



SOCIAL SECURITY
Office of the Inspector General

September 30, 2010

The Honorable Earl Pomeroy
Chairman, Subcommittee on Social Security
Committee on Ways and Means
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Pomeroy:

In an August 4, 2009 letter, former Chairman Tanner requested that we (1) examine conferences held during the past 5 years where Social Security Administration (SSA) funds were used or Agency staff was present; (2) determine how much was used for such training as a percent of the Agency's overall administrative expenses, as well as the role of off-site training conferences within these training funds; (3) discuss the decision-making process behind the off-site training and steps to ensure service delivery is not affected when employees are at these conferences; and (4) provide information regarding planned conferences through Fiscal Year 2010. This report addresses Questions 2 and 3 regarding training costs, the decision-making process, and steps to ensure uninterrupted service delivery. We addressed Questions 1 and 4 in our May 2010 report, *Off-site Training Conferences* (A-05-10-21035).

To ensure the Agency is aware of the information provided to your office, we are forwarding a copy of this report to SSA. I have also sent a similar response to Sam Johnson, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Social Security, and John Linder, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support.

If you have any questions, please call me or have your staff contact Misha Kelly, Congressional and Intra-Governmental Liaison, at (202) 358-6319.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Patrick P. O'Carroll, Jr.
Inspector General

Enclosure

cc:
Michael J. Astrue



SOCIAL SECURITY
Office of the Inspector General

September 30, 2010

The Honorable Sam Johnson
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Social Security
Committee on Ways and Means
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Johnson:

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SOCIAL SECURITY
Office of the Inspector General

September 30, 2010

The Honorable John Linder
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on
Income Security and Family Support
Committee on Ways and Means
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Linder:

In an August 4, 2009 letter, you requested that we (1) examine conferences held during the past 5 years where Social Security Administration (SSA) funds were used or Agency staff was present; (2) determine how much was used for such training as a percent of the Agency's overall administrative expenses, as well as the role of off-site training conferences within these training funds; (3) discuss the decision-making process behind the off-site training and steps to ensure service delivery is not affected when employees are at these conferences; and (4) provide information regarding planned conferences through Fiscal Year 2010. This report addresses Questions 2 and 3 regarding training costs, the decision-making process and steps to ensure uninterrupted service delivery. We addressed Questions 1 and 4 in our May 2010 report, *Off-site Training Conferences* (A-05-10-21035).

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Inspector General

Enclosure

cc:
Michael J. Astrue

CONGRESSIONAL RESPONSE REPORT

Training Expenditures at the Social Security Administration

A-05-10-10118



September 2010

Mission

By conducting independent and objective audits, evaluations and investigations, we inspire public confidence in the integrity and security of SSA's programs and operations and protect them against fraud, waste and abuse. We provide timely, useful and reliable information and advice to Administration officials, Congress and the public.

Authority

The Inspector General Act created independent audit and investigative units, called the Office of Inspector General (OIG). The mission of the OIG, as spelled out in the Act, is to:

- Conduct and supervise independent and objective audits and investigations relating to agency programs and operations.
- Promote economy, effectiveness, and efficiency within the agency.
- Prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse in agency programs and operations.
- Review and make recommendations regarding existing and proposed legislation and regulations relating to agency programs and operations.
- Keep the agency head and the Congress fully and currently informed of problems in agency programs and operations.

To ensure objectivity, the IG Act empowers the IG with:

- Independence to determine what reviews to perform.
- Access to all information necessary for the reviews.
- Authority to publish findings and recommendations based on the reviews.

Vision

We strive for continual improvement in SSA's programs, operations and management by proactively seeking new ways to prevent and deter fraud, waste and abuse. We commit to integrity and excellence by supporting an environment that provides a valuable public service while encouraging employee development and retention and fostering diversity and innovation.

Executive Summary

OBJECTIVE

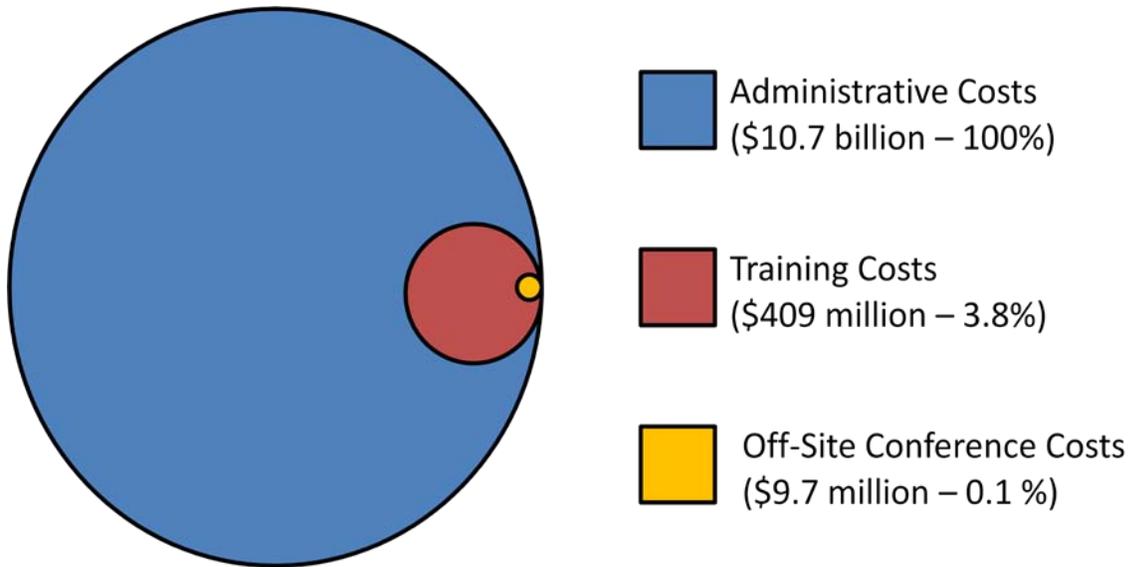
Our objectives were to (1) determine the portion of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) administrative expenses dedicated to training as well as the role of off-site training conferences within these training funds; and (2) define the Agency's decision-making process related to off-site training as well as steps taken to ensure service delivery is not affected when employees are at these conferences.

BACKGROUND

Given the size and complexity of the programs the Agency administers, SSA has established overall goals for management succession and continual learning that are then translated through various organizational layers to employee work units. The Agency uses various financial systems to track the costs related to employee training. Some training costs are easily attributed to individual components and the activities being measured, such as tuition fees, instructor contracts, and employee travel costs associated with attendance at off-site conferences. Other costs relate to activities that must first be measured so the costs can be properly allocated, such as employee time spent in training so salary and benefit costs can be determined.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

Although SSA's cost systems were not set up to specifically track and accumulate training costs in one report or management information system, we reviewed the available financial data and estimated the Agency spent approximately \$409 million on training-related activities in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009, representing about 3.8 percent of SSA's \$10.7 billion administrative budget. This amount does not include training costs incurred by the State disability determination services, which we estimated could be another \$64 million. SSA incurred approximately \$9.7 million in off-site conference costs in FY 2009, or about 2.4 percent of the estimated \$409 million spent by the Agency on training in FY 2009 (and less than 0.1 percent of the Agency's administrative budget). Beginning in FY 2010, off-site conferences became subject to centralized oversight to ensure such training closely adhered to the Agency's training procurement policies.



Our review of the budget allocation priorities in SSA’s Office of Operations demonstrated that Headquarters specifically allocated funds to the regions for technical training, whereas the regions schedule more varied training based on available funds and the organization’s needs. We reviewed the Chicago Region’s budget allocation process to learn more about the regional process and the training of new employees. The Region used a variety of training approaches to develop its staff and managers, though off-site conferences were not used in FY 2009 because the Region had sufficient space in its own facilities to host small events. We also found the Region and Agency lacked a comprehensive training database that could provide detailed training information for each regional employee. According to the Agency, it is developing a Learning Management System that will provide this information upon implementation.

Finally, while we did not find a specific Agency policy regarding service delivery while employees are attending off-site training, the Agency’s guidelines require that the official who approves training ensure the release of an employee to attend training is compatible with workload demands. Field office managers took a variety of steps to ensure service delivery was not affected when employees attended training, whether the training was provided internally or off-site.

CONCLUSIONS

Off-site training was a small part of SSA’s training expenditures in FY 2009. While managers have flexibility in meeting their training needs, the Agency has set up new controls to oversee off-site training activities. Agency managers are expected to ensure training does not affect service delivery and have used a variety of methods to balance training and workloads. The variety of training delivery systems at the Agency provides managers with greater opportunities to adjust the timing and nature of this training.

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OBJECTIVE

Our objectives were to (1) determine the portion of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) administrative expenses dedicated to training as well as the role of off-site training conferences within these training funds; and (2) define the Agency's decision-making process related to off-site training as well as steps taken to ensure service delivery is not affected when employees are at these conferences.

BACKGROUND

An August 4, 2009 letter from then Chairman of the Social Security Subcommittee and Representatives Johnson and Linder requested that the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) review the appropriateness of SSA's off-site training conferences. Specifically, we were asked to (1) examine conferences held during the past 5 years where SSA funds were used or Agency staff was present; (2) determine how much was used for such training as a percent of the Agency's overall administrative expenses as well as the role of off-site training conferences within these training funds; (3) discuss the decision-making process behind the off-site training and steps to ensure service delivery is not affected when employees are at these conferences; and (4) provide information regarding planned conferences through Fiscal Year (FY) 2010.

This report responds to Questions 2 and 3, providing information on funds used for training, the decision-making process behind off-site training, and steps the Agency has taken to ensure service delivery is not affected when employees attend conferences. We issued a report in May 2010 to respond to Questions 1 and 4.¹

AGENCY GROWTH

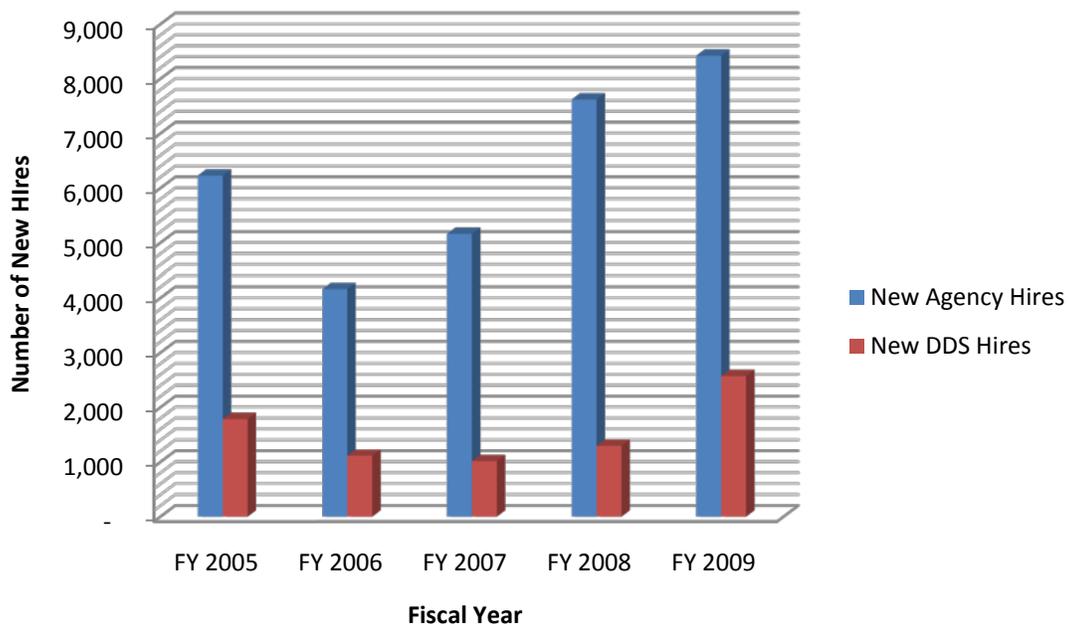
SSA's mission is to deliver Social Security services that meet the changing needs of the public. In FY 2009, SSA was provided appropriations totaling approximately \$10.7 billion, which consisted of its annual appropriation and funds under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (ARRA). Among other things, ARRA provided SSA \$500 million to process increasing retirement and disability workloads² due to both

¹ SSA OIG, *Off-site Training Conferences* (A-05-10-21035), May 2010.

² Pub. L. No. 111-5, Division A, Title VIII, 123 Stat. 115, 185-186. Of the \$500 million mentioned above, \$40 million may be used for health information technology research and activities to facilitate the adoption of electronic medical records in disability claims. Id.

the economic downturn and the baby boom retirement wave.³ SSA used these funds, in part, to hire additional individuals in the Offices of Operations (Operations) and Disability Adjudication and review (ODAR), as well as State disability determination services (DDS). Figure 1 illustrates the growth in hiring at SSA since FY 2005, with FY 2009 representing the period of greatest hiring. At the end of FY 2009, the Agency had approximately 65,000 employees nationwide, with another 16,800 State DDS employees also providing support for the Agency’s programs.⁴

Figure 1: New Hires at SSA and DDSs (FYs 2005 to 2009)



TRAINING GOALS AND GUIDANCE

Given the size and complexity of the programs the Agency administers, SSA has established overall goals for management succession and continual learning, which are then translated through the various organizational layers to the employee work units. We outline these goals in Appendix B.

SSA’s *Administrative Instructions Manual System (AIMS)* requires that Agency training be designed to ensure the optimum use of human resources in achieving organizational goals and approved employee development plans by the most cost-effective and

³ See SSA OIG, *The Office of Operations’ Staffing Plans Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* (A-09-09-29157), November 2009; *The Office of Disability Adjudication and Review’s Staffing Plans Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (A-12-09-29140), December 2009; and *Disability Determination Services’ Staffing Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (A-07-09-29156), December 2009.

⁴ SSA, *Fiscal Year 2009 Performance and Accountability Report*, Management Discussion and Analysis, page 10.

professional means available.⁵ Moreover, this training must conform to appropriate laws, regulations and the terms of negotiated agreements.⁶

Federal agencies are allowed to use a variety of methods to train employees, including classroom, on-the-job, technology-based, satellite, self-development, coaching, mentoring, career development counseling, details, rotations, cross-training, and developmental activities at retreats and conferences.⁷

TRAINING COSTS

The Agency uses various financial systems to track the costs related to employee training. Some training costs are more easily attributed to individual components and the activities being measured, such as tuition fees, and instructor contracts, and employee travel costs associated with attendance at off-site conferences. These costs are captured and maintained in the Social Security Online Accounting and Reporting System (SSOARS).⁸ Other costs relate to activities that must first be measured so the costs can be properly allocated, which applies to the salaries and benefits of SSA employees attending training. While these costs are also captured in SSOARS, they are then allocated to the appropriate activities in the Agency's Cost Analysis System (CAS).⁹

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

To meet our objectives, we compiled, analyzed, and relied on Agency-provided training cost data for FY 2009 (October 1, 2008 through September 30, 2009). We also interviewed staff from the relevant Headquarters components and the Chicago regional office to obtain information on the budget and decision-making processes, as well as employee training activities. See Appendix C for our full scope and methodology.

⁵ SSA, AIMS, Training Manual (TM), § 01.01.04.A—*Development and Management of Training Policy and Training Course Evaluation*. AIMS is the official medium for issuing SSA's policies, standards, and instructions on administrative subjects. AIMS provides a single integrated, comprehensive approach to issuing policies and procedures covering all administrative subjects, other than personnel matters.

⁶ Id.

⁷ Office of Personnel Management, Planning and Evaluation Training, 5 C.F.R. § 410.203 (2010).

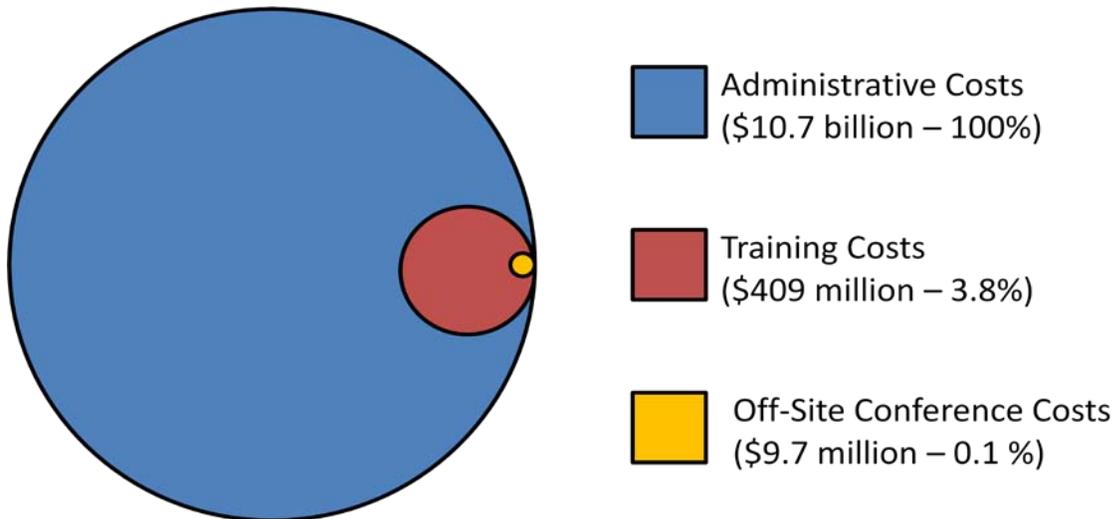
⁸ In October 2003, SSOARS was implemented as SSA's system-of-record for the Agency's financial accounting function.

⁹ Most of the workload volume and functional workyear data are obtained from SSA's work measurement systems. For cost analysis purposes, work measurement systems specifically provide the basis for apportioning personnel time among functions (for example, work sampling) and therefore are the basis for distributing payroll costs. We are conducting several separate audits of SSA's cost accounting system, which will go into greater detail.

Results of Review

Although SSA's cost systems were not set up to specifically track and accumulate training costs in one report or management information system, we reviewed the available financial data and estimated the Agency spent approximately \$409 million on training-related activities in FY 2009, representing about 3.8 percent of SSA's \$10.7 billion administrative budget. This amount does not include training costs incurred by the State DDS, which we estimated could be another \$64 million. SSA incurred approximately \$9.7 million in off-site conference costs in FY 2009, or about 2.4 percent of the estimated \$409 million spent by the Agency on training in FY 2009 (and less than 0.1 percent of the Agency's administrative budget). Beginning in FY 2010, off-site conferences became subject to centralized oversight to ensure such training closely adhered to the Agency's training procurement policies. We found that SSA regional offices, which incurred the majority of the training expenses, had a degree of autonomy when planning for employee training needs, which may include off-site conferences. Finally, we found that, in the absence of a formal or written policy, field office managers took a variety of steps to ensure service delivery was not affected when employees attended training, whether the training was provided internally or off-site.

Figure 2: FY 2009 Expenditure Comparisons



SSA TRAINING COSTS

SSA's FY 2009 budget provided approximately \$10.7 billion for administrative costs.¹⁰ Based on the data we obtained for this review, total identifiable training costs of \$409 million comprised about 3.8 percent of SSA's administrative budget in FY 2009.

¹⁰ This includes all SSA components, including the OIG. It also includes ARRA funds. SSA has a program budget and an administrative budget. The program budget covers benefit payments to individuals, while the administrative budget covers the costs of accomplishing SSA's mission.

We found that off-site conference costs made up about 2.4 percent of the approximately \$409 million in FY 2009 identifiable training costs. Total reported off-site conference costs were about 0.1 percent of the Agency's total administrative budget. If we add our estimate of DDS-related training costs, Agency training costs would increase to \$473.6 million, representing about 4.4 percent of SSA's administrative budget in FY 2009.

As shown in Table 1, we identified four areas, representing the approximately \$409 million in FY 2009 training costs, as well as a fifth area related to DDS salaries and benefits associated with time spent in training. Agency managers stated that SSA's systems are set up to track workload-related costs, such as efforts related to processing Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income workloads. As a result, while the training costs could be located in various systems and component budgets, the Agency was not specifically tracking and accumulating these training costs in one report or management information system. Moreover, State DDSs are not required to provide detailed breakouts associated with training costs.

Table 1: Estimated Training-Related Costs for FY 2009

Source	Reported Costs	Percent
Agency Salaries and Benefits ¹	\$336.7 million	82.3%
Course or Conference Specific: ²		
- Training-Related Travel	\$28.4 million	7.0%
- Class Tuition & Training Materials	\$15.0 million	3.7%
- Training Contracts ³	\$6.3 million	1.5%
IVT Equipment	\$17.9 million	4.4%
Telephone and Computer Support	\$4.9 million	1.2%
Subtotal	\$409.2 million	100%⁴
DDS Salaries and Benefits		\$64.4 million
Total		\$473.6 million

Note 1: Since SSA's systems are not set up to track all non-workload-related costs, a number of Headquarters components are not included in these costs.

Note 2: These costs were reported in SSOARS by the various Agency components and represented travel costs, course tuition, training materials, and training contracts. These costs include open obligations and disbursements for activity incurred in FYs 2009 and later. Actual disbursements totaled about \$41.3 million.

Note 3: These costs include food and entertainment expenses.

Note 4: Does not add to 100 percent because of rounding.

SALARIES AND BENEFITS

About 82 percent of the identifiable training costs were related to salaries and benefits. These salaries and benefits were associated with the time employees spent attending training¹¹ as well as time spent by employees providing instruction or training services, such as Office of Learning (OL) staff. CAS recorded approximately \$336.7 million on

¹¹ This includes on-the-job training time.

FY 2009 training-related costs.¹² Of the \$336.7 million, \$320.5 million (95 percent) represented training costs related to instruction for both new and existing staff attending training from components handling workloads.¹³ As shown in Figure 3, the majority of these salary and benefit expenditures related to regional and field offices (70 percent)¹⁴ and program service centers (15 percent).

Figure 3: Allocation of \$320.5 Million in Training Costs



The remaining \$16.2 million (5 percent) in training costs represented costs associated with support functions of the Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Human Resources, including the salaries and benefits of OL staff.

TUITION, CONTRACTS, AND RELATED TRAVEL

We identified approximately \$49.7 million in costs related to course tuition, training-related contracts, and travel associated with training classes and conferences (see Figure 4). About \$28 million (57 percent) of the training costs was related to travel associated with informational meetings, conferences, and training. Most of these costs were obtained directly from SSOARS based on sub-object classifications (SOC) that

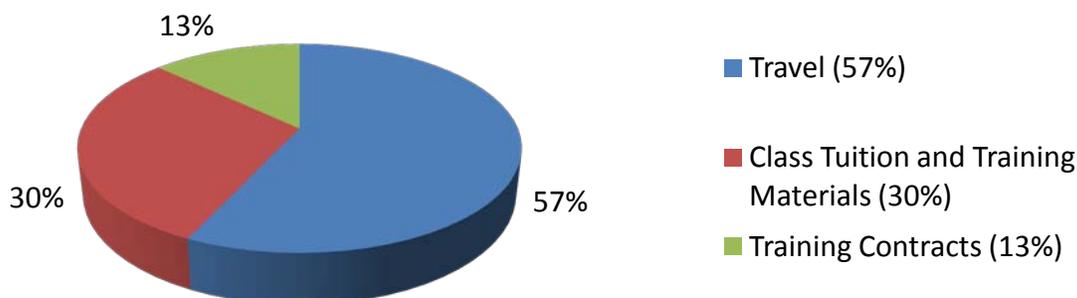
¹² While we determined that FY 2009 costs related to ongoing training remained constant, new staff training costs are approximately 127 percent greater than in FY 2007. This is consistent with the increased hiring of the last 2 years.

¹³ The SSA CAS C1 – 1235 report provides category workyears, payroll obligations, and payroll costs per workyear for workload and staff functions by program activity for SSA and its components. A workload is defined as a major classification denoting that the basic character or work being performed is directly engaged in performing one or more of the program missions of the Agency. Since SSA’s systems were not set up to track all non-workload-related costs, eight Headquarters components are not included in the CAS calculations: Offices of Actuary; Budget, Finance and Management; Chief Information Officer; Commissioner; Communications; General Counsel; Inspector General; and Legislation and Congressional Affairs.

¹⁴ According to the time allocation studies conducted at the regional and field offices, between 6.2 and 8.2 percent of employee time is charged to training-related activities.

appeared to be related to training activities. The remaining amounts related to the cost of classes and materials under the *Government Employees Training Act (GETA)*¹⁵ (30 percent) as well as the costs of contracts for instructors and training-related activities (13 percent). This contract amount also includes about \$633,000 in “Entertainment Expenses” related to award ceremonies, food, and receptions.¹⁶ Of the \$49.7 million in tuition, contracts, and related travel costs, almost \$41.3 million has been disbursed, and the remainder is considered open obligations.

Figure 4: Reported Tuition, Contracts, and Related Travel Costs for FY 2009



IVT COSTS

The Agency also uses the Interactive Video Teletraining (IVT) network for training. SSA produces live broadcasts from an in-house studio, and employees view those broadcasts on television monitors in field offices. This technology enabled limited real-time communication between the instructor and students. In addition, sessions are recorded and employees may view rebroadcasts via the Agency’s “Video on Demand” program. SSA has noted that IVT is a cost-efficient method of delivering training to audiences in multiple locations, although there are other delivery choices for specific training. The Agency reported IVT costs of about \$17.9 million for FY 2009, primarily related to equipment, studio, and maintenance costs.

¹⁵ 5 U.S.C. §§ 4101 et seq. (2007). GETA provides that the head of an agency may pay all or part of the pay of an employee of the agency for the period of training, and may pay or reimburse the employee for all or part of the necessary expenses of training. GETA provides that the necessary expenses of training include the necessary costs of travel and per diem, among other things. *Id.* at § 4109(a).

¹⁶ Food and reception costs are often offset when the employees attending a training event do not claim reimbursement for the meals on their travel vouchers.

OL COSTS

OHR reported about \$23.2 million in OL costs for FY 2009, mostly related to salaries, IVT studio operations, leadership training, career development, and vendor training.¹⁷ OL is responsible for ensuring that SSA's workforce possesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities to support the Agency's mission. The courses provided by OL include the following:

- entry-level programmatic training,¹⁸
- professional development,
- career enrichment workshop seminars,
- leadership development for new and experienced supervisors, and
- online training.

TELEPHONE AND COMPUTER SUPPORT

SSA also allocated approximately \$3.2 million in telephone and computer support to training-related activities. As this support cannot easily be charged directly to each component, the costs of this support are funded from the Centralized Common Expense Account (CCEA), an Agency-level overhead account. The CCEA pools various central office and other expenses from many organizations that share the use of central office buildings, equipment, supplies, and/or services and benefit from certain Agency-wide expenditures.

Another \$1.7 million in allocated costs was related to Information Technology Systems (ITS). ITS is an SSA overhead account that pools various automated data processing and transmission expenses (including voice and telecommunications) of many organizations that share SSA's information and transmission, equipment, supplies, and/or services.

¹⁷ We did not specifically identify these costs in Table 1 since about \$10.5 million was already included under "Salaries and Benefits" costs, and the remaining \$12.7 million was covered under the "Course or Conference Specific" costs.

¹⁸ In addition to the Claims and Service Representative entry-level training courses provided by OL in partnership with regional studios, SSA develops and delivers training for benefit authorizers, claims authorizers, technical support technicians, teleservice representatives, DDS examiners, administrative law judges, decision writers, legal assistants and fundamental training for all new Headquarters employees. The OL maintains, prints, and delivers the course material for this training.

OFF-SITE CONFERENCE COSTS

SSA also conducts off-site conferences to train and inform its employees. SSA defines a conference as a meeting, retreat, seminar, symposium, forum, training activity, or event that involves attendee travel or an internal training activity.¹⁹ We did not identify this as a separate category in Table 1 since the off-site training conference costs, such as travel and speaker costs, as well as employee salaries and benefits, were already included in the prior cost categories.

As discussed in our May 2010 *Congressional Response Report: Off-Site Training Conferences*, SSA conducted 168 off-site conferences between October 2004 and November 2009 for about 26,000 attendees at a cost of approximately \$23.5 million. Based on data we obtained from the Agency, we determined that total reported off-site conference costs of approximately \$9.7 million related to FY 2009 (see Table 2).²⁰ As a result, off-site conference costs made up about 2.4 percent of the approximately \$409 million in FY 2009 identifiable training costs. Compared to the Agency's administrative budget, total reported off-site conference costs were about 0.1 percent of SSA's total budget.

Table 2: FY 2009 Reported Off-Site Conference Training Costs by Component

Component	Reported Costs	Estimated Salaries and Benefits
Office of Communications	\$386,373	\$230,541
Office of Disability Adjudication and Review	\$845,539	\$1,314,310
Office of Disability Determinations	\$92,833	\$716,423
Office of General Counsel	\$180,361	\$348,981
Office of Human Resources	\$1,640,912	\$732,344
Office of Retirement and Disability Policy	\$735,377	\$339,229
Office of Operations	\$973,090	\$1,203,224
Totals	\$4,854,485	\$4,885,052

Source: SSA OIG analysis of data obtained for our May 2010 *Congressional Response Report: Off-Site Training Conferences*. The criteria we used to calculate estimated salaries and benefits are described in Appendix E of our May 2010 report and are not identical to SSA's own process for calculating these costs.

¹⁹ SSA Office of Financial Policy and Operations, *Conference Planning Guide*, p. 8 (November 2009). The Guide states ". . . a conference may be sponsored for the purpose of exchanging information and fostering discussion of programmatic, administrative, and/or operational issues, and for generating ideas to address problems and challenges."

²⁰ We performed our own calculations related to salaries and overhead, so our totals may differ from the Agency's calculation in CAS. However, the CAS report does not break down costs to conference specific level.

Starting in FY 2010, conference oversight and related procurement activity has been centralized. SSA components must apply for centralized approval before planning or holding a conference. Additionally, the Agency automated the conference data submission process in July 2010. While the central oversight policy relates primarily to conferences and not to all on-going training, we believe these recent steps should provide (1) increased assurance as to the appropriateness and necessity of future off-site conferences, (2) stronger control over training expenditures, and (3) improved compliance with Agency policy and statutory regulations.²¹ See Appendix E for additional information on conference oversight.

DDS COSTS

While SSA reimbursed DDSs for approximately \$2 billion in services in FY 2009, we could not identify any training costs because the Agency does not require that State DDSs provide training cost breakouts as part of its reporting process. Course costs and related travel are reported to SSA as “miscellaneous” and “DDS travel” without any further detail on the *State Agency Report of Obligations for SSA Disability Programs* (SSA-4513). We also found DDSs did not track all training time, though it is likely that some DDSs may track the amount of time spent in training for their own purposes. CAS staff noted the Agency would need to monitor more than 50 different time allocation systems if the salary and benefit costs were to be broken down into training-related categories. Finally, we found that while training needs vary greatly among DDSs, OL provides some training to State employees, including a 16-week basic core curriculum for new disability examiners. As a result, some of these DDS training costs are already captured in our SSA cost estimates.

To ensure we captured the majority of costs, we estimated potential DDS training costs using available information. According to SSA data, total DDS personnel costs for the nation in FY 2009 were about \$1.1 billion. Assuming that DDS staff spent approximately 6 percent of their time being trained,²² we estimate that approximately \$64.4 million of about \$1.1 billion of total DDS personnel costs related to time DDS staff spent in training in FY 2009.

²¹ We discuss some concerns about conferences held before the Commissioner’s decision to centralize the conference oversight process in a previous report. SSA OIG, *Congressional Response Report: San Francisco Regional Management Training Forum* (A-05-09-29174), December 2009. See Appendix I for a list of prior OIG reports that relate to training.

²² Approximately 6.2 to 8.2 percent of SSA employee time at field offices was charged to training-related activities in FY 2009. We used the lower end of this estimate. Being an estimate, it is possible that the actual percentage of time charged to training activities is higher or lower than 6 percent.

TRAINING ALLOCATION AND OVERSIGHT

Our review of the budget allocation priorities in Operations demonstrated that Headquarters specifically allocated funds to the regions for technical training, whereas the regions schedule more varied training based on available funds and the organization's needs. Overall, the Chicago Region²³ spent about 4 percent of its FY 2009 budget allocation on training for new and existing staff. The Region used a variety of training approaches to develop its staff and managers, though off-site conferences were not used in FY 2009 because the Region had sufficient space in its own facilities to host small events. Finally, we found the Region and Agency lacked a comprehensive training database that could provide detailed training information for each regional employee.

BUDGET ALLOCATION PROCESS

We reviewed the budget allocation process in the Chicago Region to understand how Operations ensured field office personnel were properly trained. As noted earlier, the majority of the salary and benefit costs was related to the regional offices. As illustrated in Figure 5, upon receiving its \$10.7 billion in FY 2009 appropriations from Congress, SSA's Office of Budget allocated funds to each Headquarters component without providing specific expenditure details beyond rent costs and postage. Operations received these funds, made its own determinations concerning discretionary versus non-discretionary funding, and allocated the funds to the relevant field components, including each of the 10 regional offices.²⁴

²³ We selected the Chicago Region based on its size as the Agency's second largest region. The Chicago Region's budget process should not be regarded as typical of all SSA regions since we did not perform audit work to determine whether it was representative. We illustrated the decisionmaking process followed by the San Francisco Region in our December 2009 report, *Congressional Response Report: San Francisco Regional Management Training Forum* (A-05-09-29174).

²⁴ Components under the Office of Operations include the 10 regional offices and associated program service centers as well as the Offices of Automation Support, Central Operations (for example, international operations), Disability Determinations (for example, disability determination services), Electronic Services, Public Service and Operations Support, and Telephone Services (for example, teleservice centers).

Figure 5: Illustration of the Budget Allocation Process in the Chicago Region



CHICAGO REGION TRAINING COSTS

We reviewed the budget process in the Chicago Region²⁵ to understand the decision-making process related to providing employee training in this location.²⁶ In FY 2009, approximately \$2 million, or about 4 percent of the regional funding, was related to staff and management training costs.²⁷ According to regional staff, the

²⁵ The Chicago Region serves Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin with a regional office, 224 local field offices, 6 State DDSs, 7 teleservice centers, and the Great Lakes Program Service Center. The Chicago Region employed approximately 6,670 individuals at the end of FY 2009, which does not include the State employees working at the regional DDSs or the 1,323 additional SSA employees working in the Region, such as the Offices of Disability Adjudication and Review and Quality Performance.

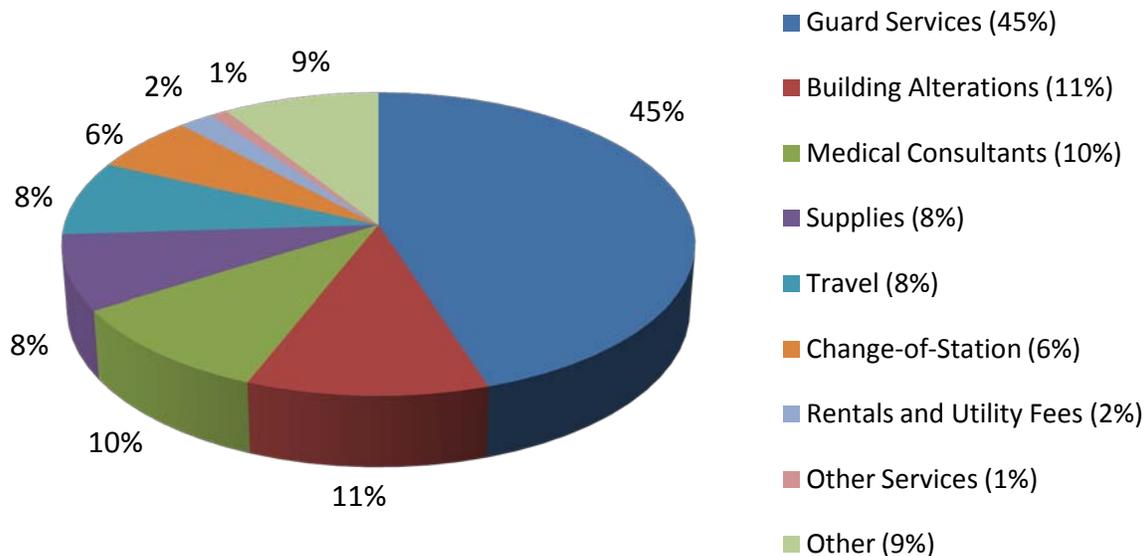
²⁶ As noted earlier, the Chicago Region should not be regarded as typical of all SSA regions.

²⁷ The salaries and benefits related to regional activities are not part of this cost analysis since these costs are captured and recorded in Headquarters. The Region provides Headquarters with details on employee time performing certain duties, including training duties, which are used to allocate the salary and benefit costs.

Chicago Region’s FY 2009 budget was \$44.1 million,²⁸ which included 31 non-discretionary funded items totaling \$35.7 million, or 81 percent of the budget.

Operations set aside approximately \$740,000 of these non-discretionary funds for technical training. The Region dedicated another \$1.2 million in discretionary funding to a variety of training activities²⁹ as well as training-related travel. As a result, a total of approximately \$2 million was available for training and training-related travel for employees in the Chicago Region. The Region typically holds most of the training funds and allocates a small portion to area directors, who are generally more familiar with training needs in their own districts. Figure 6 shows the FY 2009 distribution of expenditures in the Chicago Region.

Figure 6: Chicago Region’s Expenses in FY 2009



Note: Training costs are part of “Travel” and “Other” costs. Expenses presented in the chart do not include salaries and benefits.

The amount of funds allocated by regional managers to training is dependent on the region’s total resources in consideration of all other needs. At the beginning of each FY, regional staff surveys all major components under the Regional Commissioner’s jurisdiction to determine funding needs. Regional budget staff compiles all funding requests in a line-item listing with an activity description to ensure each request receives the consideration of upper regional management in the allocation process.

²⁸ This budget amount relates to the regional office, field offices, teleservice centers, and the Great Lakes Program Service Center. The DDSs are funded separately by the Office of Disability Determinations in the Office of Operations.

²⁹ We discuss these training activities in the next section.

Depending on the region's available resources, training efforts may be fully funded, reduced in scope and funding, or deferred until additional funds are available. Table 3 demonstrates the decision process used by regional managers when identifying spending priorities. In terms of discretionary funds, some technical training occurs at stage two and the rest of the training is part of stage four.³⁰

Table 3: Methodology for Determining Regional Needs Using Discretionary Funds

Priority Stage	Type of Expenditure	Expenditure Examples
1	Fixed cost and non-discretionary needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overtime utility fees • Employee counseling services • Program service center facility contract for electricity, cleaning, and engineers • Telephone directory listing fees • General Services Administration vehicle rentals • Alarm and security-related repairs
2	Critical operational needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field office area and speech travel • Detail travel to backfill management positions • Interpreters for the hearing impaired • Supplies • New hire/crossover technical training, automation training, and work incentives liaison training
3	Critical administrative needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area director visits to field offices • Area manager meetings • Regional office staff travel • Litigation travel
4	All other needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal training • Developmental program travel • GETA tuition • Building alterations • Furniture and equipment purchases

Training Activities

Training is listed as one of the Chicago Region's priorities in its *FY 2009 Operating Plan* under "Invest in Our Workforce." These priorities include entry-level training for front-line positions, automation training, and management and leadership training. For example, the Region runs a Chicago Upward Bound (CUB) program, which is a formal, competitive developmental program that enhances the career development of

³⁰ If additional funds become available later in the FY, items not funded or fully funded at levels 3 and 4 are reconsidered for funding. The proposed allocation plan is reviewed by management to obtain recommendations for revision. In addition, a regional Budget Committee, representing all components, is convened when necessary to discuss items in level 4 that were not funded. If the Region has unallocated funds, the Budget Committee can decide to allocate them. The Budget Committee also decides the priority order for funding other items in level 4, if additional funds become available.

journeyman personnel in the Chicago Region who have demonstrated leadership potential. CUB participants remain in the program for 1 year, receive a temporary promotion to the next higher grade level for 1 year, complete two or more developmental assignments, and receive formal training experience.³¹

In terms of entry-level employees, new employees hired to process disability and retirement workloads are given training to perform their jobs, including face-to-face classroom work, IVT courses, and on-the-job training with mentors. As we noted in our November 2009 report,³² the Agency does not realize the full benefits of hiring these employees until they have completed their training and gained experience. While the amount of training provided varies among SSA regions, entry-level courses are standardized programs for all employees, and the approximate length of the training required for the most common positions ranges between 3 and 8 months. For example, the estimated length of training for the service representative³³ position is about 3 months while the claims authorizer³⁴ position is 6 to 8 months.

Training can be delivered to regional staff in a number of ways, including video conferences, in-person conferences, IVT, video on demand, SSA Learn,³⁵ E-Learning, in-person classroom, and private vendors.³⁶ While the Chicago Region provided its employees with a range of training opportunities, the Region did not directly support any off-site conferences that met our criteria in FY 2009, as described in our May 2010 report,³⁷ though two other Headquarters components reported conferences held in the Region.³⁸ Regional office staff said the Region does not have any off-site conferences in FY 2010 that would meet our reporting criteria of more than 50 employees.

Regional staff noted that the auditorium and classroom space in the regional building, as well as the Chicago Training Center near the regional building, provide sufficient space for management gatherings, and training events. For example, the Chicago

³¹ See Appendix B for more information on training goals at SSA.

³² SSA OIG, *The Office of Operations' Staffing Plans Under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (A-09-09-29157)*, pages 5 and 6, November 2009.

³³ Service representatives provide information to, and assist, claimants and beneficiaries with various disability and retirement matters.

³⁴ Claims and benefit authorizers process claims and post-entitlement actions for current beneficiaries.

³⁵ SSA Learn provides SSA employees with easy access to an extensive library of online courses, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from any computer with an Internet connection and a Web browser. SSA Learn also enables employees to keep records of completed courses.

³⁶ See Appendix G for a training matrix that discusses each of these in greater detail.

³⁷ SSA OIG, *Off-site Training Conferences (A-05-10-21035)*, May 2010.

³⁸ The Office of Disability Determinations held the DDS Forum meeting in Detroit, Michigan, in May 2009 while the Office of Retirement and Disability Policy held a quarterly meeting for the Occupational Information Development Advisory Panel in Chicago, Illinois, in June 2009.

Training Center has four classrooms and two conference rooms. One of the conference rooms can accommodate up to 60 people theater style and can be subdivided into 2 smaller rooms.

Training Records

To understand the amount of training provided to various types of employees, we requested copies of training records and reports. While some regional components maintain limited training documentation, we could not find a comprehensive training database for regional employees. According to the Agency, it is developing a Learning Management System that will provide this information upon implementation. SSA's Office of Personnel currently maintains an Employee Data Webpage that provides staff the ability to voluntarily update personal data, including training classes. Staff are asked to update their own training information after attending a training class that is 4 hours or more in length.³⁹ Since the Webpage relies on self-reporting and excludes certain types of reporting, it is possible that some employees do not update records timely or at all. We spoke to an Area Director in the Region who maintains his own information files, mostly comprised of employees' names and dates, to ensure his staff can account for training.

OL also maintains its own databases on some employee training.⁴⁰ While the database we queried did not provide employee names, it contained statistics on the date a course was taken, the course title, and the number of attendees from each location. For example, the *IVT Usage Report* indicated the Chicago Region had 29,563 attendees at IVT sessions in FY 2009. This training included *Title II Claims Representative Basic Training*, *Title XVI Claims Representative Training*, *Service Representative Basic Training*, *Entry-Level Core Lessons*, and *Site LAN Coordinator Basic Course*.

SERVICE DELIVERY

Agency guidelines state, in part, that before approving a training nomination, the approving official must ensure that the release of the employee to attend training is compatible with workload demands.⁴¹ However, Agency staff stated they were unaware of more specific written policies at the national or regional levels to (1) ensure service to the public is not diminished when managers or employees travel or attend training; and (2) require an optimum staff to management ratio during such absences. When we surveyed the 10 regional offices, regional staff confirmed that they were unaware of such guidance.

³⁹ Some courses offered via Video on Demand and other medium are under 4 hours, so they would not necessarily be captured in this database.

⁴⁰ See Appendix H for Agency statistics on employee training.

⁴¹ SSA, AIMS, TM 02.01.05.B.1.

Agency managers stated that while the regions place a priority on ensuring public service does not suffer while employees or managers attend training, it is difficult to apply a formula since minimum staffing requirements vary among districts depending on such factors as the time of year, local business practices, and availability of staff to detail to specific assignments. Moreover, these managers emphasized that training is a critical component in the mission of serving the public, and the regions continually attempt to maintain a balanced approach between the necessity of training and its affect on service delivery. The variety of training delivery systems also provided managers with greater opportunities to adjust the timing and nature of training.

Some of the approaches identified by regional managers to balance training and workload needs included the following.

- Regional training staff work with component heads to determine appropriate dates and participants. When possible, multiple training days are offered to allow fewer attendees to be away from their components.
- Training is provided in the morning before the opening of the office so customer service is not affected. Employees who miss the morning training can take it later in the day after the office closes via Video on Demand.
- Use of the *Visitor Intake Process*⁴² to identify the best days and times for training to occur and plan for small training groups throughout the day. This practice ensures that a majority of the interviewing staff is available at all times to see the public.
- One program service center staggers training throughout the day to allow the necessary work to be covered.
- In the rare event the management team is absent in a field office, the district manager appoints an officer in charge, generally a technical expert or management support specialist, to handle general business operations.
- Managers adhere to the expectation that a minimum of 50 percent of operations staff (not including management) must be present during office operating hours each day.

⁴² The *Visitor Intake Process* is a program designed to help field offices automate and control all stages of in-office visitors and scheduled appointments.

Conclusions

We estimate SSA spent between 3.8 and 4.4 percent of its administrative expenses in FY 2009 on training and training-related activities. Expenditures related to off-site conferences are much smaller, representing less than 0.1 percent of the Agency's administrative costs. In terms of oversight, while most training activities are left to the relevant components' discretion, SSA has established greater controls over the off-site conference expenditures that should help ensure the scheduled conferences are appropriate and closely adhere to the Agency's planning and procurement policies. Because of the lack of a comprehensive employee training database, we could not quantify the amount of completed training provided per employee or the volume associated with all types of training provided. Finally, we found that in the absence of a formal or written policy, local field office management has established a variety of internal policies to ensure appropriate coverage of workloads while employees are being trained. The variety of training delivery systems at the Agency also provides managers with greater opportunities to adjust the timing and nature of this training.

Appendices

Acronyms

AIMS	<i>Administrative Instructions Manual System</i>
ARRA	<i>American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009</i>
CAS	Cost Analysis System
CCEA	Centralized Common Expense Account
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
CPAS	Conference Proposal and Approval System
CPS	Conference Planning Support
CUB	Chicago Upward Bound
DDS	Disability Determination Services
FY	Fiscal Year
GETA	<i>Government Employees Training Act</i>
ITS	Information Technology Systems
IVT	Interactive Video Teletraining
ODAR	Office of Disability Adjudication and Review
OFPO	Office of Financial Policy and Operations
OHR	Office of Human Resources
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
OL	Office of Learning
Operations	Office of Operations
PSC	Program Service Center
Pub. L. No.	Public Law Number
SOC	Sub-Object Classification
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSOARS	Social Security Online Accounting and Reporting System
TM	Training Manual

Training Goals at the Social Security Administration

The information provided below demonstrates how the overall Agency training goals translate into programs at the field-office level.

AGENCY-LEVEL TRAINING GOALS

The Social Security Administration's (SSA) Office of Human Resources published a *Strategic Human Capital Plan* covering 2009 to 2011. This document provided the reader with "...a roadmap on how we will use human capital to meet our mission and goals..." and highlighted four strategic human capital goals.

1. **Recruitment:** Capitalizing on recruitment programs that will attract a multi-generational, multi-cultural workforce with the competencies needed to achieve our mission.
2. **Development of Succession Management:** Developing leaders at all levels through comprehensive succession management, outstanding development programs, and an extensive array of learning opportunities.
3. **Performance and Communication:** Improving employee performance by fostering better management-employee communication and rewarding excellence.
4. **Organizational Culture and Continual Learning:** Providing an environment and culture that fosters employee retention, promotes achievement in public service, and encourages the pursuit of personal excellence through continual learning.

The second and fourth goals directly address training needs.

COMPONENT-LEVEL TRAINING GOALS

The Office of Operations' *Operating Plan for FY 2009* contains a number of priorities, including a goal to "Invest in Our Workforce." This goal has a number of training initiatives that involve the use of various Agency resources.

1. Continue to enhance entry-level training for front-line positions.
2. Support and improve training using appropriate training technologies.
3. Continue to provide all staff with automation training, including training on Internet services for the public, to ensure maximum and efficient use of technology.
4. Ensure management personnel receive timely management and leadership training.

FIELD-LEVEL TRAINING GOALS

The Chicago Region's *FY 2009 Operating Plan* highlights the Office of Operations' priorities, including "Invest in Our Workforce." The Region also added initiatives specific to its needs, including (1) developing and rolling out diversity training for managers, (2) training all staff on "internet services for the public," and (3) support for career development programs, such as the following.

1. **Chicago Employee Exchange and Rotation:** This is an on-going program, first established in 1998, aimed at giving employees of all grades and locations in the Region a chance to request a temporary work assignment in another office or component outside their chain-of-command. These assignments can be for as few as 5 or as many as 30 work days.
2. **Special Opportunities to Excel:** This is a regional program for grade levels GS-2 through 8 and WG-2 through 6 employees. This program offers all regional employees at these grade levels a chance to compete in a career development program that includes a variety of developmental experiences and a temporary promotion for 12 months.
3. **Chicago Upward Bound:** This is a formal, competitive developmental program designed to enhance the career development of journeyman personnel in the Chicago Region who have demonstrated leadership potential. Participants will remain in the program for 1 year, receive a temporary promotion to the next higher-grade level for 1 year, complete two or more developmental assignments, and receive a formal training experience using regional training funds.
4. **Fresh Incentives for Regional Excellence:** This is a regional program for GS-13 and 14 permanent employees designed to develop managerial talent.

Scope and Methodology

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed applicable Federal regulations and the Social Security Administration's (SSA) policies and procedures, including the *Administrative Instructions Manual System*, pertaining to training activities at Federal agencies.
- Reviewed prior Office of the Inspector General reports on training and related activities.
- Reviewed data in SSA's financial systems, including Division of Cost Allocation reports and the Social Security Online Accounting and Report System (SSOARS), for Fiscal Year 2009 as well as other periods for purposes of comparison.
- Interviewed staff from the Offices of Disability Determinations and Finance as well as the Division of Cost Allocation and obtained information from the Offices of Learning and Financial Policy and Operations.
- Interviewed Chicago Region staff associated with the budget process, decision-making, and employee training. We also visited a Chicago area field office to learn more about decision-making by local managers and the training available to field office staff.

Our review was limited in scope to analyzing training and training-related cost data as supplied to us by the Agency. As such, we relied on the representations of Agency personnel indicating the data reported to us were complete and accurate to the best of their awareness and ability. Accordingly, our work did not constitute an audit of such information.

We conducted our work from January through August 2010 in accordance with the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's *Quality Standards for Inspections*.

Tuition, Contracts, and Related Travel Costs

We identified approximately \$49.7 million in costs related to course tuition, training-related contracts, and travel associated with training classes and conferences (see Table D-1).¹ These costs were obtained directly from the Social Security Online Accounting and Reporting System (SSOARS)² based on sub-object classifications (SOC) that appeared to be related to training activities. We identified other SOCs that may have contained costs related to training, but we were unable to distinguish training activities from other activities, so we did not include them. Of the \$49.7 million in tuition, contracts and related travel costs, almost \$41.3 million has been disbursed, and the remainder are considered open obligations.

Table D-1: Training Expenditures Related to Tuitions, Contracts, and Related Travel for Fiscal Year 2009

Social Security Online Accounting and Reporting System Data		
SOC	Sub-Object Classification Description	Total
2120	Travel – Informational Meeting	\$895
2123	Travel – Conference	\$2,509,020
2141	Travel – Training Attendance – Internal	\$15,934,596
2142	Travel – Training Attendance – Inter-Agency	\$547,414
2143	Travel – Training Attendance – Non-Government	\$772,913
2144	Travel – Technical Recruiting	\$8,684,598
2321	Exhibit, Temporary Space and Other	\$2,201,587
2525	<i>Government Employees Training Act</i> Training	\$14,963,744
2526	Training Contracts	\$3,482,691
252G	Entertainment Expenses	632,974
Total		\$49,730,432

¹ This does not include the Interactive Video Teletraining and Office of Learning costs.

² In October 2003, SSOARS was implemented as the Social Security Administration's system-of-record for the Agency's financial accounting function.

Training Approval Policy

Social Security Administration policy¹ states that before approving a training nomination, the approving official must ensure that

- the training is needed;
- the necessary funds and/or other resources required for the training are available and can be committed;
- the release of the employee to attend training is compatible with workload demands;
- the training is a more economical means of obtaining the needed knowledge and skills than job rotation, special assignment, detail, or other less formal types of training;
- the cost of the training, including loss of productive time and salary, is offset in relation to the value of improved performance to the Agency;
- the employee will have the opportunity to make use of the newly acquired knowledge and skills; and
- all other employees who might need the training have been considered without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap, or other factors unrelated to training.

¹ SSA, *Administrative Instructions Manual System*, Training Manual, 02.01.05.B.1.—*Other Government and Non-Government Training and Internal Training*.

Central Oversight of Off-Site Conferences

In August 2009, the Commissioner centralized conference oversight and related procurement activity in the Office of the Deputy Commissioner for Budget, Finance and Management. In addition, a conference planning support staff was established to

1. provide clear guidance for conference planning and execution, including updating the *Administrative Instructions Manual System* and publishing a conference guide on the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Website;
2. implement a process for reviewing and approving all components' upcoming conference plans at the beginning of each fiscal year (FY); and
3. implement a post-conference process for evaluating conference planning and execution.

Essentially, beginning in FY 2010, all SSA components must apply for centralized approval before planning or holding a conference of any sort, not just training. The applicant's proposal will be subjected to review and control by the Office of Financial Policy and Operations (OFPO) before SSA components are allowed to commit Federal funds. As part of the oversight process, OFPO Conference Planning Support (CPS) staff reviews data provided by SSA components using the *SSA Conference Proposal* form.¹ The form requires that the requesting entity include conference details, such as purpose, location, facilities, attendees, and costs, as well as a narrative justification for the expenditure.

CPS and the Office of Program Accounting Operations Web team developed a Web-based system called the Conference Proposal and Approval System (CPAS) that was released in July 2010. CPAS automates the conference proposal process from beginning to end and tracks post conference reports. CPAS allows users to input conference plans, electronically route and approve proposals, access the status of proposals in real time, and prepare post-conference reports. In addition, CPAS will have the capabilities to generate numerous management information reports for components to monitor their conference costs and activities, such as

1. number of conferences by component/region, category or facility type (Federal or non-Federal);
2. status of conference proposals and post-conference reports by component;

¹ The internal Website SSA established provides managers with the *SSA Conference Planning Guide* and reporting forms.

3. conferences with cost variances over 10 percent and explanations for those variances; and
4. total conference costs for prior and current FYs by component (both budgeted and actual costs).

Chicago Region Training Matrix

We developed the training matrix below based on discussions with regional officials in the Chicago Region.

Table G-1: Training Matrix for Various Methods of Delivering Training at the Social Security Administration

Delivery Methods	Purpose/Delivery Method	Audience	Size of Audience (target)	Instructor/ Student Interaction	Types of Courses	Training-Related Travel	Technology Used	Affect on SSA's Computer Network
Video Conferences	Occasionally used to share information with Headquarters components or for Commissioner-level conferences	Management	Varies	Limited ¹	NA	NA	SSA's network	Technology uses SSA's network capacity (bandwidth) and may slow the system
Conferences	Predominantly used for lecture, interactive discussion, and training	Management and staff	Varies	Open and limited ²	Predominantly used for management training	Yes	Contract for technology services	None

Delivery Methods	Purpose/Delivery Method	Audience	Size of Audience (target)	Instructor/ Student Interaction	Types of Courses	Training-Related Travel	Technology Used	Affect on SSA's Computer Network
Interactive Video Teletraining (IVT)	Used for majority of entry-level training for field operations and ongoing transmittal training for staff in the immediate claims taking units in the program service center (PSC). IVT is available to most staff in other sections of the PSC, teleservice center, and disability determination services (DDS)	Management and staff	Varies	Limited ³	Chicago uses IVT for 85-90 percent of field office entry level training; management training; and personal development	Yes ⁴	SSA's Satellite Dish	Technology does not interfere with SSA's network
Video on Demand	Self-study videos of IVT sessions	All Staff	One person	None	Individuals who are unable to attend required IVT training, refresher training, and self-development	No	SSA's network	Technology uses SSA's network capacity (bandwidth); however, the number of expected users at any given time should not slow the system

Delivery Methods	Purpose/Delivery Method	Audience	Size of Audience (target)	Instructor/ Student Interaction	Types of Courses	Training-Related Travel	Technology Used	Affect on SSA's Computer Network
SSA Learn	Self-study	All Staff	One person	None	Personal development and refresher training	No	Internet	Technology uses SSA's network capacity (bandwidth); however, the number of expected users at any given time should not slow the system
E-Learning	Self-study	All Staff	One person	None to limited ⁵	Personal development and refresher training	No	Internet	Technology uses SSA's network capacity (bandwidth); however, the number of expected users at any given time should not slow the system
Traditional (on-site) – Face-to-Face	Lecture	All Staff	Varies	Open	All entry-level training for DDS, PSC, and other component staff; management training; and training needs of an individual or group	Varies	None	None
Private Vendors (off-site) – Face-to-Face	Lecture	All Staff	Varies	Open	Management training and training needs of an individual or group	Varies	None	None

Note 1: The participants are not inclined to discuss actual management issues/problems because they do not know who is actually in attendance at the different participating sites and how the discussion will be received.

Note 2: The participants are allowed to discuss different issues with their peers from other offices and participate in activities/simulation training (for example, real-life scenarios) in small groups. The participants also attend large, group meetings where they may or may not feel comfortable sharing ideas.

Note 3: The participants are allowed to interact with the instructor through question and answer sessions. The instructor may not be able to respond or receive all the participants' questions.

Note 4: SSA has generally clustered students for IVT training. SSA does not want one individual to attend an IVT session only. As a result, SSA pays for training travel related expenses for staff from different offices to participate in the IVT training sessions.

Note 5: SSA has contracted in the past with private vendors that supplement the E-Learning course with an instructor who could answer potential questions from course participants.

Statistics on Agency Training

Social Security Administration (SSA) delivers training using a variety of programs. When we spoke to staff in the Office of Human Resources, we found that while the Agency does not yet have the ability to generate training reports, it is working with a contractor to implement a pilot of a Learning Management System this fall. In the meantime, the Office of Learning was able to provide the following training information for Fiscal Year 2009.¹

1. **SSA Learn:** There were 1,788 users who completed 4,233 course registrations. There are 3,322 users who are completing 9,920 course registrations.
2. **On-line Lessons:**² A total of 110 different lessons were viewed 218,646 times.
3. **Video on Demand:** A total of 752 distinct lessons were viewed 606,758 times.
4. **Interactive Video Teletraining (IVT):** A total of 174 individual programs were viewed by an estimated 213,553 viewers. Each IVT was rebroadcast approximately four times and then made available on Video on Demand.
5. **Entry level classes:** There were nine 4-month classes for Title II, Title XVI, and service representatives that served 3,359 students. In addition, there were 178 live classes that served another 2,271 students.

Using the data that the Office of Human Resources provided, we identified the following 10 courses as the most frequently taken by Agency employees.

- Service Representative Training (IVT)
- E2 Solutions
- Effective Business Writing
- Title II Claims Representative (IVT)
- Transition to Leadership 401
- Front Line Conference
- SSA Leadership Symposium
- Title XVI Claims Representative (IVT)
- Transition to Leadership 301 (Nuts and Bolts)
- E2 Solutions Document Preparation

¹ We did not verify the training numbers and Agency officials noted that some of the training figures may be incomplete.

² These are SSA developed programmatic lessons that are not available on SSA Learn.

Related Office of the Inspector General Reports

We have issued several reports that discuss the Agency's training efforts.

Report	Date Issued
<i>Social Security Administration Off-site Training Conferences (A-05-10-21035)</i>	May 2010
<i>The Social Security Administration's Hiring and Training of Information Technology Specialists (A-13-09-19082)</i>	March 2010
<i>San Francisco Regional Management Training Forum (A-05-09-29174)</i>	December 2009
<i>The Social Security Administration Field Offices' Training of Staff (A-13-08-18029)</i>	July 2008
<i>Association of Administrative Law Judges' Training Conference Costs (A-12-08-28037)</i>	April 2008
<i>The Social Security Administration's Office of Systems' Training Programs (A-13-05-15031)</i>	October 2005

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Social Security Advisory Board

Overview of the Office of the Inspector General

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is comprised of an Office of Audit (OA), Office of Investigations (OI), Office of the Counsel to the Inspector General (OCIG), Office of External Relations (OER), and Office of Technology and Resource Management (OTRM). To ensure compliance with policies and procedures, internal controls, and professional standards, the OIG also has a comprehensive Professional Responsibility and Quality Assurance program.

Office of Audit

OA conducts financial and performance audits of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) programs and operations and makes recommendations to ensure program objectives are achieved effectively and efficiently. Financial audits assess whether SSA's financial statements fairly present SSA's financial position, results of operations, and cash flow. Performance audits review the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of SSA's programs and operations. OA also conducts short-term management reviews and program evaluations on issues of concern to SSA, Congress, and the general public.

Office of Investigations

OI conducts investigations related to fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement in SSA programs and operations. This includes wrongdoing by applicants, beneficiaries, contractors, third parties, or SSA employees performing their official duties. This office serves as liaison to the Department of Justice on all matters relating to the investigation of SSA programs and personnel. OI also conducts joint investigations with other Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies.

Office of the Counsel to the Inspector General

OCIG provides independent legal advice and counsel to the IG on various matters, including statutes, regulations, legislation, and policy directives. OCIG also advises the IG on investigative procedures and techniques, as well as on legal implications and conclusions to be drawn from audit and investigative material. Also, OCIG administers the Civil Monetary Penalty program.

Office of External Relations

OER manages OIG's external and public affairs programs, and serves as the principal advisor on news releases and in providing information to the various news reporting services. OER develops OIG's media and public information policies, directs OIG's external and public affairs programs, and serves as the primary contact for those seeking information about OIG. OER prepares OIG publications, speeches, and presentations to internal and external organizations, and responds to Congressional correspondence.

Office of Technology and Resource Management

OTRM supports OIG by providing information management and systems security. OTRM also coordinates OIG's budget, procurement, telecommunications, facilities, and human resources. In addition, OTRM is the focal point for OIG's strategic planning function, and the development and monitoring of performance measures. In addition, OTRM receives and assigns for action allegations of criminal and administrative violations of Social Security laws, identifies fugitives receiving benefit payments from SSA, and provides technological assistance to investigations.