Strategic Goal 1: Deliver Innovative, Quality Service

Strategic Objective 1.3: Partner with Other Agencies and Organizations to Improve Customers' Experience and Align with the Administration's One-Government Approach

Vision 2025 Priority: Superior Customer Experience

Many people seeking benefits from us also interact with other agencies and private organizations. By partnering with other agencies, community-based organizations, tribal governments, and the private sector, we can improve our customers' experiences. We can learn from each other, share data, and develop processes that help our customers access services more quickly and easily.

Strategies

- Implement Social Security Express to provide service using self-service customer service stations in community locations;
- Provide Social Security services through other government agencies, community-based organizations, tribal governments, and private organizations that serve our customers;
- Increase collaboration with the Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to improve processes for veterans and service members; and
- Improve information sharing among other government agencies for records, data, and other information.

Progress Update

We took the following steps in fiscal year (FY) 2015 to improve customers' experience through partnerships with other agencies:

- Installed three additional customer service stations in the New York and Philadelphia regions, bringing the total to seven;
- Completed 4,274 transactions on our Customer Service Stations (CSS), including answering 2,102 video calls to assist customers in real time;
- Partnered with over 50 community locations to provide video service delivery; and
- Partnered with organizations affiliated with the VA and Health and Human Services to expand our Social Security Express Projects;
- Partnered with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to promote each other's online services. The IRS added the SSA Express icon link to 100 of its kiosks in 37 locations across the country; and
- Partnered with the Alaska Online with Libraries to provide 125 video locations across remote Alaska, areas to reduce travel time for claimants and representatives attending hearings before an administrative law judge.

Next Steps

- Evaluate the customer service station project and, if successful, obtain agreements with additional third-party sites for installation;
- Issue additional desktop icons to local government and private organizations;
- Partner with additional veterans organizations to provide access to our online services;
- Expand data exchanges with the VA and DoD;
- Determine system requirements to exchange information with the VA to receive medical information quicker;
- Increase federal data exchange partnerships from 18 federal agencies to 22 federal agencies;

- Develop and publish the types of data commonly shared among federal agencies; and
- Add links to the IRS web site on our self-help personal computers in up to 16 pilot locations.

Risks and External Factors

In addition to general privacy, legal, and budget concerns, the following risks or external factors may affect our efforts to partner with other agencies and organizations to improve our customers' experience and align with the Administration's one-government approach:

- The DoD and VA have their own mission-critical work, priorities, and resource limitations;
- Lack of buy-in from potential partners; and
- Problems with new technologies.

Key Initiatives

Expanding Our Partnerships with External Organizations

Our Social Security Express initiative currently includes two self-service options that allow the public to complete their business from external partner locations (local, state, or Federal Government agencies such as the VA or the Department of Housing and Urban Development). Those self-service options are:

A Social Security Express icon installed on the partner sites' desktop computers, enabling access to our online services; and

A customer service station, containing a desktop computer and a printer, offering limited online services and video assistance from one of our employees.

In FY 2013, we launched the program, and 25 partner sites downloaded the Social Security Express icon to the desktops of their public computers. In FY 2014, we expanded our partnership to 168 sites. We partnered with 93 additional sites in FY 2015. In total, 261 partner sites have installed the Social Security Express icon.

In FY 2014, we installed one customer service station in a field office as a proof of concept and implemented three additional customer service stations in three external partner sites. In FY 2015, we added three additional customer service stations, bringing the total to seven.

The customer service stations allow us to offer our services in locations other than field offices, providing an additional vehicle for service delivery to our customers and reducing foot traffic in our field offices. We will evaluate usage levels and customer satisfaction from our proof of concept. If the proof of concept is successful, we will make modifications based on customer feedback and proceed with a pilot.

We also have partnerships with over 50 community locations to provide video service delivery. We plan to identify new video service delivery sites in FY 2016 focused on serving the Native American population, Wounded Warriors, veterans, and people who are disabled.

Launching a Federal Data Exchange Community of Practice

We initiated and now lead the Federal Data Exchange Community of Practice, facilitating records, data, and other information exchanges across federal agencies. Our collaborative efforts will help build a larger knowledge base, find solutions for data exchange challenges, identify cross-organizational solutions, prioritize and resolve problems, harmonize policy and processes where possible, share best practices, and build a network of federal data exchange partners.

In FY 2015, we developed a list of the most common types of data regularly shared among federal agencies and the best sources for each type. We plan to share the list through the Federal Data Exchange Community of Practice in FY 2016. We created a site on MAX.gov, hosted by OMB, to share documents, agendas, presentations, and contact lists. Our site has a 94 percent enrollment rate. In FY 2015, we added 11 new agencies to the group, expanding the network by 69 percent. In FY 2016, we will develop a list of prioritized activities and objectives. We plan to implement at least two of those prioritized activities in FY 2017.

Establishing a State Data Exchange Community of Excellence

Since Congress passed the Affordable Care Act in 2010, the Administration has led efforts to standardize public health program eligibility policies, data use, and information technology tools. The standardization will streamline states' public health business processes, improve service delivery, and enhance data accuracy.

In FY 2015, we established a public-private partnership called the State Data Exchange Community of Excellence whose goal is to advance the Administration's one-government approach. The State Data Exchange Community of Excellence will include federal, state, and private stakeholders, including the Department of Health and Human Services, the Administration of Children and Families, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutritional Services, the American Public Health Services Administration, and Governor-appointed human service administrators. We are finalizing a tri-agency agreement with Health and Human Services and the Department of Agriculture to share our data through a hub that will help states determine a person's eligibility for certain benefits.

In FY 2016, we will work with federal agencies and the American Public Health Services Association to survey and evaluate data exchange needs in each state. We will also help to develop a prioritized list of activities for the State Data Exchange of Excellence. We plan to implement at least two of those activities in FY 2017.

Expanding the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record

In April 2009, the DoD and VA launched the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record initiative to create a unified lifetime electronic health record for members of the Armed Services. We are working closely with both agencies to ensure we address service members' and veterans' needs as seamlessly as possible when applying for Social Security benefits by fully automating access to medical records.

In FY 2015, we worked with the DoD and VA to:

- Enhance the clinical content available for health information technology (IT) exchange;
- Implemented eAuthorization, an electronic signature on our Authorization to Disclose Information, Form SSA-827, with all health IT partners; and
- Pilot a health IT exchange.

The health IT exchange will provide our veterans, service members, and their families with a high level of customer service and will enable greater decision support for examiners, thereby improving the overall case processing time. The national rollout plan is scheduled for implementation in FY 2016 in collaboration with the DoD.

Strengthening the Social Security Number Application Process

Enumeration is our process of assigning Social Security numbers and issuing Social Security cards. Each year we receive approximately 16 million applications for original and replacement Social Security cards. Our employees use the Social Security number application process, a web-based system, to record information and evidence submitted with a Social Security number application. This system is available in all field offices (including Social Security card centers) and Foreign Service posts. It also enables employees to correct individuals' Social Security number records.

As resources permit, we will develop and implement the following enhancements to help us enforce enumeration policy:

- Continue to partner with other Federal agencies to ensure the immigration systems and forms we use are up-to-date and in line with policy;
- Increase Social Security number integrity by improving citizenship documentation when appropriate; and
- Enhance policy and procedure enforcement.

These enhancements ensure accuracy in our Social Security number records, which in turn enables us to make proper payments. Further, in line with the Administration's one-government approach, we partnered with the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State to enumerate noncitizens accurately and consistently.

In FY 2015, we will provide additional processing statistics to help track our performance and improve our enumeration workload. In FY 2016, we plan to expand the Social Security number application process to allow for processing under special circumstances or in emergencies.

In FY 2017, we will provide support and updates to the system as needed, based on discussions we have with the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State. Additionally, we will continue to request enhancements to help ensure the system aligns with policy changes. We will provide faster application processing and stronger information security by enabling Foreign Service Posts to transfer applications electronically. Additionally, we will ensure the system continues to align with policy changes.

Performance Measure that supports Strategic Objective 1.3

Performance Measure		FY 2015 Performance	FY 2015 Target	FY 2016 Target	FY 2017 Target
1.3a	Minimize the average response time to deliver medical evidence to the VA for wounded warriors and veterans	4.2 business days Met	Deliver medical evidence to the VA within an average of 5 business days	Deliver medical evidence to the VA within an average of 5 business days	Deliver medical evidence to the VA within an average of 5 business days

References

For additional information please see our Annual Performance Plan for Fiscal Year 2017, Revised Performance Plan for Fiscal Year 2016, and Annual Performance Report for Fiscal Year 2015 (www.socialsecurity.gov/performance/)