Office of the Inspector General
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Audit Report

The Social Security Administration's Human Capital Planning

A-02-19-50866 September 2022

Office of the Inspector General
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 26, 2022   **Refer to:**   A-02-19-50866

To: Kilolo Kijakazi
Acting Commissioner

From: Gail S. Ennis,
Inspector General

Subject: The Social Security Administration's Human Capital Planning

The attached final report presents the results of the Office of Audit's review. The objective was to determine whether the Social Security Administration is complying with strategic and talent management human capital planning requirements.

If you wish to discuss the final report, please contact Michelle L. Anderson, Assistant Inspector General for Audit.

Attachment

The Social Security Administration's Human Capital Planning
A-02-19-50866

Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) is complying with strategic and talent management human capital planning requirements.

Background

Federal regulation 5 C.F.R. § 250.203 establishes the Human Capital Framework, effective April 2017, to provide comprehensive guidance on Federal strategic human capital management. Federal regulation 5 C.F.R. § 250.205 defines specific requirements for Agency human capital operating plans, such as SSA's Human Capital Operating Plan (HCOP). Federal agencies must integrate their strategic human capital management processes into agency planning and management processes and seek to continuously improve human resource service delivery.

The Human Capital Framework guides agencies to effectively manage an organization's talent by using sound talent management practices and provides talent management strategies that support and shape an organization's current workforce, while the organization prepares for the future.

Results

SSA is not complying fully with strategic and talent management human capital planning requirements, including the requirement that it integrate its human capital strategies in its planning. SSA's *Agency Strategic Plan (ASP)*, *Annual Performance Plans,* and HCOPs covering Fiscal Years (FY) 2018 – 2022 include limited discussions of the human-capital strategies needed to ensure it successfully meets its strategic goals and initiatives. We also found limited descriptions of the human capital strategies in the FYs 2022 – 2026 ASP (a corresponding HCOP is not yet available). Given the limited human-capital information in SSA's planning documents, we could not determine how SSA will address its workforce challenges, including mitigating losses due to retirements and the resulting loss of institutional knowledge.

SSA's planning documents also lack information on the talent-management strategies needed to shape its current and future workforces, including how it will close staff skills gaps. While SSA surveyed its components to determine how many employees require mission-critical training, only a small percentage of those employees received the training.

Also, while SSA has succession plans for its higher-level management positions, which represent approximately 1 percent of its workforce, it does not have succession plans for remaining staff. Per SSA's reporting, approximately 24,000 of its 60,000 employees will be eligible to retire by FY 2027. SSA's planning documents lack descriptions of the hiring and recruitment plan needed to address the upcoming retirement wave.

Recommendations

We made five recommendations for SSA to improve its human capital planning, including that it fully integrate human-capital management strategies in its planning documents; align its HCOP with all its strategic goals and initiatives; and develop human-capital strategies in its HCOP that specifically describe how it will acquire the future workforce needed to successfully fulfill its mission, including plans to address its upcoming retirement wave. SSA agreed with our recommendations.

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ABBREVIATIONS

APP	Annual Performance Plan
ASP	Agency Strategic Plan
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
DCARO	Deputy Commissioner for Analytics, Review, and Oversight
e7b	Electronic 7B File
FY	Fiscal Year
GRB	Government and Retirement Benefits
GS	General Schedule
HCF	Human Capital Framework
HCOP	Human Capital Operating Plan
IWM	Improve Workplace Morale
LENS	Leadership Essentials for New Supervisors
NLDP	National Leadership Development Program
OARO	Office of Analytics, Review, and Oversight
OBFM	Office of Budget, Finance and Management
OHR	Office of Human Resources
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
OPE	Office of Personnel
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
OSLWD	Office of Strategy, Learning and Workforce Development
PC	Processing Center
PD	Position Description
RESOLVE	Reaching Every Supervisor or Leader Very Early
SSA	Social Security Administration
SWP	Strategic Workforce Planning

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) is complying with strategic and talent management human capital planning requirements.

BACKGROUND

The Human Capital Framework

Federal regulation[1] establishes the Human Capital Framework (HCF), which provides comprehensive guidance on strategic human capital management in the Government. The HCF was established ". . . to align human capital management practices to broader agency strategic planning activities, and better align human capital activities with an agency's mission and strategic goals."[2] The Federal Register on Personnel Management states, "Strategic Human Capital Management processes used to cultivate and manage the workforce must be integrated into agency planning and management processes, remain current with research and best practices, allow for proactive responses to anticipated environmental changes, and seek to continuously maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of human resource service delivery."[3]

The HCF consists of four systems: strategic planning and alignment, talent management, performance culture, and evaluation. Agencies must use these systems to plan, implement, evaluate, and improve human capital policies and programs.[4] For purposes of this review, we focused on strategic planning and alignment and talent management as they address what we consider to be the more critical aspects of SSA's hiring and planning.

Strategic Planning and Alignment

The strategic planning and alignment system requires that an agency ensure its human capital management strategies, plans, and practices:

- are integrated into strategic plans, annual performance plans (APP), and goals;

- contain measurable and observable performance targets; and

- communicate in an open and transparent manner to facilitate cross-agency collaboration to achieve mission objectives.

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[1] 5 C.F.R. § 250.203 and § 250.205. Agencies are required to develop a Human Capital Operating Plan, a planning document that must demonstrate how an agency's human capital implementation strategies follow the principles and standards of the HCF while including an explanation of how human capital policies, initiatives, objectives, and resources will be used to achieve agencies' human capital goals.

[2] 5 C.F.R. § 250.203 established the HCF, replacing the Human Capital Assessment and Accountability Framework.

[3] Personnel Management in Agencies. 81 Fed. Reg. 89357 (December 12, 2016). This rule, effective April 11, 2017, is intended to align human capital management practices to broader agency strategic planning activities, and better align human capital activities with an agency's mission and strategic goals.

[4] 5 C.F.R. § 250.203-204. An agency must use the systems and standards established in this part, and any metrics the Office of Personnel Management subsequently provides in guidance, to plan, implement, evaluate, and improve human capital policies and programs.

Talent Management

The talent management system ". . . promotes a high-performing workforce, identifies and closes skill gaps, and implements and maintains programs to attract, acquire, develop, promote, and retain quality and diverse talent."[5] The talent management system requires that agencies:

● plan for and manage current and future workforce needs;

● design, develop, and implement proven strategies and techniques and practices to attract, hire, develop, and retain talent; and

● make progress toward closing any knowledge, skill, and competency gaps throughout the agency.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is the chief human resources agency and personnel policy manager for the Government. It has developed additional information and tools to assist Federal agencies in implementing the HCF.[6]

Planning Documents

The *Agency Strategic Plan* (ASP) defines SSA's long-term strategic goals and objectives for a 4 Fiscal Year (FY) period, including those related to its workforce.[7] The ASP's broader-based goals and objectives are more specifically defined in additional planning documents, including APPs.

The APP addresses the goals, strategic objectives, and strategies in the ASP, as required by the *Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010*.[8] SSA evaluates its progress by the performance measures and targets for each strategic objective.

According to OPM, a human capital operating plan (HCOP) details how an agency is implementing human capital strategies to support its strategic plan. SSA's workforce planning and goals are more specifically detailed in its HCOP, which includes SSA's human capital key initiatives and related performance measures needed to accomplish its broader strategic goals. Each HCOP spans several years; the current HCOP covers FYs 2020-2022, and the prior

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[5] 5 C.F.R. § 250.203(b).

[6] 5 C.F.R. § 250.204 and OPM's *Policy, Data, Oversight: Human Capital Framework*, opm.gov (March 2, 2022). Federal agencies must use the systems and standards outlined in 5 C.F.R.§ 250.203 – 250.205, which include the HCF and develop an HCOP as a tool for agency leadership to set a clear path for achieving stated human capital strategies. Under 5 U.S.C. § 1103(c), OPM is responsible for guiding, enabling, and assessing agency strategic human capital management processes.

[7] The FY ends on September 30 of the corresponding year.

[8] *The Government Performance and Results Modernization Act of 2010,* Pub. L. No. 111-352, 124 Stat. 3866 (2011), requires agencies to include a description of: (1) how the agency is working with other agencies to achieve its goals and objectives as well as relevant Federal priority goals and (2) how the goals and objectives incorporate views and suggestions obtained through congressional consultations.

HCOP covered FYs 2018-2019. These two HCOPs cover the span of SSA's FYs 2018-2022 ASP.[9] See Appendix B for more information on SSA's strategic goals and HCOP key initiatives.

Overview of the Agency's Workforce

SSA has approximately 60,000 full-time equivalent[10] staff who serve the public from a network of offices nationwide.[11] Most of SSA's employees directly serve the public or provide support to employees who do. SSA's staffing has decreased since FY 2015 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: SSA's Staffing[12]

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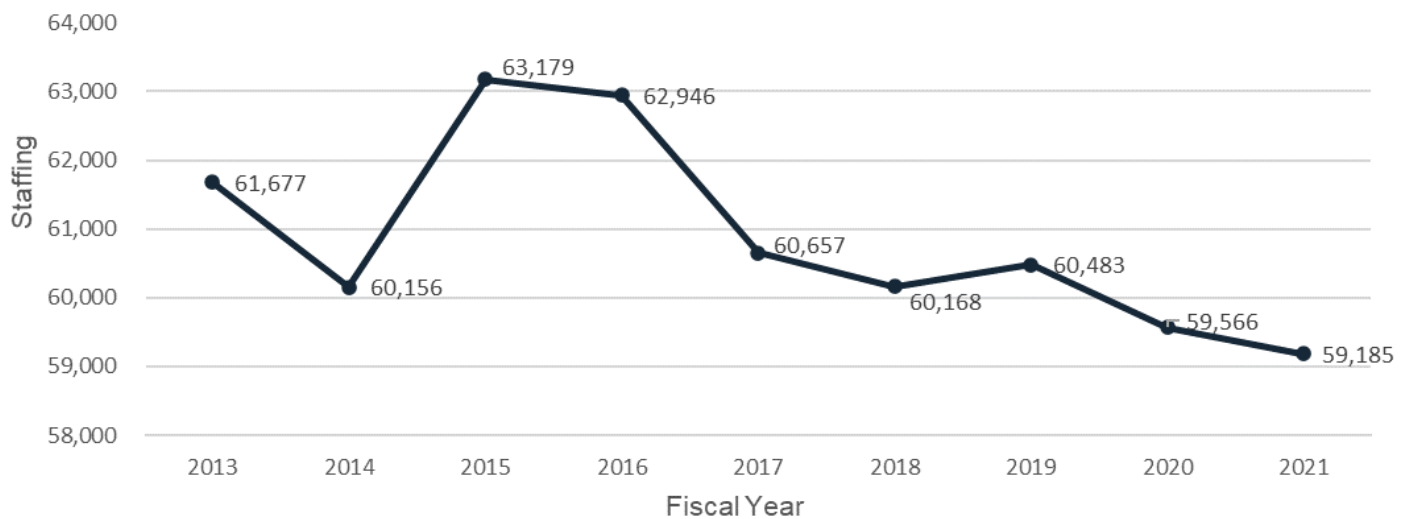
[9] We analyzed SSA's planning documents corresponding to their respective timeframes. At the time of this audit, SSA had not released a HCOP corresponding to the FYs 2022-2026 ASP, which SSA published in March 2022.

[10] A full-time equivalent is a type of workyear that measures employee paid time in terms of hours, i.e. one full-time equivalent is equivalent to an employee who works full time for the entire year (i.e., generally 2,080 hours. At the end of FY 2021, SSA had 59,185 full-time equivalent staff. For the remainder of the report, we will refer to full-time equivalent as "staff." We excluded General Services Administration delegations, the Social Security Advisory Board, and the Office of the Inspector General in the staffing totals reported in this audit.

[11] SSA offices include 10 regional offices, 8 processing centers, 24 teleservice centers, and approximately 1,230 field offices.

[12] The staffing totals represent staff as of the end of each FY, which is September 30th of each corresponding year. The staffing totals were provided by SSA; we did not audit these statistics and do not express an opinion on their completeness, accuracy, or reliability. See Appendix C for additional information on SSA's component staffing levels and Appendix D for descriptions of its components.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

SSA is not complying fully with strategic and talent management human capital planning requirements.

Strategic Planning and Alignment

The strategic planning and alignment system requires that SSA ensure its human capital management strategies, plans, and practices are integrated with strategic plans, APP, and goals within those plans. This includes a requirement that it integrate its human capital strategies in its planning.

Human Capital Planning Integration

Agency Strategic Plan

SSA's human capital management strategies are not well integrated in its ASP. The FYs 2018-2022 ASP has limited information on the human capital strategies needed to achieve the strategic goals and objectives it outlines. One of the eight strategic objectives in the ASP, *Improve Workforce Performance and Increase Accountability*, under the strategic goal *Ensure Stewardship*, addresses SSA's workforce. In describing this strategic objective, SSA states its human capital management includes three major focus areas: workforce, succession, and performance management. The ASP does not describe the three focus areas or their relationship to strategic goal and objective obtainment (see Appendix E for more information on SSA's strategic objective, *Improve Workforce Performance and Increase Accountability*).

In another section of the FYs 2018-2022 ASP, *Key External Factors We Must Consider*, SSA includes 2 paragraphs on its workforce trends, including that it projects more than 21,000 of its employees will retire by the end of FY 2022. While SSA acknowledged the loss of a large portion of its workforce, it only stated it must take steps to mitigate the impact of the retirements, including a loss of institutional knowledge and impaired succession management and knowledge transfer. The ASP does not further describe what the mitigating steps might be (see Appendix E for more information on the *Key External Factors We Must Consider*).

SSA broadened the descriptions of its human capital management strategies in its FYs 2022-2026 ASP. Two of the eight strategic objectives in this ASP address SSA's workforce - *Promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Hiring and Advancement* and *Support Employees' Chosen Career Paths*, which are listed under the new strategic goal *Build an Inclusive, Engaged, and Empowered Workforce*. Although the ASP now has two human capital-related objectives, their descriptions are limited (see Appendix E for more information on the two workforce-related strategic objectives in the ASP). Additionally, the newer ASP omits the *Key External Factors We Must Consider* section that was included in the previous ASP.

Annual Performance Plan

SSA's APPs are aligned with its ASPs. The APPs further elaborate on the ASP strategic goals and objectives and provide more information on key initiatives and annual performance goals and measures that support those initiatives. However, similar to the ASPs, SSA's human capital management strategies are not well integrated in its APPs. We reviewed multiple APPs and found that each provided limited and incomplete descriptions of the human capital management strategies needed in support of the key initiatives they included.[13]

The FYs 2021-2022 APP, which supports the FYs 2018-2022 ASP, includes the strategic objective to *Improve Workforce Performance and Increase Accountability*. The APP describes three related key initiatives—strengthen the performance management process, execute talent management and succession planning, and invest in training and support for managers (see Appendix E). SSA's descriptions of the three key initiatives are limited. Additionally, like the ASP, the APP does not detail the human capital strategies needed to address SSA's other strategic objectives.

The FYs 2021-2022 APP includes a list of challenges identified by SSA's leadership, including having ". . . enough employees with the right skills in the right place at the right time."[14] Beneath this challenge, SSA only bullets the titles of the three key initiatives it previously listed in the document—strengthen the performance management process, execute talent management and succession planning, and invest in training and support for managers. It does not elaborate on the initiatives (see Appendix E for more information on the APP's *Additional Challenges Identified by Our Leadership*).

SSA's *Annual Performance Report for FYs 2021–2023* includes the APP for FY 2023 and further elaborates on the two workforce-related strategic objectives also within its FYs 2022-2026 ASP – *Promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Hiring and Advancement* and *Support Employees' Chosen Career Paths*.

Promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Hiring and Advancement. Under this strategic objective, SSA has the key initiative of Enhancing Strategic Workforce Planning. The initiative includes developing a strategic workforce planning framework and business process in FY 2022, which SSA plans to assess in FY 2023 for ". . . expanded implementation at the component level and to support development of future human capital efforts."[15] The APP does not provide addition details on these efforts or detail how they support the other strategic objectives in the APP.

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[13] We reviewed the APPs for FYs 2019, 2020, 2021, 2021–2022 and 2023.

[14] SSA, Annual Performance Plan: Fiscal Years 2021-2022, p. 47 (May 2021).

[15] SSA, Annual Performance Report: Fiscal Years 2021-2023, p. 35 (April 2022).

SSA includes a second key initiative for this strategic objective, *Execute Talent Management and Succession Planning*. Under this initiative, SSA explains it is developing an "enterprise-wide approach to succession planning," which it plans to test and validate in FY 2022 and begin a phased roll out of in FY 2023.[16] The APP does not include further details on the succession planning approach or how it will support the remaining strategic objectives in the APP (see Appendix E for more information on the two key initiatives on workforce planning and talent management and succession planning).

Support Employees' Chosen Career Paths. This strategic objective includes four key initiatives: (1) *Improving Employee Engagement*, (2) *Investing in Training and Support for Managers*, (3) *Strengthen the Performance Management Process*, and (4) *Ensure Equity in Leadership Development*.

- Under *Improving Employee Engagement,* SSA developed its engagement improvement plan in FY 2021 with plans to implement it in FY 2022 and evaluate and enhance it in FY 2023.

- Under *Ensure Equity in Leadership Development*, SSA conducted internal assessments of its national leadership development programs in FY 2021. SSA plans to analyze the development program's application process and identify "promising practices" and areas of improvement in FY 2022. It will enhance the leadership development program to promote equity in FY 2023.

All of these descriptions are process-oriented and lack enough detail to determine how SSA will address its major near-term workforce challenges, including mitigating the impact of increased retirements and addressing the resulting loss of institutional knowledge, impaired succession management, and knowledge transfer.[17]

Human Capital Operating Plan

SSA's HCOP provides strategic direction for the current and future workforce and near-term "human capital strategies, initiatives, and methods for measuring progress" in the same focus areas outlined in the FYs 2022-2026 ASP—workforce, succession, and performance management.[18] It further states that the HCOP ". . . covers various human capital priorities deemed critical by agency senior leaders and subject matter experts"[19] and reflects SSA's high-level strategy to "support the full lifecycle of employees from recruitment to attrition."[20]

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[16] SSA, Annual Performance Report: Fiscal Years 2021-2023, p. 35 (April 2022).

[17] See Appendix E for more information on the four key initiatives supporting the strategic objective of supporting employees' chosen career paths

[18] SSA, Human Capital Operating Plan: Fiscal Years 2020-2022, p. 3 (February 2021).

[19] SSA, Human Capital Operating Plan: Fiscal Years 2020-2022, p. 3 (February 2021).

[20] SSA, Deputy Commissioner for Analytics, Review, and Oversight (DCARO), Audit Liaison Staff, Audit No. 22021008 - Final Agency Response to OIG Entrance Conference Questions- OIG Review of *The Social Security Administration's Workforce Management (A-02-19-50866)* (Email February 11, 2021).

Human Capital Operating Plan Alignment with the Agency Strategic Plan

The human capital management strategies in SSA's HCOP align with some ASP strategic objectives but not others. For example, the HCOP describes key initiatives on workforce development and creating curriculums for mission-critical occupations and functions that align with the ASP's strategic objective to improve workforce performance. However, the HCOP does not include human capital management strategies for the remaining ASP strategic objectives, including SSA's initiatives to improve service delivery and accelerate information technology modernization.[21] While the HCOP states SSA's ". . . highest priority and commitment is to improve service delivery to the public, which includes improving 800 number, hearings, and field office wait times and modernizing our information technology as well as our disability policies," the HCOP does not describe the human capital management strategies needed to support these priorities.[22] In response to a FY 2021 OPM review,[23] SSA reported it would align its upcoming (and not yet released) HCOP with the FYs 2022-2026 ASP and describe its human capital strategies to address Agency-specific skill and competency gaps.

Resources

The HCOP includes a *Resources Required* section for each key initiative that includes lines for Staff, Funding, and Information Technology (IT). However, these sections provide limited details and do not include the number or type of staff needed, funding amounts, or the number/type of IT staff/resources needed to support SSA's human capital initiatives.

The Staff lines only list which divisional staffs will address the performance initiatives. They do not detail the number or type of staff needed, whether additional staffing is needed, or whether addressing the performance initiatives will affect the divisional staffs' ability to address other workloads.[24] The Funding lines similarly only list from which SSA division the funding will come. They do not include a funding amount, whether SSA has sufficient funding, or whether funding used for the initiatives will limit funding for other workloads. Also, the Funding lines often include a response of Not Applicable. The IT lines are similar. They either have a response of Not Applicable or list the division or office of the IT staff needed to support the performance initiatives.

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[21] SSA's strategic goals outlined in its ASP for FYs 2018-2022 are: (1) Delivering Services Effectively, (2) Improving the Way We Do Business, and (3) Ensuring Stewardship. SSA states its human capital actions address Strategic Goal 3: *Ensure Stewardship*. Specifically, Strategic Objective 3.3: *Improve Workforce Performance and Increase Accountability*. SSA's strategic goals outlined in its ASP for FYs 2022-2026 are: (1) *Optimize the Experience of SSA Customers*, (2) *Build an Inclusive, Engaged, and Empowered Workforce*, and (3) *Ensure Stewardship of SSA Programs*.

[22] SSA, Human Capital Operating Plan: Fiscal Years 2020-2022, p. 9 (February 2021).

[23] OPM, *Human Capital Management Evaluation on Social Security Administration Headquarters* (2021).

[24] See Appendix G for a comparison of SSA component staff totals to their respective, key workloads as reported by SSA in publicly available documents.

For example, under the key initiative *Improve Employee Engagement*, the resources required note Staff only as *OHR*, funding as *Not Applicable* and indicates the *IT* resources as *Office of Information Technology for Human Resources staff support* (see the yellow box within Figure 2).

Figure 2: Example of HCOP Resources Required[25]

M. Improve Employee Engagement		
Purpose: To sustain an innovative, productive, and high performing workforce, focused on employee engagement strategies that includes practical resources for managers.		
Improvement Initiative/Milestone	**Accountable Component**	**Due Date**
Provide training to component employee engagement point of contacts on reviewing FEVS data dashboards and developing improvement strategies based on results	OHR/OSLWD	FY 2021 Qtr. 2
Launch a new employee engagement website resource	OHR/OSLWD OHR/OITHR	FY 2020 Qtr. 1 *(Completed)*
Launch new "Leadership Lessons" video series to showcase effective employee engagement practices amongst current SSA leaders	OHR/OSLWD	FY 2021 Qtr. 1 *(Completed)*
Research, benchmark and develop employee engagement resources (e.g., best practices summaries, action-planning templates, manager toolkits, etc.)	OHR/OSLWD	FY 2020 Qtr. 4 *(Completed)* FY 2021 Qtr. 4
Establish and implement a data-driven approach to inform the agency's D&I strategy (e.g., barrier analyses, empirical population studies, deep dive analyses)	OHR/OCREO	FY 2020 Qtr. 4 *(Completed)* FY 2021 Qtr. 4
Resources Required	Staff: OHR Funding: N/A IT: OITHR staff support	
Performance Measure(s)	**Performance Targets**	
Positive employee perceptions of employee engagement as measured by OPM's FEVS Employee Engagement Index (EEI)	**FY 2020 - 2022 Target:** Maintain an EEI score of at least 65%	

Performance Targets

The strategic planning and alignment system requires that SSA ensure its human capital management strategies, plans, and practices contain measurable and observable performance targets. The HCOP includes 14 key initiatives and several *improvement initiatives/milestones* for each of SSA's 3 focus areas: workforce, succession, and performance management. The improvement initiatives are predominantly output-based, as opposed to outcome-based, which makes it difficult to determine how the initiatives will improve or support the successful implementation of the human capital initiatives.

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[25] SSA, Human Capital Operating Plan: Fiscal Years 2020-2022, p 27 (February 2021). See the Abbreviations section in the beginning of this report for the acronyms in this figure.

For example, the key performance management initiative *Strengthen Manager Accountability for Effective Performance Management* includes the improvement initiatives *Upload Initial Discussion documents by manager into the e7B application, secure electronic signatures, and complete the required signed employee acknowledgements through the e7B application* and *Implement e7B litigation hold functionality*. It is unclear how these initiatives strengthen manager accountability or make SSA's performance management more effective (see the yellow box within Figure 3).

Figure 3: Example of an HCOP Improvement Initiative/Milestone[26]

L. Strengthen Manager Accountability for Effective Performance Management: *Purpose: To ensure manager support and accountability in effectively managing staff performance.*		
Improvement Initiative/Milestone	**Accountable Component**	**Due Date**
Upload Initial Discussion documents by manager into the e7B application, secure electronic signatures, and complete the required signed employee acknowledgements through the e7B application	OHR/OPE	FY 2020 Qtr. 2 *(Completed)* FY 2021 Qtr. 2
Implement e7B litigation hold functionality	OHR/OPE	FY 2020 Qtr. 4 *(Completed)*
Upload Mid-Cycle Performance Discussion documents by manager into the e7B application and secure electronic signatures	OHR/OPE	FY 2020 Qtr. 4 *(Completed)* FY 2021 Qtr. 4
Upload Appraisal documents by manager into the e7B application and secure electronic signatures	OHR/OPE	FY 2021 Qtr. 2 FY 2022 Qtr. 2
Issue annual communication to managers and supervisors regarding performance management responsibilities for closing out the current year and starting a new year	OHR/OPE	FY 2020 Qtr. 4 *(Completed)* FY 2021 Qtr. 4
Resources Required	Staff: OHR, DCS, and Office of General Counsel (OGC) Funding: Additional funding needed IT: DCS & OITHR staff support	
Performance Measure(s)	**Performance Targets**	
Strengthen manager accountability for effective performance management	**FY 2020 Target:** 95% of required signed employee acknowledgements completed and tracked electronically through our e7B system *(Met)* **FY 2021 Target:** 96% of required signed employee acknowledgements completed and tracked electronically through our e7B system	

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[26] SSA, Human Capital Operating Plan: Fiscal Years 2020-2022, p. 26 (February 2021). See the Abbreviations in the beginning of this report for the acronyms in this figure.

Although the HCOP contains performance goals, most are output-based, making it difficult to discern the desired outcome. For example, the HCOP includes the *Deliver Hiring Refresher Training for Managers and HR Staff* key initiative. The associated performance measure is *Improve Participant Perceptions of Training Material Usefulness*. While the performance measure does relate to the initiative (*Deliver Refresher Training*), the Agency lacks a goal to have more effective hiring. SSA explained it ". . . does not have any direct measures of effectiveness, as hiring needs and allocations can vary each FY."[27]

As another example, the performance measures for the key initiative *Expand Human Resource Automation* are *Increase non-HR staff usage of the Government Retirement & Benefits Platform* and *Number of e7B Litigation Holds placed on files that are involved in or affected by pending litigation*.[28] While the performance measures may measure increased use of some automated options, they do not measure the desired outcome of expanded human resource automation (see the yellow box in Figure 4).

Figure 4: Example of HCOP Performance Measures[29]

B. Expand HR Automation (FWPR Priority)		
Purpose: To expand and streamline HR processes and functions to enhance the long-range automation vision.		
Improvement Initiative/Milestone	**Accountable Component**	**Due Date**
Train components to submit job announcement requests in USA Staffing	OHR/OPE	FY 2021 Qtr. 3
Explore expanded use of USA Hire or other assessment tools	OHR/OPE	FY 2021 Qtr. 2
Evaluate USA Hire	OHR/OPE	FY 2021 Qtr. 4.
Develop recommendations regarding effective applicant assessments	OHR/OPE	FY 2021 Qtr. 4
Evaluate use of Supervisory Situational Judgement Test and automated writing assessment used for the National Leadership Development Program to determine whether to expand use of these assessments	OHR/OPE	FY 2021 Qtr. 4
Market and advertise Government Retirement & Benefits (GRB) Platform throughout the agency using various methods such as demonstrations/overviews to SSA employees as needed.	OHR/OPE	FY 2021 Qtrs. 3 & 4
Partner with Chief Technology Officer and identify priority HR workloads for RPA evaluation	OHR/OPE DCS	FY 2020 Qtr. 1 (Completed)
Integrate online HR Service Sites	OHR/OITHR	FY 2020 Qtr. 4 *(Completed)*
Resources Required	Staff: OHR, DCS Funding: Budget dependent/ability to hire IT: N/A	
Performance Measure(s)	**Performance Targets**	
Increase non-HR staff usage of the GRB Platform	**FY 2021 Target:** Achieve over 90,000 GRB logins **FY 2022 Target:** Achieve over 92,000 GRB logins (FY 2022)	
Number of e7B Litigation Holds placed on files that are involved in or affected by pending litigation	**FY 2020 Target:** N/A **FY 2021 Target:** The ability to place a batch litigation hold on 90% of the litigants' e7Bs identified for a class action lawsuit.	

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[27] SSA, DCARO, Audit Liaison Staff, Audit No. 22021008 - SSA Response - OIG Preliminary Findings and Observations *The Social Security Administration's Workforce Management* (A-02-19-50866) (Email March 10, 2022).

[28] The Electronic 7B File (e7B) application is an interactive workflow process and centralized repository for employee personnel records maintained by supervisors.

[29] SSA, Human Capital Operating Plan: Fiscal Years 2020-2022, p. 11 (February 2021). See the Abbreviations in the beginning of this report for the acronyms in this figure.

Communication

The strategic planning and alignment system requires that SSA ensure its human capital management strategies, plans, and goals are communicated in an open and transparent manner to facilitate cross-agency collaboration to achieve mission objectives. SSA's human capital strategies and goals are generally not communicated to the public because the HCOP, which is a key part of SSA's human capital planning, is not publicly available. While SSA is not required to publicly release the HCOP, 12 of the 24 Chief Financial Officers Councils agencies had some version of their HCOPs or similar workforce plans available on their public Websites.[30] The lack of a publicly available HCOP prevents the public and other stakeholders from better understanding SSA's human capital plans. Although other SSA planning documents, such as its ASP and APP, are publicly available, they do not adequately describe the human capital management strategies needed to implement the strategic goals and objectives within them.[31] In response to our preliminary findings on the HCOP's public availability, SSA responded it will provide links to the HCOP in its other planning documents should it decide to publish the HCOP on its Website.

SSA's FYs 2018-2019 *Human Capital Evaluation System Communication Plan*, which is not publicly available,[32] communicates SSA's organizational goals and desired outcomes supporting its human capital strategies within the ASP and HCOP to facilitate cross-agency collaboration and achieve mission objectives. In response to our question, SSA stated it does not have a formal process to measure how effectively it has communicated its HCOP's strategies and goals to its employees.[33]

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[30] The *Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990* established the Council to advise and coordinate the activities of the member agencies on matters including consolidating and modernizing of financial systems and improving the quality of financial information. The organization comprises the Chief Financial Officers from the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Justice, Labor, State, Transportation, Treasury, Veteran Affairs, Environmental Protection Agency, National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Agency for International Development, General Services Administration, National Science Foundation, Nuclear Regulatory Commission, Office of Personnel Management, Small Business Administration and Social Security Administration.

[31] SSA, Agency Strategic Plan, https://www.ssa.gov/agency/asp/ (last visited July 19, 2022) and Annual Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report, https://www.ssa.gov/agency/performance/ (last visited July 19, 2022).

[32] The Human Capital Evaluation System Communication Plan listed the HCOP's "Target Audience" as SSA Deputy Commissioner components while omitting the public and Congress. Accordingly, the HCOP is available on SSA's intranet, was shared internally via email with SSA executives and not posted on SSA's public Website. Conversely the "Target Audience" for the ASP, which SSA has shared on its Website, specifically lists "the public" and "Congress."

[33] SSA, DCARO, Audit Liaison Staff, Audit No. 22021008 - SSA Response - OIG Preliminary Findings and Observations *The Social Security Administration's Workforce Management* (A-02-19-50866) (Email March 10, 2022).

Talent Management

Current and Future Workforce Needs

The talent management system requires that SSA plan for and manage current and future workforce needs.

Current Workforce

Per the FY 2020 to 2022 HCOP key initiative *Increase Workforce Development*, SSA completed training needs analyses for its current workforce. SSA said it determined ". . . employees require training in new technology, desktop software, analytics, leadership, procurement, soft skills, project management, security, and records management." It did not detail which employees or components were to receive which training and when the training would be provided.

Although the Commissioner of SSA has the overall responsibility for training activities, SSA's training is generally decentralized. Each Deputy Commissioner has ". . . the responsibility of ensuring that their employees receive adequate training, ensuring that the training and career development needs of their employees are adequately met."[34] Federal or SSA mandates require that all SSA employees complete mandatory training in such areas as ethics, unconscious bias, and information security and privacy awareness.[35]

SSA can require other mandatory training specific to an employee's position. According to SSA policy, the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners manage and coordinate an SSA-wide training program with the Agency's Office of Strategy, Learning and Workforce Development (OSLWD). SSA said OSLWD conducts an annual training needs survey where SSA components and regions identify how many staff require mission-critical and non-mission-critical training or will require training in the future.[36]

OSLWD's FYs 2020 and 2021 training data indicated 14,295 and 16,544 employees needed training.[37] Of those, 2,383 (17 percent) and 2,888 (18 percent) employees received training in FYs 2020 and 2021, respectively. SSA did not indicate whether the training completed was mission-critical or non-mission-critical or whether all those who needed mission-critical training received it.

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[34] SSA, *AIMS*, Training Manual, ch. 01.01, sec. 01.01.05 (October 07, 2020). The Office of Human Resources has the overall responsibility for recommending national training objectives and priorities for consideration by the Commissioner, and ensuring the design and execution of the total SSA training effort is efficient and effective.

[35] SSA employees access the training through "weLearn," which allows SSA to manage and track mandatory training.

[36] SSA, *AIMS*, Training Manual, ch. 01.01, sec. 01.01.06 (October 07, 2020). SSA has a process primarily aimed at identifying employee and organization needs for discretionary training. The process is based on, and includes, training needed to improve employee performance and training related to career development.

[37] SSA can indicate training is required in multiple courses for the same employee.

Additionally, while SSA's HCOP includes plans to improve current talent management issues by offering required employee training, its performance measures may not indicate their effectiveness. For example, the performance measure for the *Increase Workforce Development* initiative is to obtain participant feedback. SSA does not have measures for the long-term impact or effectiveness of the training to close skill gaps or improve the participants' job performance or the current workforce development needs.

According to the Agency's HCOP for FYs 2018-2019, SSA reviewed its position descriptions[38] (PD) to ensure they accurately reflected current mission needs and abolished positions that were no longer relevant.[39] SSA said the reviews were completed in two parts: (1) the PDs that were vacant for 7 years or longer and (2) the remaining PDs, which included filled positions. SSA provided documentation on the first part of the review but not the second, and its reply to OIG did not include the number of PDs abolished as a result of its efforts. SSA also indicated it would periodically review PDs, but it did not provide clarifying information, such as the timing of reviews or their results.

Future Workforce

The HCOP states the loss of technical and institutional knowledge is one of SSA's greatest challenges and may impair succession management and knowledge transfer. According to an April 2022 SSA workforce report, approximately 24,000 SSA employees will be eligible to retire in the next 5 years.[40] While SSA acknowledges it must mitigate these losses with effective planning, recruitment, and hiring, the Agency does not include in its HCOP a plan to address the retirement wave or the future staffing needs for its customer-facing components, like the Office of Operations, which represents approximately 43,000 (73 percent) members of SSA's workforce.

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[38] Per OPM, a position description is a statement of the major duties, responsibilities, and supervisory relationships of a position which indicates the work to be performed by the position.

[39] OMB, *Comprehensive Plan for Reforming the Federal Government and Reducing the Federal Civilian Workforce*, M-17-22, part I, sec. 1, p. 1 (2017). A Federal hiring freeze was implemented in January 2017. On April 12, 2017, the hiring freeze was lifted. Office of Management and Budget Memorandum M-17-22 requires that all agencies reduce redundant staffing levels. The objective is to create a lean, accountable, and more efficient Government. The Memorandum describes an analytical framework to consider various factors, including duplicative or non-essential functions, and eliminating, merging, or restructuring those functions with other positions. Furthermore, it describes developing a long-term workforce reduction plan to include using Agency data to determine appropriate staffing baselines. SSA stated it reviewed outdated positions and abolished them as needed.

[40] Per the April 7, 2022 Electronic Workforce at a Glance report on SSA's Office of Personnel's Intranet site, 15,106 (26 percent) employees are eligible to retire in the next 5 years. An additional 9,234 (16 percent) are eligible for early out retirement if they meet certain age and length of service requirements. According to the 2021 governmentwide Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Results, 79,423 (approximately 30 percent) of 271,879 respondents indicated they plan to retire in the next 5 years.

The HCOP describes a succession planning protocol to account for "critical losses before they occur." Per SSA, the succession planning protocol provides a framework for SSA to determine the likelihood critical positions will become vacant, use a risk-based approach to determine whether SSA should fill the potential vacancy by recruiting or building expertise in-house, and establish readiness ratings for a pool of candidates. SSA reported its initial succession planning is limited to non-bargaining-unit leadership at the General Schedule (GS) 15 level, which represents approximately 1 percent of SSA's overall workforce.[41] SSA started the protocol with its Offices of Human Resources and Systems in FY 2022. SSA plans to extend the program to GS-15 employees in the remaining components by FY 2024 (see Appendix F).

Strategies to Attract, Hire, Develop, and Retain Talent

The talent management system requires SSA to implement proven strategies and practices to develop and retain talent. The HCOP, along with the ASP and APP, does not describe a strategic recruitment plan to attract and hire talent. Although the HCOP includes initiatives to improve hiring by providing refresher training on recruitment strategies, it does not explain what these strategies are. It is unclear whether SSA has an effective strategic recruitment plan as the HCOP's only goal in this area is to improve hiring and attracting talent in under-represented groups. For example, the HCOP includes the key initiative *Develop a recruitment framework to enhance and maintain a diverse workforce* with a goal of expanding the applicant pools to include more members of under-represented groups at all levels of SSA by 1 percent above its baseline. The initiative is more focused on diversity and inclusion rather than broader recruitment efforts. Additionally, only 2 of SSA's 11 Deputy Commissioner components had documented, strategic recruitment plans.[42] SSA explained it plans ". . . to incorporate better examples of the way agency components market and recruit for their positions in support of [SSA's] hiring strategy" in a future HCOP.[43]

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[41] The GS pay system covers the majority of SSA employees and civilian white-collar Federal employees in technical, administrative, and clerical positions. The GS system includes 15 grades ranging from GS-1 to GS-15. As of March 2022, SSA had 711 employees at the GS-15 level.

[42] The Offices of Hearing Operations and Systems provided OIG with their recruitment plans.

[43] SSA, DCARO, Audit Liaison Staff, Audit No. 22021008 - SSA Response - OIG Preliminary Findings and Observations *The Social Security Administration's Workforce Management* (A-02-19-50866) (Email March 10, 2022).

In a May 2022 hearing on customer service,[44] Grace Kim, SSA's Deputy Commissioner for Operations, explained ". . . insufficient funding over multiple years to hire the level of staff needed, and higher than average attrition rates across the agency" had driven SSA to its lowest staffing levels in 25 years. SSA's ability to hire during the year is affected by when SSA receives its funding. SSA's final budget is not usually passed timely as appropriations for agencies are not always signed into law when the FY begins on October 1 each calendar year. Congress and the President must approve the budget or a continuing resolution (short-term legislation to keep the Government open). Otherwise, a funding lapse may result in a Government shutdown where agencies can only conduct mission-critical activities, and non-essential work like training is suspended. As a result, SSA will send guidance as to when components can hire. SSA stated it is difficult to plan and manage funding under the Federal budget process especially if there are funding lapses or continuing resolutions. Office of Operations staff explained they cannot over-hire to account for losses throughout the year.

When SSA can hire, it often hires staff in large numbers after it receives an approved budget and trains the new hires together.[45] One Regional Commissioner noted a "steady source of income" would allow for more balanced planning and hiring all year as uncertain budgets create cycles of hiring and freezes. Other Operations subject-matter experts explained hiring staff in large numbers creates a strain on human resource support staff who need to address a large number of staff hired at one time. Also, SSA reported the timing of funding can limit SSA from strategically hiring staff during advantageous times of the year, such as recruiting before students graduate and during the times college campuses typically hold recruitment and job fairs. Not being able to strategically time when to hire staff places SSA at risk of not hiring the most qualified candidates as they may have accepted offers from other employers and are no longer seeking employment opportunities when SSA receives funding. SSA's planning documents do not address the following hiring challenges identified by senior staff and subject matter experts:

● Hiring lists are less robust in some locations and the caliber of candidates is lower for frontline and managerial positions.

● Operations' leadership noted concerns in losing newer employees who may be less engaged as they have been trained in a virtual environment and did not have the same level of support more senior employees have had via mentors and trainers.

● SSA continues to limit candidate pools by restricting the area of consideration, which can restrict candidates' eligibility to those who are in local areas or specific components.[46]

● Potential candidates are less attracted to SSA as other employers offer other incentives, such as student loan repayment and expanded telework.

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[44] Hearing on *Strengthening Social Security's Customer Service* before the Social Security Subcommittee, House Ways and Means Committee, 117th Congress (May 17, 2022).

[45] SSA considers hiring 25 or more employees as hiring in large numbers.

[46] The area of consideration describes the individuals from whom SSA will accept applications to compete for a vacant position. If the applicant is not within the area of consideration and not eligible for a non-competitive or special hiring authority, SSA will not consider the application. SSA can limit the area of consideration to a local area or specific component. SSA explained the area of consideration is used for internal promotions and reassignments. However, components explained that, if they are experiencing difficulty finding qualified candidates, SSA may expand the area of consideration to find more qualified candidates.

Closing Knowledge, Skill, and Competency Gaps

The talent management system requires that SSA make progress toward closing any knowledge, skill, and competency gaps throughout the agency. In the HCOP, SSA states its succession management key initiatives ". . . ensure necessary talent and skills are available when needed."[47] While multiple versions of the HCOP and/or other planning documents released over the years recognized the need to identify and close skill gaps, they have generally focused on establishing a process to identify gaps and have not reported on what those gaps are or the strategies needed to address them. In 2021, OPM reviewed SSA's HCOP and provided SSA with the following required actions:

● Revise its HCOP to describe the Agency-specific skill and competency gaps that must be closed through the use of Agency selected human capital strategies; and

● Prepare a comprehensive workforce plan, to include steps to identify and close skills gaps for Governmentwide and agency identified mission-critical occupations.

SSA agreed with OPM that it would benefit from developing a comprehensive workforce plan. However, SSA also noted it lacked dedicated staff and resources to make substantial progress toward closing skills gaps. SSA said it was ". . . identifying a suitable and repeatable method to assess current and future skills gaps across all grade levels, occupations, and components."[48]

CONCLUSION

While SSA recognizes the loss of technical and institutional knowledge as one of its greatest challenges, its planning documents lack information on the talent management strategies it needs to shape its current and future workforces, including how it will close staff skills gaps. SSA's lack of strategic and talent management human capital planning puts it at risk of not having the workforce it needs to ensure it meets its service delivery goals and overall mission at a time when a large portion of its workforce is eligible to retire.

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[47] SSA, Human Capital Operating Plan: Fiscal Years 2020-2022, p. 15 (February 2021).

[48] SSA, DCARO, Audit Liaison Staff, RE: ACTION - Audit No. 22021008 - OIG Review of *The Social Security Administration's Workforce Management* (A-02-19-50866) (email October 26, 2021).

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that SSA:

1. Fully integrate SSA's human capital management strategies into its Agency Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plan, especially if SSA's Human Capital Operating Plan (HCOP) remains publicly unavailable.

2. Align the HCOP with all of SSA's strategic goals and initiatives, clearly describing the number, types, and related costs of the human capital needed to effectively achieve the strategic goals and initiatives.

3. Include outcome-based human capital improvement initiatives and performance measures in its HCOP.

4. Develop human capital strategies in its HCOP that specifically describe its plans to attract and hire talent and identify and close staff skills gaps, including the steps SSA will take to address known hiring and retention challenges.

5. Develop human capital strategies in its HCOP that specifically describe how SSA will acquire the future workforce needed to successfully fulfil its mission, including plans to address its upcoming retirement wave.

AGENCY COMMENTS

SSA agreed with our recommendations. See Appendix H for a full text of SSA's comments.

Michelle L. Anderson
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

APPENDICES

Appendix A –SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

To accomplish our objective, we:

● Reviewed Federal human capital planning requirements, including Office of Personnel Management directorates and guidance, Office of Management and Budget memorandums, and relevant Federal Regulations.

● Reviewed the Social Security Administration's (SSA) *Human Capital Operating Plan* for Fiscal Years (FY) 2018-2019 and 2020-2022; *Agency Strategic Plan* for FYs 2018-2022 and 2022-2026; and *Annual Performance Plan* for FYs 2019, 2020, 2021, 2021–2022, and 2023.[1]

● Identified the SSA offices responsible for the Agency's workforce management and the role each office takes in the process.

● Interviewed key staff and subject-matter experts from each Deputy Commissioner-level component with responsibility for, and/or knowledge of, SSA's human capital planning.

● Requested employee data from SSA consisting of the number of SSA employees in each of the last 10 fiscal years, broken down by job description, grade level, and component.

We assessed the significance of internal controls necessary to satisfy the audit objective. This included an assessment of the five internal control components, including control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring. In addition, we reviewed the principles of internal controls as associated with the audit objective. We identified the following components and principles as significant to the audit objective.

● Component 1: Control Environment
  ○ Principle 1: Demonstrate commitment to integrity and ethical values
  ○ Principle 2: Exercise Oversight Responsibility
  ○ Principle 3: Establish structure, responsibility, and authority
  ○ Principle 5: Enforce accountability
● Component 2: Risk Assessment
  ○ Principle 6: Define objectives and risk tolerances
  ○ Principle 7: Identify, analyze, and respond to risk
  ○ Principle 9: Analyze and respond to change
● Component 3: Control Activities
  ○ Principle 10: Design control activities

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[1] We reviewed the FYs 2022-2026 ASP and its discussion of human capital planning; however, at the time of our review, it did not have a corresponding HCOP.

- o   Principle 12: Implement Control activities
- Component 4: Information and Communication
  - o   Principle 13: Use quality information
  - o   Principle 14: Communicate internally
- Component 5: Monitoring
  - o   Principle 16: Perform monitoring activities
  - o   Principle 17: Remediate deficiencies

The data in this report include publicly reported and internal SSA staffing, performance, and training data. SSA provided underlying data to support the staffing, performance, and training data. We specifically requested information on historical full-time equivalent staffing for each SSA component, Deputy Commissioner for workload metrics, and discretionary training data from the Office of Strategic Learning and Workforce Development. While we believe the underlying data SSA provided reasonably supports SSA's information from its publicly reported documents and is sufficiently reliable for the purposes of responding to our objectives, we did not evaluate the underlying data itself.

We conducted this audit between December 2020 and February 2022. The entities reviewed were the Offices of the Commissioner and the Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources. We interviewed subject-matter experts from the remaining SSA components.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

Appendix B —AGENCY STRATEGIC AND HUMAN CAPITAL GOALS AND INITIATIVES

Fiscal Years 2018-2022 Agency Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives:

- Strategic Goal 1: Deliver Services Effectively
  - Strategic Objective 1.1 - Improve service delivery.
  - Strategic Objective 1.2 - Expand service delivery options.
- Strategic Goal 2: Improve the Way We Do Business
  - Strategic Objective 2.1 - Streamline policies and processes.
  - Strategic Objective 2.2 - Accelerate information technology modernization.
- Strategic Goal 3: Ensure Stewardship
  - Strategic Objective 3.1 - Improve program integrity.
  - Strategic Objective 3.2 - Enhance fraud prevention and detection activities.
  - Strategic Objective 3.3 - Improve workforce performance and increase accountability.
  - Strategic Objective 3.4 - Improve organizational effectiveness and reduce costs.

Fiscal Years 2018-2022 Human Capital Operating Plan Goals

- Workforce management: Improve the management of staff resources.
- Succession management: Enhance leadership effectiveness.
- Performance management: Maximize employee performance.

Fiscal Years 2018-2019 Human Capital Operating Plan Key Initiatives

- Deliver workforce flexibilities training for managers.
- Conduct systematic component reviews of position descriptions.
- Provide human resources oversight of position allocations.
- Execute Senior Executive Service talent management and succession planning.
- Create a leadership succession strategy for the general schedule workforce.
- Expand talent management resources.
- Conduct supervisory training and assessments.
- Increase workforce development.
- Align leadership development programs with agency succession planning.
- Strengthen manager accountability for effective performance management.

- Implement employee performance improvement training.
- Establish real-time support for managers.

Fiscal Years 2020-2022 Human Capital Operating Plan Key Initiatives

- Deliver hiring refresher training for managers and human resources staff.
- Expand human resources automation.
- Enhance customer service delivery through human resources system modernization.
- Improve reasonable accommodation employee awareness.
- Develop a recruitment framework to enhance and maintain a diverse workforce.
- Execute Senior Executive Staff talent management and succession planning.
- Create a leadership succession strategy for the general schedule workforce.
- Conduct supervisory training and assessments.
- Increase workforce development.
- Align National Leadership Development Program with Agency succession planning.
- Create comprehensive curriculums for mission critical occupations and functions.
- Strengthen manager accountability for effective performance management.
- Improve employee engagement.
- Implement performance improvement training and support for managers.

Appendix C − THE AGENCY'S WORKFORCE

The Social Security Administration's (SSA) workforce consists of approximately 60,000 staff as of Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 (see Table C–1 and Table C–2).

Table C–1: SSA Staffing by Component for FYs 2013-2021[1]

SSA Component		FY 13	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21
Analytics, Review, and Oversight (OARO)[2]		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2,059	2,108	2,051	1,929
Budget, Finance, and Management (OBFM)		722	1,799	1,869	1,953	1,883	762	722	688	669
Communications		224	146	159	165	160	157	148	142	136
Hearings Operations[3]		10,841	10,266	10,559	10,769	10,418	9,594	9,335	8,549	7,970
Human Resources		588	569	601	631	619	609	600	567	547
Legislation and Congressional Affairs		57	67	65	67	64	56	55	52	56
Operations	Field Office	27,685	27,454	28,778	28,239	27,389	27,150	27,492	27,296	27,351
	Teleservice	4,158	4,079	4,498	4,590	4,147	4,135	4,307	4,624	4,808
	Processing Center	5,365	5,226	5,808	5,731	5,447	5,459	5,620	5,531	5,659
	Other	6,245	6,060	6,296	6,096	5,948	5,722	5,657	5,705	5,614
	Subtotal[4]	43,453	42,819	45,380	44,656	42,931	42,467	43,075	43,156	43,432
Retirement and Disability Policy		623	590	584	585	555	540	519	503	480
Systems		3,227	3,090	3,104	3,194	3,177	3,125	3,115	3,087	3,169
Chief Actuary		51	55	54	55	56	55	54	51	48
General Counsel		719	704	733	768	727	719	723	694	724
Commissioner		51	31	33	56	38	25	29	26	25
Quality Performance[5]		1,121	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Chief Strategy[6]		N/A	20	38	48	29	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total		**61,677**	**60,156**	**63,179**	**62,946[7]**	**60,657**	**60,168**	**60,483**	**59,566**	**59,185**

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[1] SSA, Payroll Operational Data Store. We did not audit this and do not express an opinion on its completeness, accuracy, or reliability. We excluded General Services Administration delegations, the Social Security Advisory Board, and the Office of the Inspector General in the staffing totals reported in this audit.

[2] OARO was established in FY 2018 by reorganizing OBFM, Hearings Operations, and the Commissioner.

[3] The Office of Hearings Operations was formerly the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR). The Office of Appellate Operations was part of ODAR and subsequently part of OARO in FY 2018.

[4] Due to rounding, the sum of the Operations subcomponents does not add up to the FYs 2018 and 2019 subtotals.

[5] The Office of Quality Performance was reorganized into OBFM in FY 2014 and into OARO in FY 2018.

[6] The Chief Strategy Office was eliminated in FY 2017 and staff was disbursed.

[7] Due to rounding, the FY 2016 totals do not add up to the staff in the offices of HR, Retirement and Disability Review and the Office of Hearing Operations.

Table C–2: SSA Staffing by Percentage for FYs 2013-2021[8]

SSA Component		FY 13	FY 14	FY 15	FY 16	FY 17	FY 18	FY 19	FY 20	FY 21
Analytics, Review, and Oversight[9]		N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.4	3.5	3.4	3.3
Budget, Finance, and Management		1.2	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.1	1.3	1.2	1.2	1.1
Communications		0.4	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Hearings Operations[10]		17.6	17.1	16.7	17.1	17.2	15.9	15.4	14.4	13.5
Human Resources		1.0	0.9	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	0.9
Legislation and Congressional Affairs		<0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1
Operations	Field Office	44.9	45.6	45.6	44.9	45.2	45.1	45.5	45.8	46.2
	Teleservice	6.7	6.8	7.1	7.3	6.8	6.9	7.1	7.8	8.1
	Processing Center	8.7	8.7	9.2	9.1	9.0	9.1	9.3	9.3	9.6
	Other	10.1	10.1	10	9.7	9.8	9.5	9.4	9.6	9.5
	Subtotal[11]	70.4	71.2	71.8	70.9	70.8	70.6	71.2	72.5	73.4
Retirement and Disability Policy		1.0	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.8
Systems		5.2	5.1	4.9	5.1	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.2	5.4
Chief Actuary		<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1
General Counsel		1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2
Commissioner		<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1
Quality Performance[12]		1.8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Chief Strategy[13]		N/A	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	<0.1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total[14]		**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**

Although SSA's workforce was reduced over time, each component's respective ratios have not changed greatly outside of such reorganizational changes as the creation or dissolution of OARO in FY 2018 and Quality Performance in FY 2014 or such Agency initiatives as reducing the Hearings backlog.

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[8] SSA, Payroll Operational Data Store. We did not audit this and do not express an opinion on its completeness, accuracy, or reliability.

[9] See Footnote 3.

[10] See Footnote 3.

[11] Due to rounding, the sum of the components does not equal the subtotals for FYs 2015, 2016, and 2019.

[12] See Footnote 6.5

[13] See Footnote 6.

[14] Due to rounding, the sum of each SSA component may not add up to 100 percent for each FY total.

Appendix D – DEPUTY COMMISSIONER COMPONENTS

- The Deputy Commissioner for Analytics, Review, and Oversight oversees the review of program quality and effectiveness and makes recommendations for program improvement using feedback from the adjudication of cases, predictive modeling, and other advanced data analysis techniques. This component also coordinates the Social Security Administration's (SSA) anti-fraud initiatives; responds to the recommendations of external monitoring authorities; and serves as the accountable official for improper payment. This component also includes the Office of Appellate Operations, which, through its Appeals Council, serves as the final level of administrative review within the Agency and considers appeals from hearing decisions

- The Deputy Commissioner for Budget, Finance, and Management directs SSA's comprehensive management programs, including budget, financial policy, acquisition, grants, facilities and logistics management, and security and emergency preparedness.

- The Deputy Commissioner for Communications conducts SSA's national public information and outreach programs and fosters the transparency of SSA's operations.

- The Deputy Commissioner for Hearings Operations administers the nation-wide hearings program with its administrative law judges conducting hearings and issuing decisions, in accordance with relevant Federal laws and regulations.

- The Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources administers human resources programs, including training, human capital initiatives, personnel and employee relations, labor management, and civil rights and equal opportunity.

- The Deputy Commissioner for Legislation and Congressional Affairs develops and conducts legislative program, serves as SSA's liaison to Congress, and analyzes legislative and regulatory initiatives.

- The Deputy Commissioner for Operations directs SSA's network of field offices, National 800-number teleservice centers, and processing centers.

- The Deputy Commissioner for Retirement and Disability Policy advises the Commissioner on major policy issues and is responsible for all activities in the areas of program policy planning, policy research and evaluation, statistical programs, and overall policy development, analysis, and implementation.

- The Deputy Commissioner for Systems directs the strategic management of systems and databases, which includes the development, validation, and implementation of new systems. This component also directs operational integration, strategic planning processes, and implementation of a systems configuration program.

Appendix E – HUMAN CAPITAL PLANNING INTEGRATION

We extracted the Social Security Administration's (SSA) descriptions of its human capital strategic plans by initiatives and objectives below.

Integration with Agency Strategic Plans

Improve Workforce Performance and Increase Accountability in the Fiscal Years (FY) 2018-2022 Agency Strategic Plan (ASP), SSA stated:

> Our employees remain our most important asset. We are accountable for ensuring they have the training and technology they need to take timely, quality actions. Feedback, including clear and measurable expectations, is an important tool to ensure our employees know how they are performing.
>
> Likewise, our managers need to understand how to maximize employee performance so that we can serve the public. We must support them in that effort by establishing expert teams who will be available to provide information and assistance in real time. We will also be requiring additional management training and working with our managers to help them engage and communicate with employees.
>
> While many of our employees are attracted to Federal employment by the benefits and flexibilities we provide, they also specifically choose our agency because they believe in, or have personal experience with, our mission. Our employees have some of the most difficult but also the most rewarding jobs. We must ensure that they remain aware of the importance—to real people in our communities—of a job well done. We must ensure that they know how much we—and the public—value their effort. Therefore, we must be attentive to issues they bring to our attention from requests to simplify policies to demanding that we hold all employees accountable.
>
> Our framework for comprehensive human capital management includes three major focus areas: workforce management, succession management, and performance management.

Key External Factors We Must Consider in the FYs 2018-2022 ASP, SSA projected more than 21,000 employees would retire by FY 2022 and stated:

> These retirements along with regular ongoing attrition will cause a loss of institutional knowledge and potentially impair succession management and knowledge transfer. We must take affirmative steps to mitigate these effects through effective planning, recruitment, and hiring.

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

Promote Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Hiring and Advancement in the FYs 2022-2026 ASP:

We are committed to promoting diversity, inclusion, fairness, and equity. The diversity of our workforce is one of our greatest strengths. Our goal is to attract and retain employees who reflect the public we serve, are committed to our mission, and dedicated to providing quality customer experience. We will promote a workplace that recognizes and celebrates our employees' unique abilities and encourages the full contributions of all. The findings from our evidence-building activities related to Priority Question #7[1] in our Learning Agenda will inform our efforts to achieve this objective.

We will continuously strive to expand applicant pools through targeted recruitment of underrepresented groups. We will engage our Advisory Council Chairs within the Diversity and Inclusion Council, who have connections with the communities they serve and can play a key role to broaden our recruitment efforts among underrepresented groups. We will also seek talented candidates through collaborations with universities—such as Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Minority Serving Institutions internship programs, inter-agency partnerships, and agency-wide developmental programs.

Support Employees' Chosen Career Paths in the FYs 2022-2026 ASP:

We will invest in our employees, increase their engagement, and support their efforts to create fulfilling careers. We will offer dynamic career paths and opportunities for professional growth—helping employees become experts and encouraging participation in cross-government initiatives, such as through leadership development programs.

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[1] SSA's 7th priority question is "To what extent are there systemic barriers to hiring, developing, and advancing a diverse and talented workforce and what are the effects of our Action Plan to mitigate those barriers in support of our goal to build an inclusive, engaged, and empowered workforce?"

We will prioritize career growth and leadership development. Our performance management system will equitably reward high performance and incorporate well-defined and clearly communicated standards for success. Employees will receive meaningful individualized feedback on a continual basis to guide their development. Our employee-centered programs will foster skills development and facilitate knowledge transfer. We will assess training needs at the organizational level as well as the individual level, as our programs continually improve. Our training programs will be dynamic, address critical skill gaps, and will be crafted and adjusted according to our mission.

Integration with Agency Performance Plans

Strengthen the Performance Management Process, the FYs 2021-2022 Annual Performance Plan (APP) stated:

> The electronic 7B (e7B) application provides the ability to complete and track employee performance management documents and required acknowledgement statements (e.g., systems access, and handling of personally identifiable information), which were previously maintained in paper form. The application allows employees and management to electronically deliver and sign these documents, and enhances management and employee accountability.
>
> We have also established a program to provide supervisors with the tools to address employee performance. The program consists of manager and employee relations specialist cohorts, which meet regularly to discuss actual cases with associated challenges and issues to better equip managers to address potential and current performance and conduct matters. This program is highly interactive, includes case scenarios to identify solutions, and covers the full scope of performance and conduct issues.
>
> ● FY 2021, we plan to have 97 percent of all required signed employee acknowledgements maintained in our e7B system. In addition, we will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of our supervisor support program using a pre-and post-test protocol with the participants.
>
> ● In FY 2022, we plan to continue tracking performance documents though the e7B and continue evaluating the program.

Execute Talent Management and Succession Planning, the FYs 2021-2022 APP stated:

> Our goal is to continue to increase the proficiency of our leadership cadre and pipeline to enhance their readiness to fill potential gaps in leadership and critical positions. In FY 2020, we announced selectees for the National Leadership Development Program (NLDP).
>
> ● In FY 2021, we will begin assignments for our inaugural NLDP Track 1 (GS 15) and Track 2 (GS 12–14) selectees. We will also announce selections, complete competency baselines, and begin assignments for Track 3 (GS 8–11) selectees.
>
> ● In FY 2022, we will reduce leadership competency gaps among at least 90 percent of NLDP participants.

Invest in Training and Support for Managers, the FYs 2021-2022 APP stated:

> We are responsible for providing the training necessary for managers and supervisors to enable our employees to carry out their duties and provide the level of service the public expects and deserves. In FY 2019, we launched and updated our National Leadership Essentials for New Supervisors (LENS) curriculum to train new managers and supervisors on management laws and responsibilities, in conjunction with SSA and the Office of Personnel Management's policies and procedures. New supervisors are enrolled in training within 90 days of their appointment. They are expected to complete LENS training within one year of their supervisory appointment. In FY 2020, we began developing Leadership Fundamentals, a new multi-year online and self-paced curriculum that provides sequential training for managers within the first three years of their supervisory role.

> - In FY 2021, we will develop online lessons that will encompass the first full year of the Leadership Fundamentals curriculum.
> - In FY 2022, we will begin implementation of the first year curriculum and develop the training that will encompass years two and three of Leadership Fundamentals.

Additional Challenges Identified by Our Leadership, the FYs 2021-2022 APP stated:

> Employee turnover challenges our ability to retain and develop empowered, knowledgeable, compassionate, and engaged employees. Having employees with the right skills in the right place at the right time is critical to our mission.

> Actions we are undertaking to address this challenge include:

> - Strengthen the Performance Management Process.
> - Execute Talent Management and Succession Planning.
> - Invest in Training and Support for Managers.

Enhancing Strategic Workforce Planning, the FY 2023 APP stated:

> To serve the American public efficiently and effectively, we must align our workforce requirements with the strategic direction for our organization. We will employ strategic workforce planning (SWP) to ensure the effective acquisition, development, and retention of a talented and diverse workforce SWP analyzes the current and future needs of our workforce, identifies gaps in skills and competencies, and implements strategies to address them. We will update our Human Capital Operating Plan, which serves as the roadmap to our future workforce, using SWP data analysis and assessment of key competencies for our mission-critical occupations.

> - In FY 2021, we conducted research for the best industry practices and benchmarking with SWP programs across multiple Federal agencies.
> - In FY 2022, we will develop a comprehensive SWP framework and business process.
> - In FY 2023, we will assess the SWP framework for expanded implementation at the component level and to support development of future human capital efforts.

Execute Talent Management and Succession Planning, the FY 2023 APP stated:

> Our goal is to continue to increase the strength and diversity of our leadership cadre and pipeline to enhance our readiness to fill potential gaps in leadership and critical positions. We are developing an enterprise-wide approach to succession planning, using a module within our talent management system to automate our business process and improve efficiency. In FY 2020, we announced selectees for the NLDP and identified selectees' competency baselines with a goal of reducing leadership competency gaps among at least 90 percent of program participants.

> - In FY 2021, we began assignments for our inaugural NLDP Track 1 (GS 15) and Track 2 (GS 12–14) selectees. We announced selections, completed competency baselines, and began assignments for Track 3 (GS 8–11) selectees. Additionally, we finalized configuration of our succession planning tool.
> - In FY 2022, with the completion of the NLDP, we will reduce the identified leadership competency gaps among at least 90 percent of NLDP participants. We will also launch the prototype of the succession planning module and then test and validate the tool in preparation for national roll out.
> - In FY 2023, we will conduct an evaluation of the NLDP. We will also begin a phased roll out of our succession planning tool.

Improving Employee Engagement, the FY 2023 APP stated:

> We are focusing on strategies that highlight best practices in employee engagement, diversity, equity, inclusion, and retention. We are also employing tools that support executive and management accountability, such as: workforce statistics that convey the impact of engagement on attrition and retention, employee feedback through surveys or focus groups to obtain insight on employee needs and experiences, targeted and required action planning to document and track our strategies, training on soft skills and engagement-related topics, and other resources to enhance employees' levels of engagement and inclusion.
>
> ● In FY 2021, we developed an agency-wide Improving Workplace Morale (IWM) Plan. This plan includes initiatives (e.g., effective leadership, employee and management development, and effective communication) developed to improve employee engagement. Components also developed specific IWM plans.
>
> ● In FY 2022, we plan to implement agency and component-level IWM plans and offer training, resources, and support for managers.
>
> ● In FY 2023, we will enhance our agency and component plans based on benchmarking and research of current trends and best practices in employee engagement.

Investing in Manager Training and Support, the FY 2023 APP stated:

> Effectively trained managers and supervisors with the foundational tools to execute their responsibilities are better positioned to train and manage the performance of their own staff, enhance employee engagement, increase productivity, and improve retention.
>
> In FY 2019, we launched and updated our LENS curriculum to train new managers and supervisors on management laws and responsibilities, in conjunction with the Office of Personnel Management's policies and procedures. New supervisors are enrolled in training within 90 days of their appointment. We expect them to complete LENS training within one year of their supervisory appointment.
>
> In FY 2020, we began developing Leadership Fundamentals, a new multi-year online and self-paced curriculum that provides sequential training for managers within the first three years of their supervisory roles. The first year of Leadership Fundamentals includes lessons in personnel management, labor and employee relations, managing a diverse workplace, managing performance, and health and safety.
>
> ● In FY 2021, we developed online lessons that encompass the first full year of the Leadership Fundamentals curriculum.
>
> ● In FY 2022, we will begin implementation of the first-year curriculum and develop the training that will encompass years two and three of Leadership Fundamentals.

- In FY 2023, we plan to develop continuing education resources to maintain skills for managers who are beyond their third year in a supervisory position.

Strengthening the Performance Management Process, the FY 2023 APP stated:

In 2020, we established the Reaching Every Supervisor or Leader Very Early (RESOLVE) program to provide supervisors with the tools to address employee underperformance. The RESOLVE program consists of manager and employee relations specialists working together to equip managers to address potential and current performance and conduct matters.

Our RESOLVE program is highly interactive, includes case scenarios to identify solutions, and covers the full scope of performance and conduct issues. We will evaluate the effectiveness of the program via multiple assessment tools, including a pre-and post-test questionnaire. The questionnaire assesses the knowledge gained from specific sessions and solicits feedback regarding the effectiveness of the training. Additionally, we will utilize a six-month post-RESOLVE session survey to assess how participants applied the training in their regular supervisory duties.

We developed additional LENS training for supervisors and managers to reinforce our performance management policies and procedures. We released a new video on implementing objective employee-level performance measures in performance plans to support our FY 2022 plans. We are seeking contractual support to develop additional numeric performance measures for selected positions in our FY 2023 plans. We also plan to implement a Performance Oversight Team with a dual focus on compliance and narrative feedback. We will conduct robust reviews of required performance documents agency wide, increasing our annual performance management auditing to approximately 10 percent of performance plans.

We utilize the electronic 7B (e7B) application to complete and track employee performance management documents and required acknowledgement statements (e.g., systems access, and handling of personally identifiable information), which were previously maintained in paper form. The application allows employees and management to electronically deliver and sign these documents, enhancing management and employee accountability.

- In FY 2021, we maintained 98 percent of all required, signed employee acknowledgement statements in our e7B system.

- In FY 2022, we plan to have 95 percent of Initial Discussions, Mid-year Performance Discussions, and Appraisal performance documents tracked electronically through our e7B application.

- In FY 2023, we plan to have 96 percent of Initial Discussions, Mid-year Performance Discussions, and Appraisal performance documents tracked electronically through our e7B application.

- In FYs 2022 and 2023, we plan to assess participant feedback and continue utilizing the RESOLVE program to provide supervisors with tools to address employee performance.

Ensuring Equity in its Leadership Development, the FY 2023 APP stated:

> We promote a workplace that recognizes and celebrates our diverse employees' abilities and encourages the full contributions of all. We continually strive to expand and diversify applicant pools through targeted recruitment of underrepresented groups. We engage our Advisory Council Chairs within the Diversity and Inclusion Council, as the Advisory Councils have connections with the communities they serve and can play a key role in our efforts to broaden interest among underrepresented groups in national leadership development programs. We participate in diversity recruitment events through our established relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and minority serving institutions and universities and organizations that serve veterans, military spouses, and individuals with disabilities.

> - In FY 2021, we conducted an internal equity assessment through meetings with a volunteer group of our employees from across the agency and identified potential challenges in the application process for our national leadership development programs.

> - In FY 2022, based on the identified potential challenges, we will analyze of our national leadership development program's application process. Following the analysis, we will identify promising practices and areas for improvement to promote equity.

> - In FY 2023, we plan to use our analysis, promising practices, and identified areas for improvement to enhance our national leadership development programs and policies to promote equity in all agency development programs.

Appendix F—DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMS

The Social Security Administration's (SSA) Human Capital Operating Plan (HCOP) includes the key initiative, *Align National Leadership Development Programs* (NLDP) *with Agency Succession Planning,* and the corresponding performance measure *Improve leadership competencies among national leadership development program participants*. SSA's NLDPs are SSA's primary succession planning tool to identify and develop employees to become future leaders.[1] SSA plans to use its ". . . evaluation data to modify the programs to produce improved results for the agency and ensure fiscal responsibility for the investments made to support their administration." The programs provide specialized training opportunities for employees who demonstrate or want to acquire the skills, knowledge, and experience needed to obtain leadership positions. Operations advised us each region administers regional development programs at various levels to strengthen the pipeline of potential successors. This includes developmental assignments for mid- to high-level graded employees, targeted training, and working with a mentor to close leadership skill gaps and strengthen leadership competencies. In addition, the regional and Headquarters Operations components use informal development activities to support such succession planning efforts as temporary promotions, details, and job shadowing opportunities.

SSA explained initial participation to the succession planning protocol is limited to non-bargaining unit leadership at the General Schedule (GS)-15 level as SSA focuses on critical leadership positions.[2] SSA explained it started this protocol in phases[3] so the Office of Human Resources (OHR)[4] could provide guidance and facilitation to each component with actions such as identifying critical positions, determining the likelihood those positions will become vacant,[5] using a risk-based approach to determine whether SSA should fill the potential vacancy by recruiting or building expertise in-house, and establishing readiness ratings for a pool of candidates. SSA's vision is to:

- Prepare for the replacement of losses in leadership and other critical positions;

- Develop future leaders with the competencies needed to execute SSA's mission;

- Identify high potential employees to sustain the leadership pipeline; and

- Concentrate needed resources on talent development.

---

[1] The NLDP has three development tracks that are available to employees who hold GS-8 through 15 positions.

[2] SSA indicated critical leadership positions are largely at the GS-15 level and represent a small portion of the workforce.

[3] SSA started the protocol with the Offices of Human Resources and Systems in FY 2022 and is planning to expand to its remaining components in FYs 2023 and 2024. As the program progresses, SSA will expand its participant eligibility to include planning for positions at the GS-14 level, which would include potential eligible staff at the GS-13 and 14 levels. SSA explained this succession planning process does not address positions at the GS-13 level and will implement a broad workforce planning process for larger groups of occupations and skillsets. SSA also explained there is no established workforce planning framework and protocol, however OHR is working to develop such a framework and protocol for testing in FY 2022.

[4] OHR initially conducted a study that laid the framework and processes for this leadership succession protocol.

[5] SSA used two factors in this consideration: (1) the incumbent's retirement eligibility status and (2) manager input where OHR asked the manager to determine the likelihood the positions may become vacant.

As part of this protocol, SSA also conducted an employee survey to obtain information on training and development needs and a self-assessment of leadership competencies and skills such as conflict management, team building, decisiveness, and strategic thinking. Next, managers provided their assessments of their employees and assigned a readiness rating to each employee. Readiness ratings included *Build Tenure/Experience*, *Ready for Career Broadening,* and *Ready for Increased Challenge.* The information allows SSA to identify competency and skills gaps so it can develop a plan to close them. SSA collected other data points including employee retirement eligibility, education, and performance ratings.
This aggregated information can align employee development with Agency needs and allow SSA to use training funds more efficiently.

Appendix G − STAFF AND WORKLOAD METRICS

We graphically compared the Social Security Administration's (SSA) component staff totals to key workloads as reported by SSA in publicly available documents. The staff totals for each figure below are the total staff as of the end of each Fiscal Year (FY), which is September 30 of each corresponding year. We did not audit the data in the graphs and do not express any opinion on their completeness, accuracy, or reliability. Also, we note FY 2021 does not represent normal operations as SSA had limited in-person activities starting March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We also recognize that staffing is one of multiple factors that could affect productivity and performance.

Office of Hearings Operations

For over 10 years, SSA's priorities have included eliminating the Office of Hearings backlog of pending hearings. SSA's initiatives to eliminate the hearing backlogs included improving procedures and technology as well as increasing staff.

Figure G–1: Office of Hearings Staff Versus Hearings Pending
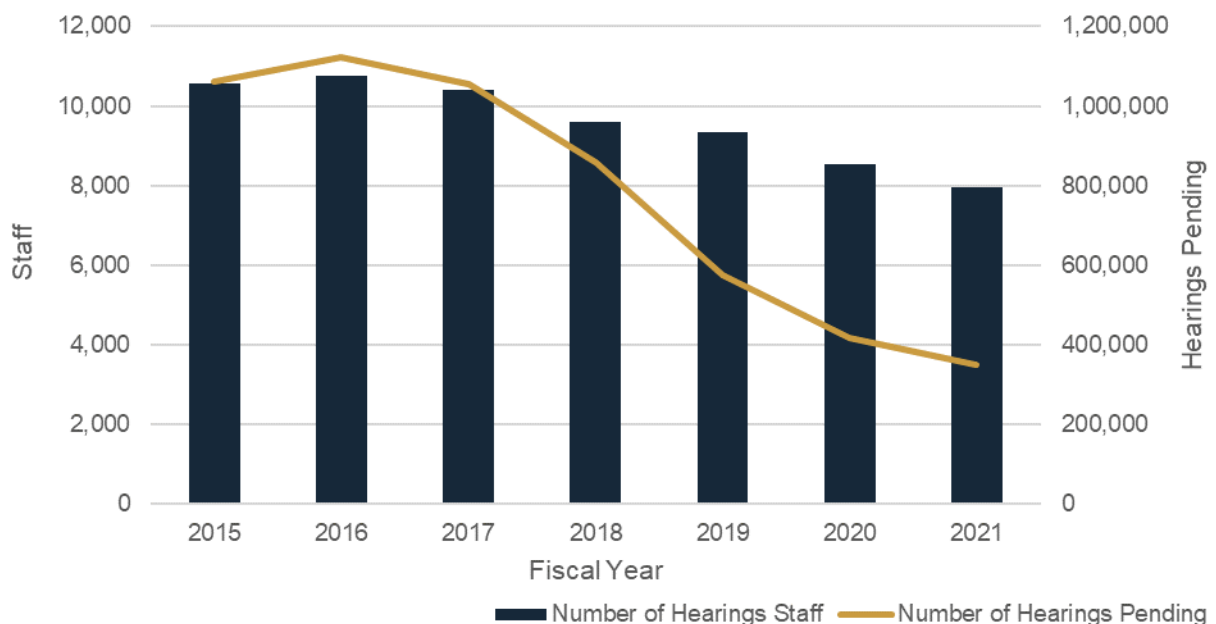
Office of Operations

The Office of Operations is SSA's largest component and comprises a network of field offices and national 800-number teleservice and processing centers (PC). The public can contact a field office or the 800-number to file claims, ask questions, or update information. PCs handle complex retirement, survivors, and disability claims as well as benefit-payment issues.

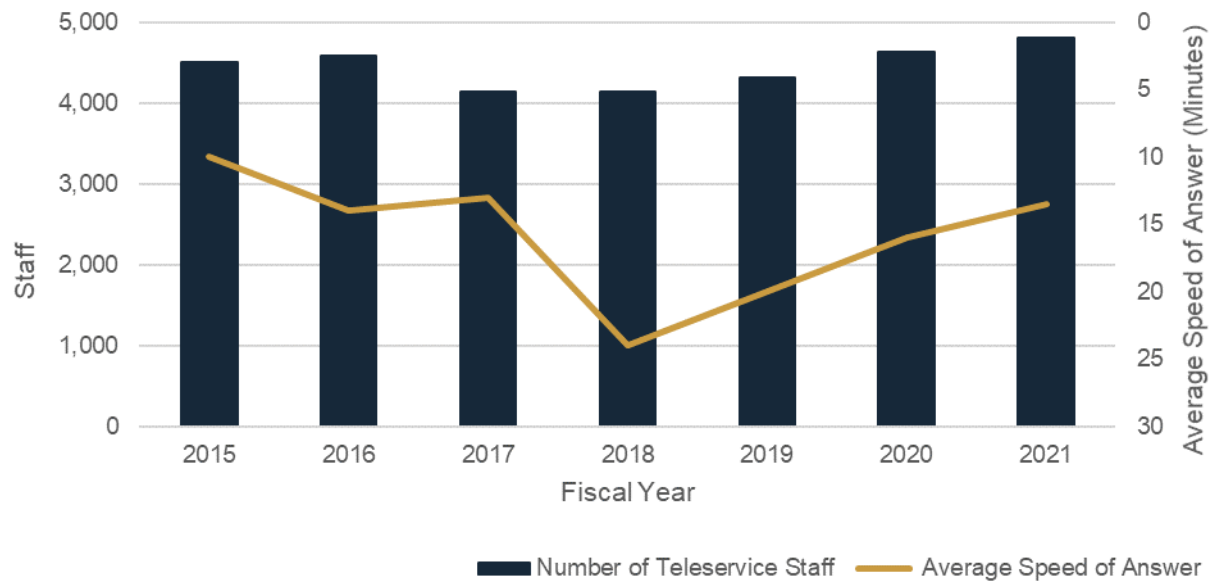**Figure G–2: Teleservice Center Staff Versus 800-Number Average Speed of Answer**

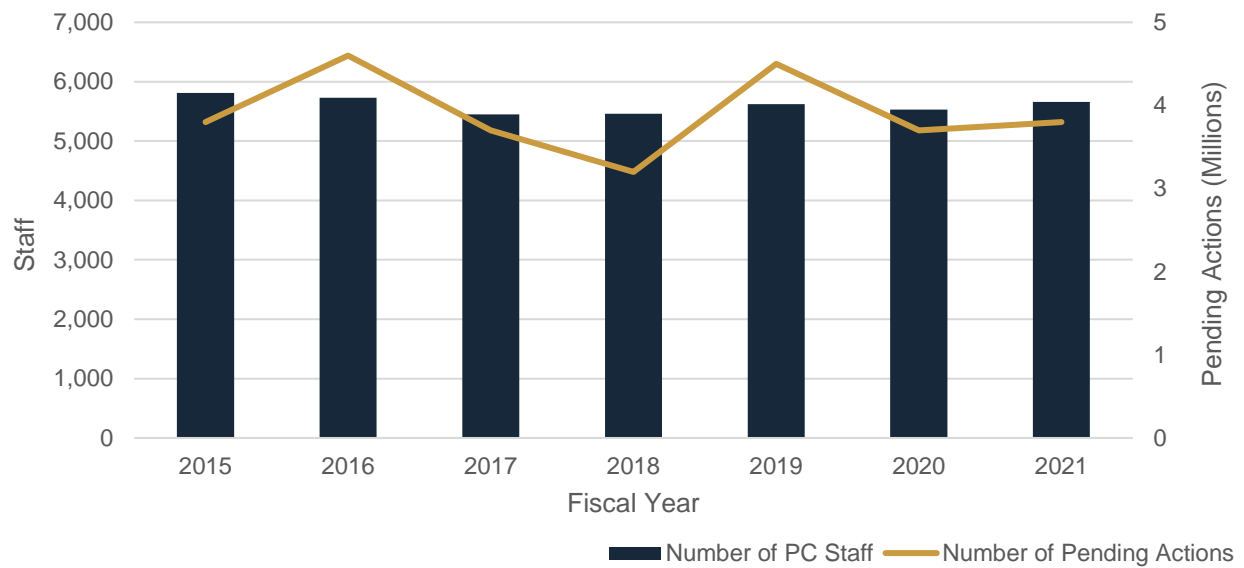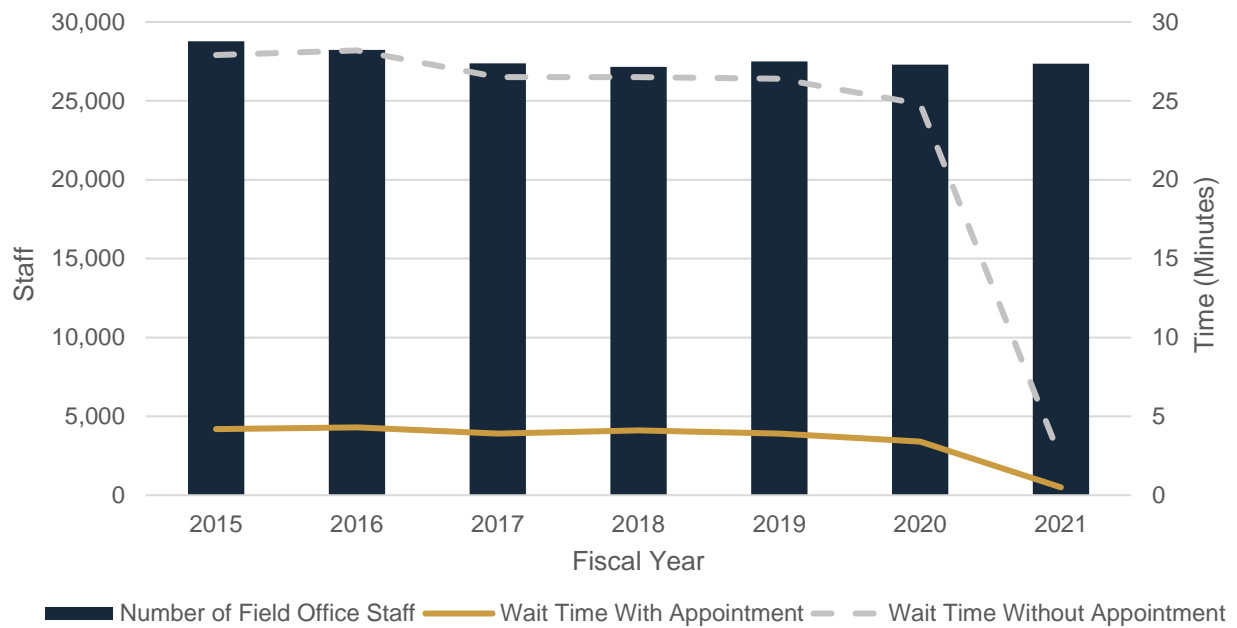**Figure G–3: Processing Center Staff Versus Pending Actions**

Figure G–4: Field Office Staffing Versus Average Wait Time

Appendix H – AGENCY COMMENTS

SOCIAL SECURITY

Date: September 19, 2022   Refer To: TQA-1

To: Gail S. Ennis
Inspector General

From: Scott Frey
Chief of Staff

Subject: Office of the Inspector General Draft Report "The Social Security Administration's Human Capital Planning" (A-02-19-50866) — INFORMATION

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report. We agree with the recommendations.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance. You may direct staff inquiries to

Trae Sommer at (410) 965-9102.

Mission:	The Social Security Office of the Inspector General (OIG) serves the public through independent oversight of SSA's programs and operations.
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