

Part IV: Strategic Goals, Objectives, Performance Measures and Performance Goals

Scope: This part contains detailed information on each of our strategic goals, objectives, external performance measures and annual goals. It also describes means and strategies in support of Agency priorities, the President’s Management Agenda (PMA) items, GAO and IG Major Management Challenges, and Social Security Advisory Board recommendations.

A. Strategic Goal: To deliver high-quality, citizen-centered service

Scope: Our Service goal encompasses SSA’s traditional and electronic services to applicants for benefits, beneficiaries and the general public as well as services to and from states, other agencies, third parties, and employers.

This goal addresses the full meaning of the term “citizen-centered” service and the full scope of the “Expanding E-Government” item in the President’s Management Agenda. That is:

- Making it simpler to receive quality service regardless of contact mode;
- Providing a choice of ways to obtain service;
- Increasing collaboration among agencies to provide more transparent government;
- Making it easier for businesses to comply with reporting responsibilities; and
- Sharing information more quickly and conveniently between federal agencies and states.

This goal covers attributes of service that define “quality” as a balance of accuracy, efficiency, productivity, cost, timeliness, and service satisfaction. The creation of a new Office of Quality Management within the Office of the Chief Strategic Officer signals the Agency’s overarching commitment to quality. We are working to build an in-line quality system for all the Agency’s business processes including disability.

Our emphasis in FY 2004 is on improving our disability processes and improving service through the use of technology. We will focus on providing timely and accurate service to claimants for disability benefits, and offering more choices to our disability beneficiaries for receiving return-to-work services. We will enhance SSA applications and transactions available on the Internet, and will promote the use of our Internet services to the public. To ensure that high levels of performance continue in other areas, we continue to closely monitor overall public satisfaction with our service and our performance in the areas of retirement and survivors claims, SSI aged claims and both pre-claims and postentitlement actions.

Environmental Factors: The Social Security Administration faces great challenges in giving the American people the service they expect and deserve, particularly as the number of beneficiaries increases each year with the aging of the baby boomers. The number of Social Security retirement, disability and SSI claims will grow significantly over the next decade. Also, SSA estimates that by 2010, over 28,000 of its federal employees will retire and another 10,000 will leave the Agency for other reasons. This equates to over 50 percent of our workforce.

The increased use of the Internet and advancements in electronic communication technologies will provide greater access for citizens to our services and allow us to reach them more efficiently. At the same time, the increased use of new technologies raises far-reaching questions about security, safety, and

privacy. SSA will need to maintain its vigilance in identifying vulnerabilities and safeguarding its information technology systems against potential intrusions.

Our strategic objectives for this goal are:

- A.1. Make the right decision in the disability process as early as possible;
- A.2. Increase employment for people with disabilities; and
- A.3. Provide service through all available technology.

Although we continue to monitor all areas of service performance internally, these objectives focus on key areas of strategic importance or those needing improvement.

A.1. Strategic Objective: Make the right decision in the disability process as early as possible

Output Measures	FY	Projection
Number of initial disability claims (Title II and Title XVI) processed	2003	2,498,000
	2004	2,497,000
Number of hearings processed*	2003	602,000
	2004	543,000
Number of appellate actions processed (SSA level reconsiderations, appeals council reviews, new court cases and court remands)	2003	950,500
	2004	963,600

***Note:** The FY 2003 target for the number of hearings processed includes both SSA and Medicare cases. The Administration’s plan is to transfer the Medicare hearings function to the Department of Health and Human Services starting with FY 2004. The FY 2003 target excluding Medicare hearings is 497,000.

Outcome Measure: Average processing time for initial disability claims (days)

FY	Actual
1999	105 days
2000	102 days
2001	106 days
2002	104 days
	Goal
2003	104 days
2004	103 days

Data Definition: This is the fiscal year average processing time for DI and SSI claims combined. Processing time is measured from the application date (or protective filing date) to either the date of the denial notice or the date the system completes processing of an award.

Data Source: Title II MIICR Processing Time and Title XVI SSICR Processing Time Systems

Outcome Measure: Number of initial disability claims (Title II and Title XVI) pending

FY	Actual
1999	457,823
2000	535,407
2001	579,000
2002	592,692
	Goal
2003	593,000
2004	593,000

Data Definition: DDS count of initial disability claims pending, including disabled dependents

Data Source: National Disability Services System

Outcome Measure: DDS net accuracy rate (allowances and denials combined)

FY	Actual
1999	98.0% (allowance) 95.8% (denial)
2000	98.4% (allowance) 95.2% (denial)
2001	98.3% (allowance) 94.7% (denial)
	Goal
2002	98.0% (allowance) 96.2% (denial)
2003	97%
2004	97%

Data Definition: Net accuracy is an alternative method of reporting state agency accuracy that is based upon the “correctness” of the DDS disability determination. Net accuracy is based upon the net error rate that is defined as the number of corrected deficient cases with changed disability decisions, plus the number of deficient cases that are not corrected within 90 days from the end of the period covered by the report. Prior to 2003, we reported allowances and denials as separate numbers.

Data Source: Disability Quality Assurance Databases

Outcome Measure: Average processing time for hearings (days)

FY	Actual
1999	316 days
2000	297 days
2001	308 days
2002	336 days
	Goal
2003	352 days
2004	336 days

Data Definition: Beginning FY 2000, this indicator was redefined, from the one included in the FY 1999 APP, to represent the average elapsed time, from the hearing request date until the date of the notice of the decision, of all hearings level cases processed during all months of the fiscal year. The FY 1999 APP measure reflected the average elapsed time of hearings level cases processed only in the last month of the FY (September).

Data Source: OHA Monthly Activity Reports and the Hearing Office Tracking System (HOTS)

Outcome Measure: Number of hearings pending

FY	Actual
1999	311,958
2000	346,756
2001	435,904
2002	500,757
	Goal
2003	587,000
2004	557,000

Data Definition: All hearings pending in the Office of Hearings and Appeals. Includes hearing requests from all programs

Data Source: OHA Hearing Office Tracking System

Note: The FY 2003 target for the number of hearings pending includes both SSA and Medicare cases. The Administration's plan is to transfer the Medicare hearings function to the Department of Health and Human Services starting with FY 2004. The FY 2003 target excluding Medicare hearings is 532,000.

Outcome Measure: Hearings decisional accuracy rate

FY	Actual
1999	88%
2000	88%
	Goal
2001	88%
2002	89%
2003	89%
2004	89%

Data Definition: The decisional accuracy rate is the percent of disability hearing decisions – both favorable and unfavorable – supported by “substantial evidence”. This is the standard used by the federal courts to evaluate accuracy of decisions, and by the Appeals Council in determining which hearing decisions to review.

Data Source: Biennial Disability Hearings Quality Review Process Peer Review Reports

Outcome Measure: Average processing time for decisions on appeals of hearings (days)

FY	Actual
1999	458 days
2000	505 days
2001	447 days
2002	412
	Goal
2003	300 days
2004	250 days

Data Definition: Effective FY 2001, this measure represents the 12-month average processing time for dispositions issued during the report period. Processing time begins with the date of the request and ends with the disposition date.

Data Source: Actual processing time for each case is maintained by the ACAPS. Percentages will be calculated from information extrapolated from ACAPS.

Note: A new measure of disability processing time through final Agency decision is being developed. This performance measure will examine the time to final decision the claimant experiences at each step of the process, i.e., initial claim, reconsideration, hearing, appeal of hearing decision. In the interim, we are using the separate processing time measures (above) for each level of the decision process to gauge our performance.

Means and Strategies for Making the Right Decision in the Disability Process as Early as Possible:

One of SSA's highest priorities is to improve service to the public in the disability programs from the initial claim through the final administrative appeal. Each Social Security and Supplemental Security Income disability claim represents a person and often a family. The length of time it takes to process these claims through all levels of Agency appeals is unacceptable. It places a significant financial and emotional burden on applicants and their families. It also leads to re-contacts and re-handling, placing an enormous drain on Agency resources.

The most significant external factor affecting SSA's ability to improve service to disability applicants is the expected growth of workloads. Ongoing application receipts will rise dramatically as the baby boomers enter their disability-prone and then retirement years. Furthermore, an unexpected near-term surge in disability claims receipts is adding to the problem. With DI rolls projected to grow 35 percent in the ten years ending 2012, SSA cannot keep doing things the same way. We are responding directly to this challenge.

Our near-term strategies are described below. These are just the first steps that SSA will take to meet the challenge of providing a timely, efficient and quality disability process. As part of the service delivery assessment, SSA has compiled a range of ideas and recommendations on potential improvements to the disability process from a variety of sources. These are being evaluated for possible implementation.

Disability Process Improvements: SSA has engaged in a number of efforts to redesign and improve the disability determination process by testing several initiatives over the past several years. We carefully reviewed the results of these initiatives to identify the elements that show the most promise. Based on this review, we have decided to:

- Encourage early and frequent contacts with claimants during the development process;
- Eliminate the claimant conference at the end of the process; and
- Temporarily extend the "elimination of reconsideration step" feature in the ten prototype states that are currently doing this, while SSA develops an alternative approach.

Improvements to the Appeals Process: Processing time for the SSA appeals process continues to be a major concern. The Hearings Process Improvements (HPI) initiative, which was implemented in 2000, did not achieve the planned results. Based on analysis of HPI, SSA announced decisions to make the following near-term changes to the hearings process:

- Include ALJs in early case screening to more quickly identify cases for dismissal and possible on-the-record decisions;
- End the requirement that cases be certified as “ready to hear”;
- Issue decisions from the bench;
- Expand the use of technology in the Office of Hearings and Appeals, including video teleconferencing, speech recognition and digital recording of hearings; and
- Contract out file assembly.

Accelerated eDIB: To reduce delays as a result of mailing, locating, and organizing paper folders, SSA is accelerating its transition to the electronic disability process. When the AeDIB process is fully implemented, SSA will no longer create, mail and store paper disability folders. Through interfaces with existing case processing systems, components will be able to work claims by electronically accessing and retrieving information. AeDIB will significantly change how components process disability claims. It will contribute to SSA performance goals of more timely and accurate adjudication at all levels, and will help increase Agency productivity. Initial rollout of AeDIB is set for the beginning of 2004, and substantial progress toward national implementation will take place by the end of 2004.

Additional activities that support AeDIB are:

- The use of scan-to-print technology to support the creation of electronic records;
- Expansion of the Electronic Disability Collection System (that captures information collected during the disability interview) to support all types of disability claims;
- Expansion of the types of services available to people filing for disability via the Internet;
- Development of a Case Processing and Management System for our Office of Hearings and Appeals so that they can interface with the electronic folders;
- Migration of DDSs to an IT platform that will allow them to interface with the electronic folders; and
- Development of electronic processes to speed the request and retrieval of evidence from medical and educational sources.

Updating Medical Listings: SSA has a sequential process for evaluating disability and one of those steps entails consideration of medical listings. If an individual has an impairment, which meets or equals the listings, SSA will find the individual disabled. The listings are categorized by body system and contain criteria (i.e., signs, symptoms and laboratory findings) for various impairments. Our external monitoring authorities and interest groups, including Congress, GAO, IG and the SSA Advisory Board, have all stressed the importance of updating these listings. These updates are targeted for completion by the end of FY 2004 and will provide disability adjudicators with current and effective evaluation tools. Most of the updates will be completed by the end of FY 2004, although some body systems will require more formal outreach to update the criteria consistent with current medical practices.

Disability Rulemaking Enhancement: This initiative will help us improve existing rule-making and program guidance procedures that better integrate policy and practice, and identify barriers that impede efficiency. We will improve the process of obtaining input from our stakeholders without lengthening the process time. Finally, we will explore an evaluative approach to help policymakers assess whether process and structural changes will help us achieve program goals and objectives.

A2. Strategic Objective: Increase employment for people with disabilities

Outcome Measure: Percent increase in the number of DI and SSI beneficiaries, with tickets assigned, who work.

FY	Goal
2003	Establish a baseline
2004	TBD

Data Definition: In 2003, we will establish a preliminary baseline and an FY 2004 goal for this new outcome measure. Actual performance levels will be based on all recorded earnings information from various data sources for beneficiaries who have assigned their tickets to Employment Networks (EN) - i.e., signed an agreement with the EN for services. The data will be provided on a calendar year basis.

Data Source: eWorkCDR DB2, Disability Control File (VERN or Work and Earnings Reports field), OCSE, MEF

Note: We had intended to use the following measure for FY 2003: *Percent increase in the number of DI adult worker beneficiaries entering an extended period of disability (EPE) due to earnings from work.* We are substituting the above measure for the EPE measure because it is more in line with the intent of our long-term outcomes as stated in our strategic plan, and it more accurately measures the number of people participating in the ticket-to-work program who return to work and are moving toward self-sufficiency.

Outcome Measure: Percent increase in the number of SSI disabled beneficiaries earning at least \$100 per month

FY	Actual
1999	230,131
2000	10.9% (255,129)
2001	-1.1% (252,219)
2002	-1.2% (249,175)
	Goal
2003	8% (269,109)
2004	10% (296,020)

Data Definition: Beginning FY 2003, our goal will be for annual increases in the number of working SSI disabled beneficiaries, earning at least \$100 per month. This is a new measure meant to better reflect the impact of all work incentives for SSI disabled beneficiaries

Data Source: "SSI Disabled Recipients Who Work" report

Means and Strategies for Increasing Employment of People with Disabilities:

SSA is working to ensure that all Americans have the opportunity to learn and develop skills, engage in productive work, make choices about their daily lives and participate fully in community life. The strategies that follow directly support the President's New Freedom Initiative. They also address the GAO major management challenge to improve programs that provide support to people with disabilities.

Full implementation of the Ticket-to-Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 entails the implementation of several complementary new programs, i.e., Ticket-to-Work and Self-Sufficiency, Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach, Protection and Advocacy Services and other work incentives.

Full implementation of the *Ticket-to-Work and Self-Sufficiency Program* will be completed in 2004. We are implementing the Ticket-to-Work and Self-Sufficiency Program in three phases. In Phase One, from February through October 2002, we mailed tickets to 2.4 million eligible Social Security DI and SSI beneficiaries in 13 states. The Phase Two Ticket mailings began in November 2002 and will continue through September 2003. We will release 2.5 million tickets during this phase to eligible beneficiaries in 20 additional states and the District of Columbia. Phase Three mailings will begin in November 2003 in the remaining 17 states and U.S. Territories. We will release 3.3 million tickets during this phase, which will conclude in September 2004. We will also release tickets to newly entitled Social Security DI and SSI beneficiaries on an ongoing basis.

Promoting the Ticket-to-Work Program: As an offshoot of Ticket to Work, we worked with the Department of Labor (DOL) to develop a new service to help employers locate and recruit skilled job candidates with disabilities. This service, "Ticket to Hire" is a free, national referral service for employers to recruit workers from the Ticket-to-Work Program.

SSA and the DOL are funding a two-year demonstration project to establish specialists called *Disability Program Navigators*, to serve as a resource to and advocate for people with disabilities who seek training and employment opportunities. Working in DOL's One-Stop Career Centers, Navigators will link people with disabilities, including Social Security DI and SSI beneficiaries, with employers and with benefit planning, assistance and outreach organizations.

SSA has established a community-based *Benefits Planning, Assistance and Outreach (BPAO) program*. We have awarded 116 grants in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the Territories, offering full national coverage. These grant awards have been set up in three cycles from FYs 2002-2004, with most grants now in their third year of operation. The goals of the BPAO program are:

- To provide work incentives, planning, and assistance to SSA's beneficiaries with disabilities;
- To conduct outreach efforts to those beneficiaries who are potentially eligible to participate in federal and state work incentives programs; and
- To work in cooperation with federal, state and private agencies and nonprofit organizations that serve beneficiaries with disabilities.

SSA is authorized to make payments to *Protection and Advocacy (P&A) systems* to provide the following services to beneficiaries with disabilities:

- Information and advice about obtaining vocational rehabilitation and employment services;
- Advocacy or other services that a disabled beneficiary may need to secure or regain gainful employment;
- Investigation of complaints surrounding entities involved in a beneficiary's return-to-work effort;
- Assistance to beneficiaries and relevant organizations in the area of federal work incentives;
- Protection of beneficiaries' rights through dispute resolution; and
- Identification of deficiencies in employment networks and other service providers.

P&A grants were awarded in FY 2001 and renewed in FYs 2002 and 2003. Funding will continue through FY 2004. We will conduct training and monitor progress/finances, etc. on an ongoing basis.

SSA's multifaceted approach to helping beneficiaries with disabilities obtain accurate and timely information regarding work includes the planned creation of a Work Incentive Specialist corps. Certain SSA field employees, to be designated as Work Incentive Specialists, will provide technical information and assistance to both beneficiaries and outside groups. At the same time, we plan to provide a customized training curriculum targeted to each employee's role in administering employment support

programs. In addition, we are developing new systems to help us associate reported wages with a beneficiary's disability record in a more timely fashion.

Other initiatives:

- SSA has a major initiative under way to convert its paper-driven disability claims system into an electronic format. SSA will look for opportunities for Social Security beneficiaries with disabilities to participate in this work, thus maximizing their economic self-sufficiency.
- Early intervention - Many experts believe that providing intervention methods to individuals with disabilities as close to the disability onset as possible significantly improves their chance of returning to work. SSA, in collaboration with the Disability Research Institute, is developing a demonstration project with DI applicants that will test a variety of interventions such as early medical insurance and support for employment. The goal of the project is to assist persons with disabilities in returning to work as soon as possible rather than transitioning to long-term dependency on the DI rolls.
- Youth employment - Many children receiving Supplemental Security Income stay on the rolls for life, and many lose benefits at the required age 18 medical redetermination without any support for becoming self-sufficient. In addition, a significant number come onto the SSI rolls at age 18 when their parents' income no longer counts towards eligibility. We are developing a youth demonstration project that would test interventions to support the transition of young SSI beneficiaries to adulthood through higher education or employment support. The goal is to help SSI youth maximize their economic self-sufficiency.

A. 3. Strategic Objective: Improve service through technology

Output Measures	FY	Projection
RSI claims processed	FY 2003	3,229,000
	FY 2004	3,331,000
800-number calls handled	FY 2003	55,000,000
	FY 2004	54,000,000

Outcome Measure: Percent of retirement claims initiated via the Internet

FY	Actual
2001	4.83%
2002	6.73%
	Goal
2003	Conservative: 7.1% Mid-Range 7.4% Optimistic: 8.1%
2004	See measure below

Data Definition: Our FY 2003 goal is stated as a range of percentages of retirement claims initiated via the Internet. This range is more appropriate than a specific target since the workload is still new and we have a limited baseline to detect trends. The range of targets represents a conservative (5% growth rate), mid-range (a 10% growth rate), and optimistic (a 20% growth rate).

Data Source: Executive and Management Information System (EMIS), Title II Internet claims report, provides the universe of retirement claims received and those initiated via the Internet.

Outcome Measure: Percent usage growth of electronic entitlement and supporting actions

FY	Actual
2002	Baseline: 218,932
	Goal
2003	N/A. See prior measure for 2003
2004	50% growth over FY 2002 baseline (328,398)

Data Definition: In setting this new measure indicator, SSA recognizes the need for a more overarching measure that takes into account additional electronic services in our Title II suite and shows the increased usage of these electronic services. The new indicator consists of an aggregate measure of representative electronic transactions the public performs with SSA. The following are included in this indicator:

- Internet Social Security Benefit Application (ISBA) which offers online filing for retirement, spouse, and disability claims;
- Benefit Verification Statement (BEVE);
- Medicare Replacement Card (iMRC);
- Change of Address (iCOA); and
- Change of Direct Deposit (iDD).

Beginning in FY 2004, the growth percentage goal compares the aggregate count of these transactions in the fiscal year to those in the FY 2002 baseline of 218,932 transactions. For FY 2004 our targeted aggregate count is 328,398.

Data Source: Executive and Management Information System (EMIS), Title II Internet claims report, Electronic Service Delivery report

Outcome Measure: Percent of employee reports (W-2s) filed electronically

FY	Actual
2001	27.04%
2002	42.5%*
	Goal
2003	48%
2004	55%

*based on actuarial estimate of 250,000,000 W-2s. May be adjusted after end of calendar year

Data Definition: This percent is the number of W-2s filed electronically and processed to completion for a tax year, divided by the total number of W-2s for that tax year processed to completion by the end of the processing year (mid-January).

Data Source: Earnings Management Information Operational Data Store (EMODS) reports

Outcome Measure: Percent of people who do business with SSA rating the overall service as “excellent,” “very good,” or “good”

FY	Actual
1999	88%
2000	82%
2001	81%
2002	82.9%
	Goal
2003	83%
2004	83%

Data Definition: This is the percent of people who call or visit SSA surveyed by SSA’s Office of Quality Assurance and Performance Assessment who rate overall service as “good,” “very good,” or “excellent” on a 6 point scale ranging from “excellent” to “very poor”, divided by the total number of respondents to that question.

Data Source: For FY 1999 and earlier, the SSA Annual Satisfaction Survey. For FY 2000 and beyond, the Interaction Tracking Systems that capture satisfaction shortly after service contacts (either by telephone or in-person) take place.

Outcome Measure: Percent of callers who successfully access the 800-number within 5 minutes of their first call

FY	Actual
1999	95.8%
2000	92.9%
2001	92.7%
2002	93.3%
	Goal
2003	94%
2004	94%

Data Definition: This is the percent of unique call attempts that successfully “connect” within 5 minutes of the first attempt within a 24-hour period. A successful “connection” occurs when a caller selects either an automated or live agent and is connected with that option within 5 minutes of first dialing the 800-number.

Data Source: Automatic number ID records provided by WorldCom

Outcome Measure: Percent of callers who get through to the 800-number on their first attempt

FY	Actual
1999	90.9%
2000	88.4%
2001	89.2%
2002	91.3%
	Goal
2003	87%
2004	87%

Data Definition: The percent is the number of individuals who reach the 800-number (either live or automated service) on their first attempt, divided by the number of unique telephone numbers dialed to the 800-number. An “attempt” is defined as the first attempted call of the day, or a subsequent attempt after a previously successful call.

Data Source: Automatic number ID records provided by WorldCom

Note: SSA is developing new 800-number performance measures. Starting with FY 2005, we will replace the current access rate metrics (i.e., 5 minute access rate and first-time access rate) with two new metrics: busy rate and average speed of answer. During FY 2003, we will be developing the targets for these two new metrics which focus on our responsiveness to answering calls. We intend to track our performance on these new metrics prior to their official adoption in FY 2005. We will also continue to measure the current access rate metrics and goals.

Means and Strategies for Improving Service Through Technology:

Technology is the foundation to the Agency’s current and future ability to provide quality service in the face of dramatic workload growth and SSA’s employee retirement wave. Automating our claims intake process, which began in the 1980s, adding the 800-number as a service option in 1988, and initiating the Internet option in 1994 were all important landmarks in our efforts.

The President’s Management Agenda item “Expanded Electronic Government,” the OIG Major Management Challenge “Electronic Government/Service Delivery”, the GAO Major Management Challenge “Better Position SSA for Future Service Delivery Challenges,” and Social Security Advisory

Board recommendations support this objective. Following are a number of initiatives and projects that will help us meet these challenges and our performance goals:

E-government to citizen: Using the Internet (<http://www.socialsecurity.gov>), we are providing citizens with better access to SSA, improving service, and meeting increasing service demands. During FY 2002, the number of visits to SSA's website rose to about 40 million, an increase of 40 percent over FY 2001. Several SSA customer surveys have found that the public is generally well pleased with our site. In our most recent survey of online users, 71 percent of those surveyed rate the site as excellent, very good, or good.

SSA has reviewed the strategy for delivering new Internet services. Now that we have most of our major forms and applications online, we are moving to a strategy more focused on increased use of our Internet services by the public. The Internet Social Security Benefit Application is the flagship service that SSA offers and one that has the potential for higher usage and greater return to the Agency. The FY 2003 measure for retirement claims initiated on the Internet was the first step in measuring usage. For FY 2004, we are using a more overarching measure that takes into account additional services in our Title II suite, including spouse and disability claims, along with change of address, change of direct deposit, replacement Medicare card, and benefit verification applications.

SSA is committed to providing a secure Internet environment in which to conduct SSA business. Currently we have two authentication processes for beneficiaries, a knowledge-based process and a password process. We are active participants in the e-Authorization initiative with the General Services Administration and are exploring other authentication methods, i.e., Pay.gov. An authentication workgroup has been tasked with investigating other alternatives.

Providing online services is not enough; they must be easy to use and people must know these services exist to take advantage of them. The SSA Internet website has been redesigned to make it easier for individuals and organizations to get the services they need. Results of an online survey at the end of several of our Internet applications show that about 96 percent of the users felt the applications were easy to use and would recommend their use to others.

E-government to government: E-government results in overall improvement not just to SSA services, but also to government-wide services. By establishing partnerships with other agencies and organizations, we can share best practices and find common solutions to problems. We will continue researching and testing emerging technologies to help us determine their usefulness to our e-government initiative. SSA is a leading partner in the Quicksilver task force (formed with OMB and the President's Management Council) to identify e-government projects that can deliver significant productivity and performance gains across government. Twenty-four projects were selected for initial development. SSA has the lead responsibility for one of these, E-Vital.

E-Vital includes two projects, "Electronic Verification of Vital Events and "Electronic Death Registration." Together they will provide verification and exchange of vital statistics data. E-Vital will enhance the ability of federal and state agencies to reduce benefits fraud and erroneous payments, and it will also result in efficiencies by improving the speed and accuracy of access to vital records data. We plan to implement up to eight pilots of Electronic Verification of Vital Events in states with all or nearly all of the necessary records in an electronic format. Following successful pilots, we plan to have 16 states online by December 2004. In June 2002, we published solicitations to award contracts to additional states who are interested in developing an Electronic Death Registration System. We will continue to work with more states on developing their internal systems through FY 2004 as funding permits.

E-government to business: We have made significant improvements in our earnings process and service to employers. However, opportunities still exist to make improvements in the electronic wage reporting program.

We have developed a 5-year plan to:

- Increase the use of electronic wage reporting;
- Provide the infrastructure within our earnings systems to accommodate more electronic business, especially via the Internet;
- Improve earnings products and services for employers and employees;
- Improve the way earnings are established, corrected and adjusted; and
- Improve coordination between our data files that contain information about employers, employees, and wages.

The capability to receive electronically filed wage reports through the Internet will provide the business community with an easy-to-use, cost-effective filing process and it will help SSA lower costs, capture data quicker, and transmit information to the Internal Revenue Service faster. In FY 2002, we implemented full Internet reporting capability including:

- Completion of W-2 forms;
- A variety of responsive help desk services;
- A facility for employers to download wage reporting software; and
- Online error notice capability.

Our electronic reporting communications efforts include promotional materials, attending payroll and employer focused conferences, writing articles for trade publications, and direct contact with employers. We will continue to make on-site visits with large payroll service providers and other companies, encouraging them to report electronically.

Telephone Service Improvements: We assume the number of calls handled will remain about level because of increased use of SSA's website and implementation of a new system that has improved our call handling efficiency. As a result, we believe the need for beneficiaries to make multiple attempts to get through to the 800-number has been reduced.

We are improving the efficiency of our national 800-number and field office telephone service through the use of advanced technology and employee training. The national 800-number main menu was split from one large menu into two shorter menus to make it more user-friendly and to provide the flexibility of being able to add new applications. This change also allowed callers to repeat the current menu or option, to select multiple automated service options and to opt to speak to a representative after using an automated service. We added a PIN/Password option to the menu of services; using a touch-tone telephone, callers with a PIN/password are now able to obtain some account information from their records without having to speak to an agent. Future plans include using speech technology to enable callers to obtain information and/or update information on their accounts. For FY 2003, we have expanded pilots to 1) measure the busy rate and 2) offer callers who would have received a busy signal the opportunity to have their call transferred to the national 800-number. This should have a positive impact on field office access and service.

Improve Notices: This long-term initiative includes the use of technology to improve our notices so that people understand them better, reducing the need to contact us for further explanations. We are:

- Revising the language and format of SSA's least understandable, most sensitive, high-volume notices, and making them available in Spanish;
- Consolidating and modernizing notice databases; and
- Increasing automation and eliminating labor-intensive manual processes when possible.

Title II Redesign: The goal of our Title II Systems Redesign project is to provide a single system for processing virtually all Title II initial claims and client-related postentitlement actions in an online interactive mode. We have steadily increased the automation rate for Title II postentitlement workloads that will reduce internal hand-offs of work and also reduce follow-up calls from beneficiaries.

Title XVI Postentitlement Modernization: The Modernized Supplemental Security Income Claims System (MSSICS) provides the infrastructure for processing SSI claims and postentitlement transactions. We are enhancing this system to help us improve productivity, e.g., reducing internal work hand-offs and multiple contacts with beneficiaries. Some of the specific improvements include:

- Further automation of windfall offset;
- Enhancements to the Office of Child Support Enforcement data in the MSSICS screen path;
- A data base to control SSI alerts;
- Address integration between MSSICS and other SSA systems; and
- Automation of remaining SSI actions not supported by MSSICS.

