

**Supporting Statement for  
Social Security Administration's Public Credentialing and  
Authentication Process  
20 CFR 401.45, 20 CFR 402  
OMB No. 0960-0789**

**A. Justification**

**1. Introduction/Authoring Laws and Regulations**

The Social Security Administration (SSA) is continuing its public credentialing and authentication process that provides secure access to SSA's electronic services.

With this continued process, we offer consistent authentication across SSA's secured online services. We allow our users to request and maintain only one User ID, consisting of a self-selected Username and Password, and the entry of a one-time security code to the customer's registered email address or cell phone number to access multiple Social Security electronic services. Designed in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-04-04 and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Special Publication 800-63-2, this process provides the means of authenticating users of our secured electronic services and streamlines access to those services.

SSA's public credentialing and authentication process:

- Issues a single User ID to anyone who wants to do business with the agency and meets the eligibility criteria;
- Partners with an external Identity Services Provider (ISP) to help us verify the identity of our online customers;
- Complies with relevant standards;
- Offers access to some of SSA's heaviest, but more sensitive, workloads online while providing a high level of confidence in the identity of the person requesting access to these services;
- Offers an in-person process for those who are uncomfortable with, or unable to use, the Internet process;
- Balances security with ease of use; and
- Provides a user-friendly way for the public to conduct extended business with us online instead of visiting local servicing offices or requesting information over the phone. Individuals have real-time access to their Social Security information in a safe and secure web environment.

**2. Description of Collection**

We collect and maintain the users' personally identifiable information (PII) in our *Central Repository of Electronic Authentication Data Master File Privacy Act* system of records, which we published in the Federal Register (December 17, 2010, at 75 FR 79065). The PII may include the users' name, address, date of birth, Social Security number, phone number, and other types of identity information [e.g., address information of persons from the W-2 and Schedule Self Employed forms we receive electronically for

our programmatic purposes as permitted by 26 U.S.C. 6103(l)(1)(A)]. We may also collect knowledge-based authentication data, which is information users establish with us or that we already maintain in our existing Privacy Act systems of records.

We retain the data necessary to administer and maintain our e-Authentication infrastructure. This includes management and profile information, such as blocked accounts, failed access data, effective date of passwords, and other data that allows us to evaluate the system's effectiveness. The data we maintain also may include archived transaction data and historical data.

We collect, maintain, and distribute confidential and non-confidential information in accordance with 42 U.S.C. 1306, 20 CFR 401 and 402, 5 U.S.C. 552 (Freedom of Information Act), 5 U.S.C. 552a (Privacy Act of 1974, as amended), Internal Revenue Code (26 U.S.C. § 6103(l)(1)(A)), Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002 (Title III) of the E-Government Act of 2002 (Pub.L. 107-347, section 301), and OMB Circular No. A-130.

We use the information from this collection to identity proof and authenticate our users online and to allow them access to their personal information from our records. We also use this information to provide second factor authentication. We are committed to expanding and improving this process so we can grant access to additional online services in the future.

Offering online services is not only an important part of meeting SSA's goals, but is vital to good public service. In increasing numbers, the public expects to conduct complex business over the Internet. Ensuring SSA's online services are both secure and user-friendly is our priority. With the limited data we have, it is difficult for SSA to meet the OMB and NIST authentication guidelines for identity proofing the public. Therefore, we awarded a competitively bid contract to an ISP, Equifax<sup>1</sup>, to help us verify the identity of our online customers. We use this ISP, in addition to our other authentication methods, to help us prove, or verify, the identity of our customers when they are completing online, electronic transactions with us.

### **Social Security's Authentication Strategy**

We remain committed to enhancing our online services using authentication processes, which balance usability and security. We continue to research and develop new authentication tools while monitoring the emerging threats.

The following are key components of our authentication strategy:

- **Enrollment and Identity Verification**  
Individuals who meet the following eligibility requirements may enroll:
- Must have a valid email address;
- Must have a valid Social Security number (SSN);

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<sup>1</sup> Equifax is a global information solutions provider. Equifax's solutions help Social Security to manage risk and mitigate fraud.

- Must have a domestic address of record (includes military addresses); and
- Must be at least 18 years of age.

We collect identifying data and use SSA and ISP records to verify an individual's identity. Individuals have the option of obtaining an enhanced, stronger, User ID by providing certain financial information (e.g., Medicare wages, self-employed earnings, or the last eight digits of a credit card number) for verification. We also ask individuals to answer out-of-wallet questions so we can further verify their identities. Individuals who are unable to complete the process online can present identification at a field office to obtain a User ID.

- **Establishing the User Profile** – The individual self-selects a username and password, both of which can be of variable length and alphanumeric. We provide a password strength indicator to help the individual select a strong password. We also ask the individual to choose challenge questions for use in restoring a lost or forgotten username or password.
- **Provide a Second Factor**  
We ask individuals to provide a text message enabled cell phone number or an email address. We consider the cell phone number or email address the second factor of authentication. We send a security code to the individuals' selected second factor. We require the individuals to confirm its receipt by entering the security code online. Subsequently, each time the individuals attempt to sign in to their online accounts, we will also send a message with a one-time security code to the individuals' selected second factor. The individuals must enter the security code along with their usernames and passwords. The code is valid for only 10 minutes. If the individual does not enter the code within 10 minutes, the code expires, and the individual must request another code. If applicable, the individual's text messaging rates may apply dependent on the type of cell phone plan.
- **Enhancing the User ID** – If individuals opt to enhance or upgrade their User IDs, they must provide certain financial information for verification.  
We mail a one-time-use upgrade code to the individuals' verified residential address. When the individuals receive the upgrade code in the mail, they can enter this code online to enhance the security of the account. With extra security, we continue to require the individuals to sign in using a username, password, and the one-time security code we send to their second factor email address or cell phone number (whichever the users listed in their account).
- **Sign in and Use** – Our authentication process provides an individual with a User ID for access to our sensitive online Social Security services. Second factor authentication requires the individual to sign in with a username, password, and a one-time security code sent to the individual's selected second factor. SSA

expanded its existing capabilities to require second factor authentication for every online sign in. We also allow for maintenance of the second factor options. An individual who forgets the password can reset it automatically without contacting SSA.

### **Social Security's Enrollment Process**

The enrollment process is a one-time only activity. SSA requires individuals to agree to the "Terms of Service" detailed on our web site before we allow them to begin the enrollment process. The "Terms of Service" inform the individuals what we will and will not do with their personal information and the privacy and security protections we provide on all data we collect. These terms also detail the consequences of misusing this service.

To verify an individual's identity, we ask the individual to give us minimal personal information, which may include:

- Name;
- Social Security Number;
- Date of birth;
- Address – mailing and residential;
- Telephone number;
- E-mail address;
- Financial information;
- Cell phone number; and
- Selecting and answering password reset questions.

We send a subset of this information to the ISP, who then generates a series of out-of-wallet questions back to the individual. The individual must answer all or most of the questions correctly before continuing in the process. The exact questions generated are unique to each individual.

This collection of information, or a subset of it, is mandatory for respondents who want to do business with SSA via the Internet. We collect this information via the Internet, on SSA's public-facing website. We also offer an in-person identification verification process for individuals who cannot, or are not willing, to register online. For the in-person process, the individual must go to a local SSA field office and provide identifying information. We do not ask for financial information with the in-person process.

We only collect the identity verification information one time, when the individual registers for a credential. We ask for the User ID (Username and password) along with a security code sent to the individual's selected second factor every time an individual signs in to our automated services. The respondents are individuals who choose to use the Internet or Automated Telephone Response System to conduct business with SSA.

### **3. Use of Information Technology to Collect the Information**

We collect this information electronically via the Internet through SSA's public-facing website, [www.socialsecurity.gov](http://www.socialsecurity.gov), under the agency's Government Paperwork Elimination Act plan. We also collect this information through an in-person process for those who cannot, or choose not to, complete the registration online. For the in-person process, the individual provides the information to an SSA representative during a field office interview. The representative enters the information via an Intranet customer service application. Approximately 6 percent of respondents use the in-person process to register for a User ID. Approximately 94 percent of respondents use the online process.

#### **4. Why We Cannot Use Duplicate Information**

The nature of the information we collect and the manner in which we collect it would normally preclude duplication. Although we currently use other collection instruments to obtain similar data, this identity verification, public credentialing, and authentication process offers the public additional features the applications noted below do not, for example, enhanced identity verification, access to multiple Social Security electronic services, and enhancement or upgrade of User IDs. Our other authentication processes, listed below, do not include these features.

- RISA – Request for Internet and Automated 800# Services – Knowledge-Based Authentication for the Individual, OMB #0960-0596
- IRES – Single Sign-On (SSO) & Integrated Registration Services for Business Services Online (BSO), OMB #0960-0626

Further, this identity verification, public credentialing, and authentication process will eventually absorb and replace the existing collections (mentioned above). We plan to accomplish this work through a series of annual releases. Additional releases will reduce the burden of the existing collections. We will prepare change requests for the existing collections to adjust the burden as needed.

#### **5. Minimizing Burden on Small Respondents**

This collection does not affect small businesses or other small entities.

#### **6. Consequence of Not Collecting Information or Collecting it Less Frequently**

Failure to collect this information to verify an individual's identity would result in SSA's non-compliance with OMB & NIST guidelines (*OMB 04-04 & NIST SP 800-63*). In addition, failure in our ability to verify the requesters' identity would result in our inability to respond to their requests. Making this service available electronically saves the requester the effort of phoning a Social Security TeleService Center representative or visiting a Social Security field office, and it saves our staff time. We only collect this information on an as-needed basis; therefore, we cannot collect it less frequently. There are no technical or legal obstacles that prevent burden reduction.

#### **7. Special Circumstances**

There are no special circumstances that would cause Social Security to conduct this information collection in a manner inconsistent with *5 CFR 1320.5*.

**8. Solicitation of Public Comment and Other Consultations with the Public**

The 60-day advance Federal Register Notice published on May 12, 2017, at 82 FR 22173, and SSA received no public comments. The second Notice published on July 13, 2017, at 82 FR 32431.

We will continue to conduct focus group and usability testing with members of the public, both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries, as we build upon and enhance this process.

**9. Payment or Gifts to Respondents**

Social Security does not provide payments or gifts to the respondents.

**10. Assurances of Confidentiality**

We can make disclosures without individual authorization only for purposes stated at the time of data collection (purposes typically identified in a system of records' routine use provisions), or specifically consented to thereafter by each of the parties to whom we provided the promise of confidentiality. SSA collects, maintains, and distributes confidential and non-confidential information in accordance with *42 U.S.C. 1306, 20 CFR 401 and 402, 5 U.S.C. 552* (Freedom of Information Act), *5 U.S.C. 552a* (Privacy Act of 1974), Internal Revenue Code (*26 U.S.C. 6103(l)(1)(A)*), *Federal Information Security Management Act of 2002 (Title III)* of the E-Government Act of 2002 (*P.L. 107-347*), and OMB Circular No. A-130.

**11. Justification for Sensitive Questions**

We ask questions of a sensitive nature in this Information Collection. We ask the respondents some knowledge-based, "out-of-wallet" questions, and we ask the respondents some "shared secret" questions. We may ask the respondents for financial information. Before we ask for any information, the respondents must read, and agree to our "Terms of Service," which serves to acknowledge and indicate their consent to provide us with sensitive information. The "Terms of Service" explain what we will, and will not do with the information; it describes the responder's responsibilities; and it explains SSA's legal authority for collecting the information.

**Out-of-Wallet Questions**

The ISP incorporates both public and private data to allow generation and evaluation of questions uniquely pertaining to a given consumer. We call these "out-of-wallet" questions. The ISP designs these questions so only the individual would know the answer. If someone stole the consumer's wallet, the identity thief should not be able to answer these questions.

The categories of questions are as follows:

- 1) Credit questions** – These questions incorporate information from the Credit Report of a consumer. The types of questions in the group are about specific lenders, dates, and terms of loans.

- 2) **Non-credit questions** – These are questions derived from various public and private databases. The types of questions in this group vary from automobile related questions, to questions on previous residences, to questions on professions or licenses, etc.

These questions are important because we use them to protect and verify an individual's identity. We must ensure only the true individuals can access their personal information. We ask these questions only once, and in multiple-choice format, when the respondent enrolls to create an account with SSA. (See the screen package in for examples of these questions.)

SSA does not have access to the information the individual provides to the ISP. SSA does not retain or have access to any of the information – questions and answers – after the transaction takes place.

### **Financial Information**

We may ask the individual to provide financial account information. If individuals want extra security, we ask them to provide financial account information in the form of W-2 information; self-employment information from tax returns; or the last eight digits of a credit card; however, they can enroll for a standard account without providing it. We confirm financial account information as another way of ensuring an individual's identity, using our own records or, in the case of the last eight digits of a credit card, using the ISP's records. The information the individuals provide does not allow us to access or view their financial accounts or credit records. Providing this information is optional. We only ask for financial information one time, when the respondent enrolls to create a Social Security account with extra security. If the individuals are uncomfortable about giving us financial account information, they can still sign up for an account by visiting their local Social Security field office in person. We do not require financial information as part of the in-person process.

### **Shared Secrets**

We collect shared secrets from the individuals to use as password reset questions to improve customer service and reduce workloads and costs. If the individuals lose or forget their password, we ask the three questions we established with the individuals during account setup when they originally created the User ID. The individuals must provide correct answers, consistent with the answers on record, to all three questions.

During registration, we ask the individuals to select and answer three password reset questions. We grouped these questions into three sets dealing loosely with persons, places, and things. The individuals must select one question from each of the following categories:

- Relationship questions;
- Geographic questions; and
- Objective questions.

Once the individuals provide correct answers to their shared secrets questions, the system will allow them to reset their password.

**12. Estimates of Public Reporting Burden**

Based on our current management information data, we estimate that 52,698,441 respondents use the Internet process annually to create and manage an account with SSA and then authenticate to gain access to our secured online services. We estimate that it takes an average of 8 minutes to complete a transaction, resulting in an annual reporting burden of 7,026,459 hours. We calculated a separate cost burden for this process (see #13 below).

Based on our current data, we estimate that 3,407,319 respondents use the Intranet process annually to create and manage an account with us. We estimate that it takes an average of 8 minutes to complete this transaction, resulting in an annual reporting burden of 454,309 hours. We did not calculate a separate cost burden for this process.

We use different modalities to collect the information, via the Internet and the Intranet. We included an estimated number of registrations and sign-ins when we calculated the total number of annual respondents. We estimated the number of minutes for completion by averaging the “time-on-task” figures we obtained from our usability testing. See the chart below with the updated figures:

<b>Modality of Completion</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency of Response</b>	<b>Average Burden Per Response (minutes)</b>	<b>Total Annual Burden Hours (hours)</b>
Internet Respondents	52,698,441	1	8	7,026,459
Intranet Respondents	3,407,319	1	8	454,309
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>56,105,760</b>			<b>7,480,768</b>

The total annual burden for this information collection is **7,480,768** hours. This figure represents burden hours, and we calculated a separate cost burden for the respondents using the Internet process (see #13 below for details).

**13. Annual Cost to the Respondents**

There may be a cost burden to the respondents if respondents choose cell phone as the second factor. These costs could be incurred at registration, sign in, or when they contact SSA over the phone. However, since these costs are associated with the respondent’s chosen cell phone carrier, we do not estimate these costs in this ICR to avoid conjecture. Based on our knowledge of current cell phone plans, we estimate the costs could be as follows:



**Storage Management Subsystem (SMS) cost** – code sent via text message from SMS to the individual user.

- For the user who receives the SMS code and does not have a text plan: the current cost could range from 10 cents to 20 cents per message.
- For the user who has a limited text plan: the cost would just be included as part of the plan. We have no way to estimate this cost.
- For the user who has an unlimited text plan, there would be no charge. The user would have paid for this service as part of the plan. We have no way to estimate cost. We estimate that 88% of U.S. cell phones have unlimited texting.

**14. Annual Cost to Federal Government**

The total cost to the Federal Government is approximately **\$8,637,923**. This estimate accounts for costs from the following areas: (1) SSA employee (e.g., field office, 800 number, DDS staff) information collection and processing time; (2) systems development, updating, and maintenance costs for the electronic systems; and (3) the costs we listed above for our partnership for ISP expenses incurred via two tasks: a development and maintenance task, and a transaction task.

Here we break down the costs for the ISP as well as for systems development, updating, and maintenance costs:

**ISP Costs**

A key component of SSA’s registration and authentication process, which manifests itself as both an Internet application and an Intranet application, is the partnership with an ISP for the verification of personal information. SSA pays the ISP for expenses incurred via two tasks: a development and maintenance task and a transaction task. Currently, development and maintenance costs are approximately \$854,962.00; and transaction costs are approximately \$3,598,713.40; totaling \$4,453,675.40. The average cost per transaction is \$0.40.

**Social Security Costs**

Social Security’s internal costs to develop and maintain the eAccess and RCS processes for the past three years are displayed in the following table.

<b>Electronic Access - Actual Costs FY15 - FY17*</b>			
	<b>FY15</b>	<b>FY16</b>	<b>FY17 *</b>
<b>Development</b>	\$1,420,585	\$3,829,837	\$1,099,439
<b>Maintenance</b>	\$1,001,208	\$354,411	\$15,948
<b>Total</b>	\$2,421,793	\$4,184,248	\$1,115,387

\* FY17 thru 2/1/17

We also included costs for SSA employees to collect and process the information. We based this cost on a GS-11 salary, at 8 minutes per respondent for the Intranet

respondents only (since respondents who use the Internet typically do not need help from SSA staff).

**15. Program Changes or Adjustments to the Information Collection Request**

The burden increase is due to the continuing expansion of our online services and the increase in the number of individuals who register for a credential so they can come online to do business with us.

Eventually, this identity verification, public credentialing, and authentication process will absorb and replace the existing authentication collections under OMB Control Numbers 0960-0596 and 0960-0626. We plan to accomplish this work through a series of annual releases. The future releases will reduce the burdens in the other existing authentication collections. SSA will continue to prepare change requests for the other existing authentication collections, as needed.

**16. Plans for Publication Information Collection Results**

SSA will not publish the results of the information collection.

**17. Displaying the OMB Approval Expiration Date**

SSA is not requesting an exception to the requirement to display the OMB approval expiration date.

**18. Exceptions to Certification Statement**

SSA is not requesting an exception to the certification requirements at 5 *CFR* 1320.9 and related provisions at 5 *CFR* 1320.8(b)(3).

**B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods**

Social Security does not use statistical methods for this information collection.