

The Social Security Administration's Human Capital Planning

A-02-19-50866



September 2022

Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) is complying with strategic and talent management human capital planning requirements.

Background

Federal regulation 5 C.F.R. § 250.203 establishes the Human Capital Framework, effective April 2017, to provide comprehensive guidance on Federal strategic human capital management. Federal regulation 5 C.F.R. § 250.205 defines specific requirements for Agency human capital operating plans, such as SSA's Human Capital Operating Plan (HCOP). Federal agencies must integrate their strategic human capital management processes into agency planning and management processes and seek to continuously improve human resource service delivery.

The Human Capital Framework guides agencies to effectively manage an organization's talent by using sound talent management practices and provides talent management strategies that support and shape an organization's current workforce, while the organization prepares for the future.

Results

SSA is not complying fully with strategic and talent management human capital planning requirements, including the requirement that it integrate its human capital strategies in its planning. SSA's *Agency Strategic Plan (ASP)*, *Annual Performance Plans*, and HCOPs covering Fiscal Years (FY) 2018 – 2022 include limited discussions of the human-capital strategies needed to ensure it successfully meets its strategic goals and initiatives. We also found limited descriptions of the human capital strategies in the FYs 2022 – 2026 ASP (a corresponding HCOP is not yet available). Given the limited human-capital information in SSA's planning documents, we could not determine how SSA will address its workforce challenges, including mitigating losses due to retirements and the resulting loss of institutional knowledge.

SSA's planning documents also lack information on the talent-management strategies needed to shape its current and future workforces, including how it will close staff skills gaps. While SSA surveyed its components to determine how many employees require mission-critical training, only a small percentage of those employees received the training.

Also, while SSA has succession plans for its higher-level management positions, which represent approximately 1 percent of its workforce, it does not have succession plans for remaining staff. Per SSA's reporting, approximately 24,000 of its 60,000 employees will be eligible to retire by FY 2027. SSA's planning documents lack descriptions of the hiring and recruitment plan needed to address the upcoming retirement wave.

Recommendations

We made five recommendations for SSA to improve its human capital planning, including that it fully integrate human-capital management strategies in its planning documents; align its HCOP with all its strategic goals and initiatives; and develop human-capital strategies in its HCOP that specifically describe how it will acquire the future workforce needed to successfully fulfill its mission, including plans to address its upcoming retirement wave. SSA agreed with our recommendations.