

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 21, 2017

Refer To:

To: The Commissioner

From: Acting Inspector General

Subject: Congressional Response Report: The Social Security Administration's Telework Program and Its Effect on Customer Service (A-04-17-50267)

On November 17, 2016, we received a request from the Chairman, House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Social Security, to answer the following questions related to SSA's telework pilot in its field offices (FO), hearing offices, and teleservice centers (TSC) and its effect on customer service.

1. Which specific positions are allowed to participate in the telework pilot, and those that are not allowed?
2. What types of work can teleworking employees perform at their alternate duty locations, and are there any job responsibilities not to be performed while teleworking?
3. How does the telework pilot affect customer service? What management information and metrics does SSA have to measure the impact telework has on customer service?
4. What steps has SSA taken to ensure that telework has not negatively affected the quality, productivity, and performance of customer service related work?
5. What challenges do managers and employees face with telework?

Finally, the Chairman asked us to recommend telework improvements that may enhance SSA's customer service.

I have attached the final audit report my Office of Audit prepared in response to these questions. In response to the final question above, we developed four recommendations that we believe the Agency should implement. As SSA continues its telework program, it should determine:

1. Whether additional customer service or production metrics would assist in measuring how telework affects FOs ability to provide customer service and employee productivity.
2. Whether the amount of time FO staff spend to identify and prepare work to be performed while teleworking is reasonable, and if not, whether it can be reduced.

3. The effect telework has on customer wait times when an FO experiences an unusually high number of visitors.
4. The effect telework has on a hearing office's ability to provide support to an administrative law judge during a hearing.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to your team in the Offices of Operations and Disability Adjudication and Review for their assistance throughout this review.

Please provide within 60 days a corrective action plan that addresses each recommendation. If you have any questions, please call me or have your staff contact Rona Lawson, Assistant Inspector General for Audit, 410-965-9700.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Gale Stallworth Stone". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gale Stallworth Stone

Attachment



Office *of the* Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Congressional Response Report

The Social Security Administration's
Telework Program and Its Effect on
Customer Service

A-04-17-50267 | July 2017

OIG Office of the Inspector General
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

July 12, 2017

The Honorable Sam Johnson
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Social Security
Committee on Ways and Means
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

In a November 17, 2016 letter, you asked that we determine the effect of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) nationwide telework pilot that will eventually allow field office, hearing office, and teleservice center employees to telework 1 day each pay period. You were interested in whether the telework pilot will hinder SSA's ability to provide quality service to the public.

In accordance with your request, we have compiled a list of all positions participating in the telework pilot and the types of work/responsibilities that can(not) be performed at an alternate duty station. We also determined the (1) effect telework has had on customer service; (2) management information and metrics SSA had in place to measure the impact telework has had on customer service; (3) steps SSA had taken to ensure telework had not negatively affected customer-service related work; and (4) challenges management and employees who telework faced. Based on the results of our review, we have recommendations to help ensure SSA sustains high quality customer service at its field offices, teleservice centers, and hearing offices as the Agency continues implementing telework.

To ensure SSA is aware of the information provided to your office, we are forwarding a copy of this report to the Agency. If you have any questions concerning this matter, please call me or have your staff contact Walter Bayer, Congressional and Intragovernmental Liaison, at (202) 358-6319.

Sincerely,



Gale Stallworth Stone
Acting Inspector General

Enclosure

cc:
Nancy A. Berryhill

The Social Security Administration's Telework Program and Its Effect on Customer Service

A-04-17-50267



July 2017

Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To answer specific questions from the Chairman, House of Representatives, Social Security Subcommittee, regarding the Social Security Administration's (SSA) telework program and its effect on customer service.

Background

In November 2013, SSA agreed with the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) to Article 41, *Telework*, of the SSA/AFGE National Agreement. Article 41 established a uniform telework program that permits eligible AFGE bargaining unit employees to perform Agency-assigned work at a management-approved alternate duty station. Article 41 provided employees in SSA field offices (FO) and teleservice centers (TSC) the opportunity to participate in telework. Before implementing this program nationwide, SSA began a pilot program to determine whether it can successfully use telework in its front-line service positions.

SSA's Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR) has hearing offices nationwide where administrative law judges (ALJ) conduct hearings and decide on appealed claims. ODAR's ALJs and staff participated in telework under SSA's Flexiplace program before Article 41 was implemented.

Findings

SSA did not restrict specific FO and TSC job positions from participating in its telework pilot. However, SSA limited the number of FOs, TSCs, and employees that could participate in the pilot. When SSA began the FO telework pilot in December 2013, it restricted telework to 1 day per 2-week pay period. SSA subsequently increased FO telework to 1 day a week. The TSC telework pilot began in September 2015, and employees were eligible to telework 1 day a week. For hearing offices, SSA restricted only the contact representative position from participating in telework. Hearing office staff could telework up to 3 days per week; some decision writers could telework 4 days a week; and ALJs could telework up to 8 days per month, with the expectation of scheduling, on average, 50 hearings per month. Generally, FO, TSC, and hearing office staff could perform most of their duties while teleworking.

As of January 2017,

- 4,526 (16 percent) of the 27,530 FO employees were participating in the telework pilot at 317 (26 percent) of the 1,213 FOs;
- 831 (19 percent) of the 4,298 TSC employees were teleworking at 17 (68 percent) of the 25 TSCs; and
- 5,541 (64 percent) of the 8,725 hearing office employees were teleworking across all 164 hearing offices, National Case Assistance Centers, and National Hearing Centers.

SSA's management information showed that teleworking FOs performed slightly less as well as the non-teleworking FOs while TSC teleworking staff performed slightly better than non-teleworking staff. Finally, as the number of hearing office teleworkers increased, hearing office productivity declined in three of the four metrics ODAR monitored. SSA explained that multiple factors affect productivity, regardless of telework.

SSA managers and staff recognized various telework challenges, and SSA told us it was working to resolve them. SSA needs to establish a business plan that monitors telework productivity to ensure it will timely identify and correct trends that may negatively affect customer service.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AALJ/IFPTE	Association of Administrative Law Judges/International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers
Act	<i>Telework Enhancement Act of 2010</i>
ADS	Alternate Duty Station
AFGE	American Federation of Government Employees
ALJ	Administrative Law Judge
FO	Field Office
FY	Fiscal Year
NTEU	National Treasury Employees Union
OASDI	Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance
ODAR	Office of Disability Adjudication and Review
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
TSC	Teleservice Center

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to answer specific questions from the Chairman, House of Representatives, Social Security Subcommittee, regarding the Social Security Administration's (SSA) telework¹ program and its effect on customer service.

BACKGROUND

Congressional Request

On November 17, 2016, we received a request from the Chairman, House of Representatives, Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Social Security, to answer the following questions related to SSA's telework pilot in its field offices (FO), hearing offices, and teleservice centers (TSC) and its effect on customer service.

1. Which specific positions are allowed to participate in the telework pilot, and those that are not allowed?
2. What types of work can teleworking employees perform at their alternate duty locations, and are there any job responsibilities not to be performed while teleworking?
3. How does the telework pilot affect customer service? What management information and metrics does SSA have to measure the impact telework has on customer service?
4. What steps has SSA taken to ensure that telework has not negatively affected the quality, productivity, and performance of customer service related work?
5. What challenges do managers and employees face with telework?

Finally, the Chairman asked us to recommend telework improvements that may enhance SSA's customer service. See Appendix A for a copy of the Chairman's letter.

¹ Telework is an extension of the workplace that allows employees to work at an alternate duty station (ADS). While teleworking, an employee may work at his/her home or other management-approved ADS.

Telework Agreements

In November 2013, SSA and the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) agreed on Article 41, *Telework*, of the SSA/AFGE National Agreement.² Article 41 and SSA's *Personnel Policy Manual S650_1, Telework*, established a uniform telework program that permits eligible AFGE bargaining unit employees³ to perform Agency-assigned work at a management-approved ADS subject to the availability of portable work. A sidebar⁴ to Article 41 allows FO and TSC employees to participate in telework on a pilot basis. SSA's Office of Operations, which manages FOs and TSCs, began a pilot program to determine whether the Agency may successfully use telework in its front-line service positions. SSA also authorized this pilot for management and supervisory positions (non-bargaining unit employees) in the Office of Operations. In December 2013, a limited number of FO employees began teleworking under the pilot. TSC employees began telework in September 2015, as SSA had to purchase and distribute the telephone technology that would enable TSC staff to service 800-number calls at their ADS.

Since the 1990s, the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review (ODAR) employees and administrative law judges (ALJ) have participated in telework under SSA's Flexiplace program.⁵ Several unions represent hearing office employees based on job position and duties. The Association of Administrative Law Judges/International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (AALJ/IFPTE) represents ALJs. Article 15 of the agreement between SSA and the AALJ/IFPTE covers telework.⁶ The National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) represents most attorneys and certain non-attorney positions. Article 17 of the agreement between SSA and the NTEU covers telework.⁷ AFGE represents most other bargaining unit employees in the hearing offices. Non-bargaining unit employees, such as managers and supervisors, are covered under SSA's *Personnel Policy Manual S650_1, Telework*.⁸ Appendix B discusses our scope and methodology.

² The current *National Agreement Between the American Federation of Government Employees and the Social Security Administration* became effective July 16, 2012.

³ Bargaining unit employees are eligible to join a labor union. The labor union represents the interests of a group of employees during negotiations or bargaining with the management of a company or organization. A bargaining unit consists of employees with similar interest in regards to salary scales, work benefits, and working conditions.

⁴ A sidebar agreement is a second or supplemental agreement entered into by the parties to an existing contract.

⁵ Flexiplace is a voluntary program, which enables an employee to work at an ADS with management approval.

⁶ *The National Agreement Between the Association of Administrative Law Judges (AALJ), International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), AFL-CIO and Social Security Administration's Office of Disability Adjudication and Review*, September 30, 2013.

⁷ *The National Agreement Between the National Treasury Employees Union and Social Security Administration*, June 2, 2014.

⁸ SSA, *Personnel Policy Manual S650_1, Telework*, Section 2.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

SSA did not restrict specific FO and TSC job titles from participating in its telework pilot. However, in accordance with a sidebar agreement to Article 41 negotiated with AFGE, SSA limited the number of FOs, TSCs, and employees that could participate in the pilot. When SSA began the FO pilot in December 2013, it restricted telework to 1 day per 2-week pay period. As FOs received softphones,⁹ SSA increased telework to 1 day a week. The TSC telework pilot began in September 2015, and employees were eligible to telework 1 day a week. For hearing offices, all positions, except contact representative, were eligible for telework. Hearing office support staff could telework up to 3 days per week, while some decision writers could telework 4 days a week,¹⁰ and ALJs were eligible to telework up to 8 days per month, with the expectation that the ALJ will schedule, on average, 50 hearings per month. Generally, FO, TSC, and hearing office staff could perform most of their work duties while teleworking. As of January 2017,

- 4,526 (16 percent) of the 27,530 FO employees were participating in the telework pilot at 317 (26 percent) of the 1,213 FOs;
- 831 (19 percent) of the 4,298 TSC employees were teleworking at 17 (68 percent) of the 25 TSCs; and
- 5,541 (64 percent) of the 8,725 hearing office employees were teleworking across all 164 hearing offices, National Case Assistance Centers, and National Hearing Centers.

For all teleworkers, management retained the right to suspend telework temporarily to ensure an office was adequately staffed, or to conduct training and meetings. When necessary, management may recall teleworkers to their official duty station (teleworkers are required to report to the office within 2 hours of notification).

To determine whether telework affected customer service, SSA compiled and monitored data for various service indicators. For example, SSA measured visitor wait times and appointment calendar availability at FOs; the average number of calls handled per staff member at TSCs; and the average daily production and processing days for hearings at hearing offices.

SSA's management information showed that teleworking FOs did not perform quite as well as the non-teleworking FOs, while TSC teleworking staff performed slightly better than non-teleworking staff. SSA stated its data did not definitively support a conclusion that telework affected public service. For example, SSA explained that before telework, those FOs that were participating in the telework pilot had longer wait times than the other FOs, and this trend continued after telework. SSA emphasized that such factors as FO staffing levels, customer

⁹ Softphone technology makes telephone calls over the Internet using a computer. The softphone consists of a telephone headset and a software-generated, on-screen interactive display that appears and functions like a telephone console. It displays a panel and buttons for interaction with the computer screen.

¹⁰ In accordance with a September 2016 Federal Service Impasse Panel decision (Case No. 16 FSIP), beginning October 3, 2016, decision writers who worked at ODAR's National Case Assistance Centers, National Hearing Centers, and Regional Writing Units were eligible to telework up to 4 days per week.

demographics, and variations in workload volume and complexity affected wait times, regardless of telework. Finally, as the number of hearing office teleworkers increased, hearing office productivity declined in three of the four metrics ODAR monitored. ODAR explained that SSA's elimination of overtime and freezing staff hiring in mid-Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 had the most significant negative impact on FY 2016 productivity. ODAR provided data that showed the total support staff for ALJs declined about 8 percent from FY 2015 to FY 2016. Additionally, ODAR stated its efforts to reduce the number of aged cases during FYs 2016 and 2017 increased average processing times in these years.

SSA managers and staff recognized various telework challenges, and SSA told us it was working to resolve them. SSA needs to establish a business plan that monitors telework productivity to ensure it will timely identify and correct trends that may negatively affect customer service.

FIELD OFFICES

SSA administers its programs and services through a network of approximately 1,200 FOs that directly serve the public in communities throughout the United States and its territories. FOs are SSA's primary point of face-to-face contact with the public. FOs are responsible for various workloads, including processing claims under SSA's Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) programs; issuing original and replacement Social Security cards; and updating beneficiaries' records for a multitude of post-entitlement actions. The public may also conduct business with SSA by telephone with an FO representative. In FYs 2014 through 2016, SSA's FOs serviced, on average, 39.3 million visitors per year.¹¹

Telework Pilot Status

SSA did not restrict any specific FO job positions from participating in the telework pilot.¹² However, in accordance with a sidebar agreement to Article 41 negotiated with AFGE, SSA limited the number of FOs and employees that could participate in the pilot. When SSA began the FO telework pilot in December 2013, it initially restricted telework to 1 day per 2-week pay period. As FOs received softphones, SSA increased telework to 1 day a week for eligible employees.¹³ In December 2013, the telework pilot included only 72 (6 percent) of 1,264 FOs and 377 (1 percent) of 26,943 FO employees. Generally, when an FO initially entered the pilot, SSA limited the number of teleworkers to 25 percent of the telework-eligible employees. After an FO was working at the 25-percent level, SSA increased its participation rate to 50 percent and ultimately to 100 percent.

¹¹ Data obtained from SSA's Customer Service Record Performance Reports for FOs.

¹² See Appendix C for FO positions that teleworked.

¹³ SSA's *Personnel Policy Manual*, S650_1, Section 5.3.2, and the union agreements established the conditions for an employee to be eligible to telework. Those conditions include that the employee not be in a probationary period, be on sick leave restriction, be under a performance assistance or opportunity to perform successfully plan, or have been disciplined within the preceding 12 months for misconduct that has a nexus to telework.

As of December 31, 2016, 317 (26 percent) of the 1,213 FOs and 3,264 (12 percent) of the 27,766 FO employees were participating in the telework pilot. See Appendix D for a list of FOs, by region, that participated in the telework pilot. In January 2017, after SSA expanded the telework pilot to the 50-percent participation rate, the number of FO teleworkers increased to 4,526. The number of FOs did not increase. Table 1 details the number of FOs and employees that participated in the pilot in December 2016 and January 2017.

Table 1: FO Teleworkers—December 2016 and January 2017

FO Telework Participation Rate	December 2016		January 2017		Percent Increase in FO Teleworkers
	Number of FOs	Number of Teleworkers	Number of FOs	Number of Teleworkers	
100 Percent	54	862	54	915	6.1
25 to 50 Percent	263	2,402	263	3,611	50.3
Total	317	3,264	317	4,526	38.7

Source: SSA's Office of Operations.

The pilot included expansion dates for April and July 2017. The two expansions will only increase the percentage of employees eligible for telework at FOs already in the telework pilot. The April 2017 expansion increased those FOs at 50-percent participation to 75 percent. At the end of April 2017, 5,000 (18 percent) of the 27,244 FO employees teleworked at 317 FOs. In July 2017, SSA plans to increase these FOs to the 100-percent participation rate. After the July 2017 expansion, SSA expects that up to 6,755 FO employees will be eligible to telework—25 percent of its FO employees. The pilot calls for a 6-month evaluation period after the expansion.

Telework Duties

Except for servicing unscheduled walk-in visitors, teleworking FO employees can perform most job responsibilities, including processing new claims and taking post-entitlement actions on existing claims, at their ADS. However to protect personally identifiable information, SSA has configured teleworkers' laptops to prevent them from printing documents at an ADS. As such, teleworkers cannot mail correspondence to customers. Additionally, using softphone technology most FO teleworkers can perform telephone functions as if they are working in the FO, including answering calls received at the FO. As of December 31, 2016, SSA had issued softphones to 1,755 (54 percent) of the 3,264 teleworkers at 53 FOs. In May 2017, SSA stated it had issued softphones to all FO teleworkers.

SSA provides a laptop computer to all employees.¹⁴ At their ADS, employees must, at their own expense, maintain a broadband connection or high-speed Internet connection, provide all needed furniture, and keep a safe ADS environment. The employee must also have access to SSA's

¹⁴ SSA began the Single Device Strategy program in June 2014. Under this program, SSA plans to issue a single laptop computer to each Agency employee as his/her primary workstation and eliminate desktop computers.

virtual private network¹⁵ and be accessible by telephone during working hours. Before employees begin telework, they must complete Agency training on telework policy, protecting personally identifiable information, equipment set up, and connecting to the SSA network; and sign a written acknowledgment of their telework rights and responsibilities. Also, SSA's local and national technical support is available for teleworkers.

Measuring and Ensuring Customer Service

SSA told us it designed the FO telework pilot to provide employees telework opportunities while meeting its customer service responsibilities. To minimize the impact telework had on customer service, SSA allowed a gradual but steady increase in the number of FOs and employees eligible for telework. Furthermore, the deliberate but controlled participation in the pilot helped SSA ensure its technology could support telework and handle a range of workloads. As SSA determined its technology met both conditions, it gradually increased telework participation in a limited number of sites. For all teleworkers, management retained the right to temporarily suspend telework to ensure an office was adequately staffed or conduct training and meetings. Finally, when necessary, management may recall teleworkers to their official duty station (teleworkers are required to report to the office within 2 hours of notification).

SSA had management information to measure productivity and customer service across all FOs. To determine whether telework affected customer service, SSA compiled and monitored data on visitor wait times, appointment calendar availability, telephone call answer rates, and telephone call busy rates. SSA's data for the first and second quarters of FYs 2016 and 2017, which compared these service indicators to teleworking and non-teleworking FOs, showed that teleworking offices did not perform as well in all four metrics as non-teleworking offices. For example, through the first 2 quarters of FYs 2016 and 2017, at teleworking FOs, visitor wait times were 3:50 and 3:18 minutes longer, respectively. Moreover, for the same periods, busy rates at teleworking FOs were 1.5 and 2.1 percent higher. Table 2 compares the customer service metrics for teleworking to non-teleworking FOs for the first and second quarters of FYs 2016 and 2017.

¹⁵ A virtual private network uses the Internet to provide remote users secure access to their organization's network.

Table 2: FO Customer Service Metrics Comparing First and Second Quarters of FYs 2016 and 2017

Type of FO	Wait Times (minutes)	Appointment Calendar Availability	Telephone Answer Rates	Telephone Busy Rates
FY 2016 (First and Second Quarters)				
Teleworking FOs	31:31	54.2%	78.3%	8.7%
Non-Teleworking FOs	27:41	58.8%	81.2%	7.2%
Difference	3:50	4.6%	2.9%	1.5%
FY 2017 (First and Second Quarters)				
Teleworking FOs	30:40	49.5%	74.8%	9.9%
Non-Teleworking FOs	27:22	54.8%	78.9%	7.8%
Difference	3:18	5.3%	4.1%	2.1%

Source: SSA's Office of Operations.

SSA stated its data did not definitively support a conclusion that telework affected public service. For example, SSA explained that FOs that were participating in the telework pilot had longer wait times than the other FOs before the pilot, and this trend continued after it implemented telework. SSA also emphasized that multiple factors, such as FO staffing levels, customer demographics, and variations in workload volume and complexity, affect wait times and other service metrics regardless of telework. SSA stated that, because of these factors and numerous variations in FO operations, it had not established a national wait time goal for FOs.

SSA emphasized that management continuously communicated the importance of balancing all work and providing world-class service. Further, management understood that ensuring and improving customer service presented a multitude of challenges. As such, it is continuously searching for ways to improve FO efficiencies, including telework.

Telework Challenges and Benefits

Challenges

SSA cited managers and employees learning to work with each other remotely as a challenge. SSA's efforts to minimize this challenge included conducting periodic teleconferences with FO managers to share information and best practices as well as answer questions. Additionally, SSA created the Telework Resource Center, an Intranet site that provides information and reference materials for managers, employees, and information technology staff participating in the pilot. Officials from the National Council of Social Security Management Associations¹⁶ told us about several challenges FO managers have experienced with telework.

¹⁶ The National Council of Social Security Management Associations is a membership organization for over 3,400 SSA management positions at FOs and TSCs nationwide.

- Time staff spends in the FO preparing for, and returning from, a telework day. To protect sensitive data, SSA prohibits staff from removing paper documents from an FO. As such, staff may spend 1 or 2 hours in the FO scanning documents to prepare for a telework day. Additionally, because SSA configured teleworkers' laptop computers not to print at offsite locations, teleworkers must print and mail documents when they return to the FO.

SSA explained that, in 2015, it implemented WorkTrack, which controls non-automated paperwork the office receives in-person or via mail and fax. WorkTrack reduces the reliance on paper documents and makes work items electronically portable. SSA also explained it requires that FOs scan all documents it will not process in 3 business days into WorkTrack, regardless of telework. As such, SSA had no basis for estimating how long it will take to scan documents related to telework. Finally, SSA stated the WorkTrack project team was working on methods of reducing the time staff spends scanning documents.

SSA agreed it experienced some difficulties with teleworkers printing from the ADS to the FO. For example, some documents were mixed with others, while other documents may have been discarded since the teleworker was unable to pick the material up until the next day. However, SSA told us that FOs were working to improve the process. For example, some teleworking FOs had designated a specific printer for telework use. Other FOs initiated a "printer buddies" approach by pairing a teleworking employee with an onsite employee to assist in collecting documents for their "buddy." Finally, one region developed a tool that allowed users to send documents to the print queue while they were teleworking and print them when they returned to the office. SSA stated it had offered the print tool to all its FOs, and those FOs that used it found it helpful.

- Staff not available to work customer service windows during peak volumes of walk-in visitor traffic or other face-to-face service needs. For example, an FO with 50 staff, all teleworking 1 day a week, would have 10 staff (20 percent) teleworking every day from Monday through Friday.¹⁷ SSA stated it had no data to support this situation.

SSA explained while 54 offices offered telework to 100 percent of eligible staff, only 2 offices were at 100-percent participation. SSA also stated that neither of these offices had expressed concerns related to staff coverage or requested to reduce any aspect of participation or frequency of telework. Both staff and management supported telework and understood that public service remains a priority. As such, when necessary, managers have occasionally suspended telework.

- Staff not available for in-office group training. FOs may have to conduct training over several days to ensure all employees receive the training. SSA stated that multiple training offerings are not unique to telework, as training often occurs over several days because of employee availability. Managers can use such technology as Web-based meetings and

¹⁷ The example assumes the number of teleworkers is allocated equally each day throughout the workweek.

conference lines to conduct most training. Finally, managers can also suspend or cancel telework when necessary.

- Staff cannot answer customer calls placed to the FO. SSA stated, in May 2017, it had issued softphones to all FO teleworkers. Softphones enable employees to make and receive calls from an Agency-issued telephone instead of relying on a personal telephone and eliminating the need for an Agency-issued, long-distance calling card. SSA stated it plans to continue pursuing options and technology to enhance the telework experience for both its customers and employees.

Benefits

SSA recognizes that the *Telework Enhancement Act of 2010* (Act) was designed to ensure that all Federal agencies use telework to the extent possible to reduce commuting costs, reduce environmental impact, lower real estate costs, ensure continuity of operations during emergencies, and improve work-life balance. Under the Act, SSA is required to develop a comprehensive, Agency-wide telework policy and advise all current and new employees concerning their telework eligibility. SSA's ability to offer telework allows it to comply with the goals of the Act, be a model employer, and remain competitive in attracting and retaining talent. SSA also cited improved employee job satisfaction and morale as a benefit of telework. SSA further explained that the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey¹⁸ score for the Office of Operations' work-life balance category showed an improvement from FYs 2015 to 2016. SSA's Office of Operations partly attributed the improvement to telework. Finally, the Office of Operations conducted telework surveys in May 2014, February 2015, and February 2016. The latest, which received 1,684 responses¹⁹ during the period January 21 through February 9, 2016 summarized the employee responses, as follows:

- 68 percent completed more work when teleworking,
- 78 percent feel more satisfied with their jobs since the implementation of telework,
- 90 percent indicated no difference in communication with a supervisor when needed, and
- 67 percent indicated no problems accessing SSA's systems.

TELESERVICE CENTERS

SSA's 25 TSCs are the primary points of contact for individuals who call its national 800-number network. SSA's 800-number system routes callers to various TSCs based on call volume and time of day. TSC staff answers calls Monday through Friday, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. local times. TSCs provide various types of services including answering questions on how SSA

¹⁸ The annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey measures employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions characterizing successful organizations are present in their agencies. The results provide valuable insight into the challenges agency leaders face in ensuring the Government has an effective civilian workforce.

¹⁹ The Office of Operations survey included both FO and TSC teleworkers.

computes OASDI and SSI benefits and the eligibility requirements for these programs. While speaking with a caller, TSC staff can process such actions as changing an address, updating direct deposit bank account information, and issuing a benefits letter. In FYs 2014 through 2016, TSCs received, on average, about 76.9 million calls per year.²⁰

Telework Pilot Status

In September 2015, SSA began its TSC telework pilot that planned for 1,000 TSC participants. Initially, the pilot included 9 (32 percent) of 28 TSCs and 123 (2.7 percent) of the 4,635 TSC employees. SSA authorized TSC employees to telework 1 day per week. SSA did not restrict any specific TSC job positions from participating in its telework pilot. The TSC telework expansion began in October 2016. As of January 2017, 17 (68 percent) of the 25²¹ TSCs and 831 (19 percent) of the 4,298 TSC employees were teleworking under the pilot. SSA reached its planned pilot participation rate of 1,000 TSC teleworkers. Specifically, as of March 2017, 19 (76 percent) of the 25 TSCs and 1,000 (23 percent) of the 4,298 TSC employees were teleworking under the pilot. See Appendix E for a list of TSCs by SSA region that were participating in the telework pilot as of March 2017.

Telework Duties

Teleworking TSC employees can perform all job responsibilities at their ADS. The primary job responsibility for TSC employees is to answer and service calls to SSA's 800-number system. See Appendix F for a list of TSC positions that participated in the telework pilot. Similar to the FO employees, SSA provides TSC teleworkers a laptop computer and accompanying peripherals. However, SSA also provides TSC teleworkers with a telephone, headset, and Internet router. As such, TSC teleworkers connected to their ADS Intranet service can access the 800-number network and answer calls.

Measuring and Ensuring Customer Service

To determine whether telework affected TSCs' customer service, SSA compiled and monitored data for average calls handled per staff, average call handle time, and hours logged into the 800-number system per day. SSA's data compared these service indicators for TSC teleworkers to non-teleworkers for the first and second quarters of FYs 2016 and 2017. For these periods, SSA's data showed that TSC teleworkers performed better than non-teleworkers. For example, through the first 6 months of FYs 2016 and 2017, teleworkers handled an average of 5 and 3.9 more calls per day, respectively; and had average call handle times that were 31 and 17 seconds shorter during the same comparison periods (see Table 3).

²⁰ Data obtained from SSA's Customer Service Record Performance Reports for TSCs.

²¹ SSA closed three TSCs effective October 1, 2016. The TSCs were located in Indianapolis, Indiana; East Brunswick, New Jersey; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Table 3: TSC Customer Service Metrics Comparing First and Second Quarters of FYs 2016 and 2017

TSC Employee	Average Number of Calls Handled by Employees Daily	Average Call Handle Time (Minutes)	Average Length of Time Employee Logged into System (Hours per Day)
FY 2016 (First and Second Quarters)			
Teleworker	37.5	7:55	6.1
Non-Teleworker	32.5	8:26	5.8
Difference	5.0	0:31	0.3
FY 2017 (First and Second Quarters)			
Teleworker	39.4	8:27	6.6
Non-Teleworker	35.5	8:44	6.2
Difference	3.9	0:17	0.4

Source: SSA's Office of Operations.

Note: When TSC employees are not answering and servicing calls to SSA's 800-number system, SSA requires them to log off the 800-number system. During this time, SSA requires them to perform such tasks as training, meeting with management, and reviewing updated policies and procedures.

Telework Challenges and Benefits

SSA stated that, because TSC employees do not have face-to-face interaction with SSA customers, the challenges TSC managers encounter with telework are fewer than those of FO managers. Specifically, and most importantly, for TSC managers, telework does not create a situation where staff is teleworking and unavailable to provide customer service during peak times of walk-in visitors. Finally, SSA explained it found the benefits from TSC telework were similar to those for FO teleworkers.

HEARING OFFICES

ODAR administers the Agency's hearings and appeals process for denied OASDI and SSI claims. ODAR has 164 hearing offices and 5 National Hearing Centers²² nationwide where ALJs conduct hearings and decide on appealed claims. Additionally, staff at the National and Regional Case Assistance Centers and Decision Writing Units nationwide support the hearing process.

Telework Status

In February 2015, 2,592 (30 percent) of the 8,752 hearing office employees were teleworking throughout all 164 hearing offices, National Case Assistance Centers, and National Hearing

²² SSA created National Hearing Centers as part of its strategy to address the historic hearings backlog and reduce case processing time by increasing adjudicatory capacity and efficiency with a focus on an electronic hearings process.

Centers. Almost 2 years later, in January 2017, 5,541 (64 percent) of the 8,725 hearing office, National Case Assistance Centers, and National Hearing Centers staff teleworked (see Table 4).

**Table 4: Change in Hearing Offices and Teleworkers
(February 2015 Through January 2017)**

February 2015		January 2017		Increase in Percent of Hearing Office Teleworkers
Number of Hearing Offices	Number of Teleworkers	Number of Hearing Offices	Number of Teleworkers	
164	2,592	164	5,541	113.8%

Source: SSA's Office of Disability Adjudication and Review.

Note: Data include the number of teleworkers with the National Case Assistance Centers and National Hearing Centers—123 teleworkers in February 2015 and 561 in January 2017.

ALJs were eligible to telework up to 8 days per month, with the expectation of scheduling, on average, 50 hearings per month, and may telework additional days with approval from the hearing office's Chief ALJ. In October 2015, hearing office managers became eligible to telework up to 2 days per week. Most hearing office employees were eligible to telework up to 3 days per week. However, beginning October 31, 2016, SSA authorized employees in decision writer²³ positions who worked at ODAR's National Case Assistance Centers, National Hearing Centers, and Regional Writing Units to telework up to 4 days per week. Additionally, beginning in October 2017, up to two eligible hearing office employees (covered by the NTEU agreement) may telework up to 4 days per week.²⁴

Telework Duties

ODAR officials explained, in most situations, an ODAR employee equipped with an SSA laptop and virtual private network Internet connection can complete any electronic (portable) work while teleworking. Duties that involve hearings or require face-to-face interaction with the public or other employees cannot be performed during telework. Further, work that involves paper records (non-portable), such as reviewing and writing paper cases, scanning or printing documentation, and mailing notices, cannot be performed during telework. Finally, duties that require SSA's telephone system cannot be completed during telework unless the employee has a softphone. ODAR stated that it plans to issue softphones to all teleworking employees by the end of FY 2018. As of December 31, 2016, 1,650 (30 percent) of the 5,541 hearing office employees at 49 hearing offices had softphones. By the end of April 2017, 6,627 (79 percent) of the 8,394 hearing office, National Case Assistance Center, and National Hearing Center employees had softphones. See Appendix G for a list of hearing office positions that telework.

²³ Decisions writers are generally attorneys who draft hearing decisions at the direction of an ALJ.

²⁴ Sidebar to Article 17 Telework of *The National Agreement Between the National Treasury Employees Union (NTEU) and Social Security Administration (SSA)*, June 2, 2014.

Measuring and Ensuring Customer Service

ODAR stated it did not have specific metrics that differentiated work performed during telework versus that performed at the hearing office. ODAR further explained it had one management information system that tracked an employee's work and performance and one that tracks the number of hours an individual teleworks. Because the two management information systems did not interface, ODAR did not have information that matched daily work and performance data to telework. ODAR stated it was exploring ways of automating the reporting feature to ensure it obtains complete and current information for telework participation. Finally, ODAR emphasized that it had specific goals to measure hearing office productivity, regardless of whether an employee is teleworking or in the office.

In February 2015, 2,592 (30 percent) of the 8,752 hearing office employees were teleworking throughout all 164 hearing offices, National Case Assistance Centers, and National Hearing Centers. In October 2015, ODAR expanded telework, and by September 2016, 5,133²⁵ hearing office employees were teleworking. In September 2016, ODAR completed a review of telework and hearing office productivity. The review compared hearing office productivity in FYs 2015 and 2016 and measured average daily production for hearings conducted, cases decided, cases pulled, and the average days to complete a hearing as number of telework eligible employees increased. ODAR's study found that, as the number of hearing office teleworkers increased, hearing office productivity declined in three of the four metrics it studied (see Table 5).

Table 5: Comparison of Hearing Office Teleworker Productivity (FYs 2015 and 2016)

FY	Number of Hearing Office Teleworkers	Average Daily Production			Average Processing Days
		Cases Pulled	Cases Decided	Hearings Held	Hearings
2015	3,236	0.88	2.10	1.79	480
2016	5,133	0.91	1.90	1.68	543
Difference		0.03	0.20	0.11	63

Source: SSA's Office of Disability Adjudication and Review.

Note 1: The difference in green indicates the production metric improved from FY 2015 to FY 2016, while differences in red indicate the metrics declined from FY 2015 to FY 2016.

Note 2: The number of hearing office teleworkers is as of the end of the FYs and includes teleworkers from the National Case Assistance Centers and National Hearing Centers—171 in FY 2015 and 578 in FY 2016.

Additionally, ODAR provided data that compared these metrics for the first and second quarters of FYs 2016 and 2017. ODAR's data again showed, as the number of hearing office teleworkers increased, productivity declined in three of the four metrics—the hearings metric improved in the second quarter of FY 2017 (see Table 6).

²⁵ Because of a systems error, ODAR estimated the number of teleworkers as of September 30, 2016.

Table 6: Comparison of Hearing Office Teleworker Productivity for the First and Second Quarters of FYs 2016 and 2017

FY	Number of Hearing Office Teleworkers	Average Daily Production			Average Processing Days
		Cases Pulled	Cases Decided	Hearings	Hearings
First Quarter					
2016	4,070	1.02	1.84	1.68	505
2017	5,334	0.74	1.67	1.62	564
Difference	1,264	0.28	0.17	0.06	59
Second Quarter					
2016	4,681	1.00	1.91	1.67	518
2017	5,880	0.83	1.87	1.69	583
Difference	1,199	0.17	0.04	0.02	65

Source: SSA's Office of Disability Adjudication and Review.

Note: The difference in green indicates the production metric improved from FY 2016 to FY 2017, while differences in red indicate the metrics declined from FY 2016 to FY 2017.

According to ODAR, SSA's elimination of overtime and freezing staff hiring in mid-FY 2016 had the most significant negative impact on FY 2016 productivity. ODAR provided data that showed the total support staff for ALJs declined from FY 2015 to FY 2016 by about 8 percent, from 4.47 to 4.12, and overtime declined by approximately 25 percent, from about 368,000 to 276,000 hours. Additionally, ODAR stated its efforts to reduce the number of aged cases²⁶ during FYs 2016 and 2017 increased average processing times in these years. ODAR also stated ALJ current productivity, adjusted for the decision-writing backlog, was comparable to that of FY 2015. Furthermore, ODAR explained, from January through May of FY 2017 it reduced the number of claimants waiting for a hearing decision (an important customer service indicator), and expects this trend to continue.

Telework Challenges and Benefits

ODAR stated that some hearing office managers found it challenging to manage virtual teams. Additionally, managers and staff found it challenging to have adequate staff available in the hearing office to support ongoing hearings and other office duties. Those duties include assisting ALJs with issues that arise during a hearing, assisting with the hearing record, scanning documents into the electronic file, and answering calls in the hearing office.

ODAR stated it believed telework had improved employee morale. ODAR explained its Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey score for the work-life balance category showed an improvement from FYs 2015 to 2016. Specifically, ODAR stated that the survey showed the score improved

²⁶ SSA's FY 2016 and 2017 Agency Priority Goals established that, in FY 2016, ODAR would decide 99 percent of appeals cases that began the FY at 430 days old or older (about 263,000 cases) and, in FY 2017, decide 97 percent of cases that began the FY at 430 days old or older.

7.2 percent—from 79.6 percent in FY 2015 to 86.8 percent in FY 2016. Additionally, a 2016 SSA survey of ODAR teleworkers found that 82.3 percent of teleworkers were more satisfied since they began telework, while 15.3 percent felt the same, and only 2.3 percent were less satisfied. Finally, ODAR stated it had anecdotal information from employees stating they were more productive teleworking because of fewer interruptions.

OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE SSA’S TELEWORK PROGRAM

In his request, the Chairman also asked us to recommend telework improvements that may enhance SSA’s customer service. As SSA continues its telework program, SSA needs to ensure it monitors the impact telework has on customer service and make decisions accordingly. Specifically, SSA should develop a business plan that establishes customer service and production metrics. SSA should also ensure managers monitor these metrics to determine whether telework is negatively affecting customer service or production and take appropriate and timely corrective action.²⁷

In developing its business plan, SSA should specifically determine the following.

1. Whether additional customer service or production metrics would assist in measuring how telework affects FOs ability to provide customer service and employee productivity.
2. Whether the amount of time FO staff spend to identify and prepare work to be performed while teleworking is reasonable, and if not, whether it can be reduced.
3. The effect telework has on customer wait times when an FO experiences an unusually high number of visitors.
4. The effect telework has on a hearing office’s ability to provide support to an ALJ during a hearing.



Rona Lawson
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

²⁷ We provided the report to SSA under separate cover. See SSA’s comments at Appendix H.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – LETTER FROM CONGRESS

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

November 17, 2016

The Honorable Gale Stallworth Stone
Acting Inspector General
Social Security Administration
6401 Security Boulevard
Altmeyer Building, Suite 300
Baltimore, MD 21235

Dear Ms. Stone:

I want to better understand the effect of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) nationwide telework pilot and request your office conduct a review. As you know, this pilot will eventually allow employees at teleservice centers, hearing offices, and field offices to telework one day each pay period. The American people want, need, and rightfully expect the SSA to provide quality customer service and it is important that this pilot does not hinder the agency's ability to do so.

Specifically, I am interested in knowing the answers to the following:

1. Please provide a list of all specific positions that will be allowed to participate in this pilot and note if any positions are excluded.
2. What types of work can teleworking employees perform at their alternate duty location? For each position that can telework, are any job responsibilities unable to be performed off site?
3. How does the pilot affect customer service? What management information and metrics does the SSA have in place to measure the impact telework has on customer service?
4. What steps has the SSA taken to ensure that telework has not negatively affected the quality, productivity, and performance of customer service related work?
5. What challenges do managers and employees face with telework?
6. What recommendations related to telework does your office have for the SSA to enhance customer service?

Appendix B – SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

We focused solely on telework at the Social Security Administration's (SSA) field offices (FO), teleservice centers (TSC), and hearing offices. To accomplish our objectives, we talked with SSA officials in the Offices of Operations and Disability Adjudication and Review and reviewed the documents and data these Offices provided regarding implementation, monitoring, and status of the telework program.

Additionally, we:

- Reviewed applicable sections of the union agreements related to telework.
 - American Federation of Government Employees
 - National Treasury Employees Union
 - Administrative Law Judges, International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers
- Reviewed SSA's *Personnel Policy Manual*, S650_1, *Telework*, and telework Websites.
- Interviewed SSA personnel in Headquarters and FOs to determine how telework affects customer service and productivity at FOs and TSCs.
- Interviewed officials in the National Council of Social Security Management Associations to obtain its understanding of how telework affects customer service and productivity at FOs and TSCs.
- Interviewed officials in the Office of Disability Adjudication and Review to obtain an understanding of how telework affects customer service and productivity at hearing offices.

Our review of internal controls was limited to gaining an understanding of the metrics SSA used to monitor customer service and productivity for the FOs and TSCs that participated in the telework pilot and for hearing offices that teleworked. We determined the data used for our audit were sufficiently reliable to meet our objective. We conducted our work from December 2016 through May 2017 in Atlanta, Georgia. The SSA entities audited were the Offices of Operations and Disability Adjudication and Review.

We conducted our review in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Appendix C – FIELD OFFICE POSITIONS ELIGIBLE FOR TELEWORK

The Social Security Administration (SSA) did not exclude any field office position from participation in its telework pilot. Table C–1 lists each field office position.

Table C–1: SSA Field Office Positions Eligible to Participate in the Telework Pilot

SSA Field Office Position
Administrative Assistant
Assistant District Manager
Claims Specialist
Claims Technical Expert
Customer Service Representative
District Manager
Management Support Specialist
Operations Supervisor

Source: SSA's Office of Operations.

Appendix D– FIELD OFFICES IN TELEWORK PILOT

As of January 2017, the Social Security Administration (SSA) had 317 (26 percent) of 1,213 field offices participating in its telework pilot. Table D–1 lists each field office, by region and State, participating in SSA’s telework pilot.

Table D–1: SSA Field Offices in Telework Pilot, by Region (As of January 2017)

SSA Field Offices in Telework Pilot					
Atlanta Region					
Alabama		Georgia (continued)		North Carolina (continued)	
1	Bessemer	6	Gwinnett	3	Lumberton
2	Birmingham	7	Toccoa	4	Statesville
3	Dothan	8	Winder	5	Whiteville
4	Montgomery	Kentucky		South Carolina	
Florida		1	Ashland	1	Aiken
1	Belle Grade	2	Bowling Green	2	Anderson
2	Clearwater	3	Campbellsville	3	Charleston
3	Dade City	4	Florence	4	Spartanburg
4	Jacksonville (South)	5	Hopkinsville	5	Walterboro
5	Leesburg	6	Louisville	Tennessee	
6	Miami (South)	7	Richmond	1	Cookeville
7	Pensacola	Mississippi		2	Jackson
8	Port Charlotte	1	Forest	3	Knoxville
Georgia		2	Hattiesburg	4	Memphis
1	Albany	3	Jackson	5	Murfreesboro
2	Athens	4	Tupelo	6	Nashville
3	Augusta	North Carolina		7	Paris
4	Covington	1	Durham		
5	Gainesville	2	Gastonia		
Boston Region					
Connecticut		Maine		Massachusetts (continued)	
1	Bridgeport	1	Auburn	4	Hanover
2	East Hartford	2	Bangor	5	Holyoke
3	Meriden	3	Portland	6	Hyannis
4	New Britain	4	Saco	7	Lowell
5	Stamford	Massachusetts		8	Malden
6	Waterbury	1	Brockton	9	New Bedford
7	Willmantic	2	Dorchester	10	Norwood
		3	Framingham	11	Quincy

SSA Field Offices in Telework Pilot					
Boston Region (continued)					
Massachusetts (continued)		New Hampshire		Rhode Island (continued)	
12	Salem	1	Concord	2	Warwick
13	Springfield	2	Keene	3	Woonsocket
14	Taunton	3	Manchester	Vermont	
15	Worcester	Rhode Island		1	Burlington
		1	Providence	2	Montpelier
Chicago Region					
Indiana		Michigan		Ohio	
1	Anderson	1	Detroit/7 Mile	1	Cincinnati
2	Hammond	2	Detroit (Northwest)	2	Cleveland
3	Kokomo	3	Grand Rapids	3	Cleveland (Northwest)
4	Vincennes	4	Holland	4	Dayton (West)
Illinois		5	Inkster	5	Findlay
1	Aurora	6	Livonia	6	Lancaster
2	Champaign	7	North Flint	7	Steubenville
3	Chicago (Near Southwest)	8	Roseville	Wisconsin	
4	Chicago (South)	9	Traverse City	1	Appleton
5	Chicago (West)	Minnesota		2	Fond Du Lac
6	Joliet	1	Fairmont	3	La Crosse
7	Springfield	2	Mankato	4	Oshkosh
8	Woodstock				
Dallas Region					
Arkansas		Louisiana (continued)		Texas	
1	El Dorado	6	New Orleans (West)	1	Alice
2	Fort Smith	7	Shreveport	2	Austin
3	Jonesboro	New Mexico		3	Brenham
4	Little Rock	1	Albuquerque	4	Brownsville
5	Pine Bluff	2	Las Cruces	5	Conroe
6	Russellville	3	Roswell	6	Corpus Christi
7	Searcy	Oklahoma		7	Dallas (North)
Louisiana		1	Clinton	8	Dallas/Oak Cliff
1	Baton Rouge	2	Enid	9	El Paso
2	Houma	3	Lawton	10	Houston (Southeast)
3	Kenner	4	Muskogee	11	Laredo
4	Lafayette	5	Oklahoma City	12	Lubbock
5	New Orleans	6	Tulsa	13	McAllen

SSA Field Offices in Telework Pilot					
Dallas Region (continued)					
Texas (continued)		Texas (continued)		Texas (continued)	
14	Odessa	17	San Antonio (Northwest)	20	Temple
15	San Angelo	18	San Antonio (South)	21	Waco
16	San Antonio (Central)	19	Sherman	22	Wichita Falls
Denver Region					
Colorado		Montana		Utah	
1	Aurora	1	Billings	1	Provo
2	Fort Collins	2	Missoula	2	Salt Lake City
3	Grand Junction	South Dakota		3	South Jordan
4	Lakewood	1	Rapid City	Wyoming	
				1	Cheyenne
Kansas City Region					
Iowa		Kansas		Missouri (continued)	
1	Ames	1	Kansas City	6	Lebanon
2	Burlington	2	Lawrence	7	Sedalia
3	Cedar Rapids	3	Salina	8	Springfield
4	Coralville	4	Topeka	9	St. Louis/Central West End
5	Council Bluffs	5	Wichita	10	St. Louis (Southwest)
6	Davenport	Missouri		Nebraska	
7	Des Moines	1	Cape Girardeau	1	Lincoln
8	Fort Dodge	2	Chillicothe	2	North Platte
9	Mason City	3	Columbia		
10	Ottumwa	4	Joplin		
11	Waterloo	5	Kansas City/Gateway		
New York Region					
New Jersey		New York (continued)		New York (continued)	
1	Bridgeton	4	Brooklyn/Flatbush	14	New York (Downtown)
2	Cherry Hill	5	Brooklyn/New Utrecht	15	New York (Midtown)
3	Egg Harbor	6	East Bronx	16	Ridge Road
4	Hackensack	7	Flushing	17	Rochester
5	Jersey City	8	Freeport	18	Schenectady
6	Trenton	9	Greece	19	Syracuse
New York		10	Jamaica	20	West Farms
1	Albany	11	Laconia Avenue	21	West Nyack
2	Boro Hall	12	Mineola	22	White Plains
3	Brooklyn/Bushwick	13	Newburgh		
New York Region (continued)					
Puerto Rico		Puerto Rico (continued)		Puerto Rico (continued)	

SSA Field Offices in Telework Pilot					
1	Aguadilla	4	Caguas	7	Ponce
2	Arecibo	5	Guayama	8	San Juan
3	Bayamon	6	Hato Tejas		
Philadelphia Region					
District of Columbia		Pennsylvania		Virginia (continued)	
1	Washington/M Street	1	Ambridge	2	Lynchburg
Delaware		2	Bethlehem	3	Petersburg
1	Wilmington	3	Harrisburg	4	Richmond (Downtown)
Maryland		4	Philadelphia/University City	West Virginia	
1	Annapolis	5	Upper Darby	1	Morgantown
2	Baltimore/Wabash	Virginia			
3	Silver Spring	1	Alexandria		
San Francisco Region					
Arizona		California (continued)		California (continued)	
1	Apache Junctions	12	Hanford	29	San Bernardino
2	Glendale	13	Hayward	30	San Diego
3	Phoenix (North)	14	Huntington Park	31	San Francisco Mission
4	Prescott	15	Lancaster	32	San Jose (South)
5	Tucson (South)	16	Los Angeles (Downtown)	33	San Mateo
California		17	Los Angeles/Westwood	34	Santa Clarita
1	Anaheim	18	Madera	35	Santa Cruz
2	Bakersfield	19	Merced	36	Torrance
3	Bakersfield/East Hills	20	Moreno Valley	37	Victorville
4	El Cajon	21	Oakland	38	Wilshire Center
5	Fountain Valley	22	Ontario	Hawaii	
6	Fresno	23	Palm Springs	1	Kapolei
7	Fresno (Southeast)	24	Porterville	2	Wailuku
8	Fresno (West)	25	Redding	Nevada	
9	Gilroy	26	Roseville	1	Las Vegas
10	Glendale	27	Sacramento	2	Las Vegas (North)
11	Glendora	28	Sacramento (South)		

SSA Field Offices in Telework Pilot					
Seattle Region					
Idaho		Oregon (continued)		Washington (continued)	
1	Boise	5	Portland (Metro)	5	Longview
2	Pocatello	6	Salem	6	Lynnwood
Oregon		Washington		7	Seattle (Metro)
1	Astoria	1	Bellevue	8	Puyallup
2	Eugene	2	Bellingham	9	Seattle (Metro)
3	Medford	3	Everett	10	Spokane
4	Portland (East)	4	Kent	11	Tacoma

Source: SSA's Office of Operations.

Appendix E – TELESERVICE CENTERS IN TELEWORK PILOT

Teleservice center (TSC) expansion began in October 2016, and SSA reached its planned pilot participation rate of 1,000 TSC teleworkers. Specifically, as of March 2017, 19 (76 percent) of the 25 TSCs and 1,000 (23 percent) of the 4,298 TSC employees were teleworking under the pilot, as shown in Table E-1.

**Table E-1: Number of SSA Staff Teleworking in TSCs, by Region
(As of March 2017)**

Region	TSC Location	Teleworkers
Atlanta	Birmingham, Alabama	110
	Fort Lauderdale, Florida	21
	Tampa, Florida	21
Chicago	Chicago, Illinois	39
	Cincinnati, Ohio	14
	Cleveland, Ohio	13
	Detroit, Michigan	21
Dallas	Albuquerque, New Mexico	154
Kansas City	Kansas City, Missouri	30
New York	Jamaica, New York	63
Philadelphia	Baltimore, Maryland	147
San Francisco	Bay Area, California	14
	Honolulu, Hawaii	5
	Los Angeles, California	23
	Phoenix, Arizona	10
	Salinas, California	78
	San Diego, California	14
Seattle	Auburn, Washington	111
Headquarters	Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania	112
Total		1,000

Source: SSA's Office of Operations.

Appendix F – TELESERVICE CENTER POSITIONS ELIGIBLE FOR TELEWORK

The Social Security Administration (SSA) did not exclude any teleservice center (TSC) position from the telework pilot. Table F–1 lists each teleservice center position.

Table F–1: TSC Positions Eligible to Participate in the Telework Pilot

TSC Center Position
Administrative Assistant
Claims Specialist
Claims Technical Expert
Customer Service Representative
Director
Director (Deputy)
Lead Customer Service Representative
Manager
Manager (Deputy)
Manager (Operations)
Manager (Section)
Management Support Specialist
Program Management Analyst

Source: SSA's Office of Operations.

Appendix G– HEARING OFFICE POSITIONS ELIGIBLE FOR TELEWORK

For hearing offices, the Social Security Administration’s (SSA) Office of Disability Adjudication and Review excluded the Contact Representative position from telework. Table G–1 lists Hearing Office positions eligible for telework.

Table G–1: Hearing Office Positions Eligible to Participate in Telework

Position
Administrative Aide
Administrative Law Judge
Attorney
Attorney (Senior)
Case Intake Specialist
Case Technician
Case Technician (Senior)
Group Supervisor
Hearing Office Case Analyst
Hearing Office Chief Administrative Law Judge
Hearing Office Director
Hearing Office System Administrator
Legal Assistant
Legal Assistant (Lead)
Paralegal Specialist

Source: SSA’s Office of Disability Adjudication and Review.

Appendix H– AGENCY COMMENTS



SOCIAL SECURITY

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 27, 2017 **Refer To:** SIJ-3

To: Rona M. Lawson
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

From: Stephanie Hall /s/
Acting Deputy Chief of Staff

Subject: Office of the Inspector General Draft Congressional Response Report, “The Social Security Administration’s Telework Program and Its Effect on Customer Service” (A-04-17-50267)--
INFORMATION

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report. Please see our attached comments.

Please let me know if we can be of further assistance. You may direct staff inquiries to Gary S. Hatcher at (410) 965-0680.

Attachment

COMMENTS ON THE OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL (OIG) DRAFT CONGRESSIONAL RESPONSE REPORT, “THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION’S TELEWORK PROGRAM AND ITS EFFECT ON CUSTOMER SERVICE” (A-04-17-50267)

GENERAL COMMENTS

We are committed to successfully using our resources to provide quality customer service to the American public. We have approached our telework policy carefully, keeping our public service responsibilities in mind before we consider further expansion. As we move forward, we will continue our analysis of telework and determine ways to enhance it while continuing to meet our customer service obligations. We will continue to provide training to managers with a focus on strategies to manage employees in a telework environment.

We thank OIG for its suggestions regarding ways we can improve our telework program. We will consider OIG’s suggestions as we continue to assess the effect of telework on customer service and agency productivity.

MISSION

By conducting independent and objective audits, evaluations, and investigations, the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) inspires public confidence in the integrity and security of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) programs and operations and protects them against fraud, waste, and abuse. We provide timely, useful, and reliable information and advice to Administration officials, Congress, and the public.

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