

Summary of the Audit of the Social Security Administration's Information Security Program and Practices for Fiscal Year 2022

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September 2022

Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration's (SSA) overall information security program and practices were effective and consistent with the *Federal Information Security Modernization Act of 2014* (FISMA) requirements, as defined in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 core Inspector General (IG) FISMA reporting metrics.

Background

Under FISMA, SSA must develop, document, and implement an Agency-wide information security program. In addition, the Commissioner of Social Security is responsible for providing information security protections commensurate with the risk and magnitude of the harm that results from the unauthorized access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification, or destruction of Agency information and information systems.

FISMA requires that the Office of the Inspector General, or an independent external auditor as determined by the IG, annually evaluate the Agency's information security program and practices to determine their effectiveness.

We engaged Grant Thornton LLP (Grant Thornton) to conduct this performance audit in conjunction with the audit of SSA's FY 2022 Financial Statements. Grant Thornton used the FY 2022 core IG FISMA reporting metrics in evaluating SSA's overall information security program and practices.

Results

Based on the FY 2022 core IG FISMA reporting metrics guidance, Grant Thornton concluded SSA's overall security program was "Not Effective."

Although SSA had established an Agency-wide information security program and practices, Grant Thornton identified deficiencies that may limit the Agency's ability to adequately protect its systems and information. While SSA continued executing its risk-based approach to strengthen controls over its information systems and address weaknesses, Grant Thornton's audit continued to identify persistent deficiencies in both the design and operation of controls related to the FY 2022 core IG FISMA reporting metrics.

SSA should make protecting its networks and information systems a top priority and dedicate the resources needed to protect the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of information the American public entrusts to SSA.

Recommendations

In addition to the recommendations provided throughout the performance audit, Grant Thornton provided SSA with nine overarching recommendations to address the identified issues.

Office of the Inspector General Comments

SSA must improve its risk management processes and ensure the appropriate design and operating effectiveness of information security controls.

Agency Comments

SSA stated that protecting its networks and information remains a critical priority.