



U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY
1139 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
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Washington, DC 20515

July 25, 2023

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller General Dodaro:

The Social Security Administration (SSA) depends on its aging information technology (IT) infrastructure to handle billions of transactions a year while serving individual members of the public, supporting other federal agencies, and processing wage records for private businesses. The need for these systems to maintain operations and stay up to date is not only critical for Social Security beneficiaries, but for every worker and business in America. Over the past decade, the SSA has spent over \$16 billion on IT and cybersecurity and has budgeted an additional \$2.1 billion for IT in fiscal year 2023.¹ Despite these sizable IT investments, upgrades to the SSA's systems continue to be delayed to the detriment of Americans seeking services from the agency.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has found that IT investments by the federal government, including the SSA, have too frequently failed to deliver capabilities in a timely manner. They also incur cost overruns or schedule slippages while contributing little to mission-related outcomes. These investments often lack disciplined and effective management in such areas as project planning, investment management, and program oversight and governance.²

With the SSA expending billions of taxpayer dollars each year on IT and cybersecurity, it is imperative that the agency does not squander these resources. As a result, I request that the GAO evaluate the SSA's IT investment policies and procedures for systems development and acquisition, as well as the SSA's acquisition and non-acquisition workforce that oversees and supports its IT contracts.

¹ *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees Fiscal Year 2024*, SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (March 2024).

² *High-Risk Series: Efforts Made to Achieve Progress Need to Be Maintained and Expanded to Fully Address All Areas*, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE (April 2023).

As part of your review, please respond to the following questions and please consider both what the SSA can do within its existing statutory authority to improve on the value it receives from the resources it invests and what actions Congress can consider to improve the effectiveness of the SSA's IT investments.

1. How does the SSA manage and oversee its IT investments?
2. To what extent do the SSA's IT investment policies and procedures align with federal guidance and best practices on systems development and acquisition?
3. To what extent do the SSA's IT investment practices adhere to its policies and procedures?
4. To what extent do the SSA's IT investment policies and procedures ensure the agency receives the expected performance over the lifetime of an investment?
5. To what extent has the SSA assessed its acquisition workforce to ensure that it has the capacity and skills to award, manage, and oversee contracts to support SSA's IT investments?
6. To what extent has the SSA identified (a) non-acquisition personnel supporting acquisitions; and (b) non-acquisition personnel's acquisition training needs?

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact Shaun Freiman, the Chief Social Security Counsel and Deputy General Counsel, at 202-225-3625.

Sincerely,



Drew Ferguson
Chairman
Subcommittee on Social Security
Committee on Ways and Means