OFFICE OF
THE INSPECTOR GENERAL

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION'S ELECTRONIC SERVICES

October 2011   **A-14-11-11112**

EVALUATION REPORT

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.

SOCIAL SECURITY

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 28, 2011   Refer To:

To: The Commissioner

From: Inspector General

Subject: The Social Security Administration's Electronic Services (A-14-11-11112)

OBJECTIVE

Our objectives were to (1) determine what Social Security Administration's (SSA) electronic services[1] were available to the public; (2) determine how the Agency planned to expand these services in the future; and (3) assess SSA's marketing of its electronic services through the use of social media.[2] Since social media is one of the newest venues used by SSA to communicate with its customers, we focused on the Agency's use of social media for this evaluation.

BACKGROUND

This report discusses SSA's electronic services, specifically

- the current electronic services available to the public,

- the Agency's plans for future electronic services,

- the Agency's use of social media to market its electronic services, and

- how other Federal agencies are using social media.

SSA does not have a long-term customer service delivery plan, including a strategic electronic services plan. The Agency uses its *Agency Strategic Plan FY 2008 - 2013* to lay out the incremental steps it must take to reach its customer service delivery vision (that is, world-class customer service).

---

[1] Electronic Services offer the public, businesses, and other government agencies access to SSA services via the Internet, telephone automation, and direct data exchange.

[2] Social media integrates technology, social interaction, and content creation using the "wisdom of crowds" to collaboratively connect online information. Through social media, people or groups can create, organize, edit, comment on, combine, and share content.

SSA's November 2010 Retirement Wave Report[3] states that the Agency is facing many daunting challenges. A surge in workloads due to the recession has driven an extra 1 million economically distressed workers and families to turn to SSA for help. Additionally, American baby boomers are aging and filing a flood of retirement and disability claims. Moreover, 23.4 percent of SSA's employees is eligible to retire. SSA has primarily administered its services to the public through face-to-face or telephone contact. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, SSA received approximately 45 million visitors in its field offices (FO) and handled almost 68 million transactions via the national 800-number.

SSA's FY 2010 Performance and Accountability Report (PAR) discusses the Agency's progress in achieving its strategic goals. These strategic goals are (1) *Eliminate our Hearings Backlog and Prevent its Recurrence*, (2) *Improve the Speed and Quality of our Disability Process*, (3) *Improve our Retiree and Other Core Services*, and (4) *Preserve the Public's Trust in our Programs*.[4]

Further, in support of the President's Government-wide initiative to build a high-performance Government, the Agency identified four priority goals as part of its *FY 2012 Budget Overview and Annual Performance Plan*.[5] The performance goals relevant to this review are, *Increase the Number of Online Applications* and *Improve SSA's Customers' Service Experience on the Telephone, in Field Offices, and Online*. To assist the Agency in meeting its workload demands and improve its services to the public, SSA developed Web-based services for both retirement and disability claims. In 2000, SSA took its first step by introducing the Internet Social Security Benefit Application.

SSA needs to continue investing in ways to serve efficiently and effectively its expanding number of customers. In December 2010, there were 34.5 million retirees and the Agency anticipates the number to increase by nearly 80 million over the next 20 years – approximately 10,000 claims per day.

---

[3] SSA, *Mission Critical Occupation Fiscal Years 2010-2019, Retirement Wave Report*, November 2010.

[4] *SSA, FY 2010 Performance and Accountability Report, p. 11-13*.

[5] *SSA, FY 2012 Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committee*, p. 79.

In April 2010,[6] SSA's Commissioner testified before Congress and stated:

> At the hearing two years ago, I discussed our vision to overhaul our online retirement application. The application we had in place at that time was nowhere near best-demonstrated practices, and, for most of the decade, only about 10 percent of the public applied for retirement online. To ensure that we provided the baby-boomers the service they expected and to free up our field offices so they could handle the matters requiring face-to-face interaction, we set a goal of receiving 50 percent of our retirement applications online within five years.

To meet the Commissioner's goals, the Agency plans to increase and improve its online applications as a way of reducing the number of customers visiting its field offices or calling the national 800-number. As of April 8, 2011, the Agency was receiving 39.6 percent of retirement applications online.

To determine what electronic services SSA offers, what electronic services it will offer, and how its marketing through social media affected electronic service usage, we interviewed SSA employees in the Offices of Operations, Systems, Quality Performance (OQP), and Communications. We analyzed SSA's electronic services management information and documented the Agency's proposed electronic services. We also reviewed relevant electronic services Federal laws, guidelines, policies and procedures. Finally, we contacted other Federal agencies that have social media sites to obtain information on their use and experience with social media. See Appendix B for additional information regarding our scope and methodology. See Appendix C for a glossary of electronic services.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

As of January 2011, SSA had 22[7] Internet-based electronic services available to the public (see Appendix C).[8] Based on the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) scores, SSA has the three highest-rated online services in all of Federal Government. However, the Agency's Overall Customer Satisfaction Rating reported in its FY 2010 PAR does not reflect the entire landscape of Internet transactions made by SSA's customers.

---

[6] *Oversight Hearing on Social Security Administration Field Office Service Delivery: Hearing Before House Ways and Means Committee Subcommittee on Social Security*, 111th Cong. 2 (2010) *(*Statement of Michael Astrue, Commissioner of SSA*).*

[7] After our fieldwork, SSA identified the Public Fraud Reporting Form as an electronic service.

[8] Appendix C includes four electronic services that were not operating as of January 2011, but SSA plans to begin operating these applications by the end of Calendar Year (CY) 2011. These applications are *Spanish i1020, Spanish iClaim, MySocialSecurity.com*, and *Online Social Security Statements*.

The Agency plans to improve its authentication process[9] and release several other services. Although the Agency has made progress, it continues to make a concerted effort to provide even more electronic services to the public and promote the public's use of electronic services that are already available – especially online benefit applications. The Agency has a tactical plan to develop and implement electronic services in FY 2011 but no documented electronic services strategic plan beyond 2011.

To date, the marketing efforts for SSA's electronic services have primarily been through television and radio public service announcements, public affairs specialists, print ads, Webpage postings and promotions, display banners, press releases, billboards, and airport signs. SSA began using social media[10] in 2007 and expanded its efforts in March 2010. The Agency can draw a "cause and effect" relationship between its electronic services marketing efforts and its online service use. However, SSA cannot demonstrate a cause and effect relationship between visitation to its social media sites and the number of online applications it receives.

Electronic Services Available to the Public

Based on the ACSI scores, SSA had the three highest-rated online services in all of Government—*iClaim*[11] *(91 out of 100),* the *Retirement Estimator*, *(90 out of 100)*, and *Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs (Extra Help)* application *(i1020) (88 out of 100)* —as of February 2011 (see Table 1). The customer satisfaction scores for these online services exceed the top-rated commercial site, Netflix. The Agency's average fourth quarter 2010 satisfaction score was 79 out of 100. However, the Agency's *Frequently Asked Questions (69 out of 100), Main Site (70 out of 100), and Policy Pages (72 out of 100)* online services received much lower ratings.

Since the Agency's *Frequently Asked Questions, Main Site, and Policy Pages* have lower ratings, it is imperative that SSA improve these sites. A commitment of resources to improve these sites could help to attract and keep the customers using the Agency's electronic services. This would help reduce the workloads in the FOs and through the 800-number.

To address customer concerns, the Agency convened a Satisfaction Insight Review group that meets monthly to review customer service feedback to determine the necessary service improvements and implement appropriate solutions. For example, the Agency received feedback from its customers on its socialsecurity.gov Website. Based on this feedback, SSA redesigned the site.

---

[9] Authentication is the process of determining whether someone or something is, in fact, who or what they declare to be.

[10] In 2007, the Agency launched its YouTube efforts. It launched its Facebook and Twitter efforts in 2010.

[11] *iClaim* includes four Internet-based electronic services: *Retirement*, *Spouse*, *Disability* and *Medicare Only* applications.
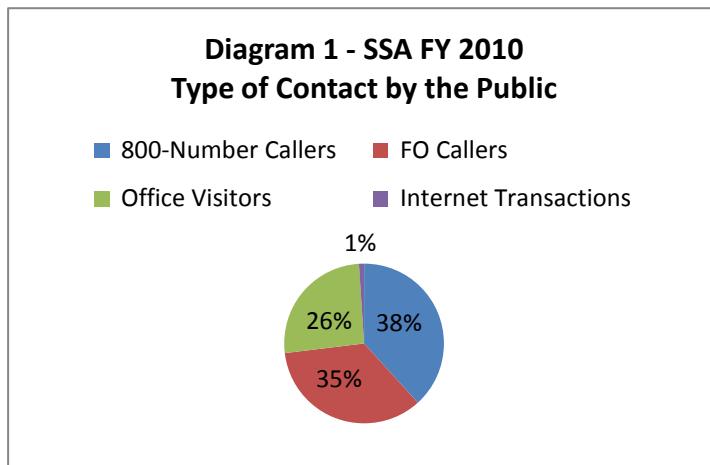
Table 1: ACSI Scorecard Ratings

Applications Surveyed	Overall Satisfaction Scores Sampling Dates February 9 Through 15, 2011
Business Service Online	82
Frequently Asked Questions	69
Disability Report	82
Main Site	70
Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs (now Extra Help)	88
iClaim	91
Retirement Estimator	90
Policy Pages	72

To calculate the overall customer satisfaction of individuals who do business with SSA through its major service delivery channels, the Agency used the results of the OQP *Overall Service Satisfaction: FY 2010 Performance Indicator Report.* The OQP survey includes the following categories as the major service delivery channels: 800-Number Callers, FO Callers, Office Visitors, and Internet Transactions.

Illustrated in Diagram 1,[12] the majority of SSA's contact with the public was through telephone calls to FOs (35 percent) or the 800-number (38 percent). According to OQP's *Overall Service Satisfaction: FY 2010 Performance Indicator Report,* only 1 percent of the public's contact was online.[13]

Diagram 1 - SSA FY 2010 Type of Contact by the Public

For FY 2010, SSA established an overall average customer satisfaction goal of 83.5 percent for individuals who do business with the Agency in person, by telephone, and online.[14] As illustrated in Table 2, the Agency did not achieve its overall customer satisfaction goal of 83.5 percent.

---

[12] *SSA,* OQP *Overall Service Satisfaction: FY 2010 Performance Indicator Report*, October 2010.

[13] For this report, the Internet contact includes actual *iClaim* and *Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs* (Extra Help) application *(i1020)* counts for FY 2009.

[14] *SSA, Fiscal Year 2010 Performance and Accountability Report*, p. 66.

Table 2: FY 2010 Service Satisfaction Rates

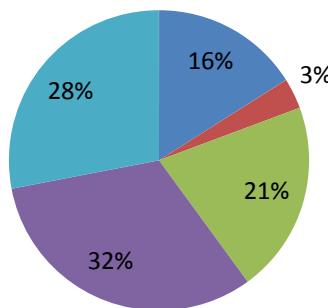| Type of Contact	Percent Excellent/Very Good/Good
800- Number Callers	73
FO Callers	75
Office Visitors	90
Internet Transactions	91
All Contacts	78

Although Table 2 indicates that *Internet Transactions* had a satisfaction rating of 91 percent, it does not appear that this category includes all types of *Internet Transactions.*[15] As previously indicated, SSA has 22 Internet-based electronic services available to the public online. SSA staff informed us that the *Internet Transactions* category only included two of the three highest-rated online services—*iClaim* and *Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs (Extra Help)*. As a result, the reported OQP *Overall Service Satisfaction: FY 2010 Performance Indicator Report* outcome does not reflect the entire landscape of *Internet Transactions* (that is, electronic services). As shown in Diagram 2 and based on SSA's *Electronic Services Usage Statistics*, the *Internet Transactions* category, which includes *iClaim* and *Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs (Extra Help)* represents 19 percent of the electronic services used by the public.[16] While *Retirement Estimator* represents 32 percent, *Check Your Social Security Benefits* represents 21 percent, and the remaining electronic services represent 28 percent, their transactions are not included in the OQP survey. Nevertheless, in OQP's FY 2010 *Internet Report Card Survey,* the Agency states it plans to add more online applications to the *Internet Transactions* contact list in the future. In FY 2011, SSA added *Direct Deposit* and *Change of Address* to the Agency's *Internet Transactions* contact list.

---

[15] *SSA, OQP Overall Service Satisfaction: FY 2010 Performance Indicator Report*, October 2010, p. 2 and A-2.

[16] *iClaim* and *Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs (Extra Help)* represent 19 percent. *iClaim* included three Internet based electronic services: *Retirement*, *Spouse*, and *Disability* applications. The 19 percent represents 18 of the 22 confirmed electronic services used by the public for the 12-month period ended March 2011.

**Diagram 2: Internet Transaction Analysis 12 Months
Ending in March 2011**

■ iClaim (Disability, Medicare Only, Retirement and Spouse Applications)

■ Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs - 06/05

■ Check Your Social Security Benefits - 02/01

■ Retirement Estimator - 07/08

■ All others (remaining applications)

To assist the Agency's efforts to provide world-class service, SSA should develop a strategic plan for its electronic services that will contribute to SSA's technology vision and customer service delivery goals. Additionally, SSA should develop performance metrics to measure customer satisfaction for key electronic service applications. Moreover, we recommend SSA continue to evaluate its composition of customer satisfaction ratings included in its Overall Average Customer Satisfaction goal, and include all electronic services, if applicable, in the measurement. Finally, we recommend the Agency continue to review customer service feedback to determine the necessary service improvements and implement appropriate solutions. For example, the Agency should continue hosting Satisfaction Insight Reviews. These workgroups provide a forum to discuss issues with various electronic service applications and brainstorm to come up with suggestions on how to improve customer satisfaction.

Future Electronic Services

SSA does not have a strategic plan for its electronic services. The Agency does have a short-term tactical plan to develop and implement electronic services (*Social Security Statement* and *Spanish iClaims*), but not beyond 2011. SSA stated its strategic electronic services plan is included in the Agency's overall planning process and incorporated in the Strategic Information Technology Assessment and Review (SITAR) process,[17] and its *Agency Strategic Plan FY 2008 -2013.* However, neither the SITAR process nor the *Agency's Strategic Plan* provides an electronic services vision beyond

---

[17] The SITAR process aligns SSA's technology investments with the Agency's strategic priorities.

5 years. The *Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993*[18] requires that the head of each agency submit a strategic plan for program activities to the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and Congress. GPRA helps Federal managers improve service delivery by requiring a plan for meeting program objectives and by providing information about program results and service quality.[19] GPRA also designates the strategic plan cover a period of not less than 5 years from the FY submitted and be updated and revised at least every 3 years.[20]

SSA is developing the Citizen Authentication Initiative to authenticate its electronic service users in the future. The Citizen Authentication Initiative will provide a controlled, single sign-on access methodology. A user will only need to sign into SSA's online services once to access multiple applications. Currently, every user must log into each online service separately and be authenticated, if required. The first electronic service scheduled to incorporate the citizen authentication solution will be the *Social Security Statement*. The Agency anticipates releasing the Citizen Authentication Initiative in CY 2012.

Further, in CY 2011, SSA plans to offer *Spanish iClaim*, and *Spanish i1020*. The *Spanish iClaim* allows applicants to apply for retirement; disability; spouse; and recently, *Medicare Only* benefits in a Spanish language format online. The *Spanish i1020* is the Spanish version of the *Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs (Extra Help)* application and allows users to apply online for help with prescription drug costs. The Agency also anticipates releasing *MySocialSecurity.gov* in CY 2012. *MySocialSecurity.gov* will provide personalized service to the public online. When fully implemented, individuals will be able to access and update SSA-related information online, such as employment records and pre-entitlement and post-entitlement information. See Table 3 below for electronic service implementation since 2008.

---

[18] GPRA of 1993, Pub. L. No. 103-62, § 3, 107 Stat. 285, 286 (as codified at 5 U.S.C. § 306).

[19] GPRA of 1993, Pub. L. No. 103-62, § 2, 107 Stat. 285.

[20] GPRA of 1993, Pub. L. No. 103-62, § 3, 107 Stat. 285, 286 (as codified at 5 U.S.C. § 306).

Table 3:	Electronic Services Implemented as of 2008[21]	
	Year	**Description**
As of 2008	1996	Social Security Statement *
	1999	Proof of Income Letter (Benefit Verification)
		Replacement 1099
	2000	Medicare Replacement Card
		Retirement Application
	2001	Check Your Social Security Benefits
		Spouse Application
		Change of Address (Password)
		Direct Deposit (Password)
	2002	Disability Application
		Public Fraud Reporting Form
	2003	Child Disability Report 3820
	2004	Appeal Disability Report 3441
		Change of Address (Knowledge-Based)
	2005	Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs (Extra Help)

Electronic Services Implemented Since 2008		
	Year	**Description**
Since 2008	2008	Retirement Estimator
		Application Status
		iClaim (includes Retirement, Spouse, and Disability Applications)
	2009	Special Notice Option
		Revised Adult Disability Report 3368
	2010	Spanish Retirement Estimator
		iAppointment
		Medicare Only Application

Electronic Services 2011 and beyond	
	Description
2011 and Beyond	Spanish i1020
	Spanish iClaim
	MySocialSecurity.gov
	Online Social Security Statement

---

[21] See Appendix C for a description of the electronic services.

Moreover, SSA is studying the feasibility of developing a "Click to Talk" application for customer support. A customer would click on a link embedded in an existing electronic service to connect to an SSA employee. The SSA employee would assist the customer in real time, instead of the customer calling the 800-number or visiting a local FO. However, the "Click to Talk" application would require a business process change and therefore will take some time to develop.

As SSA works to improve its ability to establish a long-term roadmap for the Agency's business systems and operating environment, we recommend the Agency develop a strategic plan for its electronic services that will contribute to SSA's technology vision and customer service delivery goals. A strategic electronic services plan should include a development and implementation strategy that would assist SSA in managing its future workloads better in its FOs, telephone services, and online applications. In addition, we recommend SSA continue expanding its portfolio of electronic services to provide additional ways for the public to do business with the Agency.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Use of Social Media to Market SSA's Electronic Services

SSA publicizes its electronic services through various media.[22] For example, SSA has used minimal-cost marketing mechanisms, such as television public service announcements and marketing campaigns featuring Patty Duke, Chubby Checker, and George Takei, to interact with its customers and help increase the use of electronic services. The celebrity spokespersons donate their time to promote online services. As of February 2011, the Patty Duke File Online Campaign television public service announcements had generated over $25 million in free airtime. The Chubby Checker Extra Help Campaign television public service announcements produced over $60 million in free airtime. Recently, SSA launched the "Boldly Go" campaign with George Takei to encourage the public to go online to conduct business with the Agency.

In October 2007, SSA started using YouTube. In March 2010, SSA started using Facebook and Twitter. YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter provide an inexpensive way to market SSA's electronic services, provide information, and direct the public to www.socialsecurity.gov. When newsworthy events or public information campaigns take place, or anytime there is a need or desire to communicate important information to the public, the Agency uses social media tools, along with other communication vehicles such as press releases, to deliver the information.

---

[22] SSA uses television and radio public service announcements, public affair specialists, print advertisements, Webpage posting and promotions, display banners, social media, press releases, billboards, and airport signs to publicize its electronic services.

In the past, SSA has posted on Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter such items as the announcement of the opening of a new SSA Telephone Service Center; the emergency closing of SSA local offices in areas experiencing hazardous weather conditions; a new Spanish online service; and SSA Webinars the public can watch online.

The cost of creating and posting SSA messages to social media sites is about $41,000 annually.[23] Three SSA Webmasters[24] also serve as SSA's social media administrators. SSA's Facebook page in English now has about 10,000 followers.

In FY 2010, SSA spent about $2.1 million on search marketing,[25] billboards, and public service announcements with free airtime. However, SSA had not been able to conduct aggressive yearlong continuous advertising because of budget constraints. The Office of Communications spent approximately $2.5 million to market its electronic services. According to SSA, the "cause and effect" from its marketing efforts to encourage online services was demonstrated by an increase in use after various marketing campaigns. For example, after

- the 2007 Kathleen Casey-Kirshling promotion, the first baby boomer to file for retirement online, retirement applications filed online reached 19 percent of all retirement claims filed;

- Patty Duke's promotion, retirement benefits filed online doubled to 157,000 in the first month and grew 50 percent in the following months, representing 32 percent of all retirement claims filed in 2009; and

- the 2011 Patty Duke and George Takei "Boldly Go" promotion, retirement applications filed online increased to 41 percent of all retirement claims filed.

In a sluggish economy, private firms are fine-tuning their Websites and using free social media to take full marketing advantage of the business world.[26] Although social media is an inexpensive way (approximately $41,000 annually in employee salaries) of reaching thousands of people, SSA stated there is no way for the Agency to draw a "cause and effect" relationship between visitation to its social media sites and the number of online applications it receives. OQP conducted a survey[27] of 6,000 i1020

---

[23] The cost only includes employees' salaries. Per SSA management, the Agency's budget does not include additional funding for social media use.

[24] Two Webmasters and one back-up.

[25] Paid Internet Search Marketing/Sponsored Ads vary about $1 million to $1.5 million per year at about $1.60 per click.

[26] David Holt, *Inexpensive social media marketing in a slow economy*, *Accounting Web*, http://www.accountingweb.com/topic/social-networking/inexpensive-social-media-marketing-slow-economy.

[27] OQP, *FY 2010 Internet Report Card Survey Report,* January 2011.

and Title II retirement and disability applicants. In the survey, the Agency asked questions like the following.

Question 1: How did you hear about Social Security's online application?

The customer could have responded: (a) Social Security, (b) Family member or friend, (c) Other Website, (d) Doctor, social worker, or other health care professional, (e) Nonprofit organization, (f) Attorney or paid professional consulting service, (g) Media (newspaper, magazine, TV or radio), or (h) Other.

However, the OQP survey does not offer a response option for social media when asked how the claimant heard about the online application or if social media influenced the customer to use the Agency's electronic services. In addition, SSA's ACSI survey does not ask customers how they heard about the Agency's electronic services or if social media influenced them to use the Agency's electronic services.

According to the *Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995*,[28] Federal agencies should ". . . ensure the greatest possible public benefit from and maximize the utility of information created, collected, maintained, used, shared and disseminated by, or for, the Government."

We recommend that SSA revise a question on its OQP survey and add a question to its ACSI surveys that asks customer to identify how they learned about the Agency's electronic services; and include social media as one of the options. For example, a question the Agency could ask is as follows.

How did you learn about our electronic services?

  a) Television
  b) Radio
  c) Newspaper
  d) Friend
  e) Social Media
  f) Other _____.

Other Federal Agencies' Use of Social Media

SSA should continue exploring more innovative ways of providing additional avenues to communicate and interact with its customers. We contacted several Federal agencies to obtain a better understanding of how these agencies are using social media to interact with their customers. We contacted the Departments of Education, Housing and Urban Development, and Veterans Affairs. All three agencies implemented social media resource links in 2009 and have had a favorable experience. The three agencies are using social media sites to improve their communication with the public.

---

[28] *Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995*, Pub. L. No. 104-13, § 3501 (2), 44 U.S.C. § 3501 (2).

Based on additional Internet research, we found other Federal agencies are using social media to interact with their customers. The Federal Emergency Management Agency used social media tools to get information to the public during a major winter storm. A former Federal Emergency Management Agency Deputy Chief of Staff stated the agency should have captured and relayed practical information people needed in a crisis, such as which shelters accepted dogs or which gas stations had fuel -- common questions during evacuations.[29]

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration used social media to engage 15 to 150 randomly selected Twitter users to spread the word about its mission, which resulted in communications disseminated to millions and the public's successful engagement.

According to a Nextgov article, the Department of State used social media "to understand and influence the public uprising in Egypt.[30] The Department of State used Facebook and Twitter to get critical information to American citizens. A subject matter expert stated, "If you're trying to engage and connect with and get information to and from a particular audience . . . increasingly this is the way to do it."

Other Federal agencies have used mobile applications and social media to reach its customers. For example, the Internal Revenue Service has had success with its mobile application, the IRS2Go mobile telephone tax refund tracking application.[31] Since social media is an inexpensive way to reach thousands of people, we recommend SSA continue to explore, develop, and implement more innovative ways to interact and communicate with its customers. This could assist the Agency to meet the Commissioner's goal of receiving 50 percent of retirement applications online as of 2012.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SSA, like all agencies, must manage its resources for optimal impact. As such, opportunities exist to provide additional electronic services needed and demanded by its customers. To that end, we support the Agency in its efforts to take advantage of technology to make work processes more efficient and provide the responsive service the public expects. We support efforts to develop better ways to communicate effectively and provide needed services to the Agency's customers. Consequently, SSA needs to define what services its customers demand, and work toward

---

[29] Brian Kalish, *Social media trends to be a one-way communication for FEMA*, *Nextgov*, February 3, 2011.

[30] Brian Kalish, *State Department's Use of Social Media in Egypt Gets Mixed Reviews*, *Nextgov*, January 31, 2011.

[31] After our fieldwork, SSA released its first mobile application *Baby Names Mobile Application.* The application allows individuals to search the most popular baby names from the last 120 years using official Social Security data.

implementing these services to remain a provider of world-class customer service to the public.

We recommend SSA:

1. Develop a strategic plan for its electronic services that will contribute to SSA's technology vision and customer service delivery goals.
2. Develop a performance metric to measure customer satisfaction for key electronic service applications.
3. Continue to evaluate its composition of customer satisfaction ratings included in its Overall Average Customer Satisfaction goal and include all electronic services, if applicable, in the measurement.
4. Continue to review customer service feedback to determine the necessary service improvements and implement appropriate solutions.
5. Continue expanding its portfolio of electronic services to provide additional ways for the public to do business with the Agency.
6. Revise a question on its OQP survey and add a question in the ACSI surveys that asks customers to identify how they learned about the Agency's electronic services and include social media as one of the options.
7. Continue to explore, develop, and implement more innovative ways to interact and communicate with its customers.

AGENCY COMMENTS

SSA agreed with Recommendations 3 through 7. However, the Agency disagreed with Recommendations 1 and 2. See Appendix D for the full text of the Agency's comments.

OIG RESPONSE

For Recommendation 1, SSA does not believe it is wise to commit to specific expansions or refinements of Agency electronic services in future years given the constantly evolving needs of the Agency and its customers. We find it unusual that SSA responded in this manner since the Social Security Advisory Board (SSAB)[32] recommended SSA develop a service delivery strategy that allows the public the option of interacting with the Agency in the way that best meets individuals' needs, in person, electronically, through the mail, or by telephone. In addition, the Future Systems

---

[32] SSAB, *The Social Security Administration: A Vision of the Future,* March 2011, p. 6. SSAB is a seven-member bipartisan advisory board created in 1994 when SSA became an independent agency. It was created to advise the President, Congress, and the Commissioner of Social Security on Social Security and Supplemental Security Income Programs.

Technology Advisory Panel (FSTAP)[33] recommended SSA move to an electronic customer self-service model with the goal of moving transactions to the Internet each year until 90 percent of its business takes place online.

Overall, we have stated in prior reviews the Agency lacks strategic planning for customer service[34] and information technology (IT) processing needs.[35] SSA does not have a long-term customer service delivery plan. We believe, as a part of its customer service delivery plan, the Agency should include a discussion of its future plans to develop and implement electronic services. As SSA implements solutions to address its customer service and IT processing requirements, it needs to have a more strategic and integrated approach to its planning efforts.

For Recommendation 2, SSA stated it does not believe a performance metric for its online services is appropriate. The Agency further stated it does not have parallel metrics for transactional services handled through other service delivery channels, which account for a much larger proportion of SSA's workload. We reiterate the need for an electronic service performance metric. The SSAB also recommended SSA have measurements that include assessment of the Agency's ability to support each service option as well as the quality of the service rendered. In the future, we believe the majority of customers will use the Internet instead of calling or visiting field offices to do business with SSA. Therefore, the Agency needs to develop specific electronic service metrics to determine which services are meeting its customers' needs.

Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr.

---

[33] FSTAP, *Re-imagining Social Security*, June 2010, p. 2. The Commissioner of Social Security established FSTAP in February 2008 to provide independent advice and recommendations on the future of systems technology and electronic services at SSA 5 to 10 years into the future.

[34] SSA OIG, *SSA's Customer Service Delivery (A-07-11-01125),* July 2011.

[35] SSA OIG, *SSA's IT Strategic Planning (A-44-09-29120)*, June 2009.

Appendices

Acronyms

ACSI	American Customer Satisfaction Index
CY	Calendar Year
FO	Field Office
FSTAP	Future Systems Technology Advisory Panel
FY	Fiscal Year
GPRA	*Government Performance and Results Act of 1993*
IT	Information Technology
OQP	Office of Quality Performance
PAR	Performance and Accountability Report
SITAR	Strategic Information Technology Assessment and Review
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSAB	Social Security Advisory Board

Scope and Methodology

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Interviewed SSA staff responsible for the Agency's electronic services available to the public.

- Interviewed personnel from SSA's Offices of Operations, Systems, Communications, and Quality Performance.

- Obtained and reviewed American Customer Satisfaction Index surveys.

- Requested and received a list of current and future electronic services.

- Requested and received an explanation of the Office of Electronic Services Web Analytics.

We also examined:

- SSA's Fiscal Year 2010 Performance and Accountability Report.

- Office of Management and Budget Circular A-130.[1]

- *Government Performance and Results Act of 1993.*[2]

- *Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995.*[3]

We performed our evaluation in October 2010 through June 2011 in Baltimore, Maryland. The entities reviewed were the Offices of Operations, Systems, Quality Performance, and Communications. We conducted our review in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's *Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation.*[4]

---

[1] Office of Management and Budget Circular A-130,Transmittal Memorandum #4, Management of Federal Information Resources (November 28, 2000).

[2] *Government Performance and Results* Act *of 1993*, Pub. L. No. 103-62, § 2, 107 Stat. 285-286.

[3] *Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995*, Pub. L. No. 104-13, § 3501, et seq., 44 U.S.C. § 3501 et seq.

[4] As of January 2011, the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency was superseded by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency, *Inspector General Reform Act of 2008*, Pub. L. No. 110-409 § 7, 5 U.S.C. App. 3 § 11.

Social Security Administration's Glossary of Electronic Services

	Electronic Service Applications and Implementation Date	Description
1	Spanish i1020 Pending	Spanish version of the Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs (*Extra Help*) application allows users to apply online for help with prescription drug costs.
2	Spanish iClaim Pending	Allows applicants to apply for Retirement, Disability, Spouse, and recently, Medicare Only benefits in a Spanish language format online.
3	MySocialSecurity.com Pending	Will provide personalized service to the public online.
4	Online Social Security Statements Pending	Allows access to Social Security statements online instead of waiting for a once-yearly letter or contacting a field office.
5	Spanish Retirement Estimator December 2010	Internet users can enter retirement data to get benefit estimates in Spanish.
6	iAppointment November 2010	The public can schedule an appointment with a servicing field office online.
7	Medicare Only Application February 2010	The new Medicare application is an addition to the Social Security Administration's (SSA) suite of online services. Third parties may also complete an electronic application on behalf of someone else. This application is included in iClaim.
8	Revised Adult Disability Report 3368 December 2009	The i3368 is a citizen-to-government Web application that collects information (medical data and work history) on disability reports in conjunction with disability claims.
9	Special Notice Option November 2009	SSA developed a special notice option to respond to a court order to present additional options to Title II and XVI recipients, representative payees, and claim applicants who are blind or visually impaired. This process captures individuals' preferences for receiving notices and other communications from SSA.

	Electronic Service Applications and Implementation Date	Description
10	Application Status December 2008	This application gives claimants the ability to check the status of their Social Security claims online.
11	Retirement Estimator July 2008	Internet users are able to enter retirement data to get benefit estimates online.
12	Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs *(Extra Help)* June 2005	i1020 (Applicant & third Party) allows users to apply online for help with prescription drug costs.
13	Change of Address (Knowledge-Based) February 2004	Beneficiaries can update their Title II benefits address online using a knowledge-based authentication process.
14	Appeal Disability Report 3441 February 2004	Allows Internet users to complete the Disability Report-Appeal (SSA-3441) online.
15	Child Disability Report 3820 November 2003	The public can complete the Disability Report-Child (SSA-3820) online. An automatically assigned re-entry number allows users the ability to complete the i3820 over multiple sessions.
16	Disability Application January 2002	Claimants can apply for disability benefits online. This application is included in iClaim.
17	Public Fraud Reporting Form December 2002	The public can report allegations of fraud, waste, and abuse concerning SSA programs and operations.
18	Direct Deposit (Password) August 2001	Using a personal identification number and password, beneficiaries can start or change direct deposit for Title II benefits online.
19	Change of Address (Password) April 2001	Beneficiaries can update their Title II benefits address and telephone number online using a personal identification number and password.
20	Spouse Application March 2001	A spouse who has not worked or who has low earnings can apply for benefits online. This application is included in iClaim.

21	Check Your Social Security Benefits February 2001	Beneficiaries can obtain information that SSA has on record online using a personal identification number and password. For example, direct deposit, Medicare, benefit payments, or overpayment information.
22	Retirement Application November 2000	An applicant can apply for retirement benefits online. However, the individual may need to take or mail original documents to the issuing office. This application is included in iClaim.
23	Medicare Replacement Card July 2000	Medicare beneficiaries can request a replacement Medicare card online.
24	Replacement 1099 March 1999	A beneficiary can request a replacement SSA-1099/1042S Social Security Benefit Statement online.
25	Proof of Income Letter (Benefit Verification) March 1999	Beneficiaries can request a proof of income statement mailed to them.
26	Social Security Statement March 1996	SSA customers can request a Social Security Statement online.

Agency Comments

MEMORANDUM

Date: September 28, 2011   Refer To: S1J-3

To: Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr.
          Inspector General

From: Dean S. Landis /s/
          Deputy Chief of Staff

Subject: Office of the Inspector General Draft Report, "The Social Security Administration's Electronic Services" (A-14-11-11112)—INFORMATION

          Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report. Please see our attached comments.

          Please let me know if we can be of further assistance. You may direct staff inquiries to Frances Cord, at (410) 966-5787.

          Attachment

**COMMENTS ON THE OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL DRAFT REPORT,
"THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION'S ELECTRONIC SERVICES"
(A-14-11-11112)**

Recommendation 1

Develop a strategic plan for its electronic services that will contribute to SSA's technology vision and customer service delivery goals.

Response

We disagree. Our commitment to electronic services is clear, as evidenced in the Agency Strategic Plan. However, we do not believe it is wise to commit to specific expansions or refinements of agency electronic services in future years given the constantly evolving needs of the agency and our customers. We continuously evaluate the satisfaction of our customers and our available resources, and adjust our electronic service plans accordingly.

Recommendation 2

Develop a performance metric to measure customer satisfaction for key electronic service applications.

Response

We disagree. We believe it is important to monitor customer satisfaction of our online services. However, since we do not have parallel metrics for transactional services handled through our other service delivery channels, which account for a much larger proportion of the workload, we feel it would be inappropriate to establish a performance indicator for our online services.

Our Office of Electronic Services regularly uses the American Customer Satisfaction Survey (ACSI) to measure and track customer satisfaction scores, and they analyze user responses to ACSI survey questions to obtain feedback on our electronic services. We report findings as an aggregate of all service delivery channels. In addition, our Office of Quality Performance conducts surveys and analyzes customer satisfaction of our electronic services. While we believe the surveys provide excellent feedback from users, we are re-evaluating our performance measures and developing new outcome focused measures to support our strategic plan.

Recommendation 3

Continue to evaluate its composition of customer satisfaction ratings included in its Overall Average Customer Satisfaction goal, and include all electronic services, if applicable, in the measurement.

Response

We agree. We expanded the types of transactions included in our Internet Report Card Survey beyond the original iApplications in our fiscal year 2010 survey. We will evaluate the feasibility of incorporating additional surveys as we add new services to our website.

Recommendation 4

Continue to review customer service feedback to determine the necessary service improvements and implement appropriate solutions.

Response

We agree. We review feedback from the ASCI surveys and conduct Satisfaction Insight Reviews on a routine basis.

Recommendation 5

Continue expanding its portfolio of electronic services to provide additional ways for the public to do business with the Agency.

Response

We agree. However, implementation of future electronic services depends upon available resources.

Recommendation 6

Revise a question on its OQP survey and add a question in the ACSI surveys that asks customers to identify how they learned about the agency's electronic services, and include social media as one of the options.

Response

We agree.

Recommendation 7

Continue to explore, develop, and implement more innovative ways to interact and communicate with its customers.

Response

We agree.

OIG Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

OIG Contacts

Brian Karpe, Director, Information Technology Audit Division

Mary Ellen Moyer, Audit Manager

Acknowledgments

In addition to those named above:

Cheryl Dailey, Auditor-in-Charge

For additional copies of this report, please visit our Website at http://oig.ssa.gov/ or contact the Office of the Inspector General's Public Affairs Staff Assistant at (410) 965-4518. Refer to Common Identification Number A-14-11-11112.

DISTRIBUTION SCHEDULE

Commissioner of Social Security

Chairman and Ranking Member, Committee on Ways and Means

Chief of Staff, Committee on Ways and Means

Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Social Security

Majority and Minority Staff Director, Subcommittee on Social Security

Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, Committee on the Budget, House of Representatives

Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Appropriations, House of Representatives

Chairman and Ranking Minority, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations,
   House of Representatives

Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate

Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies, Committee on Appropriations, U.S. Senate

Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Finance

Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, Subcommittee on Social Security Pensions and Family Policy

Chairman and Ranking Minority Member, Senate Special Committee on Aging

Social Security Advisory Board

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.