

D. Strategic Goal: To strategically manage and align staff to support SSA's mission

Scope: This goal addresses each dimension of the President's Management Agenda (PMA) Human Capital initiative to:

- Align human capital policies to support the Agency's mission, goals and strategies;
- Recruit, hire, develop and retain employees with mission-critical strategic competencies;
- Ensure leadership in the Agency inspires and motivates others toward goals, and models high standards of integrity and respect for individuals;
- Motivate employees for high performance, based on their contribution to the work of the organization, and common values while ensuring fairness in the workplace; and
- Promote a knowledge-sharing culture, openness, and continuous learning and improvement.

Environmental Factors: SSA and state DDS employees will begin to retire in greater numbers. SSA estimates that during this decade, over 28,000 of its federal employees will retire and another 10,000 will leave the Agency for other reasons. This "retirement wave" not only will affect our ability to deliver service to the American public, but also will result in a significant drain of SSA's institutional knowledge. SSA and the state DDSs will be faced with the continuing challenge of hiring and retaining a highly skilled and diverse workforce in what is expected to be a very competitive job market.

SSA was early in recognizing the implications of the retirement wave and in taking actions to address it. Ongoing retirement wave analysis and succession planning have led SSA to implement aggressive employee development programs at all levels and redeploy positions to direct service. The Agency also has emphasized recruitment of Presidential Management Interns and outstanding scholars and increased use of hiring flexibilities. SSA continues to build on these early efforts.

As SSA deals with significant workload growth and its own increasing numbers of retirements, we will strive to maintain a high-performing workforce and enhance productivity through automation, job enrichment opportunities and training, redistribution of staff to direct service positions, succession planning, leadership development, new performance management systems, and other service enhancements.

Our strategic objective for this goal is:

D. 1. Strategic Objective: Recruit, develop and retain a high-performing workforce

Outcome Measure: Percent improvement in the retention rate

FY	Actual
2002	84.3%
FY	Goal
2003	84.6%
2004	84.9%

Data Definition: The FY 2003 new hire retention rate will be determined by the percentage of FY 2001 new hires that remain with SSA during FY 2001 and 2002. The FY 2004 new hire rate will be determined by the percentage of FY 2002 new hires that remain with SSA during FYs 2002 and 2003.

Data Source: The Human Resource Management Information System

Outcome Measure: Milestones in developing new performance management systems

FY	Goal
2003	Implement the new SES system
2004	Formulate a new system for GS-15 employees

Data Definition: Implementation of a five-level appraisal system for performance for SES level employees in FY 2003 and formulation of an enhanced assessment system for GS-15 level employees in FY 2004.

Note: Development of new SES standards was completed in early FY 2003. Those standards should be fully incorporated in each individual SES performance plan before the end of FY 2003.

Data Source: Office of Human Resources records

Outcome Measure: Number of job enrichment opportunities (includes headquarters components and regional development programs)

FY	Goal
2003	3% of workforce
2004	3% of workforce

Data Definition: Percent of the Agency workforce participating in one of the formal national development programs or experiences (formal career development training of one to two weeks), a component program, or a regional-level program.

Data Source: Office of Training records

Outcome Measure: Provide the equivalent of 40 hours of training annually to all employees

FY	Goal
2003	Average of 40 hours training per employee
2004	Average of 40 hours training per employee

Data Definition: Success is defined as having demonstrated that SSA provided on average the equivalent of 40 hours training per employee annually through the many venues available, e.g., interactive video teletraining, the online university, traditional government-sponsored training courses, and/or training conferences and seminars.

Data Source: Office of Training records and the Human Resources Management Information System

Means and Strategies for Recruiting, Developing and Retaining a High-Performing Workforce:

The President's Management Agenda directs agencies to make government citizen-centered through strategic management of human capital. For many years citizens have been in direct contact with the front-line service delivery employees who are the decisionmakers of their claims and pre- and post-entitlement actions. During the past decade, we significantly added to the number of direct service personnel. In 2002, SSA transferred nearly 300 positions to direct service and is continuing to work in this direction.

The following strategies to recruit, develop and retain a high-performing workforce are framed by the President's Management Agenda, and the Human Capital management challenge identified by GAO and IG.

Recruitment and Retention:

- SSA will continue to use and expand personnel hiring flexibilities extensively in strategic areas, with tools such as awards, above minimum pay for systems analysts, and dual compensation salary reduction waivers to recruit federal retirees.
- We will continue to emphasize the practice of hiring about 10 percent of new hires from the outstanding scholars ranks.
- We conducted a study of employees hired in 1998 through 2000 to determine more effective ways of recruiting and retaining employees. Based on this study, a baseline was established from which to measure future performance.
- We are implementing *USA Staffing*, a software system, to automate the recruitment, assessment, referral and job applicant notification processes.
- SSA has one of the most diverse workforces in the federal government and includes about 70.8 percent women, 27 percent African Americans, 11 percent Hispanics, 3 percent Asians, 1 percent American Indians and 2.4 percent people with severe disabilities. We will maintain SSA's high degree of workforce diversity and continue our efforts to eliminate under-representation of specific groups.

Reaching out to Staff: To maintain a high-performing and highly-committed workforce, SSA will reach out to staff and make improvements to quality of work-life that will result in performance efficiencies and economies.

- We currently have multiple internal employee communication vehicles and we will continue to use them to improve employees' understanding of our human capital strategies.
- We are developing a new internal communications strategy that will evaluate our current methods and put in place a more effective program.
- We are completing the improvement of our employee suggestion program, an effort that began in FY 2002. Suggestions can now be submitted online, as well as by mail and fax. Employees can submit suggestions that are related to their job, and decisions on suggestions can now be expected within 90 days of submittal.
- We will roll out nationally the new Automated Time and Leave System (ATALS).

New Labor Agreement: The current national labor contract agreement between the American Federation of Government Employees and SSA expires April 2004. During FY 2003, our management team will develop its positions on various issues in preparation for the FY 2004 negotiations.

Leadership and Employee Development:

- SSA will continue to use a number of national, component and regional leadership development programs to identify and prepare high potential employees to assume positions of greater responsibility at all levels. In FYs 2003 and 2004, we will provide 3 percent of our workforce per year with an opportunity to participate in a development program.
- We will train 1/3 of SSA managers and supervisors each year in leadership competencies.
- We will continue our emphasis on training for all employees. We have set a goal for FYs 2003 and 2004 to provide on average the equivalent of 40 hours of training annually per employee.

Performance Culture:

- In early FY 2003, the Commissioner held a series of candid, interactive meetings with all supervisors, managers and executives in the Baltimore Washington Headquarters area, discussing leadership principles, management philosophy and the Agency's four major priorities: Service, Stewardship, Solvency and Staff. By the summer of FY 2003, she will have similar discussions with the full management cadre in each of our ten Regional cities and from field offices in commuting distance of those cities.
- SSA currently has a pass/fail performance system. In FY 2003, we enhanced SES performance plans to five levels. In FY 2004, we will develop a new performance system for GS-15 employees. A new performance system for other employees will be part of contract negotiations with our unions.
- Annual reminders are issued to supervisors on the importance of frequent performance discussions and spot checks are made to ensure compliance.

Strategic Competencies and Knowledge Management:

- We will continue SSA's successful strategy for knowledge management including succession analysis, collection of baseline training data, filling positions before the incumbents leave, and using understudies for targeted critical positions.
- Employees will receive competency-based training in order to maintain their technical skills and to use the advanced technologies that SSA is deploying.
- SSA will continue to extensively use Interactive Video Teletraining (IVT), CD-ROM training, computer-based/Internet training, our Online University, and classroom training.
- Our Online University offers employees Internet access to over 250 courses from their work desktop or from home.

Providing Employees with Better Tools: SSA is developing more efficient tools to help employees get their jobs done. Tools such as decision support software and more fully automated case processing systems will support higher productivity per employee.