

Report Summary

Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General

July 2009



Objective

To evaluate the Social Security Administration's (SSA) plans for the funds earmarked for health information technology (HIT) under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (ARRA).

Background

ARRA allows the Commissioner of SSA to use up to \$40 million for HIT research activities to facilitate the adoption of electronic health records in disability claims. These funds must be obligated by September 30, 2010.

HIT is part of the President's initiative to develop nation-wide HIT standards and the Nationwide Health Information Network to accelerate patient access to electronic health records. The Agency's HIT goal is to provide the knowledge, skills and tools to collect, manage, use, and share medical information efficiently.

To view the full report, visit
http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADO_BEPDF/A-01-09-29155.pdf

Quick Response Evaluation: Funding for Health Information Technology under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (A-01-09-29155)

Our Findings

As of July 2009, SSA had developed a plan for spending ARRA funds designated for HIT and had established procedures to ensure the funds were spent appropriately. Specifically, the Agency had

- obtained approval of its plans from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB);
- appointed a Special Advisor for HIT;
- designated a Senior Accountable Official;
- established HIT workgroups;
- set a timeline for awarding contracts for HIT spending; and
- planned for oversight of HIT contracts.

SSA plans to spend \$24 million in ARRA funds to award fixed-price contracts by the end of January 2010. The Agency intends to award these contracts through fair and open competition to healthcare providers, networks, health information exchanges, and regional health information networks. Part of these funds will also be used for IT contractor services to assist SSA in supporting the expansion of the MEGA HIT application to these healthcare providers.

Matters for Consideration

SSA decided to spend \$24 million for contractor support for HIT-related projects. The Agency has followed ARRA and OMB guidelines in developing its plans to spend ARRA funds on HIT initiatives. Once these contracts are awarded, the Agency should continually reassess whether the Agency could manage more contracts or whether additional funds should be used for HIT-related initiatives.