SOCIAL SECURITY

Date: July 31, 2008   Refer To:

To: The Commissioner

From: Inspector General

Subject: Evaluation of the Knowledge Management Website (A-13-08-30117)

The attached final report presents the results of our review. Our objective was to examine the oversight and use of the Social Security Administration's Knowledge Management website.

If you wish to discuss the final report, please call me or have your staff contact Steven L. Schaeffer, Assistant Inspector General for Audit, at (410) 965-9700.

Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr.

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Attachment

QUICK RESPONSE EVALUATION

Evaluation of the Knowledge Management Website

A-13-08-30117

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

USA

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

July 2008

Mission

By conducting independent and objective audits, evaluations and investigations, we inspire public confidence in the integrity and security of SSA's programs and operations and protect them against fraud, waste and abuse. We provide timely, useful and reliable information and advice to Administration officials, Congress and the public.

Authority

The Inspector General Act created independent audit and investigative units, called the Office of Inspector General (OIG). The mission of the OIG, as spelled out in the Act, is to:

- Conduct and supervise independent and objective audits and investigations relating to agency programs and operations.
- Promote economy, effectiveness, and efficiency within the agency.
- Prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse in agency programs and operations.
- Review and make recommendations regarding existing and proposed legislation and regulations relating to agency programs and operations.
- Keep the agency head and the Congress fully and currently informed of problems in agency programs and operations.

To ensure objectivity, the IG Act empowers the IG with:

- Independence to determine what reviews to perform.
- Access to all information necessary for the reviews.
- Authority to publish findings and recommendations based on the reviews.

Vision

We strive for continual improvement in SSA's programs, operations and management by proactively seeking new ways to prevent and deter fraud, waste and abuse. We commit to integrity and excellence by supporting an environment that provides a valuable public service while encouraging employee development and retention and fostering diversity and innovation.

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to examine the oversight and use of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Knowledge Management (KM) website.

BACKGROUND

SSA reported that in May 2003, the KM Intranet website was established to capture and share the expertise of its workforce. The website defined KM "…as preserving the experiences and knowledge of experienced workers, and making the experiences and knowledge available to everyone." The Agency categorized KM as

- transferring knowledge from more experienced to less experienced employees;
- sharing knowledge and experiences;
- generating knowledge;
- getting the right information to people when they need it; and
- sharing best practices for continuous improvement.

In addition to preserving the experience and knowledge of experienced workers, SSA reported there were many business reasons for KM activities. Specifically, the Agency believed KM would help facilitate

- retaining expertise;
- helping an organization be more efficient;
- reducing time looking for information;
- helping one avoid replicating the work done by others; and
- enabling leaders to make better decisions, drawing upon the experience of others and examining a wider range of alternatives.

The Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources, Office of Training is responsible for oversight of the KM website. Each KM effort listed the following information: project name; project identification number; project component; project contact information; and a project summary. As of May 2008, there were 14 SSA components and 268 KM projects listed on the Intranet website. See the chart below for more information.

SSA Components and KM Projects as of May 2008
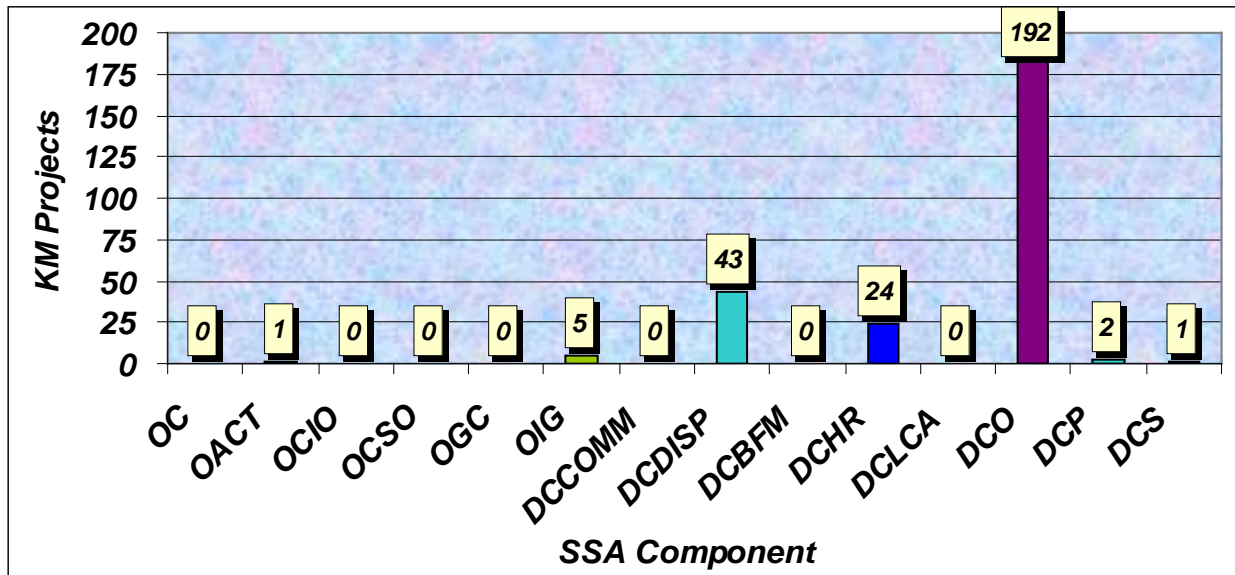
Note 1: The 14 Agency components identified in the chart are the Offices of the Commissioner (OC); Chief Actuary (OCACT, also identified on the KM website as OACT); Chief Information Officer (OCIO); Chief Strategic Officer (OCSO); General Council (OGC); Inspector General (OIG); Deputy Commissioner for Communications (DCCOMM); Deputy Commissioner for Retirement and Disability Policy (DCRDP, formerly known as Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Disability and Income Security Programs/DCDISP and Deputy Commissioner for Policy (DCP)); Deputy Commissioner for Budget; Finance and Management (DCBFM); Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources (DCHR); Deputy Commissioner for Legislative and Congressional Affairs (DCLCA); Deputy Commissioner for Operations (DCO); and Deputy Commissioner for Systems (DCS).

For our evaluation, we selected a non-statistical sample of 10 projects to review. From both OACT and DCS, we examined one KM project. We examined two DCP projects. In addition, we reviewed two projects from each of the following Agency components: DCRDP (formerly known as DCDISP), DCHR, and DCO. We excluded projects of the Office of the Inspector General from our review. The focus of our effort was the Office of Training's oversight and employees' use of the KM website. See Appendix B, Scope and Methodology, for additional information.

Our examination of the oversight and use of the KM website found (1) the website had limited management controls; (2) information listed for KM projects was not accurate; and (3) information on the use of the website was not collected.

KM WEBSITE HAD LIMITED MANAGEMENT CONTROLS

Management controls were limited concerning the information listed on the website for the KM efforts. The Office of Training issued a memorandum on May 7, 2003 to all executive officers requesting "…help in providing information on SSA's efforts in 'Knowledge Management'. With the information you provide, we can compile an inventory of our 'Knowledge Management' based initiatives and make this inventory available to everyone." We contacted staff in the Office of Training to identify the management controls for KM oversight. Staff explained the information on the KM website was not monitored. According to Office of Training staff, anyone with access to the Intranet website can add, change or update information. It was explained "…the site remains outdated and is not regularly maintained." Staff also indicated a request must be made to the Office of Training to remove a KM project from the website.

Additionally, our review found duplicate projects on the KM website. We identified some KM projects that had the same information listed on the website but had different project identification numbers.

INFORMATION FOR KM PROJECTS WAS NOT ACCURATE

The information listed for most of the KM projects we examined was inaccurate. As of May 12, 2008, the homepage of the KM website did not have language that indicated the data listed on the site was unverified or had limited use. We found the KM projects had outdated or obsolete information. Of the 10 projects reviewed, we found 9 had inaccurate information. For example, one project discussed a "new" automated information system intended to replace an existing system. However, SSA staff reported the new system was installed in 2004. We also found a project that discussed the establishment and duties of a specific Agency committee. However, that committee no longer existed. The Agency agreed with our observation that the nine projects had inaccurate information.

INFORMATION FOR KM WEBSITE USE WAS NOT COLLECTED

The Office of Training did not collect information concerning KM website use. We requested information regarding how often Agency employees accessed the website. Agency staff explained information regarding access to the website and use of the information contained on the website was not collected.

During our review, we also found that access to the KM website was no longer available. As of June 2, 2008, Agency employees could no longer access the KM website from SSA's Intranet homepage. We found the automated link to the website had been removed "to slow down traffic." No further explanation was provided. On June 23, 2008, we attempted to use the same search engine to access the KM website. The KM website could not be accessed. In addition, we tried other search engines to gain access to the website and were not successful.

Matters for Consideration

Based on the results of our review, we believe the KM website is not functioning as intended. Further, inaccurate or unverified information on the website could cause Agency employees to make erroneous decisions or take inappropriate actions. The Agency should evaluate whether the website will remain operational. If it remains operational, the Agency should ensure that the information is accurate and up to date; or include qualifying language regarding the limited utility of the information.

SSA agreed with the findings of our review, and indicated "Various individual component KM activities have overtaken the usefulness of the KM website. As such, we have taken the website down to prevent any confusion."

Appendices

Acronyms

DCBFM	Deputy Commissioner for Budget, Finance and Management
DCCOMM	Deputy Commissioner for Communications
DCDISP	Deputy Commissioner for Disability and Income Security Programs
DCHR	Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources
DCLCA	Deputy Commissioner for Legislative and Congressional Affairs
DCO	Deputy Commissioner for Operations
DCP	Deputy Commissioner for Policy
DCRDP	Deputy Commissioner for Retirement and Disability Policy
DCS	Deputy Commissioner for Systems
KM	Knowledge Management
OC	Office of the Commissioner
OCACT	Office of the Chief Actuary
OCIO	Office of the Chief Information Officer
OCSO	Office of the Chief Strategic Officer
OGC	Office of General Counsel
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
SSA	Social Security Administration

Scope and Methodology

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Identified Social Security Administration (SSA) components that had information listed on the Knowledge Management (KM) website.

- Examined the KM information on the website to determine its reliability.

- Interviewed appropriate Agency staff to gain an understanding of the:

  o purpose and goals of the KM website and

  o management controls for the establishment and maintenance of the website and the information provided on the website.

- Collected information on use of website.

- Identified an alternate mechanism for accessing the KM website.

- Selected 10 KM projects to examine.

  o Of the 14 SSA components identified on the KM website, 7 had no information listed for KM projects. For the remaining 7, we reviewed KM projects for 6 components. While the Office of the Inspector General was one of the remaining seven components, we excluded its projects from our review. The focus of our effort was the Office of Training's oversight and employees' use of the KM website.

  o For 6 components, we examined a total of 10 KM projects. The information reviewed was listed on the website as of May 2008.

    ✓ Reviewed all projects listed on the website for three SSA components: the Offices of the Chief Actuary, Deputy Commissioner for Systems, and Deputy Commissioner for Policy. A total of four projects were reviewed.

    ✓ Reviewed two projects listed on the website for each of three SSA components: the Offices of Retirement and Disability Policy, Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources, and Deputy Commissioner for Operations. We reviewed two projects related to the disability process; two projects providing assistance to Agency employees and two projects pertaining to field office operations. A total of six projects were reviewed.

We performed our review from May through June 2008 in Baltimore, Maryland. The entity reviewed was the Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources. We conducted our review in accordance with the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency's Quality Standards for Inspections.

OIG Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

OIG Contacts

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Acknowledgments

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For additional copies of this report, please visit our web site at
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A-13-08-30117.

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Overview of the Office of the Inspector General

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is comprised of an Office of Audit (OA), Office of Investigations (OI), Office of the Counsel to the Inspector General (OCIG), Office of External Relations (OER), and Office of Technology and Resource Management (OTRM). To ensure compliance with policies and procedures, internal controls, and professional standards, the OIG also has a comprehensive Professional Responsibility and Quality Assurance program.

Office of Audit

OA conducts financial and performance audits of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) programs and operations and makes recommendations to ensure program objectives are achieved effectively and efficiently. Financial audits assess whether SSA's financial statements fairly present SSA's financial position, results of operations, and cash flow. Performance audits review the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of SSA's programs and operations. OA also conducts short-term management reviews and program evaluations on issues of concern to SSA, Congress, and the general public.

Office of Investigations

OI conducts investigations related to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement in SSA programs and operations. This includes wrongdoing by applicants, beneficiaries, contractors, third parties, or SSA employees performing their official duties. This office serves as liaison to the Department of Justice on all matters relating to the investigation of SSA programs and personnel. OI also conducts joint investigations with other Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies.

Office of the Counsel to the Inspector General

OCIG provides independent legal advice and counsel to the IG on various matters, including statutes, regulations, legislation, and policy directives. OCIG also advises the IG on investigative procedures and techniques, as well as on legal implications and conclusions to be drawn from audit and investigative material. Also, OCIG administers the Civil Monetary Penalty program.

Office of External Relations

OER manages OIG's external and public affairs programs, and serves as the principal advisor on news releases and in providing information to the various news reporting services. OER develops OIG's media and public information policies, directs OIG's external and public affairs programs, and serves as the primary contact for those seeking information about OIG. OER prepares OIG publications, speeches, and presentations to internal and external organizations, and responds to Congressional correspondence.

Office of Technology and Resource Management

OTRM supports OIG by providing information management and systems security. OTRM also coordinates OIG's budget, procurement, telecommunications, facilities, and human resources. In addition, OTRM is the focal point for OIG's strategic planning function, and the development and monitoring of performance measures. In addition, OTRM receives and assigns for action allegations of criminal and administrative violations of Social Security laws, identifies fugitives receiving benefit payments from SSA, and provides technological assistance to investigations.