

November 2013

Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To report on Social Security Administration (SSA) field office (FO) performance for certain key workloads.

Background

SSA FOs are the primary points of contact for in-person interaction with the public. SSA's FO organizational structure comprises 10 regional offices, 6 processing centers, and approximately 1,260 FOs.

To assess SSA's workload data reliability, we reviewed several data sources. Our review revealed several concerns related to the completeness, accuracy, and consistency of data obtained. We also noted that FO staff, supervisors, and managers had numerous workload reports available to monitor FO workloads. For our review, we were not able to determine which sources provided accurate and complete workload data. At the request of SSA management, we analyzed FO performance using the following sources: (1) District Office Workload Report, (2) Management Information (MI) Central Processing Time Reports, and (3) MI Central Customer Service Record Reports.

After discussions with SSA management, we chose the following workloads for review: (1) title II Old-Age and Survivors Insurance claims, (2) title II Disability Insurance claims, (3) title XVI Supplemental Security Income Disabled/Blind claims, (4) title II and XVI Status Changes and Benefit Verifications, and (5) Enumerations.

Our Findings

This report assesses workload data reliability and identifies instances of possible outlying performance within the Office of Operations' FO structure. Given our findings, the Agency should examine these anomalies and implement corrective actions, where appropriate. This report focuses on five key workloads, processing times, visitor counts, and wait times. There are additional factors, beyond the numerical statistics we analyzed, that may provide a more comprehensive assessment of FO performance. The findings outlined in this report could help SSA identify performance trends and training needs as well as best practices that may be helpful nationwide.

During our analysis of FO performance on specific workloads, we noted that, in general, higher performing FOs cleared more claims and other services—in total and on a per-employee basis. Higher performing FOs also generally had larger volumes of visitors without appointments, but these customers had longer wait times than customers at lower performing FOs. Further, higher performing FOs had larger staff sizes than lower performing FOs.

SSA representatives stated that regional and area offices monitored individual FO performance through personal contact with office managers and the significant MI collected. Office of Operations executives stated that they monitored FO performance at a high level, rather than at an individual office level. We believe national level monitoring would assist the Agency with its increasing workloads and decreasing workforce.

Our Recommendations

1. Identify the most accurate, complete, and reliable data source(s) for Agency workload count and processing time data, and ensure that all Agency components are using the same source(s) for reporting purposes.
2. Develop a methodology for measuring and monitoring nationwide FO performance to ensure accurate, consistent, and timely customer service.

SSA agreed with our recommendations.