

# Selective Service System

## Background

The Selective Service System (SSS) has the critical mission of ensuring that the United States can mobilize the US population to supplement the all-volunteer military force when authorized by Congress and the President during a national emergency. Accordingly, the SSS has a registration and readiness operation that relies on digital and on-the-ground infrastructure to process registrant data and prepare to quickly mobilize in the event of a national emergency. However, SSS has not been fully mobilized since the 1970s. The nation transitioned to an all-volunteer force in July 1973 with the assumption that this voluntary force could be supplemented by conscripts when needed. In addition, the structure of SSS as a small agency with a modest budget but a large readiness responsibility that must progressively be modernized and tested, add complications to SSS's mission and operations. Therefore, SSS leadership asked for the Academy's guidance on the implementation of agile principles and practices throughout the agency.

## Project Description

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To ensure the success of its national security mission, the Selective Service System has been undertaking a strategic modernization and transformation process. Current issues include how to institutionalize new processes, how to adapt to changes in the external environment, how to improve the customer experience and journey, how to automate and increase user-friendliness, and how to strengthen internal communication practices. The Academy will assist by:

- Assessing SSS's current agile management practices.
- Identifying additional opportunities for agile management.
- Developing an agile action plan for its use in the ongoing transformation.

The Academy synthesized input from research and interviews with staff and external subject matter experts to inform the development of recommendations, which were provided to SSS in an internal report. A summary of the high-level findings from the team's research and interviews can be found below.

## About The National Academy of Public Administration

Chartered by Congress to provide nonpartisan expert advice, the Academy is an independent, nonprofit, and nonpartisan organization established in 1967 to assist government leaders in building more effective, efficient, accountable, and transparent organizations. Learn more at [www.napawash.org](http://www.napawash.org)

# Summary of Findings & Recommendations

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- SSS leadership has recognized that their agency's dynamic and uncertain environment requires agility and adaptability.
- The agency has taken important steps to embrace agile principles and practices, such as creating cross-functional teams, conducting regular retrospectives, and implementing a new IT system. However, more work is needed to fully embed an agile mindset and culture throughout the organization and its network of boards.

The Academy provided several recommendations to help SSS achieve its vision of becoming a more agile agency that can respond effectively to the nation's needs in times of peace and war.

- Enhancing communication and collaboration
- Fostering a learning and feedback culture
- Further empowering and engaging employees and board members
- Aligning structures and processes with agile values

When implemented, these recommendations will help the agency achieve its strategic goals of enhancing its readiness, resilience, and mission accomplishment for the 21st century.