

**Report Summary**  
**Social Security Administration Office of the Inspector General**

May 2010

***Conversion of the Social Security Administration's Legacy File Management System  
(A 14-09-19097)***

**Objective**

To (1) evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) conversion of its Master Data Access Method (MADAM) file management system to the DB2 Data Base Management System; and (2) provide insights as to best practices and lessons learned for future systems conversions.

**Background**

MADAM was developed in the early 1980s to support the storage and retrieval of SSA's major program Master Files. MADAM was written in a programming language that is no longer widely used, which, when combined with the system's complexity, makes it difficult to train or recruit new programmers. Furthermore, with the increasing number of retirements among SSA's system personnel, there will be fewer individuals who can maintain MADAM.

To view the full report, visit <http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADOBEPDF/A-14-09-19097.pdf>

**Our Findings**

We found that SSA had effectively implemented MADAM-DB2 Conversion Project (the Project) to replace MADAM; however, the Project implementation strategy was not efficient because the strategy resulted in less than optimal database design. The team worked with various stakeholders to implement the Project and resolved various issues encountered during the process. To date, SSA has successfully completed Phase I for two of the four Master Files. Although the Project team performed well, we found the following:

- SSA had not classified the Project as a major Information Technology (IT) investment with Office of Management and Budget (OMB).
- SSA lacked a long-term, comprehensive strategic Project plan;
- The Project methodology may result in a less than optimal design.
- SSA did not consider other alternatives for replacing MADAM.
- SSA needed to improve certain project management practices.

**Our Recommendations**

We recommend that SSA:

1. Discuss with OMB the need to classify the Project as a major IT investment.
2. Establish a long-term, comprehensive strategic plan for the Project and related major IT initiatives.
3. Ensure an Alternatives Analysis is performed for each future major IT investment.
4. Continue with its conversion, but also assess the remaining portions of the Project to determine full scope and costs of the current MADAM conversion to DB2 strategy and document the advantages and disadvantages for delaying the application rewrite efforts and the impact on total project costs.
5. Ensure compliance with OMB and SSA project management requirements.