



# A VISION OF THE FUTURE

FOR THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

SOCIAL SECURITY ADVISORY BOARD | MARCH 2011



## MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

Over the past few years, the Board has often used the concepts of people (SSA's workforce), process (policies and business procedures) and platform (both technological and physical infrastructure) as a basis for discussing changes needed at SSA. The origins of the vision presented here grew out of our further study of these areas. But moving from an initial framework to a comprehensive vision statement required additional work to confirm, refine or even refute our basic assumptions and to ensure that the concepts are grounded in reality.

To construct the vision presented in this paper, we worked with a group of Social Security Administration employees who have both in-depth experience in working with and managing today's Social Security programs and the keen ability to look beyond the status quo and visualize how the agency might operate given a different set of circumstances. We want to take this opportunity to thank the individuals from the field offices, Disability Determination Services, and regional components who participated in the Denver Visioning Workshop in October 2010, with a special thanks to Regional Commissioner Nancy Berryhill for hosting the event. The participants' willingness to share their insights and ideas as part of that collaborative exercise and to continue to provide their input was essential to this creative process. While the vision we put forth in this paper expresses our own views, the assistance of the workshop participants played a key role in its development.

In addition to this collaboration, the Board enhanced the visioning process by drawing on materials from experts in the fields of technology, sociology, and demographics that describe the changes that are expected to take place in the U.S. over the next 10 to 20 years. We analyzed what futurists are saying about a broad range of trends that will materialize during the next decade. Data on current Social Security resources and workloads were reviewed, leading to projections of the future for those same elements in the year 2020. Using the expertise of a consultant we identified the specific areas that a comprehensive future vision needs to address; our list was refined to include process, technology, workforce, organizational structure and service delivery.

The end result is a vision that we believe is both necessary and achievable to support the mission of Social Security in 2020 and beyond.

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**“But if I were to say, my fellow citizens,**

that we shall send to the moon, 240,000 miles away from the control station in Houston, a giant rocket more than 300 feet tall . . . made of new metal alloys, some of which have not yet been invented, capable of standing heat and stresses several times more than have been experienced, fitted together with a precision better than the finest watch, carrying all the equipment needed for propulsion, guidance, control, communications, food and survival on an untried mission, to an unknown celestial body, and then return it safely to earth . . . and do all this and do it right, and do it first before this decade is out—then we must be bold.”

President John F. Kennedy

September 12, 1962



# Introduction

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In September 1962, when President Kennedy described the vision for a moon landing by the end of the decade, he articulated many of the steps that would have to be taken to achieve that vision—creation of new metal alloys, the development of new equipment for propulsion, guidance and control, and the construction of a massive rocket capable of propelling man to the moon. His vision expressed not only the ultimate goal but also laid out milestones essential for achieving success. In essence, the first step on the road to realizing a bold future vision is the very act of expressing that vision followed by an ambitious, but realistic, roadmap that springs from the vision statement.

The vision of a moon landing was a powerful motivator for change in the 1960s and provided the inspiration that led to new creative approaches to solving problems, stimulated innovation, and encouraged risk-taking. The Social Security Administration is quite capable of achieving its version of a “moon landing” within the next decade, but the agency cannot reach that goal without a bold vision for what it will look like and how it will get there. SSA, like all of government, is under extraordinary strain to accomplish its core mission with smaller budgets and a smaller workforce. The immediate pressure to attend only to today’s tasks and focus less on the future is understandable, but not acceptable. The Board is convinced that not developing such a longer-range vision is extremely shortsighted and results in planning that is piece-meal, crisis-directed, and ultimately more costly.

In 2010, the Social Security Administration (SSA) commemorated its 75th anniversary, and this celebration afforded the agency the opportunity to reflect on its record of high-quality service to the American public. This anniversary is the right time for envisioning the next generation of Social Security services. A burgeoning workload, shifting social structures, blurring of the setting for when and where work is performed, and an accelerat-

ing pace of change all demand that new technologies be harnessed. The business processes currently in use should be carefully analyzed for value added, and reconfigured in new and innovative ways that increase efficiency and accuracy. The public, the business world, and agency employees must all be able to accomplish program interactions at the “flick of a switch” or a simple keystroke. The challenges are immense but not insurmountable.

SSA is currently working on a new strategic plan that will be published later this year. This new plan will describe the goals and companion milestones of mostly short- and mid-range (3 to 5 years) initiatives, many of which are already being rolled out or are in the final stages of development. These initiatives will almost assuredly play instrumental roles in strengthening SSA’s operational foundation, but will they be sufficient to prepare the agency for 2020 and beyond? Only with the future clearly and firmly in mind can the agency focus its resources in the key areas where innovation is sorely needed and discern the essential steps on the road toward 2020.

## FUTURE TRENDS

The future cannot be known with any specificity, but trend analysis points to some very basic conditions that are likely to exist in 2020.

- *Technology will become increasingly mobile and will be the primary communication mechanism for conducting both personal and public business for a large segment of the population.*
- *Technology will become the primary means for service delivery. With the advent of new technologies there will be a proliferation in potential service delivery options; more services will be delivered on demand, in real time, and without the need for human intervention.*

- *The demographics of the country are shifting and the population will continue to grow increasingly older and more diverse as society grows increasingly multicultural. The differing cultural values of diverse groups will affect the needs and expectations for service.*
- *There will be a transformation in the nature of “work” that is a reflection of the electronic world. Routine work will be automated; the bulk of the residual work will require more analytical or interactive skills.*
- *Changes in the nature of work will require modern systems design that supports and stimulates more efficient business patterns and workflows.*

While we may not be able to predict with any precision when these conditions will become mainstream, we can be sure that the work environment of the future will be very different from today. Organizations such as Social Security cannot afford to passively accept external impulses that force it to change. The agency must

anticipate the change, be nimble enough to make adjustments quickly, and forward-thinking enough to execute changes confidently.

## SOCIAL SECURITY TRENDS

The trends noted above describe how society at large is likely to look in the future. But there are also some specific changes ahead that will affect Social Security more directly. SSA has estimated that 80 million individuals, most from the baby boomer generation, will file for benefits over the next 20 years. The surge in applications will arise from retirees, survivors and dependents, and individuals under age 62 who have reached their disability-prone years. Figure 1 highlights current data for specific populations and then compares them with projections for 2020.

However, the trends in the size and composition of the beneficiary population and therefore the size of SSA’s workload are not the only factors that will shape the agency’s future. SSA’s current workforce is approximately 70,000 employees, over 12,000 of whom have been hired

Figure 1. Social Security Population Comparison 2010 and 2020

|                                                           | 2010                 | 2020                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Workers Covered by Social Security</b>                 | 155.2 million        | 176.0 million        |
| <b>Social Security Population*</b>                        | 316.2 million        | 344.7 million        |
| Old-age & Survivor Insurance (OASI) Beneficiaries         | 43.5 million (13.8%) | 58.0 million (16.8%) |
| Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) Beneficiaries | 10.0 million (3.2%)  | 11.9 million (3.5%)  |
| Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Beneficiaries          | 7.9 million (2.5%)   | 9.2 million (2.7%)   |

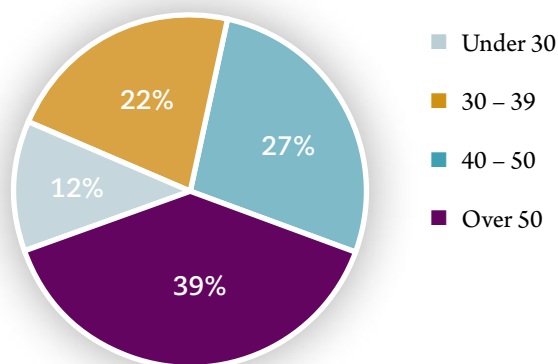
Source: The 2010 Social Security Trustees Report and the 2010 Annual Report of the SSI Program

\* Social Security Population represents the pool of all potential OASI, SSDI, and SSI beneficiaries and includes (1) residents of the 50 States and the District of Columbia; (2) civilian residents of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Mariana Islands; (3) Federal civilian employees and persons in the U.S. Armed Forces abroad and their dependents; (4) non-citizens living abroad who are insured for Social Security benefits; and (5) all other U.S. citizens abroad. Percentages shown for OASI, SSDI, and SSI beneficiaries reflect the percentages of the Social Security Population.



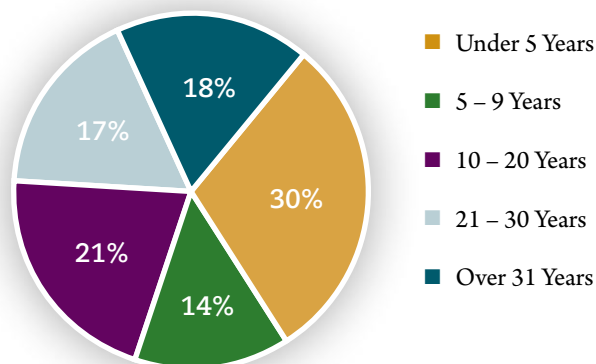
## Figures 2 and 3. Social Security Workforce

Figure 2. 2010 Age Distribution



Source: SSA's Human Resource Operational Data Store

Figure 3. 2010 Years of Service



Source: SSA's Human Resource Operational Data Store

in the last two years.<sup>1</sup> However, due to the ballooning fiscal deficit that is placing severe strains on the federal budget, the additional funding that allowed the agency to increase the size of its staff will most likely not be available for future staffing increases. Indeed, SSA's workforce may decline over the next several years. Thus, the number as well as the distribution of employees by age and years of service will continue to have significant implications for the agency's ability to handle future workloads. Over 65 percent of SSA's current workforce is age 40 or older (figure 2); 35 percent have 20 or more years of service (figure 3). By 2020, many of the employees in these categories will be eligible for retirement (age 55 with 30 years of service)<sup>2</sup> setting SSA up for another retirement wave such as the one the agency experienced during the period 2000 to 2009 which resulted in a loss of almost 25,000 of SSA's most experienced employees.<sup>3</sup>

When we look carefully at the data forecasting the trends that are most likely to have an effect on Social Security, the forces that will shape the agency's future come into view. Increased workloads coupled with a smaller agency workforce, and changes in public service expectations driven by shifting technology and demographics are all clear signs that the future will not only be different but different in very specific ways. The challenge lies in how to integrate modernized business processes into an efficient and ultimately restructured organization.

Our purpose in publishing this paper is twofold: 1) to offer one vision of SSA in 2020 based on an "outside looking in" perspective, along with a roadmap for achieving that vision and 2) to urge the agency to develop a bold vision around which SSA's energy and strategic thinking can coalesce. The agency's leadership must address the immediate need to develop a longer-range vision statement

<sup>1</sup> Source: SSA's Office of Human Resources. SSA hired 12,196 full-time and part-time permanent employees in FY 09 and FY 10. When adjusted for attrition, the net gain in permanent employees was 5,685.

<sup>2</sup> Minimum retirement age under the Civil Service Retirement System is 55. Minimum retirement age under the Federal Employees Retirement System is currently 55, but it is gradually increasing. In 2020, the minimum age will be 56 and will finally increase to 57 in 2027.

<sup>3</sup> *Retirement Wave Report: Social Security Administration Mission Critical Occupations Fiscal Years 2010 - 2019*, Office of Human Resources, December 2010 - page 7. The report states that SSA's retirement wave peaked in 2007 with retirements for fiscal years 2008 and 2009 falling well below the 2007 total of 3074 retirements.

and implementation strategy. Designing, funding, and achieving that vision will require every bit of the next ten years to accomplish; there is no time to waste.

## VISION 2020

The Social Security Administration defines its mission as “delivering services that meet the changing needs of the public.”<sup>4</sup> The following statements describe a core set of assumptions that should shape how SSA will fulfill that mission in the year 2020.

- *A high percentage of all services will be delivered without the need for human intervention.*
- *Portable technologies will expand the options for delivering personal customer service.*
- *A well-trained and flexible workforce will have the tools and capacity to process a diverse set of transactions to completion from any location.*
- *The agency's work will be highly portable, flowing “on demand” to employees or virtual employee teams with the capacity and the capability to complete it.*

- *Transaction accuracy and efficiency will be improved due to the elimination of unnecessary complexity and the real-time data availability.*
- *The American public will manage personal records by viewing and updating Social Security's information online.*
- *Mutually-beneficial partnerships will be established with other federal, state, and local agencies which support effective inter-agency information sharing and one-stop service delivery opportunities.*

These core assumptions provide a frame of reference for decision making in 2011 and beyond. The agency faces daunting challenges and must overcome them if they are to operate at optimal levels in the future, both in terms of efficiency, accuracy, and responsiveness. Future budget limitations make it imperative that SSA develop a comprehensive strategy that will take a vision of the future and translate it into a plan of action.

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<sup>4</sup> Social Security Administration: Strategic Plan Fiscal Years 2008 -2013, September 2008.

## The Road to Achieving the Vision

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Achieving a vision requires detailing the strategic objectives and then developing tactical initiatives that will pave the road to the future. Highlighted below are key areas where the agency needs to focus its immediate attention. None of these items can be achieved overnight; however, aggressive milestones need to be established that will ensure successful implementation no later than 2020.

### SERVICE DELIVERY PLAN FOR 2020

SSA needs to develop an innovative service delivery plan that reflects the service options that are currently available and anticipates those that will emerge in the next ten years. Mere expansion of current methodologies with aggressive time lines for accomplishment is not enough. SSA should focus on the following areas in its service delivery plan:

- **Develop a personal account portal** – SSA is developing a personal account portal that allows the public to manage electronically a wide array of personal business options in real time. This standard business practice will allow individuals to review and manage their earnings information, applications, and benefit records. Individuals will be able track claims and other transactions through to completion. Such a portal must be a near-term service delivery strategy that should be implemented as soon as the agency is able to establish a secure authentication protocol.
- **Fully automate routine online services with appropriate supports** – SSA must adopt service strategies that encourage and support secure self-service by fully automating as many routine transactions as possible. Today, the public is able to obtain assistance from retailers and other

institutions through online communications, live chats, or telephone assistance, so that when the customer hits the “submit” button, the transaction is complete and the customer understands exactly what has transpired. At a minimum, the public should be able to transact business with SSA in the same way. Approximately 90-95 percent of retirement and survivors claims could be self-adjudicated online if the appropriate technologies and automated verifications were in place.

- **Develop plans to incorporate the use of personal technologies** – Access to fully automated services and the personal account portal must be available through a wide range of mobile devices. These technologies facilitate an individual’s ability to conduct business anytime and anywhere, making how the public interacts with the agency a matter of personal choice.
- **Establish new standards for face-to-face contact** – SSA considers face-to-face contact in a field office as the gold standard for service delivery. The portability of work will remove many of the boundaries that have constrained where work is performed. Through the use of technology, the agency will have the ability to exceed current service delivery paradigms by taking services directly to the public. Service must be delivered in a variety of locations in addition to SSA facilities:
  - live chat or videoconferencing from an individual’s home computer,
  - kiosks located in various accessible locations,
  - temporary retail outlets to provide service in emergency situations,

- banks, libraries, and other centers of community activity, and
  - federal, state, and local government facilities, thus providing access to one-stop service opportunities.
- ***Provide service options that meet diverse needs*** – SSA’s service delivery strategy must allow the public the option to interact with the agency in the way that best meets individuals’ needs: in person, electronically, through the mail or by telephone. Service options must ensure that a range of services are available to those with special needs such as individuals with a disability, those with a language barrier, or those who may be transient. Technology should be used to connect SSA to individuals who have limited access to agency services because of geographic barriers or transportation limitations; video and online capabilities from home or from other convenient locations should be significantly expanded.
  - ***Implement “once and done” business processes*** – Many of the services SSA currently provides are completed through a series of hand-offs with each agency worker (or data system) handling only part of the process. As processes are streamlined, the ability to complete workload transactions on a “once and done” basis will increase. Future service options, whether they are fully automated or require human intervention, must minimize hand-offs while ensuring the work is performed in both a timely and accurate manner. The resources needed to resolve more complex workloads will become available and must be supported by integrated technologies, information exchanges, and highly knowledgeable employees.
  - ***Develop virtual response strategy for emergency or special situations*** – Just as in the case of national disasters where “first responders” converge from around the country, SSA should

have strategies in place that allow for the formation of virtual first responder teams to respond to emergency situations, specific peak workload demands, or particular situations requiring a broad array of experts. These teams should be able to form quickly to tackle unique situations and then disband when no longer needed. The use of videoconferences, live chat, and other instant messaging capabilities should make this type of quick response standard practice.

As these service options are put in place, it will be essential that SSA have the performance measures in place to evaluate whether the service delivery plan is meeting its objectives and whether the interactions with the public are fulfilling expectations. The measurements must include assessment of the agency’s ability to support each service option as well the quality of the service rendered.

## COMPREHENSIVE POLICY REVIEW

After 75 years, many of the policies governing SSA’s programs have become overly complex and in some cases unintentionally conflicting, thereby impeding the agency’s ability to administer its programs effectively. Some of this stems from legislative action; some is due to the agency’s inability to keep abreast of changes and develop coordinated policy responses. As a result, the public often struggles to understand which benefits they are entitled to receive and, as a result, is frustrated by the rules used to establish program eligibility.

SSA must take ownership of a comprehensive policy review process to identify changes needed to simplify and streamline policy and procedures. Many of these changes will require legislative action or regulatory approval, so the agency will need to work closely with the Administration and Congress to ensure that appropriate measures are enacted. SSA will also need to consult with subject-matter experts, budget and program advocates, and members of the public to gather needed information and obtain essential input.

Policy simplification can be achieved and the following recommendations are critical first steps:

- ***Institute a rigorous policy review of all SSA programs*** – The outcomes of a concerted effort to streamline and simplify program policies should result in:
  - program rules that are easier to understand,
  - programs that are capable of being efficiently administered for the growing number of beneficiaries,
  - expanded and more sophisticated data exchanges and utilization of electronic health records, and
  - program and administrative costs, including needed resources, being carefully assessed and weighed against the benefits of program simplification.

SSA has a vested interest in ensuring that efficient, equitable, and streamlined policies and procedures result from this review. The outcome of this review will improve the agency's ability to effectively manage its programs, design efficient systems, and carry out its stewardship responsibilities.

- ***Focus attention on the SSDI and SSI policies*** – In the 1990's SSA began an initiative to unify the application of disability program policy across components. Over the last three years this initiative has received renewed attention. SSA has developed a systematic process for identifying and remediating poorly developed or misunderstood disability policies; however, more needs to be done. For example, the work underway by the Institutes of Medicine and Boston University should be used to develop more robust policies and adjudication standards for initial claims and continuing disability reviews.

The SSI program is 37 years old and its policy foundation and its rules have changed very little since its inception. For example, inconsistencies in the work incentives and the conflicting rules between the SSDI and SSI disability programs must be addressed to eliminate confusion for both SSA employees and the public. The review should also consider how to make SSA's disability policies more integrated with other federal disability programs.

The disability program is growing at a much faster rate than previously projected. While there are a variety of reasons for this, it is striking to note that much of the growth in the disability rolls is linked to mental and musculo-skeletal impairments. SSA needs to leverage the findings from recent research that describes this phenomenon and use it in its efforts to modernize and strengthen the disability program, including the statistical modeling used in the continuing disability review process.

In order to ensure that the review is conducted expeditiously, a rigorous timeline will be needed; interim targets should be established to keep the review process moving forward. As policy and procedural changes are identified, targets should also be established to phase-in the implementation of new policies over a reasonable period while ensuring that the changes are effectuated as soon as possible.

## **A PLAN FOR A MODERN TECHNOLOGY PLATFORM**

Technology will be the key enabler for service delivery in 2020. SSA's technology infrastructure must be able to support effectively a broad range of systems processes in real time and on demand. Despite the measured steps SSA has taken in the last few years to move systems development forward, a more aggressive and strategic *Systems Modernization Plan* is absolutely essential in order to transform the current systems infrastructure into a modern technology platform. The goals of this plan

should support the portability of work and provide flexible service options that will meet workload demands and public expectations in 2020. Timelines and interim targets must be established to ensure that needed technology is in place in the shortest possible timeframe, and well before 2020. Technology roll-out schedules must be coordinated with the development and implementation of a revised business model based on updated and streamlined policies. Specifically, the plan should address the following areas which need immediate attention:

- ***Develop and implement a viable authentication protocol*** – A viable authentication protocol is essential if the public is to access efficiently personal information and transact business online. Resolving authentication issues is also an important component of SSA's ability to automate complete lines of service options. The agency is currently developing an authentication strategy that will work with current service delivery tools. Though this project is just the first step, it is critical that it be completed as soon as possible. The growth in available service options will require a continuing effort to expand and enhance the public's ability to communicate confidently with SSA in a virtual environment. As authentication methodologies evolve, the agency must be able to adapt.
- ***Eliminate reliance on 20th Century technology*** – A significant part of SSA's systems infrastructure is woefully outdated and impedes SSA's ability to move to a modern technology platform. Anti-quoted databases, "green" screen applications, and stove-piped processing systems are prime candidates for elimination to the extent they affect ongoing workload and communication processes. While SSA has made some progress in updating its system, the modernization plan needs to set aggressive goals for converting to web-based ap-

plications, integrating its processing systems and establishing a modern database platform.

Of particular importance is Social Security's management of its data center operations. The current strategy calls for two bricks-and-mortar data centers, but the growth in stored data resulting from SSA's current business model, coupled with the expanding beneficiary rolls, could well outpace the capacity of these facilities. The Office of Management and Budget has directed all federal agencies to identify workloads and processes that are appropriate for cloud computing architecture.<sup>5</sup> SSA's data center strategy must include a careful evaluation of the benefits and potential cost savings of using appropriately secure cloud computing to process workloads and support communications.

- ***Implement a comprehensive strategy for data exchange*** – The electronic exchange of information is vital to the automation of routine work and the stewardship of SSA's programs. The agency must develop and implement a plan that specifies needed data elements, preferred sources of data, benchmarks and measures of success. Data received through exchanges must be able to trigger updates to individual records and finalize ancillary actions that reduce the improper payment of benefits, thus bringing more rigor to the adjudication of claims and determination of initial benefit levels. A more ambitious schedule for moving away from the receipt of images of electronic medical evidence and towards receiving the information as structured data should be established. By 2020, the primary sources of information needed to establish entitlement to benefits and determine ongoing eligibility should be available in real time.

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<sup>5</sup> *Federal Cloud Computing Strategy*, Vivek Kundra, U.S. Chief Information Officer, February 8, 2011, page 2. "Following the publication of this strategy, each agency will re-evaluate its technology sourcing strategy to include consideration and application of cloud computing solutions as part of the budget process. Consistent with the Cloud First policy, agencies will modify their IT portfolios to fully take advantage of the benefits of cloud computing in order to maximize capacity utilization, improve IT flexibility and responsiveness, and minimize cost."



The development and implementation of a forward-looking *Systems Modernization Plan* is dependent on individuals who are capable of leading technological change. Employees must retain a “sense of urgency” that will drive them to stay abreast of new technologies and their capabilities that will support the agency’s mission and strategic objectives. Talent must be sought from within the agency, as well as other federal agencies and private industry. SSA has at its disposal a host of creative information technology contractors. The skills and perspectives these individuals and organizations offer are often limited to task execution; a more deliberate process of engaging these individuals as partners with agency experts in brainstorming and strategic thinking should be instituted.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FOR 2020

The Social Security workforce in 2020 will operate in a much different environment. Technology will handle more of the workloads that are processed by employees today, and the agency’s workforce in the future will provide a more sophisticated level of expertise. A comprehensive knowledge of SSA policies and procedures coupled with critical communication skills for both in-person and virtual contacts will define the agency’s employees. SSA must develop a new *Human Capital Plan* that focuses on preparing the workforce of today for the challenges of the future.

- **Develop a Human Capital Plan to transition SSA’s workforce** – As the agency moves away from the current environment where workload responsibilities are segmented and hand-offs are standard practice, many of the agency’s employees will require new and expanded skills. The implementation of the “once and done” philosophy will require an increased number of direct service employees to have the knowledge and skills to process work through to completion. Additionally, skills in effective communications across a variety of media must be part of the core competencies for all direct service jobs. For managers, this will mean that job competencies must include skills on how to manage individuals and teams in a virtual environment.

*The Human Capital Plan* must include new ways to evaluate performance and compensation. While technical skills and competent processing of high volumes of work will continue to be important, the agency must find new ways to assess performance and reward employees who demonstrate the broader skills and knowledge needed in the new working environment.

- **Restructure the delivery of training and programmatic resources** – To support the new work environment, SSA must develop effective ways of delivering consistent training on programmatic topics, as well as on electronic tools and communications skills. Delivery must be technology-based, it must utilize appropriate training methodologies, it must be updated routinely so that it remains current at all times, and most of all it must be delivered timely. Tools for decision analysis as well as policy repositories must be integrated into the processing systems and be available in real time. Access to programmatic guidance or consultations with program experts must be available on demand.
- **Rethink career and leadership development** – The agency will need to move away from a “command and control” hierarchy and develop a stronger culture among its leaders and employees of accountability and responsibility for the administration of Social Security’s programs. Current leadership programs tend to place participants in assignments with a narrow scope of duties. More often than not, the individual is a “placeholder” in an established hierarchy whose job is to “keep the trains running.” The emphasis in leadership development needs to be shifted to developing broader, more strategic management skills that will prepare future leaders for managing in a flatter, more fluid, and interdependent environment. SSA must offer employees continuing opportunities to work in new and varied environments that allow them to draw on old skills, develop new

ones, and which give them a sense of accomplishment and contribution to the agency's mission. Leadership programs must also look outside the agency for developmental opportunities that will help to keep SSA a dynamic organization.

### **SSA IN 2020 – A TRANSFORMED ORGANIZATION**

As technology changes, service delivery options are expanded, policies are streamlined, and the workforce learns to operate in the new environment, the very nature of SSA's organizational structure will, by necessity, evolve. As more workloads become portable and more services are delivered in a virtual environment, regional distinctions will no longer apply. Workloads can be queued and distributed across the country in order to maintain peak efficiency; this strategy can also accommodate reassigning work around the country due to unexpected emergencies. Virtual service delivery will be modeled after the 800

number whereby service is provided by the next available agent regardless of physical location. Resource allocation will be based less on staffing needs in specific areas of the country and more on the overall accomplishment of agency goals.

The changes in workload processing and service delivery will also bring about changes to the current administrative structure at SSA. Unlike the structure in 2011 where direct service employees are linked to specific regional offices and pre-determined program centers, the organizational structure of the future will be streamlined with administrative and programmatic support services provided from specialized "hub" locations situated around the country. Consolidation of SSA's physical infrastructure will allow funding to be redistributed to support the ongoing expansion of the agency's virtual infrastructure that will provide 21st century service delivery to the American public.

## Conclusion

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A bold vision can be a powerful force for change. Such a vision must underscore a sense of urgency that is critical for overcoming the resistance often encountered when moving boldly ahead. The vision should be so clear and motivating that it captures the imagination of and stimulates innovation among those individuals who will carry it out. Furthermore, it provides the framework that binds distinct elements into an inter-related system for change. Simultaneous progress in each element is a must. SSA has struggled with whether IT capabilities or business process changes should be the primary driver for change. The answer is neither; advancements in technology should open new avenues for business processes, which in turn should spur new policies and procedures. The skills needed to do the work reflect the policies, process, and electronic tools at the worker's disposal. The electronic environment

fosters a more fluid and virtual organization. Service to the public is enhanced and new and better ways to provide that service are discovered and the cycle starts again.

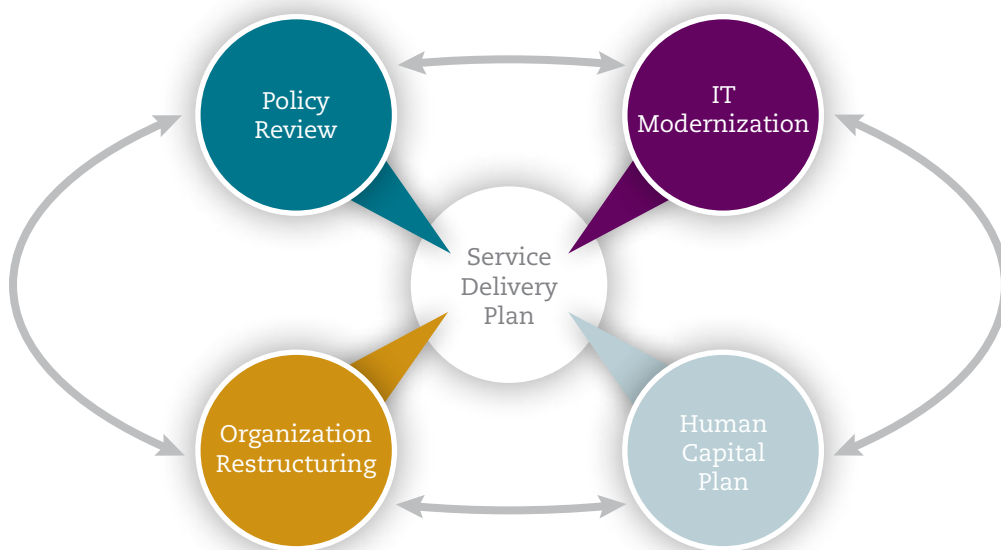
The purpose of presenting this vision for the Social Security Administration is straightforward. The burgeoning workload, shifting social structures, and an accelerating pace of change demand that the agency embark on an ambitious plan that will equip it for the years ahead. This work must begin now, and each strategic element must include clear near- and mid-term achievements that will lay the foundation for the longer-term. To ensure success in 2020, SSA must:

- *Rethink the agency's service delivery strategy and develop a plan that embraces a broad range of delivery options that meet the public's expectations.*

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### Simultaneous Development of Integrated Elements on a Continuous Basis

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- *Perform a comprehensive review of program policy to reduce complexity, improve public understanding and maximizes the use of new technology.*
- *Establish a Systems Modernization Plan that will move the agency to a modern technology platform and support enhanced service delivery options.*
- *Develop a Human Capital Plan that matches workforce competencies, training, and career development with new service delivery strategies and technology changes.*

- *Adapt SSA's organizational structure to maximize the effectiveness of the transformation taking place throughout the agency.*

Ultimately, it will be up to the agency to determine which specific initiatives will transform these areas to meet the challenges of the future, or whether initiatives already in place align with a future vision. Regardless, vision, focus and action are urgently needed. To do all that must be done, to do it right and to do it all before this decade is out means that SSA has no choice but to be bold.

## APPENDIX A - PARTICIPANTS IN VISIONING WORKSHOP

|                  |                                                      |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Karl Barnett     | Area Director - Dallas Region                        |
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| Sean Brune       | Deputy Regional Commissioner - Denver Region         |
| Travis Dodson    | District Manager - Dallas North Field Office         |
| Tanya Harrington | District Manager - Aurora, CO Field Office           |
| Piper Kelly      | Operations Supervisor - Denver Downtown Field Office |
| Shane Kelly      | Director - Denver Center for Automation              |
| Ron Miller       | Director - Denver Office of Quality Performance      |
| Pedro Sarquis    | District Manager - Los Angeles Downtown Field Office |
| Pam Schwalm      | District Manager - Huron, SD Field Office            |
| Terra Treweek    | Operations Supervisor - Kalispell, MT Field Office   |
| Gus Villalobos   | Director - San Francisco Center for Disability       |
| Nancy Vazquez    | Director - Idaho Disability Determination Service    |

## CONSULTANT

|                |                                              |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Wendi Bukowitz | Founder & Managing Director - RGsquared, LLC |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------|

## APPENDIX B – RESOURCES FOR FUTURE TRENDS

*Re-imagining Social Security*, Future Systems Technology Advisory Panel Report, June 2010

*The Changing Demographics of America: The United States population will expand by 100 million over the next 40 years. Is this a reason to worry?*, Joel Kotkin, Smithsonian Magazine, August 2010

*Gartner Says the World of Work Will Witness 10 Changes During the Next 10 Years*, Gartner Portals, Content and Collaboration Summit 2010, London, UK, September 15-16, 2010

*The Future of the Internet III*, Janna Quitney Anderson and Lee Rainie, Pew Internet & American Life Project, December 14, 2008.

*Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change.*, Paul Taylor and Scott Keeter, editors, Pew Research Center, February 2010



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