



SOCIAL SECURITY

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 28, 2005

Refer To:

To: Bill Gray
Deputy Commissioner
for Systems

From: Inspector General

Subject: The Social Security Administration's Office of Systems' Training Program
(A-13-05-15031)

The attached final report presents the results of our evaluation. Our objective was to evaluate the Office of Systems' process for providing training to current Office of Systems' staff and new hires. We reviewed training opportunities, types of training provided, and cost of training for current Office of Systems' staff and new hires to enhance skills/competencies needed to meet future workloads.

Please provide within 60 days a corrective action plan that addresses each recommendation. 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

**OFFICE OF
THE INSPECTOR GENERAL**

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

**THE SOCIAL SECURITY
ADMINISTRATION'S
OFFICE OF SYSTEMS'
TRAINING PROGRAM**

October 2005

A-13-05-15031

**EVALUATION
REPORT**



Mission

We improve SSA programs and operations and protect them against fraud, waste, and abuse by conducting independent and objective audits, evaluations, and investigations. We provide timely, useful, and reliable information and advice to Administration officials, the 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

By conducting independent and objective audits, investigations, and evaluations, we are agents of positive change striving for continuous improvement in the Social Security Administration's programs, operations, and management and in our own office.

Executive Summary

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to evaluate the Office of Systems' (OS) process for providing training to current OS staff and new hires. We reviewed training opportunities, types of training provided, and the cost of training for current OS staff and new hires to enhance skills/competencies needed to meet future workloads.

BACKGROUND

Technology is the foundation of the Agency's current and future ability to provide quality service in the face of a significant increase in workloads and the potential loss of experienced staff. Therefore, the Agency must make effective use of new technologies and ensure it has staff trained on the application of those technologies. Within OS' Division of Process Engineering, Project, and Customer Services, the Systems Training and Communications Branch manages and administers OS' technical training program.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

Generally, OS had a comprehensive process for providing training to its employees. However, there were opportunities for OS to enhance its processes to help ensure continued success in providing employees essential training to improve the skills/competencies they will need to meet future workloads.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To assist OS' technical staff to gain the necessary skills/competencies to meet future workloads and to improve the tracking of training, we recommend OS:

1. Remind managers of their responsibilities for conducting periodic discussions regarding employee training needs.
2. Work with Office of Personnel staff to remove duplicate postings of training information in its Human Resource Management Information System.

AGENCY COMMENTS

The Deputy Commissioner for Systems (DCS) agreed with our recommendations. The text of DCS' comments is included in Appendix E.

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OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to evaluate the Office of Systems' (OS) process for providing training to current OS staff and new hires. We reviewed training opportunities, types of training provided, and the cost of training for current OS staff and new hires to enhance skills/competencies needed to meet future workloads.

BACKGROUND

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is facing the unprecedented challenge of trying to continually provide quality service during a time of increasing workloads and the impending retirement wave of experienced staff. Aging of the baby boom generation (that is, those individuals born between 1946 and 1964) will have a significant impact on the Agency's workloads. SSA estimates that, from 2003 through 2012, over 28,000 of its employees will retire, and another 10,000 will leave the Agency for other reasons. This is approximately 59 percent of SSA's current workforce.¹

SSA identified 14 staff positions it considers critical to helping it "advance the economic security of the nation's people through compassionate and vigilant leadership in shaping and managing America's social security programs." One of the "mission critical" positions identified was the Information Technology (IT) Specialist. The IT Specialist develops and supports the systems and services used in the Agency's program and business functions. Most IT Specialists are employed in OS.

OS is responsible for guiding and managing the development, acquisition, and use of the IT resources that support the Agency's program and business functions. Over the next 10 years, OS estimates about 66 percent of its Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 IT workforce will be eligible for retirement. In addition, OS estimates that approximately 100 IT Specialists will retire each year over the same period.

The Systems Training and Communications Branch (STCB) manages and administers OS' technical training program. During our review, we assessed OS' training-related activities pertaining to its current staff and new hires.²

¹ *Social Security Administration Strategic Plan 2003-2008*, pps. 9 and 10, March 31, 2003.

² For this review, the term "new hires" is defined as employees hired in OS in Calendar Year 2003. Staff hired before 2003, are referred to as current OS staff.

Results of Review

Generally, OS had a comprehensive process for providing training to its employees. This process identified the training needs of its employees; provided employees the opportunities to receive training; offered various types of training; and provided training budgets. However, there are opportunities for OS to enhance its processes to help ensure continued success in providing employees essential training to improve the skills/competencies they will need to meet future workloads.

GENERALLY, OS HAD A COMPREHENSIVE PROCESS FOR PROVIDING TRAINING TO ITS EMPLOYEES

Executive Order 11348, section 301, provides "...the head of each Agency shall plan, program, budget, operate and evaluate training programs in accordance with chapter 41 of Title 5, United States Code...." Section 102 of the Executive Order further states "...it is the policy of the Government of the United States to develop its employees through the establishment and operation of progressive and efficient training programs, thereby improving public service, increasing efficiency and economy, building and retaining a force of skilled and efficient employees, and installing and using the best modern practices and techniques in the conduct of the Government's business."

Training Needs

OS had a process for identifying its staff's training needs. Each month, STCB prepares a list of training courses offered for the subsequent month and identifies the number of available trainee openings for each listed course. STCB e-mails the list to the Component Training Coordinator in each OS office.³ The Component Training Coordinators employ various methods for disseminating the list to management (see Appendix B).

Employees review the list and advise managers of their training requests. Approved training requests are provided to STCB, which records and tracks each employee's training in its *Systems Training Database*. To help OS managers review the types of training their employees have completed, STCB issues a *Systems Technical Training Monthly Status Report*.

STCB has also developed a Review Set that managers can use to address gaps in the skills/competencies of OS employees. A Review Set is a list of potential training courses available to OS employees during the next 6 months and is distributed to managers semiannually. Managers are expected to consider requirements for upcoming projects and assignments, review their employees' training histories and

³ OS is comprised of seven Offices: the Offices of the Deputy Commissioner for Systems; Disability and Supplemental Security Income Systems; Earnings, Enumerations and Administrative Systems; Enterprise Support Architecture & Engineering; Retirement and Survivors Insurance Systems, Systems Electronic Services; and Telecommunications and Systems Operations.

skill levels, determine what training will be needed, and record employees' training needs on the Review Set. Information recorded by managers on a Review Set assists STCB to determine office-wide training needs of OS employees. For example, using this information, STCB prepares a list of the Top 30 courses for use during the next FY.

Training Opportunities

Employees were provided opportunities to receive training. OS employees could choose to receive training through a variety of sources, including classroom instruction provided by Agency employees or vendors, SSA's GoLearn website,⁴ conferences, technical reference materials, and Interactive Video Training.

STCB created an Intranet site⁵ to enable OS employees to access course schedules and profiles and register for training. The Desktop Application and Technical Course Schedule, WebSphere Curriculum Course Schedule, Management Leadership Curriculum Course Schedule, Project Management Curriculum Course Schedule, and Technical Management Course Schedule provide employees with the date, time(s) and location for a variety of courses.

Additionally, OS offers graduate-level training to selected computer professionals at one of several local institutions. The program is offered to Grade Schedule 12 and above OS employees and managers. OS management indicated that funds for this program were cut the last 2 years because of budget considerations. However, employees can still request graduate-level training through their managers, who determine whether the training is related to their job and funds are available.

To determine whether OS employees requested training opportunities in Calendar Year 2003, we requested training information from a sample of 163 OS employees. We received 110 responses (about a 67 percent response rate), of which 49 were from new hires and 61 were from current OS staff members. Of the 110 responses 55 employees requested training, 53 reported they did not request training, and 2 could not remember whether they requested training. Of the 53 respondents who reported they did not request training, 20 were new hires and 33 were current OS staff.

Staff provided various reasons for not requesting training. For example, several new hires stated they were hired near the end of the year and did not have time to select training, their training was "already mapped out" for them or they were involved in a project that required their time. Further, nine current OS staff indicated they did not request training because of workload constraints or their involvement in

⁴ GoLearn became active on April 25, 2005. This new site, located at <http://www.ssagolearn.com>, offers Agency employees access to approximately 2,000 on-line courses in such subject areas as IT, leadership skills, and writing skills.

⁵ See <http://co.ba.ssa.gov/dcs/oesa/dpepcs/stcb/default.htm>.

a high priority project. Three stated there were not many courses offered for their position. The remaining staff gave a variety of reasons.

In addition, we requested training information from STCB and the Office of Personnel (OP) for the 163 employees.⁶ Our review of the training information revealed 58 of the current employees received 3,566 hours of training in 2003 or an average 61 hours per employee. Whereas, 56 of the New Hires received 7,259 hours of training for an average of 130 hours of training per employee.

Types of Training

OS offered its employees a variety of training including: technical, management, and leadership.

Individual Development Plans (IDP) were used for some new hires to identify planned training and developmental experiences to achieve individual goals and needs. The IDP is designed to help employees achieve individual goals consistent with organizational goals and needs.⁷ The employee works with their assigned mentor and manager to prepare the IDP and select training needed to reach the position at the top of the career ladder.⁸

For new hires, the recruitment staff and OS managers provide STCB a list of, and timeframes for, necessary training. New hires are required to take the following courses: *Systems Orientation, Customer Service, and Computer Security Awareness*. Employees hired as Outstanding Scholars⁹ also receive the following group training: *Effective Listening and Speaking, Technical Writing for the Systems Environment, Team Building with Myers Briggs and Working on Generation Mix*.¹⁰ After completing this training, Outstanding Scholars can enroll in the following entry-level programming classes: *Introduction to Data Processing, Structured Programming Techniques, Time Sharing Option/Interactive Systems Production Facility or Basic, and Intermediate or Advanced COBOL*.

The training needs of new hires not designated as Outstanding Scholars are based on the experience they bring to the Government. A training regimen is not automatically scheduled since it is assumed experienced new hires are trained in the areas relevant to the position they were hired to fill. However, new hires can

⁶ The training information received included the following: employee's name, course title, course number, course beginning and ending dates, course hours and cost.

⁷ IDPs are generally prepared for new hires at the entry level of a career ladder position under the following authorities: Outstanding Scholar Program, Veterans Authority, Schedule A Disability, Administrative Careers with America and the Federal Career Intern Program.

⁸ Of 49 new hires who responded to our data collection instrument, 22 had completed an IDP.

⁹ The Outstanding Scholar Program is used to appoint those college graduates from accredited schools who obtained a grade point average of 3.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale for all undergraduate courses completed toward a baccalaureate degree.

¹⁰ Employees can choose not to take these classes but must obtain management approval.

request entry-level programming classes, courses from a specific course curriculum or other training offered on the monthly training listing or semiannual Review Set list. In addition, if a new hire requires training that STCB does not offer, the manager can note the need for training on the monthly list. STCB will decide whether to develop new training based on the level of demand and their budget.

Current OS staff could receive training on-site or at local training facilities in a variety of subject areas such as: CISCO, Data Warehousing and Computer Security. Employees working with their managers could also choose to attend training conferences and seminars.

Training Costs

For FY 2003, STCB requested and received over \$2.3 million for OS training costs. STCB used about \$2.1 million for training, and the remaining funds were used for printing, rentals, supplies and equipment. Of the \$2.1 million, approximately \$101,000 was spent on 33 Outstanding Scholars hired in FY 2003.

Each Outstanding Scholar is allotted \$3,000 to obtain training related to specific job duties. Although STCB allots the funds, the Outstanding Scholars' managers determine how the \$3,000 is used. For example, funds can be used for the employees' continuing education.

OPPORTUNITIES EXISTED TO IMPROVE THE PROCESS FOR PROVIDING AND TRACKING OS EMPLOYEES' TRAINING

Although OS had a comprehensive process for providing training to its employees, there were opportunities for OS to improve its process. Specifically, opportunities existed to improve the process for providing and tracking OS employee training.

Some Managers Did Not Use Skills Inventory Survey Results

Some managers reported they were not using the results of the Skills Inventory surveys to ascertain current staffs' training needs. Survey results provide a profile of IT Specialists' existing technical skills and competencies. In addition, the survey collects data on competencies and skills that will be needed in the next 3 years. OS analyzed the survey results to determine the gap between current and future skill/competency needs.

In February 2005, OS Executive Staff asked its Executive Officers to describe ways they and their managers would use the Skills Inventory information for the component's workforce and/or workload planning. Below are some of their responses.

- Structure training course needs based on an analysis of Skills Inventory data.
- Send a list of skill sets to the Division Training Coordinator so management remains mindful of which courses the division should concentrate on.
- Focus on information that is useful for
 - mapping skills requirements to workloads,
 - succession planning, and
 - identifying available skills to share resources among components.

We did not independently determine whether all Executive Officers and their managers were using the Skills Inventory information as stated. However, we interviewed several OS managers in March 2005 who stated they did not use the Skills Inventory results to determine employee training needs. The managers stated the survey results were viewed as a tool used by the Deputy Commissioner for Systems' (DCS) Executives to determine needed skills/competencies that could be acquired through new hiring. In addition, the results could be used to determine whether to place staff in positions that require a specific skill set (for example, making a computer programmer with Disability Insurance program experience a computer programmer for the Supplemental Security Income program). One manager indicated he determined his employees' training needs based on past job experience, not the results of the Skills Inventory survey.

We believe using the Skills Inventory survey results could assist OS managers in advising, selecting, and approving employee training courses. Further, managers would obtain a better understanding of the skill/competency gaps that exist in the current workforce and the skills/competencies needed to meet future workload demands.

On May 27, 2005, OS management added language to the transmittal memorandum for the semiannual Review Set reminding managers of the top five skills/competency gaps. The memorandum also noted that additional detail on skills gaps was available on the *Gap and Retirement Loss Reports* at <http://s306a2e/itwf04/MISReports/mainmenu.cfm>.

Discussions Regarding Training Needs Were Not Always Occurring

SSA's Administrative Instruction Manual Systems states the "Responsibility for effective training and career development is shared by every SSA manager and supervisor. In their respective roles, they share the goal of building and retaining a

competent workforce."¹¹ Further, SSA managers' and supervisors' responsibilities include

- counseling employees on needed training,
- encouraging employees' self-development efforts, and
- assisting in the preparation of Individual Development Plans.¹²

Additionally, the 2000 SSA/American Federation of Government Employees National Agreement¹³ states that "The Administration will remind employees, at least annually, of the availability of Government-sponsored training programs, the general scope of training, the criteria for approval of training, and the nomination procedures." Further, the Agreement provides that "Employees or managers may initiate discussion of individual training needs."¹⁴

During our review, we asked 163 OS employees how often their training needs were discussed in Calendar Year 2003. Of the 110 respondents, 72 indicated they had a discussion at least once. However, 37 employees (33 percent) reported they did not have a discussion, and 1 could not remember. However, a review of training information for these employees indicated that 17 of the 37 respondents had participated in training in Calendar Year 2003.

We could not determine why employees were not discussing their training needs. We believe, without such a discussion, employees might not be informed of training needed for on-going development or aware of training needed for proficiency using future technology.

¹¹ *Administrative Instruction Manual Systems*, Training Manual, Chapter 01 Training Policy, Instruction 1, section 01.01.05.

¹² *Id.* at section 01.01.05E.

¹³ 2000 SSA/American Federation of Government Employees National Agreement, Article 16, section 5 A.—Training Programs.

¹⁴ *Id.* at section 5D.

Duplicate Postings of Training Information

We identified duplicate postings of OS employee training information in the OP's Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS).¹⁵ Completed Forms SSA 352-U10, *Training and Nomination Authorization*, are forwarded to the Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources' OP. Once received, OP staff assigns the training courses numeric codes and inputs this and other information from the Forms SSA 352-U10 into HRMIS. DCS management reported this manual process can take up to 45 days for the information to be entered into HRMIS. OS employees can also request their training information be entered into HRMIS through the OP Intranet site.¹⁶ DCS management stated this process should take no longer than 14 days, as referenced on the OP website. Since there are two methods to record training information in HRMIS, duplicate postings of training information could and did occur.

During our review, we obtained from OP's HRMIS database lists of 664 training courses completed in Calendar Year 2003 by the 163 OS employees included in the sample. We reviewed the list to determine whether any discrepancies existed and determined that 78 of the 664 (12 percent) courses had duplicate postings in HRMIS.

The management information included in HRMIS is used to produce various reports.¹⁷ Further, the HRMIS information can assist managers in their supervisory duties. Therefore, we believe the correction of the duplicate postings in HRMIS would help validate the reliability of information contained in management reports and used by managers in their supervisory duties.

¹⁵ HRMIS serves as a database for staffing reports, promotion plan operations, employee training data, personnel research and program evaluation, Equal Opportunity statistics, and management information. Information in HRMIS files is available on both present and former employees.

¹⁶ See <https://ope.ba.ssa.gov/poas/EEDATA>.

¹⁷ Examples of HRMIS reports include staffing reports, promotion plan operations, personnel research and program evaluations, equal opportunity statistics, and management and training information.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Technology is the foundation of the Agency's current and future ability to provide quality service in the face of a significant increase in workloads and the potential loss of experienced staff. Therefore, the Agency must make effective use of new technologies and ensure it has staff trained in the application of those technologies. To ensure OS' employees, including those in its mission-critical IT Specialist positions, have necessary skills/competencies and to ensure improved tracking of training, we recommend OS:

1. Remind managers of their responsibilities for conducting periodic discussions regarding employee training needs.
2. Work with OP staff to remove duplicate postings of training information in its HRMIS.

AGENCY COMMENTS

DCS agreed with our recommendations. Also, DCS provided a technical comment related to individuals who took training in Calendar Year 2003 but reported they did not have a training discussion. The text of DCS' comments is included in Appendix E.

OIG RESPONSE

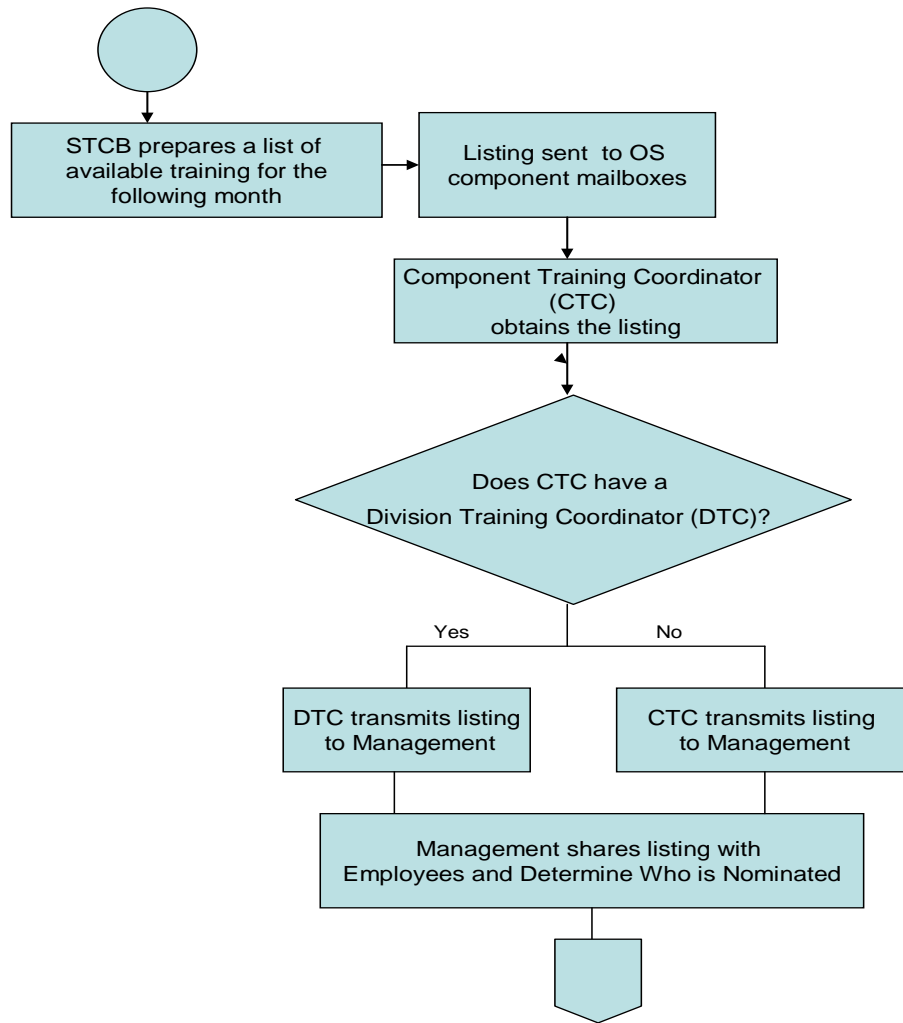
We agree with DCS' comment and have made the appropriate change.

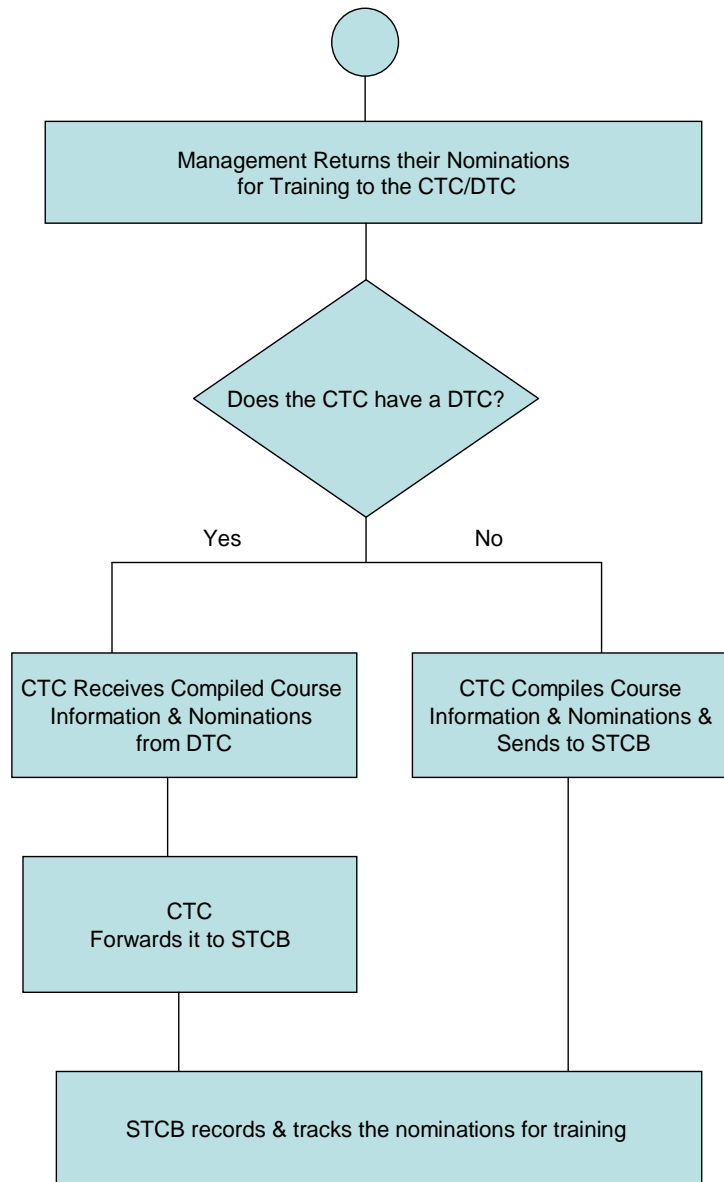
Appendices

Acronyms

DCS	Deputy Commissioner for Systems
FY	Fiscal Year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
HRMIS	Human Resource Management Information System
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IT	Information Technology
OP	Office of Personnel
OS	Office of Systems
SSA	Social Security Administration
STCB	Systems Training and Communications Branch

Identification of Training Process





Background, Scope and Methodology

The Office of Systems' Assessment of its Employees' Knowledge, Skills and Competencies

In an August 2001 report,¹ the Government Accountability Office² recommended the Social Security Administration's Office of Systems (OS) (1) complete an assessment of its current and future information technology (IT) knowledge and skill needs; (2) develop and maintain an inventory of its current IT staff's knowledge and skills; (3) determine whether a knowledge and skills gap exists between current and future IT staff requirements and current staffing; (4) implement workforce strategies that support the results of this gap analysis; (5) and analyze and document the effectiveness of its strategies for recruiting, training, and retaining IT personnel and use these results to continuously improve its IT human capital strategies.

The Agency employed a research and analysis company to respond to the Government Accountability Office's recommendations.³ The company reported:

1. OS should increase its use of skill and competency databases.
2. Multiple surveys are the key to success.
3. IT departments typically initiate a Skills Inventory/gap analysis in any organization.

To address the companies' findings, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2002, OS developed an in-house, web-based Skills Inventory survey. The survey was used to determine the status of employees' skills before OS' reorganization.⁴ Further, in FY 2003, OS conducted a follow-up Skills Inventory survey. The objectives of the follow-up survey were to identify skills/competencies of technical employees after the reorganization, collect information on future skill needs; perform a gap analysis between current and future skill requirements; enable OS to track skills lost to potential retirements; and use

¹ GAO, *INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT: Social Security Administration Practices Can Be Improved*, (GAO-01-961), p. 77, August 2001.

² The Government Accountability Office was formerly the General Accounting Office.

³ Office of Systems, *IT Workforce Strategic Plan 2003, DCS Implements Skills Inventory Survey Results to Enhance Human Capital Planning*, p.2, June 2003.

⁴ OS was restructured to organize and combine software development resources along SSA program lines. Before the reorganization, software subcomponents were aligned by function with software developers working in a different office than the staff who developed the functional requirements and who validated software after it was developed.

results to continue to improve the Deputy Commissioner for System's human capital strategy.

After the completion of the 2003 Skills Inventory survey, OS' Systems Training and Communications Branch (STCB)⁵ conducted two assessments of employees training needs.^{6 7} The assessments were used to identify critical training needed by OS' employees. In addition, STCB analyzed the 2003 *Gap Analysis Report* to identify the largest employee competency gaps in future years. The largest competency gaps were identified in the following areas: Systems Life Cycle, Technical Documentation, Requirement Analysis, Project Management and Business Process Analysis.

STCB decided that, rather than attempt to identify all gaps that could be addressed by training and prioritize that list, it would identify large gap areas and determine which could best be addressed by a training strategy. A general training strategy was then created as a solution to address any skills/competency gap areas. The strategy consists of the following five steps: (1) analyze current skills data and competency gap data in detail, (2) define skills needed for each skill level, (3) identify courses that develop this competency, (4) pilot new courses and (5) develop and publish a curriculum. STCB reported it had completed the first four steps of the strategy for the Technical Documentation skill/competency gap. OS also reported that this strategy was being used in the revision of their Analyst curriculum.

In August 2004, the FY 2004 Skill Inventory survey was completed. STCB compared the results of the FY 2004 survey to the results of the FY 2003 survey. The comparison revealed that the top 5 skill/competency gaps for 2003 appear in the top 10 gaps for 2004. After we completed our fieldwork, OS issued its *Office of Systems 2005 Strategy for Addressing Large Skill Gaps Areas Using Training* to address these gaps.⁸

⁵ STCB manages and administers OS' technical training program.

⁶ To conduct a training needs analysis, OS managers are asked to identify their employees' total needs for Review Set courses as well as for courses not listed on the Review Set. A Review Set is a compilation of courses provided by the STCB that are available to employees for the 6 months after the listing is distributed.

⁷ *Report on the Analysis of Skills Inventory Results and Component Training Needs*, July 2004.

⁸ *Office of Systems 2005 Strategy for Addressing Large Skill Gap Areas using Training*, May 2005.

Scope and Methodology

To accomplish our objectives, we:

- Reviewed various Social Security Administration (SSA) documents related to SSA's information technology human resources management.⁹
- Reviewed relevant reports from other Federal agencies.¹⁰
- Reviewed applicable laws, regulations, Office of Management and Budget guidance, and the Agency's Union Agreement and policies and procedures.¹¹
- Obtained a data extract of 9,779 employee names from the Federal Personal Payroll System representing current OS staff and new hires in the OS for Calendar Years 2001 through 2003. We segregated the data in the extract by years and selected 2003 as they were the most recent data requested and would also contain information on those employees hired in 2001 and 2002. This resulted in 3,087 employees in OS for 2003. (See Appendix D for Sampling Methodology.)
- Interviewed Agency management and staff.
- Obtained from STCB a list of completed training in 2003 for selected employees. In addition, a list of training courses completed in 2003 for these same employees was obtained from the Agency's Human Resources Management Information System. The lists were compared to determine whether any discrepancies existed.

⁹ Social Security Administration, Office of Systems, *IT Workforce Strategic Plan, DCS Implements Skills Inventory Survey Results to Enhance Human Capital Planning*, June 2003; *The Social Security Administration's Retirement Wave 2004 through 2013*, Office of Human Resources Human Capital Planning Staff, March 2004; *Social Security Information Resources Management Strategic Plan Fiscal Year 2004*, April 2004; *Performance Plan for Fiscal Year 2004 and Revised Final Performance Plan for Fiscal Year 2003*, May 2003; and *Social Security Administration Performance and Accountability Report Fiscal Year 2003*, November 2003.

¹⁰ We reviewed numerous Government Accountability Office reports on information technology and training.

¹¹ We reviewed Public Law 107-347; *E-Government Act of 2002*, December 2002; Executive Order (EO) 11348 *Providing for the Further Training of Government Employees*, April 1967; EO 13011 *Federal Information Technology*, July 1996; and EO 13111, *Using Technology to Improve Training Opportunities for Federal Government Employees*, January 1999. We also reviewed the following: Chapter 5 part 410 of the Code of Federal Regulations, *Administrative Personnel*, January 2004; Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular 123, *Management Accountability and Control*, June 1995; and OMB Circular 130; *Management of Federal Information Resources*; February 1996; Article 16 of the 2000 SSA/AFGE National Agreement and Administrative Instruction Manual Systems procedures Chapter 01 Training Policy, Instruction Number 1, Section 01.01.05, September 1996.

We did not determine the reliability of the computer-processed data nor did we test for completeness or validity. However, we were able to use the data for their intended purpose. The data obtained were used to report on SSA's process for providing training to current OS staff and new hires.

We performed our evaluation from July 2004 through April 2005 in Baltimore, Maryland. The entity reviewed was the Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Systems. We performed our evaluation in accordance with the *Quality Standards for Inspections* issued by the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency.

Sampling Methodology

To identify the population of employees in the Office of Systems (OS) during Calendar Years 2001 through 2003, we obtained a data extract from the Federal Personnel Payroll System. The total population of employee names for the period was 9,779.¹ We then segregated the data in the extract by years and used the data for 2003 as they were the most recent data requested and would also contain information on those employees hired in 2001 and 2002. This resulted in 3,087 employees in OS for 2003.

From this population, we excluded employees who had either of the following characteristics: separated from the Social Security Administration during 2003 or would not be required/subject to specialized technical training on the application of new technologies.

This reduced the population to 2,789 employees. From this population, we separated the 69 new hires for 2003 leaving 2,720 current OS staff. We then randomly selected 50 new hires out of the 69 new hires and 100 current OS staff from the 2,720 employees. The employees selected were requested to provide information pertaining to their training related experiences.

While conducting this evaluation, six new hires and eight current staff employees left their positions with OS. We then decided to select an additional 8 replacement employees for the current OS staff and use the remaining 19 new hires from our original population of 69 new hires. This resulted in a total of 163 employees requested to provide training information.

Of the 163 employees contacted, we received information from 110 individuals which represents a 67 percent response rate. The following table presents a breakdown of the responses we received. Seventy-eight percent of new hires (49 of 63) and 61 percent of current OS staff (61 of 100) responded.

**Summary of
Responses to Data Collection Instruments**

Total Employees Contacted	Total Responses	Percent of Employees Who Responded	Number of Current OS Staff Who Responded	Number of New Hires Who Responded
163	110	67	61	49

¹ An employees' name may have appeared more than once on the data extract if they were working in Systems during 2003 and any of the preceding years.

Agency Comments

October 14, 2005

From the Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Systems

Thank you for opportunity to review your draft report.

We're pleased the report recognizes the many positive aspects of our training program and we agree with your recommendations.

We began working with the Office of Personnel to remove duplicate training postings on September 7, 2005. And, we'll be sure to continue reminding managers to discuss training needs with their employees. On that note, we'd like to point out that in our busy schedules it's not always easy to remember what activity we've engaged in the past. Your report notes that 37 of 110 respondents reported they did not have a discussion about training with their managers. Apparently some of the 37 did, as 17 of them participated in training during your review scope. Discussion would have had to take place for training to be considered and approved. We recognize that this is a shortcoming of self-reported information, but would appreciate an adjustment in the numbers in your final report.

Staff may direct questions to Jackie Newton at 69187, or Margaret Rawls on extension 7-1552.

William E. Gray

OIG Contacts and Staff Acknowledgments

OIG Contacts

Shirley E. Todd, Director, General Management Audit Division, (410) 966-9365

Brian Karpe, Audit Manager, (410) 966-1029

Acknowledgments

In addition to those named above:

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Social Security Advisory Board

Overview of the Office of the Inspector General

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is comprised of our Office of Investigations (OI), Office of Audit (OA), Office of the Chief Counsel to the Inspector General (OCCIG), and Office of Executive Operations (OEO). To ensure compliance with policies and procedures, internal controls, and professional standards, we also have a comprehensive Professional Responsibility and Quality Assurance program.

Office of Audit

OA conducts and/or supervises financial and performance audits of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) programs and operations and makes recommendations to ensure program objectives are achieved effectively and efficiently. Financial audits assess whether SSA's financial statements fairly present SSA's financial position, results of operations, and cash flow. Performance audits review the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of SSA's programs and operations. OA also conducts short-term management and program evaluations and projects on issues of concern to SSA, Congress, and the general public.

Office of Investigations

OI conducts and coordinates investigative activity related to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement in SSA programs and operations. This includes wrongdoing by applicants, beneficiaries, contractors, third parties, or SSA employees performing their official duties. This office serves as OIG liaison to the Department of Justice on all matters relating to the investigations of SSA programs and personnel. OI also conducts joint investigations with other Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies.

Office of the Chief Counsel to the Inspector General

OCCIG provides independent legal advice and counsel to the IG on various matters, including statutes, regulations, legislation, and policy directives. OCCIG also advises the IG on investigative procedures and techniques, as well as on legal implications and conclusions to be drawn from audit and investigative material. Finally, OCCIG administers the Civil Monetary Penalty program.

Office of Executive Operations

OEO supports OIG by providing information resource management and systems security. OEO also coordinates OIG's budget, procurement, telecommunications, facilities, and human resources. In addition, OEO is the focal point for OIG's strategic planning function and the development and implementation of performance measures required by the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993.