

# Development and Implementation of the Debt Management Product 142313



September 2024

Office of Audit Report Summary

## Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) developed the Debt Management Product (DMP) in accordance with Federal best practices and met its project cost and schedule estimates.

## Background

In 2017, SSA initiated a 6-year Overpayment Redesign project to build a comprehensive debt management system. When complete, the system would enable the Agency to collect, store, monitor, and report program debt activity, including waiver determinations, with confidence, accuracy, and timeliness.

The DMP initiative is an Agile investment. SSA planned 19 DMP releases between Fiscal Years (FY) 2018 and 2021, with a working system scheduled for delivery in FY 2021.

In FY 2018, the Agency planned to spend \$53 million on DMP and complete the project in FY 2023. In July 2021, SSA added funding to bring its total DMP investment to \$85 million, with a new planned completion date of September 2026.

In September 2023, after having spent over \$69 million on the project, SSA leadership decided to pause development on DMP. Components of the system remained unfinished.

Our audit focused on SSA's development efforts prior to pausing the project.

## Results

SSA did not develop DMP in accordance with some Federal Agile best practices and did not meet project cost and schedule estimates.

- DMP project teams did not complete system requirements in order of priority.
- SSA's inconsistent and improper use of its Agile tool hindered the Agency's ability to track progress and forecast software delivery.
- Ineffective risk management practices also led to project delays.
- Although SSA offered core- and role-based training, the Agency needed to continue improving its Agile training content and update training requirements and monitoring.
- SSA had ineffective quality assurance processes for DMP.

## Conclusion

An Agile approach to system development can offer faster software delivery, risk mitigation, and improved customer satisfaction. However, achieving these benefits requires that the Agency and its teams fully understand and commit to Agile principles, effectively use available tools, and use quality data and feedback to continuously drive improvement.

## Recommendations

We made 12 recommendations to help the Agency realize the value invested in DMP and improve outcomes for all its Agile projects. SSA agreed with our recommendations.