



SOCIAL SECURITY

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 3, 2009

Refer To:

To: The Commissioner

From: Inspector General

Subject: Quick Response Evaluation: Office of Disability Adjudication and Review Management Information (A-07-09-29162)

The attached final report presents the results of our review. Our objective was to evaluate the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review's current management information and Information Technology Advisory Board proposals related to management information.

If you wish to discuss the final report, please call me or have your staff contact Steven L. Schaeffer, Assistant Inspector General for Audit, at (410) 965-9700.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr.

Attachment

QUICK RESPONSE EVALUATION

***Office of Disability Adjudication and
Review Management Information***

A-07-09-29162



August 2009

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.

OBJECTIVE

The objective of our review was to evaluate the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review's (ODAR) current management information (MI) and Information Technology Advisory Board (ITAB) proposals¹ related to MI.

BACKGROUND

At the end of May 2009, over 750,000 hearings were pending in ODAR, and the average processing time was 494 days. As outlined in its Fiscal Year (FY) 2008-2013 Strategic Plan, the Social Security Administration (SSA) plans to reduce the number of pending hearings to a desired level of 466,000 and the average processing time to 270 days by FY 2013. According to SSA, a pending level of 466,000 hearings ensures a sufficient number of cases to maximize the efficiency of the hearings process.

The Acting Deputy Commissioner of SSA asked that we evaluate the impact of ODAR's current MI and ODAR's proposals on its ability to reduce the backlog to the desired pending level. To address his request, we

- examined the workload ODAR would need to complete to process projected hearing requests and reduce the backlog to the desired pending level by FY 2013;
- identified MI currently available for officials to manage ODAR's workload, any reported shortfalls in available MI, and any reported shortfalls in the use of the MI to manage effectively; and
- reviewed ODAR's proposals, along with their potential impact on (1) addressing any shortfalls in ODAR's existing MI and (2) the likelihood SSA will meet its goal of reducing the backlog to the desired pending level by FY 2013.²

SSA's information technology (IT) planning is an on-going process that evaluates existing and new IT initiatives to ensure SSA is fulfilling its strategic goals and objectives. All IT projects start as IT proposals. The IT proposal is a plan to invest SSA's IT resources and is the primary tool for describing the scope of an IT project. ITAB uses available IT resources, its knowledge of SSA's priorities and strategic goals, and its understanding of executive interest, to provide guidance and approval for how SSA will invest IT resources. The Agency's ITAB, chaired by the Chief Information Officer and comprised of the Deputy Commissioner of SSA, all Deputy Commissioners for the business components, and other executive staff, is the governing body for the Agency's IT investment decisions.

¹ Throughout this report we refer to these as "proposals."

² See Appendix B for the Scope and Methodology for our review.

Results of Review

Regardless of whether the FY 2010 proposals are approved, it appears SSA will achieve the desired pending hearings level by FY 2013 based on the currently projected level of receipts. Specifically, if SSA follows its current administrative law judge (ALJ) hiring plan and the current average ALJ productivity level remains constant, ODAR's pending hearing level should fall below 466,000. However, the timing of ALJ hiring will impact ODAR's ability to achieve this desired pending level. Therefore, SSA should continue to work with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to ensure ALJs are hired within the planned time frames.

According to interviews with ODAR regional management officials, sufficient MI is available to monitor hearing office and employee productivity. However, there are inefficiencies that need to be addressed. Staff in the ODAR regional offices we interviewed identified shortfalls in existing MI and suggested improvements to use MI more efficiently. To overcome some of these shortfalls, the regional offices create additional manual reports that allow them to better manage the hearings process. However, this is inefficient and time-consuming. As resources permit, ODAR should consider automating the manual reports that are most beneficial and most frequently used by its regional and hearing office management.

To assist ITAB in allocating resources to ODAR, we identified the benefits ODAR states the proposals would have on its current MI. One of the primary concerns expressed by ODAR was that current MI does not always allow executives to adequately plan for the future or to measure the results of certain business processes. For example, ODAR stated that it does not have sufficient MI to determine whether the backlog initiatives are achieving the intended results.³ Without such a process, SSA may be expending limited resources on initiatives that have no impact or a negative impact on the hearings process. According to ODAR, the proposed *Quality Performance Management System (QPMS) Enhancements* will provide the MI needed to determine whether the initiatives are achieving the intended results. ITAB should give careful consideration to the approval of the QPMS proposal. In the future, SSA should consider having an independent assessment of the MI ODAR collects, with a focus on identifying areas where weaknesses exist in providing information for strategic planning.

ODAR is requesting ITAB approval for a total of 236.10 work years in FY 2010 to maintain existing systems and for 21 proposals.⁴ Under ITAB's current plans, all resource recipients, including ODAR, may only receive approximately the same number

³ To eliminate the backlog and prevent its recurrence, SSA has several backlog initiatives underway. The initiatives are outlined in the *Plan to Eliminate the Backlog and Prevent Its Recurrence*, which can be found at http://mwww.ba.ssa.gov/appeals/Backlog_Reports/Annual_Backlog_Report_FY_2008-Jan.pdf

⁴ A work year is a measure of work power equivalent to 1 FY of paid labor time to support the work of the Agency and of the programs it administers (including paid non-duty time such as leave). For FY 2010, a work year generally equates to \$113,500 for SSA personnel and \$126,700 for contractor personnel.

of work years in FY 2010 as they received in FY 2009. If this holds true, ODAR will receive 159.75 work years. We did not review the ITAB proposals submitted by all resource recipients. Therefore, we cannot opine on whether ODAR's proposals are the best use of ITAB's resources. However, we are not sure that the decision to hold all resource recipients to the FY 2009 level will result in the best use of limited resources, since this approach assumes that the needs of the resource recipients remain the same in FY 2010. ITAB should carefully consider the empirical cost and benefit data supporting all proposals, including ODAR's proposals.

ODAR'S ABILITY TO ELIMINATE THE BACKLOG

Regardless of whether ODAR's FY 2010 proposals are approved, it appears SSA will achieve the desired pending hearings level by FY 2013, based on the currently projected level of receipts, due primarily to the hiring of additional ALJs. We examined the workload ODAR would need to complete to process projected hearing requests and reduce the number of pending hearings to the desired level of 466,000 by FY 2013. We found that if SSA follows its current ALJ hiring plan, and the current average ALJ productivity level of 2.29 dispositions per ALJ per day remains constant, ODAR's pending level should fall to about 460,000 by FY 2013. According to the current ALJ hiring plan, SSA is hiring 157 ALJs who will come on duty in June and July 2009.⁵ In addition, SSA plans to hire 208 ALJs in FY 2010.⁶ The timing of ALJ hiring will impact ODAR's ability to achieve its desired pending level by FY 2013. The Commissioner has expressed concerns to the OPM Director that the ALJ register has not been updated for SSA to hire the 208 ALJs in FY 2010. SSA should continue to work with OPM to ensure ALJs are hired within the planned time frames.⁷ See Appendix C for details on our examination of the workload ODAR would need to complete to process projected hearing requests and achieve its desired pending level.

AVAILABLE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

We identified MI available for officials to manage ODAR's workload, reported shortfalls in the available MI, and reported shortfalls in the use of the MI to manage effectively. We found that ODAR has a considerable amount of MI available to monitor hearing office and employee productivity as well as hearing offices' progress toward meeting productivity and processing time goals. ODAR has two main sources for MI: the Case Processing and Management System (CPMS) and the Disability Adjudication Reporting

⁵ Of the 157 ALJs, 97 will be hired above attrition, and the remaining 60 will replace ALJs SSA estimates were lost due to attrition. The 157 ALJs includes 35 ALJs hired with funds provided to SSA by the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (ARRA). Pub. L. No. 111-5, February 17, 2009.

⁶ Of the 208 ALJs, 148 will be hired above attrition, and the remaining 60 will replace ALJs SSA estimates will be lost due to attrition. SSA hopes to hire 25 to 50 new ALJs in October 2009 with the remainder hired in July 2010.

⁷ To hire ALJs, SSA submits a request to OPM, which provides a list of eligible candidates. SSA interviews eligible candidates and submits selections to OPM for approval. OPM performs background checks on the candidates.

Tools (DART) system. CPMS provides a comprehensive workload management package with two functions: (1) Workload Control, which provides pending actions and real-time workload information and (2) MI, which provides completed workload information, updated nightly. We identified 71 reports available from the MI side of CPMS. DART is an ad hoc reporting system providing users access to pending and completed case information extracted daily from CPMS. We identified 66 MI reports available in DART.

We interviewed management officials in four ODAR regional offices to identify concerns or shortfalls with available MI in CPMS and DART.⁸ According to these interviews, CPMS and DART provide sufficient MI for ODAR to monitor hearing office and employee productivity. However, the ODAR regional officials we interviewed identified 18 shortfalls in existing MI and improvements to use MI more efficiently.⁹

For example, regional officials indicated the following.

- Some reports could be modified to better suit their needs, such as providing weekly rather than monthly reports, combining information from multiple reports, or providing the reports in Excel for easier sorting and filtering.
- Reports could be available in real time rather than as of the previous day to provide up-to-date MI.
- User specifications for reports, such as user-defined dates or data to include in the reports, could be improved.

To improve existing MI and address some of the shortfalls reported by the regional offices, ODAR is requesting ITAB approval for 10 MI-related proposals.¹⁰ We reviewed ODAR's MI proposals, along with their potential impact on addressing the 18 shortfalls identified in ODAR's existing MI. According to ODAR, 4 of the 18 shortfalls will be addressed with the approval of 3 of its MI proposals (see Appendix D, shortfalls 1 through 4). Specifically, ODAR stated the following with regard to each of these three proposals.

- *CPMS MI for FY 2010* will provide reports that focus on meeting weekly performance goals versus monthly goals, which will allow for better management of ODAR's workload.
- *QPMS Enhancements* will provide the MI necessary to determine whether each of ODAR's backlog initiatives is achieving the intended results as well as determine whether all the initiatives are working collectively to significantly reduce the overall disability hearings backlog.

⁸ The four ODAR regional offices contacted were Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, and Kansas City.

⁹ See Appendix D for further details of these shortfalls.

¹⁰ See Appendix E for a description of each proposal, how it will improve existing MI, and its impact on ODAR's ability to eliminate the backlog by FY 2013.

- *CPMS Enhancements FY 2010* will integrate CPMS with other SSA systems and is critical to deriving the MI improvements in the *QPMS* proposal.

For the remaining 14 shortfalls, ODAR stated

- 4 shortfalls warrant consideration for future MI proposals (see Appendix D, shortfalls 5 through 8),
- 6 shortfalls will not be considered at this time because of resource limitations (see Appendix D, shortfalls 9 through 14), and
- 4 shortfalls related to DART reports and may be addressed using existing resources since DART enhancements are not part of the ITAB process as are CPMS enhancements (see Appendix D, shortfalls 15 through 18).

According to our interviews with staff in the ODAR regional offices, several of these shortfalls create inefficiencies in the oversight of the hearings process. To overcome some of these inefficiencies, all four of the regional offices create additional MI reports that allow them to better manage the hearings process. For example, using information from CPMS and DART, the regional offices manually create additional reports in a format that is more useful to regional office management. One such manually created report allows regional office management to compare workloads among the hearing offices in their region and track progress toward meeting hearing office targets. In one regional office, two staff members spend 2 weeks each month manually creating reports officials need to effectively manage the hearings process in the region.

It is inefficient for the regional offices to create manual reports. In fact, significant time may be saved each month if the manual reports were automated in CPMS and DART. As resources permit, ODAR should consider automating the manual reports that are most beneficial and most frequently used by its regional and hearing office management.

PROPOSALS RELATED TO MI

ODAR is requesting ITAB's approval for 21 proposals, of which 10 proposals are related to MI. We asked ODAR to explain how each of the 10 MI proposals will assist in eliminating the backlog. Overall, ODAR expects the proposals will assist its efforts to eliminate the hearings backlog and prevent its recurrence by providing MI needed to (1) better manage the hearing workload thereby increasing productivity, (2) allow ODAR to measure the effectiveness of the initiatives in reducing the backlog, and (3) allow decisions earlier in the process thereby removing cases from the backlog.

To assist SSA in its ITAB process, we have identified the benefits ODAR states the proposals would have on ODAR's current MI (see Appendix E). For example, ODAR states the proposal "CPMS MI for FY 2010" is expected to improve existing MI by providing reports that focus on meeting weekly performance goals instead of monthly goals thereby enabling ODAR to better manage its workload. Given the historical

problems with ODAR's backlog of claims and lengthy processing times, better management of its workload is warranted and may help prevent recurrence of the backlog. Another proposal, "Health Information Technology (HIT) for ODAR," is part of ODAR's plan for preparing to incorporate electronic medical evidence into its business process.¹¹ It is important for ODAR to prepare for HIT as it appears to be the avenue for SSA to receive medical evidence in the future.

One of the primary concerns expressed by ODAR was that MI is not sufficient for ODAR executives to perform strategic planning. Specifically, ODAR stated that current MI does not always allow executives to adequately plan for the future or measure the results of certain business processes. Strategic planning serves a variety of purposes in an organization, such as assisting management in

- establishing goals and objectives consistent with the mission in a defined time frame and within the organization's capacity for implementation;
- ensuring the most effective use is made of the organization's resources by focusing them on key priorities;
- providing a base from which progress can be measured and establishing a mechanism for informed change when needed;
- providing a clearer focus of an organization, producing more efficiency and effectiveness and increased productivity; and
- solving major problems.

As an example of what ODAR considers to be insufficient MI, ODAR states that existing MI provides limited information needed to determine whether the backlog initiatives are achieving the intended results as well as determining whether the initiatives are working together to reduce the backlog. Given the resources being expended on the backlog initiatives, SSA should have a process to determine whether the initiatives are achieving the intended results. Without such a process, SSA may be expending limited resources on initiatives that have no, or even a negative, impact on the hearings process. If the backlog initiatives are having a negative impact, they could minimize some of the benefits of hiring additional ALJs and hinder ODAR's ability to eliminate the hearing backlog by FY 2013. According to ODAR, the ITAB proposal *QPMS Enhancements* will provide the MI needed to determine whether the initiatives are achieving the intended results.¹² Therefore, SSA, through its ITAB process, should give careful consideration to approving the *QPMS* proposal if it is proven to provide the MI needed to assess the effectiveness of the backlog initiatives.

¹¹ Under the HIT initiative, SSA's system will send an electronic medical request to the treating source. Almost immediately, the treating source will electronically transmit the individual's medical record. SSA has already exchanged data with two providers and will continue to track the flow of data from those providers. SSA plans to use approximately \$24 million in funds provided by ARRA to contract with the health care community to provide SSA with electronic health records to improve the speed and accuracy of the disability determination process.

¹² We did not assess the subset of MI ODAR needs to measure the progress of its backlog initiatives.

We did not analyze all MI collected by ODAR. Therefore, we cannot opine on its completeness or effectiveness. However, executives should have the MI needed to strategically plan the future of ODAR and solve or prevent major problems, such as preventing the recurrence of the hearings backlog. SSA should consider having an independent assessment of the MI ODAR collects with a focus on identifying areas where weaknesses exist in providing MI to executives for strategic planning.

ITAB RESOURCES AVAILABLE

As previously stated, it appears that SSA will achieve the desired hearings pending level by FY 2013 based on the currently projected level of receipts, if it follows its current ALJ hiring plan and the current average ALJ productivity level remains constant. Therefore, we do not see the proposals as critical to SSA's achieving its desired pending level. However, that does not mean the proposals are not important to prevent recurrence of the backlog, improve current MI, or improve ODAR's business processes.

ODAR is requesting ITAB's approval for a total of 236.10 work years in FY 2010, which represents 7 percent of the 3,596 work years available for all SSA FY 2010 ITAB proposals (see Appendix F). The 236.10 work years consists of

- 14.37 work years to maintain existing systems,
- 128.63 work years for 10 proposals related to MI, and
- 93.10 work years for 11 proposals not related to MI.

According to ITAB's current plans, for FY 2010, resource recipients may only receive approximately the same number of work years they received in FY 2009. If this holds true, ODAR will receive 159.75 work years. Accordingly, ODAR will not receive 76.35 of the work years it has requested.

There are various approaches to expend the limited ITAB resources available to ODAR. If resources are expended based on ODAR's ranking of the 21 proposals and approval of the *QPMS* proposal, the 159.75 work years would allow ODAR to

- maintain existing systems (14.37 work years),
- proceed with the top 10 ranked proposals (135.66 work years), and
- proceed with *QPMS Enhancements* (6.60 work years).

Using this approach, ODAR could use 94.10 work years to proceed with 6 of its 10 proposals related to MI and 48.16 work years to proceed with 5 of the 11 proposals not related to MI as shown in the following table.

Proposals Related to MI	FY 2010 Work Years Requested
CPMS MI for FY 2010	18.48
HIT for ODAR	19.58
ODAR Replacement Automated Call Order	15.68
CPMS Enhancements FY 2010	24.45
Auto Scheduling 2010	9.31
QPMS Enhancements Release 4	6.60
Total	94.10
Proposals Not Related to MI	
Desktop Video Units/Representative Video	3.50
ODAR Appeals Review Processing System for 2010 Release 5	16.78
Enhancements for Findings Integrated Template/Document Generation System FY 2010	10.30
Electronic Certified Administrative Record Release 4	6.76
Auto Scheduling Release 1	10.82
Total	48.16

We did not review the ITAB proposals submitted by all resource recipients. Therefore, we cannot opine on whether ODAR's proposals are the best use of ITAB's resources. However, we are not sure that the ITAB decision to hold all resource recipients to the same work year levels as FY 2009 will result in the best use of limited resources, since this approach assumes that the needs of the resource recipients remain the same in FY 2010. We believe ITAB should carefully consider the empirical cost and benefit data supporting all proposals, including ODAR's proposals.

Matters for Consideration

To ensure SSA achieves the desired pending hearings level by FY 2013, SSA should continue to work with OPM to ensure ALJs are hired within the planned time frames. To address inefficiencies in existing MI, ODAR should consider automating the manual reports that are most beneficial and most frequently used by its regional and hearing office management.

To ensure ODAR executives have sufficient MI to adequately plan for the future and measure the results of certain business processes, such as the backlog initiatives, ITAB should give careful consideration to the approval of the *QPMS* proposal if it is proven to provide the MI needed to assess the effectiveness of the backlog initiatives. In the future, SSA should consider having an independent assessment of the MI ODAR collects, with a focus on identifying areas where weaknesses exist in providing information for strategic planning.

We did not review the ITAB proposals submitted by all resource recipients. Therefore, we cannot opine on whether ODAR's proposals are the best use of ITAB's resources. ITAB should carefully consider the empirical cost and benefit data supporting all proposals, including ODAR's proposals.

Appendices

[APPENDIX A](#) – Acronyms

[APPENDIX B](#) – Scope and Methodology

[APPENDIX C](#) – Ability to Eliminate Backlog by Fiscal Year 2013

[APPENDIX D](#) – Shortfalls in Management Information Reported by Regional Officials

[APPENDIX E](#) – Fiscal Year 2010 Management Information Technology Initiatives

[APPENDIX F](#) – Work Years Requested for Technology Proposals

[APPENDIX G](#) – OIG Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

Acronyms

ACTII	Audio Cassette Transcription Invoice and Inquiry
AFS	Attorney Fee System
ALJ	Administrative Law Judge
ARPS	Appeals Review Processing System
ARRA	<i>American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009</i>
CPMS	Case Processing and Management System
DARES	Disability Adjudication Reporting and Evaluation System
DART	Disability Adjudication Reporting Tools
DCO	Deputy Commissioner for Operations
DGS	Document Generation System
DVU	Desktop Video Unit
eCAR	Electronic Certified Administrative Record
eCAT	Electronic Claims Analysis Tool
FIT	Findings Integrated Template
FY	Fiscal Year
HIT	Health Information Technology
IT	Information Technology
ITAB	Information Technology Advisory Board
MI	Management Information
MTAS	Mainframe Time and Attendance System
NDMIS	National Docketing and Management Information System
ODAR	Office of Disability Adjudication and Review
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
QPMS	<i>Quality Performance Management System</i>
SLA	Service Level Agreement
SSA	Social Security Administration
VHR	Verbatim Hearing Recording

Scope and Methodology

To achieve the objective of our review, we:

- Reviewed applicable laws and regulations and pertinent parts of the Hearings, Appeals, and Litigation Law Manual related to the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review's (ODAR) management information (MI).
- Reviewed manuals, guides, and other documentation related to the Case Processing and Management System (CPMS) and the Disability Adjudication Reporting Tools system.
- Reviewed CPMS MI reports to obtain ODAR's Fiscal Year (FY) 2009 workload statistics.
- Obtained details on ODAR's FY 2010 Information Technology Advisory Board technology proposals.
- Interviewed the Deputy Commissioner for ODAR and officials in ODAR's Office of Management; Office of the Chief Administrative Law Judge; and regional offices in Boston, Atlanta, Chicago, and Kansas City.

The entity reviewed was ODAR. Our work was conducted at the Office of Audit and ODAR's regional office in Kansas City, Missouri; ODAR's Headquarters in Falls Church, Virginia; and ODAR's regional offices in Boston, Massachusetts; Atlanta, Georgia; and Chicago, Illinois. We conducted our work from May through July 2009. We conducted our review in accordance with the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency's¹ *Quality Standards for Inspections*.

¹ In January 2009, 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.

Ability to Eliminate Backlog by Fiscal Year 2013

We analyzed the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review's (ODAR) ability to eliminate the backlog by Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 based on the Social Security Administration's (SSA) plan to hire 157 administrative law judges (ALJ) in June and July 2009 and 208 ALJs in FY 2010.¹ With these new ALJs, and if productivity levels and currently projected level of receipts remain constant, we estimate ODAR will reach a pending level below 466,000 cases by FY 2013, thus meeting SSA's desired level.

FY 2009-2013 Workload with Planned ALJ Hires					
Fiscal Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Projected Receipts ²	641,000	698,000	736,000	699,000	670,000
ALJs Available ³	1,066.32	1,198.00	1,315.99	1,327.05	1,327.05
ALJ Dispositions ⁴	610,470	685,855	753,402	759,738	759,738
Attorney Dispositions ⁵	35,348	35,348	35,348	35,348	35,348
Total Dispositions	645,818	721,203	788,750	795,086	795,086
Beginning Pending ⁶	760,813	755,995	732,792	680,042	583,956
Closing Pending ⁷	755,995	732,792	680,042	583,953	458,870

¹ Of the new ALJ hires, 97 ALJs will be hired above attrition in FY 2009 and 148 ALJs will be hired above attrition in FY 2010. SSA assumes 60 ALJs will be lost each year due to attrition but will be replaced. For FY 2010, SSA hopes to hire 25 to 50 ALJs in October 2009 and the remainder in July 2010.

² Projected receipts (requests for hearing) were based on the FY 2010 President's budget assumptions.

³ ODAR computes ALJ availability to account for factors such as leave, details, or a new ALJ's learning curve. We estimated the average number of ALJs available to process cases each year, taking ALJ attrition and hiring into consideration. Specifically, we applied ODAR's assumption that 60 ALJs would be lost each year due to attrition but would be replaced. We also took ODAR's 9-month learning curve into consideration when estimating the availability of new ALJs. Once the learning curve was completed, we assumed new ALJs were available at the same rate as experienced ALJs. This approach for estimating available ALJs is similar to that followed by SSA's Office of Budget when preparing its budget.

⁴ For each FY, we calculated the number of ALJ dispositions by multiplying the number of ALJs available by the FY 2009 (as of May) average of 2.29 dispositions per available ALJ per day and a 250-day work year (historically most FYs have 250 work days). In addition, we assumed any initiatives that enabled ALJs to reach a productivity level of 2.29 dispositions per available ALJ per day would continue through FY 2013.

⁵ We calculated the number of attorney dispositions by multiplying the FY 2009 (as of May) daily average of 141.39 dispositions for all attorney adjudicators combined by a 250-day work year. ODAR expects attorney adjudicators to issue the same number of dispositions each year through FY 2013.

⁶ At the beginning of FY 2009, 760,813 cases were pending at ODAR. The beginning pending levels for FYs 2010 through 2013 are equal to the closing pending levels for the prior FYs.

⁷ We calculated closing pending by adding projected receipts to the beginning pending level and subtracting total dispositions for each FY.

Shortfalls in Management Information Reported by Regional Officials

We interviewed management officials in 4 of the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review's (ODAR) 10 regions to identify concerns with available management information (MI). Specifically, the regional officials identified shortfalls in the MI available in the Case Processing and Management System (CPMS) and Disability Adjudication Reporting Tools (DART) system. According to ODAR, four of the shortfalls identified may be addressed by a Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 ODAR Information Technology Advisory Board (ITAB) proposal.¹

Shortfalls in MI and Related MI Proposal			
	Shortfall	Proposal That Will Address Shortfall	ODAR's Response to Shortfall
1	CPMS reports could be enhanced to include time and attendance information so management can easily compare an employee's workload with the amount of time actually worked.	CPMS Enhancements FY 2010 (Appendix E, Item 4)	The proposal will create an application (or incorporate the Mainframe Time and Attendance System [MTAS] Hours application) to pull work hour data from MTAS/WebTA and provide a standardized automated method for input of hearing office Monthly Activity Hours and Counts Collection information with data integrity consistent throughout ODAR using data directly from ODAR's timekeeping system(s). Given the complexity of this request and the large number of work years that would be needed, ODAR is conducting planning and analysis for FY 2010 to determine viable options.
2	There is currently no MI available with weekly workloads.	CPMS MI for FY 2010 (Appendix E, Item 1)	ODAR has some existing weekly reports, and this initiative is simply expanding the number of those reports.

¹ Throughout this Appendix we refer to these as proposals. See Appendix E for additional information on the proposals.

Shortfalls in MI and Related MI Proposal

	Shortfall	Proposal That Will Address Shortfall	ODAR's Response to Shortfall
3	CPMS and DART reports do not include target information, such as what the targets are and where the region is in meeting those targets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CPMS MI for FY 2010 (Appendix E, Item 1) ▪ Quality Performance Management System Enhancements Release 4 (Appendix E, Item 7) ▪ CPMS Enhancements FY 2010 (Appendix E, Item 4) 	This is being developed through the application Disability Adjudication Reporting and Evaluation System (DARES). ODAR has implemented the Web-based Backlog Reduction Initiatives Dashboard (a graphical experience) or Bridge that will be linked to DARES to provide high-level MI. The Office of Systems, in partnership with ODAR and the Office of Quality Performance, is developing DARES.
4	Some CPMS and DART reports are very slow to run, especially toward the end of the month.	CPMS MI for FY 2010 (Appendix E, Item 1)	Performance issues have been caused in large part by workload imbalances during the last week of the month. ODAR thinks this will be improved once the MI reports are available weekly. There is an existing project to look at systems performance issues, not part of the ITAB process using robotics.
5	Regions would like to see any data that may affect a case propagated into CPMS, such as earnings data, death information, time spent out of the country, incarceration data.	Not Applicable	This is going to occur with some queries, where the queries will automatically be uploaded to the electronic folder and is in FY 2009 ITAB submissions. Some of the other items have not been requested and appear to be good ideas to explore in the future.
6	Regions would like the manual logs used to track flexiplace cases automated.	Not Applicable	Given that ODAR has four unions, all with separate flexiplace agreements, changes cannot be made until or unless contracts are renegotiated.
7	In some situations, hearing offices do not receive a request for hearing until the case has already become aged, eliminating the region's ability to process the case in its processing time goal. Regions would like a way to identify these cases so they do not reflect negatively on the hearing office or region.	Not Applicable	ODAR has met with the Deputy Commissioner for Operations (DCO), and DCO is pursuing some systems fixes to ensure that requests for hearing do not languish in a field office, and they are pursuing some systems changes to prevent cases from not being inadvertently held.
8	Status codes for workup contract pulling and temporary transfers out for decision typing could be eliminated to reduce the chance for inaccurate data inputs.	Not Applicable	The status code for workup contract pulling is still being used, and ODAR can explore eliminating the status code for temporary transfers out for decision typing, which is rarely used because decisions are rarely dictated.

Shortfalls in MI and Related MI Proposal

	Shortfall	Proposal That Will Address Shortfall	ODAR's Response to Shortfall
9	Regions would like the flexiplace status codes in CPMS enhanced to enable them to track the time a case is worked at the flexiplace location and the time the case is worked in the hearing office. According to the region, the time is currently combined on MI reports.	Not Applicable	There was a separate proposal for FY 2010 to address flexiplace management. However, it was removed from the FY 2010 proposals because of resource limitations.
10	For reports provided to regions by the Office of the Chief Administrative Law Judge, the regions would like to be able to drill down to the hearing office level to obtain specific information on targets, etc. for each office.	Not Applicable	This is something that has been explored in the past but is extremely labor intensive and would expend a large amount of resources and that is why it has not been provided.
11	CPMS and DART reports could be enhanced to allow users to establish "preferences" or "favorites" with only the parameters or fields that the user specifies. Once established, the user selects their "preference" or "favorite" to obtain a report with the desired information. This functionality may also decrease the time it takes for the report to load since fewer fields will be pulled in.	Not Applicable	ODAR has not included this formally in any proposals and has raised the issue, however, with the Office of Systems on several occasions but have been informally told that this would be very labor intensive and expend a large number of systems work years. However, as a result of DART updates, users can mark reports/listings as favorites.
12	Regional office management would like CPMS and DART summary reports that include the summary information for each hearing office within the region. Currently, management must access a report for each hearing office to make comparisons among the hearing offices within the regions.	Not Applicable	ODAR has this existing functionality in many of the CPMS MI reports (e.g. Workload Summary by Status, Monthly Activity Report, etc.).
13	Management would like to see the summary information available in real-time rather than viewing day-old data.	Not Applicable	ODAR has formally included this item in several ITAB submissions, but the primary issue is a significant risk of decreased systems performance. Although it would be beneficial to have this, the return on investment appears to be limited and it would take a significant amount of resources to make this happen.
14	Management would like to have one place to access MI, rather than going to CPMS for some reports and DART for other reports.	Not Applicable	DART gives users the ability to create some MI reports that would not otherwise be available and allows ODAR to develop applications without relying on Office of Systems' resources.

Shortfalls in MI and Related MI Proposal			
	Shortfall	Proposal That Will Address Shortfall	ODAR's Response to Shortfall
15	Some DART reports are only available in Adobe or HTML format, making it difficult for the Region to import data into Excel to perform further analysis on the data.	Not Applicable	ODAR did not address shortfalls relating to any of the DART reports because those reports are created by ODAR and are not part of the ITAB process. As a result of DART updates, users can see all representatives' schedules (see shortfall 18).
16	Some DART reports that allow users to enter specific dates for the report should also have the option to select from ODAR's reporting months. Since ODAR's reporting months are not identical to the calendar months, users wanting monthly data may pull in excess or incomplete data by entering an incorrect starting or ending date for a month.		
17	Other DART reports do not allow the user to enter a specific date. Instead, the report is only available as of the current date.		
18	DART reports showing representatives' schedules only display hearings scheduled for the user's region and do not allow the user to view the representatives' hearings scheduled in other regions.		

Fiscal Year 2010 Management Information Technology Initiatives

The Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR) is requesting resources to be allocated to 21 Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 Information Technology Advisory Board (ITAB) proposals.¹ Of the 21 proposals, 10 are directly related to improving ODAR's management information (MI) as shown in Table 1. For these proposals, ODAR provided information on how each proposal will improve MI and assist in eliminating the backlog. According to ODAR, the other 11 proposals are related to improving existing ODAR systems or processes (see Table 2).

Table 1 FY 2010 Technology Proposals Related to MI				
	Proposal Title	Description	How will the proposal improve MI?	How will the proposal assist in eliminating the backlog?
1	Case Processing and Management System (CPMS) MI for FY 2010 (to be considered in conjunction with CPMS Enhancements FY 2010, Item 4 in this table)	This proposal will improve existing CPMS MI by providing reports that focus on meeting weekly performance goals and support for creating customized MI reports. Enhancements will include providing new quality review reports and improving the accuracy of existing reports.	This template contains numerous elements that are critical to developing comprehensive MI for ODAR. There are many changes here, but the primary item is changing the MI reports from monthly to weekly, which will focus attention on meeting weekly goals and help eliminate some of the systems problems often experienced at the end of the month. Other items will enable ODAR to better manage its workload. Moving to weekly workload reporting is a Commissioner backlog elimination initiative.	Better management of the workload should lead to higher productivity, although it would be difficult to attempt to quantify the cumulative impact of all these items.

¹ Throughout this appendix we refer to these as proposals.

**Table 1
FY 2010 Technology Proposals Related to MI**

	Proposal Title	Description	How will the proposal improve MI?	How will the proposal assist in eliminating the backlog?
2	Health Information Technology (HIT) for ODAR	This proposal will address changes required to incorporate electronic health records into ODAR's business process. The changes will use electronic information to facilitate case screening and developing a quick disability decision analysis tool.	There is limited MI on what types of impairments are generally allowed at the hearing level, and this initiative has the potential to offer much more MI than ODAR currently has to evaluate trends and identify cases that are most likely to be allowances. It will also provide data on project-specific items, such as how many cases include HIT medical evidence of record, how it affected processing time, and whether it provides an effective screening tool.	If this can better identify cases with a high probability of reversal, it could have a significant impact on the backlog by enabling ODAR to make on-the-record decisions without the need for a hearing.
3	ODAR Replacement Automated Call Order	Call orders are required for medical experts, vocational experts, and verbatim hearing recording (VHR) contractors. The proposal would replace ODAR's existing automated call order system that is no longer supported by the developers. The new system will provide management reports related to the cost of ODAR's use of medical experts, vocational experts, and VHR contractors.	This is a critical item. It will provide additional MI on the use of experts and other contractors, as well as staff availability and funding.	Productivity gains would result in the scheduling process as call orders are used on virtually every case. Replacement is necessary given that ODAR's existing system is nearing the end of its life-cycle.

**Table 1
FY 2010 Technology Proposals Related to MI**

	Proposal Title	Description	How will the proposal improve MI?	How will the proposal assist in eliminating the backlog?
4	CPMS Enhancements FY 2010 (to be considered in conjunction with CPMS MI for FY 2010, Item 1 in this table)	This proposal is to integrate CPMS with other Social Security Administration (SSA) systems to reduce the need for manual key entry and to assist in ODAR's implementation of a standardized business process. Additional enhancements will include multiple time saving improvements, such as avoiding duplicate work efforts by identifying cases that have been screened for on-the-record decisions.	Some of these items could enable ODAR to manage the workload better. Historically, CPMS templates deal with the front-end of CPMS and the CPMS MI deals with the back end, meaning that it uses the data entered on the front-end. These front-end enhancements are critical in deriving the MI identified in the proposal CPMS MI for FY 2010 (see Item 1 in this table). It also contains the items necessary to develop in-line quality assurance.	The total impact of all the various items could be significant and result in greater productivity and subsequently enable ODAR to more effectively deal with the backlog.
5	Auto Scheduling 2010	ODAR plans to develop a system to electronically schedule hearings with business partners such as claimant representatives and medical experts.	Auto scheduling will not improve ODAR's existing MI. Any MI generated will be to measure the impact of the initiative on such areas as the number of hearings scheduled, the postponement rate, and the reasons for postponements. These are critical data elements when projecting future performance.	The scheduling of hearings is almost entirely manual, and this software has the potential to significantly improve the ability to schedule more hearings and hold more hearings by using an automated calendar function to schedule hearing sites, expert witnesses, contract hearing reporters, and judges. It is a very critical piece of reducing the hearings backlog. This is high on the priority list to eliminate a labor-intensive manual process.

**Table 1
FY 2010 Technology Proposals Related to MI**

	Proposal Title	Description	How will the proposal improve MI?	How will the proposal assist in eliminating the backlog?
6	Electronic Claims Analysis Tool (eCAT) Release 6.0	E-cat is a Web-based application designed to assist the adjudicator and aid in documenting, analyzing, and adjudicating the disability claim in accordance with SSA regulations. The proposal would increase the functionality and usability of eCAT.	ODAR expects to introduce eCAT functionality in a limited number of hearing offices to allow ODAR to become familiar with this functionality. It should provide high level MI on decisional accuracy and task times, including decision writing.	Limited impact on eliminating the backlog since ODAR expects to introduce eCAT functionality in a limited number of hearing offices.
7	<i>Quality Performance Management System (QPMS) Enhancements</i> Release 4	This proposal addresses various <i>QPMS Enhancements</i> needed to automate the measurement of ODAR's productivity compared to established performance measures. Enhancements will provide MI needed to assess whether each of ODAR's backlog initiatives is achieving the intended results as well as determine whether all the initiatives are working collectively to significantly reduce the overall national disability hearings backlog.	This is a critical item that will allow ODAR to track the impact of all the backlog initiatives. Additional functionality is necessary and critical. This template not only allows ODAR to track current progress, provides critical data needed to assess the ability to meet future goals.	It is critical to measure the effectiveness of the backlog initiatives in reducing the backlog of cases.

**Table 1
FY 2010 Technology Proposals Related to MI**

	Proposal Title	Description	How will the proposal improve MI?	How will the proposal assist in eliminating the backlog?
8	Audio Cassette Transcription Invoice and Inquiry (ACTII) and Attorney Fee System (AFS) Conversion	ODAR uses ACTII to track the status and location of audio cassettes containing the transcripts of hearings. ODAR uses AFS to track both fee petitions and fee agreements in cases at the hearing level or higher. The proposal would upgrade the ACTII and AFS systems to ensure they continue to work with SSA's changing computer network.	This is an Office of Appellate Operations item to eliminate two stand-alone database applications. Given ODAR's impending upgrade of the operating system and the fact these applications may not work in the new environment, this is a critical item, even though it does not specifically relate to reducing the backlog. This item has initiative-specific MI as opposed to enterprise-wide MI.	Given ODAR's impending upgrade of the operating system and the fact these applications may not work in the new environment, this is a critical item, even though it does not specifically relate to reducing the backlog.
9	Conversion of the Findings Integrated Templates (FIT) and Document Generation System (DGS) Into a Web-Based Application	FIT is a Commissioner's initiative that includes more than 1,700 decision templates designed to improve the quality and consistency of administrative law judge decisions. DGS processes text information to generate standard notices to claimants and other parties. The proposal includes development of a Web-based tool that allows claimant representatives to submit proposed hearing decisions and supports hearing office employees' ability to work at alternate duty stations. The system will be integrated with CPMS and include MI related to notices or decisional outcomes.	Impact on MI would be limited given that this is strictly a planning and analysis template, meaning that ODAR will not receive any additional functionality at this point, but once a new system is developed, there are many uses for MI that do not currently exist. The future development effort is expected to greatly enhance ODAR's MI since the new format will allow ODAR to mine data on overall aspects of the hearing decisions.	Impact on eliminating the backlog would be limited given that this is strictly a planning and analysis template.

**Table 1
FY 2010 Technology Proposals Related to MI**

	Proposal Title	Description	How will the proposal improve MI?	How will the proposal assist in eliminating the backlog?
10	CPMS MI Release 10	This proposal will enhance existing CPMS MI reports to include case pending and disposition information, additional information to track the use of state and local video hearing networks to conduct SSA video hearings, and comprehensive MI related to remands.	This is a carryover template and these items have the potential to improve CPMS by offering things that ODAR has requested for several years. Many of these gaps, however, have been filled, at least in part by Disability Adjudication Reporting Tools (DART) reports so the overall impact would be limited and the priority is low, relative to some of the other items.	There would be some productivity gains as much time is spent by managers going between workload listings, CPMS MI, and DART. Better MI improves the productivity of ODAR's managers and provides greater accountability.

**Table 2
FY 2010 Technology Proposals Not Related to MI**

	Proposal Title	Description
1	Desktop Video Units (DVU)/Representative Video	Implement DVUs to be used in administrative law judges' offices, field offices, and external sites to reduce the need for new hearing rooms, reduce travel costs, and provide claimants more access to hearing proceedings.
2	ODAR Appeals Review Processing System (ARPS) for 2010 Release 5	Enhancements and upgrades to ARPS that will allow the Appeals Council to more efficiently process electronic claims at both the Appeals Council and Federal Court levels.
3	Enhancements for FIT/DGS FY 2010	Increase the functionality available in FITS and DGS to provide additional automation, improve decision and notice quality, and increase productivity.
4	Electronic Certified Administrative Record (eCAR) Release 4	The U.S. District Court requires that a certified copy of the administrative record be filed with the Federal court when SSA files its answers to a complaint challenging the denial of benefits. The eCAR will allow SSA to accomplish this within the electronic folder. The Office of Appellate Operations within ODAR is responsible for preparing the certified administrative record. The proposal would enhance eCAR functionality, address court redaction requirements, and allow fully electronic filing of records to the courts.
5	Auto Scheduling Release 1	Allow hearing offices to schedule hearings electronically with business partners, including claimant representatives and experts.
6	Service Level Agreement (SLA) for ODAR	Identifies and implements ODAR SLAs for Electronic Disability to track goals such as system availability, response time, and problem management customer service.
7	Transferring National Docketing and MI System (NDMIS) to OS	NDMIS consists of identification information about a variety of administrative and civil litigation and communications that may result, or has resulted, in litigation brought against, or by, SSA. The proposal facilitates Office of General Counsel transfer of NDMIS to the Office of Systems to develop interfaces with other Agency applications and be consistent with seamless processing.
8	Automated Noticing	Develop a process to automatically create and centralize mail notices and other correspondence using CPMS.
9	Compact Disc Burning Network Performance	Increase bandwidth to reduce ODAR offices' network slowdowns, improve operations, and allow users more time to complete other tasks.
10	ePulling 2010	Plan and implement national rollout of ePulling software ensuring performance is maintained at a level that meets the users' needs.
11	ODAR Case Preparation	The ePulling initiative involves customized software that can classify documents, pull out page-level data, identify potential duplicates, and sequentially number pages in a document. The proposal involves continuing the integration and piloting of the ePulling software ensuring performance is maintained at levels that meet users' needs.

Work Years Requested for Technology Proposals

The Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR) is requesting the Social Security Administration (SSA) Information Technology Advisory Board's (ITAB) approval for a total of 236.10 work years in Fiscal Year (FY) 2010, which represents 7 percent of the 3,596 work years available for all SSA FY 2010 proposals. The 236.10 work years consists of

- 14.37 work years to maintain existing systems,
- 128.63 work years for 10 proposals related to MI, and
- 93.10 work years for 11 proposals not related to MI.

According to ITAB's current plan, in FY 2010, resource recipients may only receive approximately the same number of work years they received in FY 2009. If this holds true, ODAR will receive 159.75 work years. Accordingly, ODAR will not receive 76.35 of the work years it has requested.

There are various approaches to expend the limited ITAB resources available to ODAR. If resources are expended based on ODAR's ranking of the 21 proposals and approval of the QPMS proposal, the 159.75 work years would allow ODAR to

- maintain existing systems (14.37 work years),
- proceed with the top 10 ranked proposals (135.66 work years), and
- proceed with QPMS Enhancements (6.60 work years).

Using this approach ODAR could use

- 94.10 work years to proceed with 6 of its 10 proposals related to management information (MI) (see table on the following page, yellow highlighted proposals) and
- 48.16 work years to proceed with 5 of the 11 proposals not related to MI (see table on the following page, green highlighted proposals).

Work Years Requested for ODAR ITAB Proposals				
ODAR's ITAB Ranking	Proposal Title	Work Years Requested		
		FY 2010	FY 2011	Total
1	Case Processing and Management System (CPMS) Management Information for FY 2010 (to be considered in conjunction with CPMS Enhancements FY 2010, Item 5 in this table)	18.48	6.90	25.38
2	Health Information Technology for ODAR	19.58	0.00	19.58
3	ODAR Replacement Automated Call Order	15.68	0.00	15.68
4	CPMS Enhancements FY 2010 (to be considered in conjunction with CPMS MI for FY 2010, Item 1 in this table)	24.45	40.7	65.15
5	Desktop Video Units/Representative Video	3.50	3.25	6.75
6	ODAR Appeals Review Processing System for 2010 Release 5	16.78	9.28	26.06
7	Enhancements for the Findings Integrated Templates (FIT) and Document Generation System (DGS) FY 2010	10.30	3.40	13.70
8	Electronic Certified Administrative Record Release 4	6.76	0.00	6.76
9	Auto Scheduling Release 1	10.82	0.00	10.82
10	Auto Scheduling 2010	9.31	0.00	9.31
11	Electronic Claims Analysis Tool Release 6.0	12.48	0.00	12.48
12	QPMS Enhancements Release 4	6.60	0.07	6.67
13	Audio Cassette Transcription Invoice and Inquiry and Attorney Fee System Conversion	13.90	0.00	13.90
14	Service Level Agreement for ODAR	6.16	5.00	11.16
15	Transferring National Docketing and MI System to the Office of Systems	6.48	0.00	6.48
16	Automated Noticing	9.85	4.10	13.95
17	Conversion of FIT/DGS into a Web-Based Application	7.95	0.00	7.95
18	Compact Disc Burning Network Performance	5.20	0.00	5.20
19	ePulling 2010	17.00	0.00	17.00
20	ODAR Case Preparation	0.25	0.00	0.25
21	CPMS MI Release 10	0.20	0.00	0.20
	Total	221.73	72.70	294.43

Under the illustrated approach:

ODAR could proceed with yellow highlighted proposals related to MI

ODAR could proceed with green highlighted proposals not related to MI

ODAR could not proceed with purple highlighted proposals related to MI

ODAR could not proceed with blue highlighted proposals not related to MI

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