

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

November 2010



Objective

To assess the Social Security Administration's (SSA) plans for developing an occupational information system (OIS) designed specifically for its disability adjudication process.

Background

SSA used occupational information in over 60 percent of all initial and reconsideration disability determinations in Calendar Years 2007 through 2009.

However, the Department of Labor has replaced the *Dictionary of Occupational Titles* (DOT) with the Occupational Information Network (O*NET).

Some stakeholders consider SSA's initiative to design and implement its own OIS to be the most important policy matter addressed by SSA in more than 30 years.

To view the full report, visit http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO_BEPDF/A-01-10-21024.pdf

Job Information Used in the Social Security Administration's Disability Claims Adjudication Process (A-01-10-21024)

Our Findings

Based on information available as of July 2010, SSA's plans for developing an OIS designed specifically for its disability adjudication process appear reasonable. The DOT is no longer representative of all jobs in the national economy because it has not been updated in almost 20 years. Additionally, neither the DOT nor O*NET was designed to be used for SSA's disability adjudication process.

The Agency researched these issues; determined that available occupational information systems did not meet its requirements; and decided to create a new OIS tailored specifically for use in its disability programs, rather than modify the DOT or O*NET systems. SSA determined that modifying these systems would require fundamentally changing its underlying organization, identifying elements required for disability examiners to make decisions, testing of those elements, developing an instrument to conduct data collection, and validating results—all steps required in creating a new OIS.

SSA formed an advisory panel for professional advice in developing an OIS. The panel delivered its recommendations in September 2009 and concurred with the Agency's need to create a new OIS rather than update the DOT or modify the O*NET. As the OIS project transitioned into the research and development phase, SSA requested further advice and asked the panel to review reports that may affect or inform its work on the OIS. In June 2010, the advisory panel issued its findings after review of the National Academy of Sciences report on O*NET. Additionally, SSA

- formed an internal cross-component workgroup;
- is coordinating its efforts with other Federal agencies;
- plans to conduct studies on the best methods for collecting, aggregating, and using vocational information in its disability adjudication process;
- is conducting outreach to stakeholders; and
- plans to incorporate suggestions and feedback from the advisory panel and other stakeholders.