996-1999 period. SSA's goal is to release as many initial statements as possible before the annual issuance process begins in FY 2000.

Once reissuance is in place, SSA will continue to monitor public reaction and workload volumes. A key factor in the ongoing process will be SSA's ability to correct reported earnings problems before the worker's next annual statement is produced.

### Schedule

FY 1995	FY 1996-1999	FY 2000
SIPEBES sent to all workers age 60 and older	SIPEBES sent to all workers attaining age 60 during these years	SIPEBES sent annually to all workers age 25 and older

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## 5. Title II System Redesign

*Lead SSA Official:* Deputy Commissioner for Systems

Today, 82 percent of Title II initial claims are fully automated. The remaining claims and numerous postentitlement transactions cannot be processed through the system without some manual intervention. The Title II System Redesign Project focuses on automating the Title II initial and postentitlement cases that are not automated today.

The current system for processing postentitlement actions is a series of 28 applications programs that, either independently or in harmony with each other, perform various functions to adjust payments and update client information. (These 28 systems are said to have a "stovepipe" architecture because they are stand-alone systems that are not integrated with each other.) Because these programs were originally written in COBOL programming language during an era preceding today's structured design and documentation standards, any changes to them require extensive analysis and cross validation. As SSA expanded its efforts to completely automate claims and eliminate postentitlement systems exceptions and limitations, it became clear that the need to make a multitude of changes to 28 different software programs would impede progress significantly. Further, the batch postentitlement programs precluded a full transition to online processing.

The goal of the Title II Redesign initiative is to provide a single system for processing virtually all initial claims and client-initiated postentitlement actions in an online interactive mode. The backbone of the redesigned system will be the use of common code to perform processing of common business functions. When a business function is common to two or more processes, a single business module will be developed and shared by all of the processes that require it. On completion of redesign, the 28 "stovepipe" postentitlement programs and the original initial Claims Automated Processing System (CAPS) will be eliminated.

The Title II Redesign will yield significant productivity and service improvements by:

- Providing online access to more comprehensive customer information, enabling employees to respond more readily and accurately to customer inquiries and complete more transactions in a single contact.

- ▶ Processing actions online, so that employees are able to immediately resolve systems edits and exceptions and tell customers how and when a transaction will affect their payment, reducing the need for follow-up contacts.
- ▶ Automating manual tasks that can be performed more efficiently by computers, thus speeding processing time, eliminating hand-offs and freeing employees to spend more of their time interacting with customers.
- ▶ Simplifying data input routines by standardizing various input formats required for the existing multiple systems
- ▶ Providing more flexible modernized software that is easier to maintain.

## Schedule

FY 1996	FY 1997-FY 1999	FY 2000
Provide automation for multiple entitlement claims	Expand redesign structure	Complete redesign structure

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## 6. Payment Cycling

*Lead SSA Official:* Deputy Commissioner for Finance, Assessment & Management

### Description

SSA's customer base continues to grow. During the first 10 days of the month when payments are released, customers are more likely to call or visit with payment-related business, causing peaks in workloads.

One option available to help SSA serve the growing number of customers is to create additional payment dates throughout the month rather than continuing the traditional beginning-of-the-month payment pattern. Payment cycling will have the effect of spreading out the peak workloads SSA now encounters as a result of payment delivery. This, in turn, will allow the public better access to SSA services.

During 1994 SSA conducted 10 focus groups, 5 with current beneficiaries and 5 with prospective beneficiaries. More than half the current beneficiaries stated they would volunteer to receive their checks later in the month and the consensus among the future beneficiaries was that they did not mind being paid later in the month as long as they were told the date on which they could expect their payment.

Meetings were also held with key stakeholder groups, including Congressional staff and representatives of member organizations and private industry. These sessions revealed strong support for implementing payment cycling for new beneficiaries. Private industry representatives indicated that the current process creates workload peaks for their operations as well, and a similar impact on their operations by reducing service and increasing costs.

### Major Issues

There are several decisions needed prior to implementation. One is how should payments be cycled. Other issues to be addressed are:

- ▶ Determine the extent to which SSA will allow current beneficiaries to volunteer to change payment dates and the costs related thereto;

- ▶ Determine if the Agency will seek legislation in support of changing benefit payment patterns; and
- ▶ Decide whether, as part of implementation, the Treasury Department will need to make significant changes in its current payment issuance operation to achieve additional efficiencies.

## Benefits

SSA is quantifying the benefits and costs of payment cycling as background for further decision making.

## Schedule

FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998	FY 1999
Submit plan	Promulgate regulations	Develop software	Resolve human resource issues	Conduct public information campaign
Decide cycling option & associated issues			Improve telecommunications links with Treasury	Offer current beneficiaries cycling option
				Train employees
				Implement

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## 7. Integrated Client Data

*Lead SSA Official:* Deputy Commissioner for Systems

Historically, SSA has collected and maintained data about the clients we serve in each of the various systems that support the programs administered by the Agency. As with most legacy systems, there is a lot of redundancy in our storage of data. The goal of the Integrated Client Data initiative is to use current technology to establish a client-specific data base.

Integrating client data will allow data to be shared among programmatic systems, reduce data redundancy and improve data consistency among systems. Work began on this initiative in early 1993. An analysis was performed of the largest modernized systems, the Modernized Claims System (MCS) for Title II initial claims, the Modernized SSI Claims System (MSSICS) for Title XVI initial claims, the Representative Payee System (RPS) and the 800 Number System, to determine where common and similar data existed. The final product was a list of elements that either always or usually were common across different programs and systems. In 1994, changes were made to propagate data captured in the 800 Number leads system to other systems (MSSICS and RPS). This prototype proved that significant payoff could be achieved by eliminating the need in some instances for users to collect the same data twice. The development of the Integrated Client Data Base (ICDB) is a natural extension of the data propagation prototype.

The benefits of the Integrated Client Data Base are:

- Establishment of a central data store to house data specific to individual clients.
- Increased efficiency by eliminating the need to key data more than once and alerting employees when critical client data has changed in another system.
- Improvement in the consistency of data shared across systems through standard element length, definition and edit criteria.
- Improved service by eliminating the need for employees to ask customers for the same information more than once in multiple claims situations.

## Schedule

FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997
Establish the Integrated Client Data Base (ICDB) that stores client information in one common file for the following systems: MCS, MSSICS, 800 Number Leads System and RPS.	Expand ICDB to include the Enumeration system and postentitlement functions for Title XVI (MSSICS) and Title II (POS).  Provide integrated query capability for RDS.	Interface with Title II Redesign

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## 8. Legislated Provisions Relating to Drug Addiction and Alcoholism

*Lead SSA Official:* Deputy Commissioner for Programs

On August 15, 1994, the President signed into law P.L.103-296, the Social Security Independence and Program Improvements Act of 1994. The law contains several provisions that place new restrictions on DI and SSI benefit payments to disabled individuals for whom drug addiction or alcoholism (DA&A) is a contributing factor material to the determination of disability. Major provisions of the law are:

- All beneficiaries, both DI and SSI, who are disabled based on DA&A must receive payment through a representative payee and must undergo and make progress in treatment, when available, at approved facilities.
- Payments based on DA&A are to be terminated after 36 months, unless the individual is determined to be disabled for some other reason than DA&A. (For DI beneficiaries, only months in which treatment is available count toward the 36-month limit.)
- Benefit payments will be suspended for noncompliance with treatment and terminated after 12 consecutive months of suspension for noncompliance.
- Large one-time payments of past-due benefits must be paid in installments.
- All DI and SSI beneficiaries for whom DA&A is a contributing factor material to the finding of disability must be notified within 180 days of enactment that they must receive benefit payments through payees, must undergo treatment, if available, and may receive benefit payments for only 36 months.
- Referral and monitoring agencies will refer individuals who are disabled based on DA&A to appropriate substance abuse treatment providers, monitor compliance with treatment and report individuals' treatment status to SSA .

## Implementation

### *Preparation*

Because of the magnitude of the changes involved in processing DA&A cases, every SSA field employee, DDS employee, and Hearing Office employee will be issued revised instructions and be provided training on the new policies and processes.

### *Initial Notification*

In February 1995, we will be sending letters to beneficiaries currently on the rolls who are identified as being disabled based on DA&A (and their payees) to inform them of the new legislative requirements. This mailing, estimated at between 200,000 to 300,000 letters is expected to generate major workloads:

- The field offices and Teleservice Centers will likely receive a large volume of calls about how the changes affect individual beneficiaries.
- Individuals who initially were entitled based on DA&A but who believe they are now disabled due to other impairments, will file appeals to have the reason for their disability changed. This will translate into increased FO traffic, DDS caseloads and, ultimately, OHA pendings.
- DA&A beneficiaries not currently served by representative payees but who, under the new law, now must have a payee appointed. (In addition to the payee development workloads, some percentage of appeals is inevitable.)

## DA&A Case Processing

Beginning March 1, 1995, all new DA&A cases must be processed under the revised rules. At least initially, limited automated support will be available for case processing and notices, which translates to decreased productivity and longer processing times. Potential problem areas include:

- Payment of past due benefits in installments. This can be done only via manual processing.
- Revised preference list for representative payees. In many areas of the country, preferred payees are unavailable or already at capacity. Recruitment of additional preferred payees will become a local priority.

***Treatment Requirements***

The contracts with referral and monitoring agencies that are currently in place did not anticipate the much larger numbers of DA&A beneficiaries or the additional monitoring and increased reporting requirements of this legislation. Therefore, at the outset, the majority of Title II beneficiaries will not be referred and monitored for compliance with recommended treatment. This situation will persist until SSA recompetes and awards new contracts for the services needed, a process that will be completed by the end of 1995.

***Suspensions and Terminations***

Once treatment referral and monitoring mechanisms are in place, SSA will be suspending and terminating benefits on the basis of reports of noncompliance from the RMAs. This will be very work-intensive, requiring much manual processing and locally produced notices. These actions/notices are expected to generate large numbers of inquiries and appeals.

Even after payments terminate for a beneficiary disabled based on DA&A, his/her Medicare or Medicaid entitlement, as well as Title II payments to his/her auxiliaries, continues as long as the DA&A beneficiary remains disabled. However, Medicare and Medicaid will not continue if the benefits have been terminated for non-compliance with the treatment requirements. Some level of monitoring will be necessary to ensure that these provisions are not abused.

***Due Process***

The initial notices to existing beneficiaries, the award notices to new beneficiaries, the suspension notices and the termination notices, will all offer due process to the beneficiaries. This will result in benefit continuations and appeals that involve many interactions and manual inputs.

**Schedule**

August 1994	February 1995	March 1995
Law passed	Letters sent to current DA&A beneficiaries	All new cases processed under new provisions

## 9. SSI Modernization

*Lead SSA Official:* Deputy Commissioner for Systems

Prior to the modernized SSI claims system (MSSICS), SSI initial claims were completed by taking a lengthy paper application and subsequently keying the data into the system. Today, non-disability application information is collected online for nearly all SSI initial claims, eliminating the need to prepare paper input documents. Rather than in its previous summarized form, the actual data collected from the SSI applicant is posted to the data base and remains completely available to employees for subsequent reference. MSSICS also provides automated support for performing certain developmental actions required to process claims, such as the computation of income and resources.

The next major enhancement to MSSICS will be to extend the data collection function to postentitlement situations. By doing so, local offices will continue to have online, real-time access to detailed information about factors affecting SSI eligibility payment.

Examples of significant improvements in customer service enabled by MSSICS are:

- An automated claims intake system prompts for questionable answers helping to ensure the application is accurate and complete. Direct input and automated processing features eliminate errors inherent in manual data transcriptions and computations.
- More comprehensive information available online enables employees to complete postentitlement transactions without the need to reference paper files or recontact customers to verify information.

### Schedule

FY 1997

Expand MSSICS to postentitlement situations.

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## 10. Notice Improvements

*Lead SSA Official:* Deputy Commissioner for Policy & External Affairs

### Description

SSA sends its customers 240 million notices annually. In the past, SSA has been criticized for the poor quality of its notices, being both hard-to-read and hard-to-understand. Thirty-two percent of the Agency's notices require some manual action by employees, creating opportunity for error and inconsistency in language and format. In addition to customer dissatisfaction, poor notice quality results in unnecessary inquiries in field offices and to the 800 Number. The Notices Improvement initiative is intended to increase notice readability and clarity and to reduce unnecessary operational workloads.

### Major Activities

#### *Backlogged Improvements*

By 1992 the Agency had accumulated a sizeable number of Title II and Title XVI notice projects awaiting implementation. Although improved language was available for many of these notices, a shortage of resources had prevented their implementation. The Agency identified 11 of these projects as involving critically needed improvements, and 10 of the 11 projects have been completed. The remaining project will be completed in September 1995.

#### *SSI Notice Improvements*

Field office employees must manually prepare nearly 20 percent of SSI notices. This workload is complex and labor-intensive, particularly in the overpayment area. To alleviate this burden, SSI notice automation will be increased to the extent possible. Language and format for many automated SSI notices will be improved at the same time.

### *OASDI Notice Improvements*

OASDI notices have several major problems. Many are produced manually in field offices and Processing Centers; the language is hard to understand and sometimes not tailored to the beneficiary's specific situation. Overpayment notices, in particular, generate numerous field office inquiries. As many as 1.8 million disability notices are issued each year and are produced manually, using language that is above the average reading comprehension level. The Agency is moving forward with its plan to improve the language and format of its OASDI notices. The Agency is also increasing the number of notices available in Spanish, and standards for Spanish notices have been incorporated into our English language notice standards.

Today, OASDI notices are produced by nearly 20 different software applications, each with its own language database. The Agency is improving the language in each of these applications and then folding it into the Target Notice Architecture (TNA). Under the TNA plan, SSA will consolidate 80 notice language databases into one central data base and streamline SSA's notice production environment. This will greatly reduce the time and effort needed to code automated notice changes and will eliminate duplication of notice language across software applications. Notices produced by the Title II Modernized Claims System and one postentitlement program have already been improved and built into TNA.

The TNA will provide another important capability—electronic storage and retrieval of notices. Today, employees cannot recall a copy of a notice on their computer terminals when a customer calls or visits with a question. If the employee cannot refer to the customer's copy, the question may have to be deferred until the record can be retrieved and the customer recontacted. The first notices to be stored electronically should be available for retrieval in August 1995.

Outdated, standalone word processing equipment in the Processing Centers is being replaced with centralized M/Text notice production software, eliminating 60 separate notice language data bases. The new system will help reduce clerical error with online edits, speed notice preparation, ensure the uniformity of notice language, and direct output to automated mailing facilities to lower handling and mail costs. M/Text will be implemented in all sites by February 1995.

### *Notice Evaluation*

Notice improvement will be a continuous process. As part of this ongoing activity, public opinions will be solicited through the use of focus group tests and surveys. SSA also plans to gather information on the literacy skills and special needs of its non-English speaking clients.

**Benefits**

- Improved customer understanding of SSA decisions and customer rights and responsibilities.
- Fewer inquiries, freeing field office and 800 Number employees to help other customers.
- Fewer recontacts with electronic notice retrieval, also freeing field office and 800 Number employees to help other customers.
- Fewer manual notices, freeing field office and PSC employees to process other customer business. SSA is estimating expected savings. The first group of improved SSI notices will free up 250 workyears.
- Lower overhead costs. M/Text will eliminate \$1.1 million to maintain the outdated word processing systems.

**Schedule**

<b>FYs 1993-1995</b>	<b>FYs 1994-1997</b>	<b>FYs 1993-1999</b>	<b>ONGOING</b>
Backlogged Notices	SSI Notices	OASDI Notices	Notice Evaluation

## 11. Paperless Processing

*Lead SSA Official:* Deputy Commissioner for Systems

Over the past few years, SSA has undertaken a number of actions to lay the groundwork for a paperless processing environment. These include refining our evidence-retention criteria, creating electronic record formats and establishing new practices for discarding unnecessary paper. The purpose of the Paperless Processing Project is to test and evaluate document imaging and paperless technologies as potential means of enabling SSA to redesign business processes that will allow employees to work more efficiently in a paperless environment.

The IWS/LAN provides the supporting infrastructure for the pilot effort which will apply document workflow management and imaging technologies to SSA's paper-intensive programmatic process. The system will keep files in electronic format that normally would be printed out on paper for technicians to process. It will also scan the letters, folders and other paper that are mailed to SSA, and convert them to digitized images for electronic processing. These two sources along with access to other electronic files will give technicians total information access to do their job.

The potential benefits of a paperless processing system are that it:

- Provides employees with immediate access to all the information needed to accurately and efficiently complete an action for a customer;
- Delivers work to the technician's workstation electronically and allows all processing to be completed without reliance on any paper;
- Eliminates lost or misfiled folders; and
- Provides managers with accurate and timely information necessary to manage workloads.

A Test Processing Module prototype began in January 1994 and will continue to operate as a test-bed environment to support the pilot. The purpose of the prototype is to incorporate electronic information and document imaging technology, and to test redesigned workflow scenarios.

Using knowledge gained during the prototype phase, we are enhancing current functionality and developing new, automated functionality that will be used during the pilot. The pilot will begin in Module 12 in the Great Lakes Program Service Center in January 1995 and will run for 1 full year. The pilot will initially run in parallel to the current paper process and shortly afterwards, will process the total workload of Module 12 in a full production, paperless environment. Before and during the pilot operation, SSA will evaluate the various aspects of working in a paperless environment to determine the impact of the new technology on employees, quality, costs and service delivery.

## Schedule

January 1994	January 1995
Test Processing Module prototype begins pilot testing	Pilot begins in GLPSC

## 12. Electronic Service Delivery (ESD)

*Lead SSA Official:* Deputy Commissioner for Systems

### Description

Anticipating increasing public acceptance of technology and expanding demand by customers to receive information and transact business electronically, SSA has established the Electronic Service Delivery (ESD) project as the next generation and logical extension of the technology advances the Agency will realize through IWS/LAN. Where IWS/LAN provides technology for SSA's use in streamlining and reengineering processes and operations, and in promoting effectiveness in service delivery, ESD incorporates applications to be used directly by the customer, as well as applications to be used administratively by SSA to improve customer service.

Opportunities for creating new service delivery choices for customers are possible with the increasing prevalence of electronic information processing equipment and communications networks capable of transmitting data, voice, and images. Self-service options accessible via telephone, personal computer or publicly-located kiosks, using well-designed electronic menus and easy-to-follow instructions, can make services available to clients virtually anywhere 24 hours a day.

While many electronic service concepts promise tantalizing service and efficiency advances, SSA has chosen a deliberately cautious approach to ESD. Despite growing public enthusiasm for electronic transactions, neither the technologies nor the public's tastes have matured sufficiently to support long-term decisions. Consequently, the SSA approach to ESD incorporates both an aggressive program of technology scanning and research, and a significantly more cautious strategy toward implementation which includes an exhaustive program of piloting and evaluation. While developing public preferences and the potential for staggering advances in service delivery demand action now to build a base of knowledge and experience around these technologies, SSA believes a sensible level of investment in research and gradually expanded testing will best position the Agency for prudent decisions as distinct advantages and opportunities materialize.

Within the framework described above, the following principles will be observed in the ESD program:

- ▶ Continue to provide choice in terms of how customers wish to be served (telephone, face-to-face, fax, home computer, cable television, etc.);
- ▶ Ensure that the same level of service is provided in all locations;
- ▶ Provide improved service to the business community and enhanced opportunities for coordination of activities with Federal, state, local, and private entities; and
- ▶ Provide one-contact service whenever possible.

In all activities proposed under this initiative, privacy and systems security issues will be resolved before providing any public access to SSA data bases. SSA has sought expert advice from the Los Alamos Research Laboratory, which has special expertise in systems security, and from the National Institute for Standards and Technology (NIST) and will continue to consult with other Federal, State and local organizations on these important issues of privacy and security.

## Major Activities

ESD is an umbrella project covering both applications to be used administratively by SSA to improve customer service and applications to be used directly by the customer. The applications are grouped under subprojects, as follows:

### *Interactive Distance Learning*

With Agency streamlining, increased use of automation and continuous systems and procedural changes, a faster, less expensive and more uniform method must be found for simultaneous delivery of training to large numbers of employees. Today, SSA uses its Satellite Teletraining Network to deliver interactive video broadcasts simultaneously from a central site to employees in multiple remote locations. However, the network, as currently configured, is capable of reaching only 4,000 of our 64,000 employees. Expansion of the network is being considered, along with other technologies, to determine the best way (or ways) to reach more employees. Desktop video conferencing is a potential option, and SSA is currently testing it to deliver training to technical staff in the network management centers. Other satellite broadcast and video conferencing options also will be explored before a final decision is made.

### *Video Conferencing*

Video conferencing increases access and reduces travel costs for geographically distant participants when used to conduct administrative meetings or deliver employee training, as discussed above. SSA has pioneered in the administrative use of video conferencing.

Although early administrative uses of video conferencing have proven successful, more substantial benefits should be realized by the public when interviews are possible between disability claimants and decision makers, as planned in the reengineered disability process. In November 1993, video conferencing systems were installed in the Wilmington, Delaware DDS and the New Castle, Delaware field office to demonstrate the concept of conducting initial disability and pre-denial interviews using the technology. In FY 1995, SSA will expand upon this initial effort and carefully test customer acceptance, as well as the kinds of equipment and networks needed to support client interviews, as follows:

- In Wisconsin, systems will be installed in field office, DDS and hearing office sites to test customer acceptance of the technology at different stages in the reengineered disability process.
- In another pilot to take place in Iowa, SSA will install video conferencing systems in a field office, a hearing office and the DDS to test the feasibility of integrating SSA systems with Iowa's state-wide telecommunications network and contact station facilities. Cooperative partnerships with States, where possible, could reduce the technology's cost.
- A third pilot will involve hearings offices in Huntington, West Virginia and Albuquerque, New Mexico and remote hearing sites in Prestonsburg, Kentucky and El Paso, Texas. In this pilot, advanced video features enabling Administrative Law Judges to manipulate cameras at the claimant's site, to view participants close up, and to record multiple hearing participants, will be tested in hearings conducted between these sites. The advanced features are needed to support requirements unique to hearings.

### *Imaging*

This subproject will provide for testing and refining the technology needed to support imaging of medical evidence and related documents for the reengineered disability process. Based on the results of this pilot, equipment will be acquired during Phase 2 of the National IWS/LAN Buy.

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Fax servers and secondary imaging subsystems will assist SSA in moving information quickly between processing locations and provide more information online for answering customer questions. The fax server acts as a transmission device directing the faxed material to the employee who needs it. The image storage systems are used to house fax materials and other scanned information as part of the claimant's record.

### *Remote LAN Access*

This effort will enable SSA representatives to provide service at offsite locations comparable to in-office service, using lap-top (or notebook) computers with IWS/LAN connectivity to access SSA client information and processing software. Because this technology will allow access to client data bases and processes, privacy and systems security questions will be resolved before implementation.

Prototype remote LAN access technology is being tested. In addition, a procurement in FY 1995 has been funded for the installation of Remote LAN Access servers and associated hardware and software. It is anticipated that this procurement will provide approximately 800 ports of connectivity for SSA field users.

### *Customer Access*

This initiative will use remote access technology as the gateway to programs, client data and other SSA information files for employers, Federal, State and local agencies, and individuals. Employers will be able to verify the Social Security Numbers of new employees over the telephone. Other Federal, State and local agencies will be able to verify Social Security Numbers and benefit amounts for clients. Individuals will be able to enter their name and identification information in a kiosk and receive Personal Earnings & Benefit Estimate printouts in one easy transaction. This initiative will use remote access technology as the gateway to programs, client data and other SSA information files.

SSA is also exploring the possibility of allowing three outreach grantees to access the Modernized Supplemental Security Income Claims System (MSSICS) online. In a pilot in Tennessee, State employees will have the capability to verify SSNs directly online. SSA is working with Tennessee in expanding this effort to include other capabilities and working with other States to provide like services.

Customer access also includes plans for "fax on demand" which enables a customer to dial a number and choose an SSA form from a menu. Once selected, the form will automatically be transmitted to the caller. Customer access will require the installation of additional remote access capacity. SSA is analyzing needs for additional hardware and software.

### *Telephone Access*

This subproject also supports the 800 Number improvement initiative. There are three initiatives underway:

- ▶ The Network Prompt/Infoworx Pilot has been completed and is being evaluated. Under this effort, callers in 11 States listened to a network prompt (automated menu) which allowed them to select automated self-service options or assisted service. The automated options gave the location of the closest SSA office after callers keyed in their ZIP Codes. The improved level of service accruing from the increased numbers of calls getting through to the 800 Number will be weighed against higher costs and actual service improvements in determining if Network Prompt should be continued.
- ▶ A caller behavior study is scheduled for FY 1995. SSA will conduct a public relations campaign to encourage callers to call in the evening. To determine if calling patterns can be influenced, dialing data will be captured from the telephone system.
- ▶ Another effort will assess the feasibility of developing self-service telephone applications which would interact with client data bases. For example, a caller would use the telephone keypad to respond to a series of prompts to request status of a claim or a PEBES. The technical issues are complex. Information which must be provided by the caller requires alphanumeric input and the design of keypad does not provide for easy input of other than the simplest information. The project team is currently researching and evaluating technologies which will overcome these barriers. Implementation of viable applications will also depend on the resolution of security and policy issues.

### *Kiosk*

SSA is testing the feasibility and customer acceptance of touch screen kiosks as a means of providing informational services to the public. The initial software application will provide instructions for completing commonly used SSA forms and receiving printouts of information. Information will be furnished in multiple languages based upon the demographics of the kiosk sites. The basic informational services to be provided are:

- Social Security program information;
- How to get an SSN card;
- Disability benefits;
- Medicare and Medicaid insurance;
- Retirement benefits;
- Survivors benefits;
- Supplemental Security Income; and
- How to complete SSA forms.

On a parallel track, SSA is developing a prototype kiosk system to determine the feasibility of performing functions which would require access to client data and processing software through SSA's Wide Area Network. The prototype will not be tested in public until privacy and systems security issues can be resolved. The types of applications envisioned are:

- Benefit verification;
- Summary Earnings Query;
- Claims status and payment verification;
- Completion and electronic filing of request for SSN; and
- Completion and electronic filing of request for PEBES.

The kiosks will be strategically located in SSA offices, other Federal, State and local government agencies and high-traffic areas such as shopping malls, transportation centers and post offices.

SSA acquired 12 systems in FY 1994 for a pilot involving the kiosks in the Albuquerque, New Mexico area. Installation of these systems begins in April 1995.

SSA is also exploring partnerships with other agencies to share kiosk resources. A "proof of concept" kiosk information system was developed by SSA, the United States Postal Service (USPS) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). SSA is now working with California and Colorado to add information about Social Security programs to their systems.

#### *Agency-Wide Internet Access*

SSA is developing an Agency-wide Internet platform to support public access to general program information and conduct business using personal computers. Privacy and systems security issues will be resolved before any applications involving access to personal data or SSA processing software is allowed.

Currently, the public can access general program information through Internet using two methods: e-mail server and file transfer. SSA plans to expand access to include the Internet Gopher program/server to simplify user access to information and to offer information in graphical format. A Mosaic server will also be added to allow easy-to-use Windows access to multimedia information. Using the new servers, SSA will be able to provide access to SSA POMS procedures, law, regulations, and numerous other public documents on the Internet system.

Information available via Internet will also be available through commercial online services (such as Prodigy, CompuServe and America Online ), public Bulletin Boards, and other large information providers. The Internet access platform also will provide secure access for SSA employees to information world-wide for SSA research activities.

A National Performance Review initiative underway is to establish a Government Information Locator Service to help the public locate and access information. The Internet platform will house this system.

### *Interactive Cable TV*

This subproject will initially serve as a test-bed to determine the feasibility of providing information about SSA programs to cable subscribers within designated geographical areas. The purpose of this information would be to describe how SSA's programs are administered and offer advice on ways to transact business with SSA.

### **Benefits**

Each type of access to SSA will be carefully evaluated during pilots to determine customer acceptance and satisfaction, effect on traditional customer service and cost. Before-and-after studies will be conducted to quantify changes due to new services, and implementation decisions will be based on subsequent cost/benefit analyses.

**Schedule**

	<b>FY 1994</b>	<b>FY 1995</b>	<b>FY 1996</b>	<b>TBD</b>
<b>Interactive Distance Learning</b>			Pilot of interactive video training in field offices	
<b>Video Conferencing</b>	Delaware Feasibility Demonstration	Wisconsin customer acceptance  Advanced features for hearings  Iowa cooperative venture		
<b>Imaging</b>			Imaging under RDS begins	
<b>Remote LAN Access</b>		Remote LAN access		
<b>Customer Access</b>				Access for States and corporations  Tennessee pilot expansion  Facsimile on demand  MSSICS pilot
<b>Telephone Access</b>	Network prompt pilot  Call behavior study in Mississippi			Data base access
<b>Kiosk</b>		Informational pilots		Interactive development
<b>Internet Access</b>	SSA headquarters		SSA applications	
<b>Interactive Cable TV</b>		Interactive cable TV		

## 13. Electronic Payment Services

*Lead SSA Official:* Deputy Commissioner for Finance, Assessment & Management

The National Performance Review, with its emphasis on more efficient service delivery, has prompted the government to establish a policy that calls for Federal program agencies to convert to an all-electronic payment environment by 1999. SSA has positioned itself ahead of most Federal agencies in the use of electronic funds transfer (EFT). More than half of the 570 million benefit payments issued in FY 1993 were disbursed electronically. The payment service initiative outlines SSA's strategy for addressing the NPR's objective. It includes:

- ▶ A series of actions designed to increase the number of beneficiaries who are paid by direct deposit;
- ▶ The development of electronic payment alternatives for beneficiaries who do not have bank accounts; and
- ▶ Expansion of SSA's use of the national Automated Clearing House (ACH) system for both payment and payment-related information.

Because the activities currently planned are expected to increase the use of direct deposit to about 70 percent, SSA is examining what further measures can be taken to fully achieve the NPR's 100-percent objective by 1999.

Besides the improved service this convenient, more reliable means of payment provides to our customers, increased use of direct deposit benefits SSA by:

- ▶ Reducing charges from the Department of Treasury to the OASDI trust funds (estimated at about \$17 million annually) for the costs of disbursing paper checks.
- ▶ Reducing postentitlement contacts with local offices and the 800 Number regarding delayed, unreceived or returned payments, thus freeing employees to do other work.

***Increased Use of Direct Deposit***

Of the 23 million beneficiaries who receive payment by paper check, 15 million have a relationship with a financial institution. Further, an estimated 90 percent of all new insurance program applicants and 45 percent of new SSI applicants have bank accounts at the time they file for benefits. These individuals could be paid by EFT from the outset.

SSA's proposed plans to increase the use of direct deposit include:

- More vigorously marketing the advantages of direct deposit to the public, financial community and other groups;
- Adopting a new government-wide policy that presumes direct deposit will be used by all beneficiaries who have bank accounts; and
- Issuing regulations to require the use of direct deposit for the following categories of cases: international payments, benefits paid to institutional representative payees and interim assistance reimbursements to States.

**Schedule**

1995	1995-1996	1996	1995-1999
Provide field offices with training and promotion materials in support of the Agency's new presumed direct deposit policy	Send information about direct deposit to new beneficiaries being paid by check and recipients who request replacement checks due to non-receipt	Issue regulations requiring use of direct deposit for certain categories of payments	Expand and continue to update SSA's public information materials and marketing campaign
	Conduct pilot and implement a unique toll-free number with electronic prompts for banks to use in SSA's Dial Direct Deposit program		

### *Electronic Benefits Transfer*

Both Federal and State agencies recognize that achieving an all-electronic payment environment is not possible unless electronic alternatives are found for beneficiaries who do not have a bank account. At present, about 4.5 million Social Security beneficiaries do not have bank accounts (9 percent OASDI and 55 percent SSD). The solution is electronic benefits transfer (EBT) through special, debit-only accounts established at designated financial institutions. Monthly payments will be deposited to these accounts using normal direct deposit transfers. Beneficiaries will access their accounts by means of a plastic debit card at either automated teller machines (ATM) or point-of-service (POS) terminals.

Over the next 5 years, SSA anticipates the following developments in establishing the EBT infrastructure for a national program:

### **Schedule**

<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997-1999</b>
Develop EBT infrastructure and select commercial banks to service 7 States in the southeastern part of the U.S.	Select additional commercial banks to provide EBT services in other geographic areas	Roll-out EBT infrastructure nationally

### *Expanding Use of the National Automated Clearinghouse*

As the number of beneficiaries being paid electronically increases, SSA and the financial community become more dependent upon each other for prompt exchange of program information. The natural pathway for this exchange is the ACH system that is maintained primarily by the Federal Reserve.

SSA has taken the lead in adopting the ACH to improve communications with the nation's financial institutions and thereby achieve improved service and efficiency. For example, in the past 18 months, SSA has reduced the number of administrative actions necessary to recover direct deposit payments issued after death by more than 90 percent, by creating a new electronic standard that notifies banks immediately via the ACH when a recipient with direct deposit dies.

Over the next 5 years, SSA is planning several significant new ACH enhancements. Most notable among these will be the capability to allow banks to send SSA direct deposit enrollment information electronically. Another enhancement will allow SSA to notify a bank electronically that a new beneficiary has requested direct deposit, so that the bank can verify account information prior to the first payment. General implementation timeframes for these and other enhancements are:

### Schedule

1995-1996	1996	1997	1998
Implement automated direct deposit enrollment	Implement prenotification process	Establish electronic verification of bank account resources for SSI recipients	Establish electronic verification of address information for direct depositors who change their residence without notifying SSA

## 14. Reengineering the Policy Process

*Lead SSA Official:* Director, Process Reengineering Program

The policy process at SSA involves the business cycle that begins with developing information that in turn leads to decisions about the rules governing SSA processes (enumeration, earnings, claims, postentitlement and informing the public) and results in some or all of the following: research investments, legislative proposals, regulations (including rulings), guidance to the workforce (through systems design and direct instructions), litigation strategies, and information to the public.

Upon recommendation of an employee Quality Improvement Team, the Agency will initiate a reengineering effort to redesign SSA's policy process. The impending changeover to an independent agency presents SSA with a unique opportunity to redesign its policy process. This 20-week effort, beginning in February 1995, will allow results to be available in time to implement organizational changes at the start of the next fiscal year.

All aspects of the business cycle are within the scope of this reengineering effort, including how policy decisions are made and disseminated. Existing policies will not be evaluated as part of this reengineering effort.

Recommendations for change will be developed and identified for both short-term (less than 1 year to full realization) and long-term (more than 1 year to full realization) implementation. The recommendations for change should:

- Improve public confidence by creating a strategic process that is closely attuned to external concerns, and permits rapid decisionmaking and early action to address short and long-range concerns about program design;
- Deliver world-class service by improving front-end input thereby surfacing and quickly resolving issues, and rapidly providing systems specifications or direct guidance/public information and notices; and
- Provide a nurturing environment by providing employees in the process with the management support, delegation of authority, technology and other tools, e.g., a standard methodology, to do their jobs well and by providing employees in the service delivery process with the policy support needed to do their jobs well.

The redesign should result in a business process which contains discrete, identifiable steps having outputs that are measurable with regard to timeliness, quality and added value. The redesigned process should also result in an improvement in the overall policy process cycle time, with no resulting increase in Agency administrative costs.

### Schedule

<b>FEBRUARY 1995</b>	<b>JUNE 1995</b>	<b>ONGOING</b>
Reengineering team begins analysis of current process and consideration of process redesign	Reengineering team makes recommendations for process redesign and organizational structure	Adoption and/or modification of reengineering team recommendations of policy process redesign

# Part VI

# Conclusion

## *Staffing Requirements*

With the continuing growth in SSA's workloads (e.g., increasing numbers of disability claims), coupled with mandated staff reductions, along with new statutory responsibilities (increased CDRs, PEBES and DA& A workloads), SSA must change the ways in which it does business. If SSA continues to work in the same ways that it does today, it would need to increase its workforce by as many as 12,000 additional full-time equivalents (FTEs) simply to keep up with workload growth. But SSA recognizes that there are alternatives to a "business as usual" approach to deal with these growing workloads. These alternatives are contained in SSA's three key strategies: streamlining, reengineering and automation/continuous improvement. By taking full advantage of these three approaches, SSA can deliver services more effectively and efficiently. And it can do so, by current estimates, with some 4,500 fewer FTEs than are currently in place.

ESTIMATES OF SSA'S FTE NEEDS		
	Additional FTEs	Total FTEs
SSA FTEs in FY 1995		65,000
Additional FTEs needed in FY 1999 to keep up with workload growth, with no change in the way SSA does business	8,000	
Additional FTEs needed in FY 1999 to deliver improved services, with no change in the way SSA does business and no productivity growth	4,000	
Total FTEs needed in FY 1999 if no change in the way SSA does business		77,000
Total FTEs needed as a result of automation/continuous improvement, reengineering and streamlining		60,500

## *Impact of GBP on Service*

SSA's goal for each of the core business processes and service delivery interfaces is nothing short of world-class service. The assessments described in detail in Part IV of this plan, and summarized in the tables below, describe how far the initiatives and actions identified in this first GBP will take the Agency toward this goal. This first GBP does not identify any of the areas as fully attaining world-class levels by 1999, since the paths from current service levels to world-class levels are not yet fully detailed. However, based on current performance and known customer expectations, there are several areas in which aspects of service will be world class. Subsequent editions of the GBP will describe a sequence of steps that can confidently be expected to result in world-class service levels by 1999 for some or all of the business processes and service delivery interfaces.

In this initial assessment, SSA projects that it will maintain or improve service in all aspects of its business through streamlining, reengineering and automation/continuous improvement. The following tables summarize the projected impact of these approaches on SSA's core business processes and service delivery interfaces. These tables should be understood as summaries of the narrative assessments contained in Part IV of the GBP, the ratings are not computed based on formal metrics. (The categories are: World Class Aspects, Overall Positive, Mixed, and Overall Negative.)

<b>SERVICE LEVELS FOR CORE BUSINESS PROCESSES</b>			
	<b>Current 1995</b>	<b>By 1997</b>	<b>By 1999</b>
Enumeration (overall)	Overall +	Overall +	World Class Aspects
Earnings (overall)	Overall +	Overall +	World Class Aspects
Claims (RSI & SSI Aged)	Overall +	Overall +	World Class Aspects
Claims (DI/SSI/BD)	Overall -	Mixed	Overall +
Postentitlement (overall)	Overall +	Overall +	Overall +
Postentitlement (CDRs)	Overall -	Mixed	Overall +
Inform the Public	Mixed	Overall +	World Class Aspects

SERVICE LEVELS FOR SERVICE DELIVERY INTERFACES			
	Current 1995	By 1997	By 1999
Face-to-Face (field office)	Mixed	Mixed	World Class Aspects
Face-to-Face (third parties)	Mixed	Overall +	Overall +
Telephone (800 Number)	Mixed	Mixed	Overall +
Telephone (field office)	Overall -	Mixed	Overall +
Mail	Mixed	Overall +	Overall +
Automated Self-Help	Minimal*	Mixed	Overall +

\* SSA currently has only minimal services available for this mode of service delivery. These services will be expanded significantly in the years ahead.

As the summary charts indicate, additional work will be required in every aspect of SSA's core business processes and service delivery interfaces in order to produce full world-class service. The absence of a designation of full world-class service in a business process or service delivery interface does not mean that SSA expects less than world-class service in all these areas by 1999. On the contrary, it is SSA's commitment to provide world-class service in all these areas as soon as possible. We fully expect to achieve this level of service in some or all of these areas by 1999. However, the current iteration of the General Business Plan does not yet contain enough planning detail to support an assessment of full world-class service in any of the business processes or service delivery interfaces. As the GBP is developed in the coming years, the detailed planning will be made available and the assessments will be upgraded accordingly.

SSA's General Business Plan presents how the Agency will:

- 1) Pursue its service delivery goals;
- 2) Improve its stewardship of the programs it administers; and
- 3) Provide employees with the tools and training that will empower them to improve performance.

SSA's three-fold strategy of streamlining, reengineering and automation/continuous improvement will require up-front investments in the workforce and in technology. The long-term result will be more effective, efficient delivery of services at lower costs to the taxpayers.

# Glossary

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ACH	Automated Clearinghouse
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASP	Agency Strategic Plan
ATM	Automated Teller Machine
BENDEX	Beneficiary Data Exchange
BL	Black Lung
BP	Business Plan
CAPS	Claims Automated Processing System
CD-ROM	Compact-Disk Read-Only Memory
CDR	Continuing Disability Review
DA&A	Drug Addiction or Alcoholism
DDS	Disability Determination Service
DI	Disability Insurance
DOC	Data Operations Center
EAB	Enumeration at Birth
EBT	Electronic Benefits Transfer
ESD	Electronic Service Delivery
EVS	Enumeration Verification System
FO	Field Office
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent
FY	Fiscal Year
GAO	General Accounting Office
GLPSC	Great Lakes Program Service Center
GPRA	Government Performance and Results Act
HO	Hearings Office
ICDB	Integrated Client Data Base
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Service
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
IWS/LAN	The Intelligent Workstation/Local Area Network

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LAN	Local Area Network
MCS	Modernized Claims System
MIP	Monthly Information Package
MOEP	Metropolitan Office Enhancement Project
MSSICS	Modernized Supplemental Security Income Claims System
NCC	National Computer Center
NPC	National Partnership Council
NPR	National Performance Review
OASDI	Old-Age, Survivors & Disability Insurance
OASI	Old-Age & Survivors Insurance
OBRA	Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act
OCRO	Office of Central Records Operations
OHA	Office of Hearings and Appeals
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OPA	Office of Public Affairs
OPI	Office of Public Inquiries
OPIR	Office of Program and Integrity Reviews
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
PE	Postentitlement
PC	Processing Center
PEBES	Personal Earnings & Benefit Estimate Statements
PI	Public Information
POMS	Program Operation Manual System
POS	Point-Of-Service
PPQIT	Policy Process Quality Improvement Team
PSA	Public Service Announcement
PSC	Program Service Center
RDS	Reengineered Disability System
ROPIR	Regional Program and Integrity Reviews
RPS	Representative Payee System
RSDI	Retirement, Survivors & Disability Insurance

SDX	State Data Exchange
SIPEBES	SSA-Initiated Personal Earnings & Benefit Estimate Statements
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSANSN	Social Security Administration National Satellite Network
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
SSN	Social Security Number
TNA	Target Notice Architecture
TSC	Teleservice Center
UPS	Unified Planning System
VNR	Video News Release
WY	Workyear
800 Number	800 Number Teleservice Center Network