

HOMELAND SECURITY CENTERS (HS CENTERS) PROGRAM

BROAD AGENCY ANNOUNCEMENT



Homeland Security Center
For
Behavioral and Social Aspects of Terrorism
And
Counter-Terrorism

PROPOSAL DEADLINE: September 30, 2004

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
(6/18/04)

CATALOG OF FEDERAL DOMESTIC ASSISTANCE: This program is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under 97.061, Centers for Homeland Security.

DATES: Proposals must be received on or by September 30, 2004 (4:00pm EDT).

Proposals must be sent electronically to: **www.ora.gov/dhsuce4**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF PROGRAM: This Homeland Security (HS) Center, in conjunction with previously established Centers, brings the intellectual capital of our higher educational institutions to bear on helping to ensure the security of the Nation. Accordingly, this Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) invites eligible institutions, partners, and groups of investigators to form consortia capable of mounting a sustained and innovative research and education effort in the specific area of Behavioral and Social Aspects of Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism. Respondents to this BAA should be cognizant of the fact that the Science and Technology (S&T) Directorate of the Department of Homeland Security is a mission-driven program dealing with the security of the U.S. on weapons of mass destruction, disruption and effect. Consequently, outcomes derived from the research and education of this center should emphasize applications related to domestic security while reflecting on the international context of terrorism. Further, approaches to develop the future intellectual capital and workforce necessary to respond to the challenges raised in this BAA should be broadly integrated across all lines of research.

AWARD INFORMATION:

Anticipated Type of Award: Grant

Estimated Number of Awards: One

Anticipated Funding Amount: \$12 million total costs

Cost Sharing: None required

Potential Funding per Grant: Up to \$4,000,000/year with a duration of 3 years, including direct and indirect costs. Proposals with budgets exceeding the total award limit will not be considered.

Contact: Inquiries may be sent to: universityprograms@dhs.gov

Deadline/Target Dates:

Letter of intent Due Date: July 30, 2004

Application Proposal Due Date: September 30, 2004 (4:00pm EDT)

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PART I—BACKGROUND AND PRIORITIES

A. Background and Legislative Authority

The Science and Technology (S&T) Directorate Mission Statement is “Conduct, stimulate, and enable research, development, test, evaluation, and timely transition of homeland security capabilities to federal, state, and local operational end-users”. Thus, S&T is continuing to invite proposals for multidisciplinary research and education programs that will contribute to knowledge discovery on topics of importance to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). For this competition, University Programs (UP), a component of the S&T Directorate, will consider proposals for a Center of Excellence in Behavioral and Social Aspects of Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism that meet the requirements outlined below and in Parts III and IV.

University Programs intends for the Homeland Security Centers of Excellence (HS Centers) Program to develop into an integrated, university-based system that significantly contributes by means of research and education to enhancing DHS’ efforts to make the U.S. secure from acts of terrorism. To facilitate the academic community’s role in ensuring the security of the Nation, DHS S&T has established university-based HS Centers, in accordance with the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-296) that created the Department of Homeland Security, viz., “...to establish a coordinated, university-based system to enhance the Nation’s homeland security.” The collective purpose of the integrated network of Centers is to provide a locus to engage talented and innovative researchers collaboratively in pursuit of homeland security-related needs. The HS Centers are envisioned to be an integral and critical component of the “Homeland Security Complex” providing the Nation with research and an educated workforce that is

well prepared to provide a robust, dedicated, and enduring capability that will enhance our abilities regarding: awareness, anticipation, prevention, detection, response to, and recovery from terrorist actions and terrorism.

The HS Centers are mission focused and targeted to research and education in areas that leverage the multidisciplinary capabilities of universities and fill identified knowledge gaps. Current and future HS Centers will complement activities within the Department that fund research aimed at the development and deployment of specific homeland security technologies and capabilities. Also, the creation of the HS Centers will be coordinated with other federal agencies to minimize duplication of effort and maximize coordination of expertise and resources.

At present, DHS's integrated network of Homeland Security Centers of Excellence include:

1. Homeland Security Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events,
University of Southern California and partners;
2. National Center for Foreign Animal and Zoonotic Disease Defense,
Texas A&M University and partners; and
3. National Center for Food Protection and Defense,
University of Minnesota and partners.

B. Purpose and Priorities

Major threats to the overall security of the Nation can be naturally occurring, accidental, or intentional. Domestic terrorism, by U.S. or foreign citizens, will be the focus of research and education in this center.

This HS Center will bring the intellectual capital of our educational institutions to bear on the pressing issues of domestic security with a specific focus on: Awareness, Anticipation, Prevention, Detection, Response and Recovery. Within this overarching framework, this BAA challenges the U.S. institutions of higher education to specifically address research and education on the Behavioral and Social Aspects of Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism. The proposal should address multidisciplinary, collaborative research and education. The latter should be fully integrated with the research and dedicated to the preparation of the next generation of scholars. It is expected that the successful proposal will develop a model for generating the future workforce that embraces Homeland Security issues.

C. Examples of Outcomes and Deliverables

Throughout the proposed effort, offerors or proposers should be cognizant of the fact that DHS is a mission-driven agency. Accordingly, proposed ideas should address and enhance the knowledge, tools, models, and strategies necessary to substantially enhance DHS's mission to protect the Nation against the spectrum of terrorist activities, including terrorists use of weapons of mass destruction, disruption, and effect.

Information and experiences with terrorists and terrorism are mostly based in countries external to the U.S.; however, it is important to emphasize that the knowledge, tools, models and strategies must be translated to applications in the context of U.S. security.

The following examples of deliverables and outcomes are not meant as required program elements but are meant to give illustrative perspectives. It is expected that the proposed ideas, approaches and concepts will go well beyond those given herein.

This Center will develop the understanding and tools necessary to improve the prediction, timely detection and prevention of terrorist attacks and terrorist behaviors. This includes (but is not limited to) statistical and computational modeling that incorporates geospatial, cultural, linguistic, and political data to detect, prevent, prepare for, and respond to terrorist activity at the earliest possible point in time, as well as scenario-driven behavioral models describing potential nodes of intervention with individuals and groups (domestic and international). An improved ability to anticipate and predict terrorism will require an understanding of individual and group factors related to terrorism, including social, economic and political situational variables; how and why terrorist networks form and are sustained; and knowledge of the factors that influence terrorist attack modality choices. Predictive research that addresses forward-thinking scenarios and that allows for the unique characteristics of the U.S. with regard to terrorist events will have significant value to DHS. Understanding attempts by terrorists to exploit and influence the populations in which they operate is an important early intervention step. These populations include the actual individuals directly affected by attacks, the society at which the attacks are directed, members of the terrorist group, prospective recruits, and neutral and sympathetic populations. Understanding the interaction between these groups is important for the effectiveness of counter and anti-terrorism methods.

In terms of awareness and anticipation of terrorist attacks and terrorism, it would be of interest to consider approaches and the value of modeling as a function of sociological parameters so that targeted strategies can be implemented. These strategies can prepare the public in terms of risk perception and allow for the development of effective communication strategies. It is well established that individuals' perception of

threats and risk is a strong determinant of what preparative measures they are willing to accept and how they will likely react to extreme events. Research and development of strategies on how to educate responders, the media, and policymakers on risk perception and communication factors are of interest. Translational research that integrates social and behavioral sciences with policy analyses will be needed to ensure that risk analyses, contingency planning, and simulation exercises can be related to behaviorally realistic events.

Timely detection of terrorist threats will include understanding of relevant and innovative psychological parameters coupled with an understanding of the influences of gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, age, and experience. Timely detection will involve new technologies, human users, privacy issues, new operational procedures and changing organizational structures. Expertise from the field of human factors should inform the design and implementation of such technological, procedural and organizational changes to ensure optimal performance.

The Center should develop the best practices to respond to and recover from different attack scenarios. Clearly, the extent that a community is able to mitigate the effects of an attack, recover quickly, and isolate the impact of the attack, should lead to terrorism becoming a less effective strategy of societal disruption. To develop and test such practices will require consideration and evaluation of the effects of infrastructural losses as well as individual and group vulnerabilities to short or long-term psychological distress from a significant traumatic event, among many other factors.

D. Descriptive Program Elements

This DHS S&T Center should address a set of broad, challenging questions on the

causes of terrorism from both domestic and international sources, and strategies to combat terrorism following a scenario of awareness, anticipation, prevention, detection, response, and recovery from terrorist actions and terrorism. Application of the knowledge generated in this investigation must focus on U.S. security from weapons of mass destruction, disruption and effect. A comprehensive program of investigation and education should include both basic and applied research, generating immediate, short and long-term applications. Analyses of terrorism should be at the level of individuals as well as groups and networks. It is expected that the Center would include a wide range of social and behavioral science disciplines with contributions provided by scholars inside and outside the U.S. DHS S&T expects that a creative, synergistic, university-based team will be assembled in response to this BAA. It is understood that benefits from these studies may be realized over the long term; however, outcomes more immediately translatable to operational end-user requirements for U.S. security are expected.

The proposal should include the following Research and Education topics. These topics are not exclusive.

1. Individual and social factors in persuasion and recruitment for participation in terrorist activities and development of intervention strategies involving:

Nationalist, fundamentalist, millennial, criminal and revivalism movements;
Charismatic leaders and followers;
Individual and social identity;
The impact of globalization, education, economic and political factors; and
The impact of the media (including the internet).

2. Individual and Group Behaviors and Dynamics including:

Characterization and analysis of sociological and behavioral functions affecting the group and its members;
Communication within and across terrorist networks;
Analyses of collective behaviors;
Analysis of gate-keeping dynamics and multi-network membership roles;
Sensitivities and dependencies of networks to contextual and historical

variables;
 Understanding interactions with supporters, constituencies, target groups and general populations; and
 Analysis of network resilience, vulnerabilities and development of disruptive strategies.

3. Preparation and Resilience of individuals and groups, including:

Impacts of terrorism on psychological and social functioning;
 Impacts of counter and anti-terrorism activities on psychological and social functioning;
 Communication strategies for the lay public regarding risk, threat, risk communications, the role of media, and informational needs and means for shaping perception;
 Analyses of likely responses to ‘weapons of mass destruction, disruption and effect’;
 Attitudes and behaviors toward strategies designed to protect public access to specific venues, national events, and travel; and
 Development of effective warning and communication strategies.

4. Cognition of Information, including:

Data presentation to analysts allowing efficient correlation and assessment of disparate information; and
 Efficient and effective presentation of information to practitioners.

It is recognized that international-domestic partnerships are critical to addressing a global phenomenon such as terrorism; therefore, a multicultural component is essential.

Partnerships with private and/or not-for-profit entities specializing in history and with expertise in terrorist activities are expected.

E. Educational Program

The Nation needs to build the intellectual capital and workforce capacity at all levels for research, education and training on Homeland Security issues. Thus, it is paramount that the education elements for undergraduate and graduate education be fully integrated with the research elements. This program element should describe how the Center will educate, train and mentor the next generation of scholars to meet the

challenges in multidisciplinary sciences related to Homeland Security. Models for developing sustainable education programs in higher education using existing and new curricula are encouraged. Sub-elements within the education portion must include the integration of education and research across all aspects of the program, personal and professional skills development, internships, communication skills and cross-disciplinary training for advanced students. Of particular interest to DHS is recruitment, mentoring and eventual graduation of individuals from underrepresented groups.

F. Scope of Homeland Security Centers of Excellence

DHS Centers of Excellence are expected to be a focus of effort in the designated subject area and to cooperate with the other DHS Centers of Excellence and other research capabilities within DHS. The Center should:

1. Be a consortium of institutions capable of effectively addressing all of the programmatic research and educational elements elaborated below;
2. Be a consortium adequately flexible in approach to accommodate new co-investigators and changes in direction as needed, in cooperation with DHS;
3. Be a consortium that encourages participation of individuals from underrepresented groups, Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) as well as Institutions from EPSCoR states; and
4. Be a consortium capable of holding conferences/workshops, accommodating short and long-term visitors as well as sustaining a robust publication and public outreach program.

PART II—AWARD INFORMATION

A. Available Funding

DHS expects to make one award in this competition to be funded at \$4,000,000 annually for three years. A renewal option depends on availability of funds, appropriateness of subject area, and performance over the initial 3 years.

B. Funding Mechanism

DHS has established an agreement with the Office of Naval Research to administer grants and other assistance agreements awarded to this HS Center. The recommended proposal will be submitted to ONR for final negotiations and award.

PART III—ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION**A. Eligible Applicants**

Proposals must be universitybased and submitted by a U.S. academic institution that has the ability and capacity to conduct the required research. A single academic institution must be identified as the lead and the entity for proposal submission and subsequent discussions. Lead institutions are encouraged to partner with HBCUs or MSIs and institutions in EPSCoR states. Additional institutions associated with the lead institution will be subawards from the lead institution.

B. Cost Sharing

Cost sharing is not required.

PART IV—ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION INFORMATION**A. Electronic Address and Instructions to Submit Letter of Intent and Proposal**

Information about the electronic submission procedures for the proposal may be found at: <http://www.orau.gov/dhsuce4>

B. Content and Form of Letter of Intent

A letter of intent to submit a proposal is **not** required. However, if an institution wishes to inform DHS of its intention to submit a proposal, the letter should include:

- Descriptive title of the proposal
- An abstract of the proposed effort
- Name, address, phone and email of the Principal and Co-Investigator
- Name of Institution(s) participating in the proposal
- Names of key personnel

Although the **letter of intent is not required**, it provides information that will help DHS staff plan the review and estimate the review workload. It may be submitted on or before July 30, 2004 to: <http://www.ora.gov/dhsuce4>.

C. Content and Form of Proposal Submission

All proposals for UP/S&T funding must be self-contained within specified page limitations. Internet web site addresses (URLs) may not be used to provide information necessary to the review because reviewers are under no obligations to view the Internet sites.

1. Proposal Guideline Preparation: Use the following guidelines to prepare a proposal. Proper preparation of a proposal will assist reviewers in evaluating the merits of each proposal in a systematic and consistent manner.

- Prepare the proposal on only one side of the page, single spaced using standard size (8 ½" x 11") white paper, one-inch margins, Times New Roman or Courier New, and a 12 point font. Although the proposal will be submitted electronically, when printed out, its pages must meet these standards.
- Number each page of the proposal sequentially, starting with the Table of Contents, including budget pages and any appendices.

- The contents of a proposal **must** be assembled in the following order:
 - Cover Sheet
 - Table of Contents
 - Proposal Summary
 - Proposal Description
 - Names of Principal Investigator and Other Key Personnel
 - Budget
 - Letters of Agreement (*See details below*)
 - Assurances, if requested

2. Cover Sheet: The cover sheet should identify the lead university and its proposed Center/Director, as the Principal Investigator, as well as all major cooperating partners. It is essential during the formative period of the Center that the Directorship be a full-time position, and assurances from the university to this end are desired.

3. Table of Contents: The Table of Contents should contain page numbers for each major component of the proposal.

4. Proposal Summary (up to 4 pages): The proposal summary may be up to four pages and must include: (1) the title of the proposal; (2) the names and contact information of the Principal Investigator (Director) and Co-PI from the lead institution; (3) a list of the major collaborating partner institutions with the name of the lead investigator; (4) an expanded list of participants and their affiliation; and (5) an informative abstract of the proposed research and education effort in sufficient detail so as to be appreciated independently of the main proposal. Other key elements should include specific research and education goals, a timeline for their achievement and dissemination, management structure, education plan, and explicit plans for each major cooperating partner in the proposed Center. The role of the Center in articulating and disseminating results should be addressed along with the vision for collaboration with the existing Centers of Excellence.

5. Proposal Description (up to 50 pages): This section should include statements of work, planned approaches and expected timelines to attain stated goals. Further, since this description is the most important part of the proposal, particular attention should be paid to the following issues:

That DHS has mission-oriented responsibilities; therefore the proposed research and education should be explicitly related to the DHS mission of ensuring security in the face of terrorist acts;

That DHS concerns are Awareness, Anticipation, Prevention, Detection, Response, and Recovery;

That it is the security of the U.S. that is paramount in this Center despite the concentration of terrorist activities outside of the Nation;

That the Center will be prepared to be the Nation's focal point for Social and Behavioral studies on terrorism, terrorists, and societal impact;

That the collection of major collaborators and participating investigators is of the highest quality, and encouragement is given to involve individuals (faculty, undergraduate and graduate students) from under-represented groups;

That the education program is fully integrated with the research, adequately addresses the preparation of the graduates to meet the future needs of Homeland Security, and expressly involves graduate students;

That the research programs are expected to meet the proposed tasks and time requirements, recognizing the special nature of university research; and

That participating investigators are linked to each of the specific tasks.

(a) Management Plan: Collaborative multi-institutional proposals are encouraged in order to adequately cover the subject areas. Consortia are encouraged to include individuals from underrepresented groups, minority-serving institutions as well as institutions from EPSCoR States. The proposer should identify each institutional unit contributing to the proposal and clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each unit.

This section of the proposal should convincingly demonstrate that the proposed collaborative partnerships are adequately integrated and that the participating institutions fully support, through words and deeds, the serious time and resource commitment needed to ensure timely and meaningful progress toward a successful program in research as well as education. This should include describing linkages and communication approaches among the various units and a plan to identify and benefit from complementary activities and knowledge from all units. Note: Discussions and planning with the National laboratories must not take place prior to the Center award since these laboratories have insider information and receive separate funds from DHS. Also, the management plan may include regional and national partnerships with local, state, and national emergency response communities as well as public health and other appropriate organizations and agencies.

(b) Education: The Nation needs to build the intellectual capital and workforce capacity at all levels for research, education and training on Homeland Security issues. This program element should describe how the Center will educate, train and mentor the next generation of scholars (graduate and undergraduate students) to meet the challenges in multidisciplinary sciences related to Homeland Security. It is of particular interest to DHS that models be developed for sustainable programs in higher education using existing and new curricula. Sub-elements within this element include the integration of education and research across all aspects of the program, personal and professional skills development, internships, communication skills development and cross-disciplinary training. Also, of particular interest to DHS is recruitment, mentoring and eventual graduation of individuals from underrepresented groups.

(c) Equipment, Facilities and Databases: All facilities that are available for use or assignment to the proposal during the requested period of performance should be reported and described briefly. The proposer must outline its established procedures for arranging for human subject testing, including all reviews and appraisals to be obtained before any such testing would begin. Further, the protection of data relating to human subjects or groups must also be addressed. Any potentially hazardous materials, procedures, situations, or activities, whether or not directly related to a particular phase of the effort, must be explained fully, along with an outline of the precautions to be exercised. Examples include work that may put human subjects at risk. All items of major instrumentation available for use or assignment to the proposed effort should be itemized. In addition, items of non-expendable equipment needed to conduct and bring the proposal to a successful conclusion should be listed, including their individual cost of acquisition. Justification must be provided if funds exceeding \$5K are requested for the acquisition of any particular capital equipment item.

(d) Proposal Timetable: The proposal should outline all important phases as a function of time, year by year, for the entire proposal, including periods beyond the grant funding period.

(e) Progress Reports: Annual progress reports will be required.

6. Principal Investigator and Other Key Personnel: It is essential, particularly during the formative period of the Center, that the Directorship be a full time dedicated position, and assurances from the university to this end are welcomed. Please provide cogent descriptions of the relevant capabilities of the principal investigator and other key personnel, including no more than five publications for each participant. For the PI and

any CO-PI and no more than three others, 2-page descriptions are allowed. For all other key participants, up to 30 individuals, 1-page descriptions are allowed. Each description should include information sufficient to demonstrate that the key participating personnel possess training and expertise commensurate with their roles in the program. A short paragraph by each key person on his or her specific role in the proposed effort is necessary.

7. Budget: This section should describe a program funded for the first year at \$4,000,000. Also, it should include, for planning purposes, preliminary budget strategies for a second and third year at the same level. The current expectation is for a three year funding cycle, contingent on the availability of funds and on satisfactory performance in attaining stated goals, with the possibility of ongoing support beyond this period. Centers are encouraged to seek funding from additional sources that are consistent with the goals of the proposed effort.

(a) Budget Information Non-construction Programs: The proposal must include a budget for each year of support requested and a cumulative budget for the full term. Proposals must include budget information for each year using the OMB 424A form (links are provided on the following website at: <http://www.ornl.gov/dhsuce4>). The OMB 424A form has three sections: A, B, and C. A separate Section D is also required and explained under budget narrative and justification.

(b) Budget Narrative and Justification: All budget categories, with the exception of Indirect Costs, for which support is requested, must be individually listed (with costs) in the same order as the budget and justified. Instructions for Sections A, B and C are included on the form. Instructions for Section D are as follows: Section D

must provide an itemized budget breakdown for each year for each budget category listed in Sections A, B and C. Submit Section D as an Excel spreadsheet with an itemized listing of costs. For personnel, include a listing of percent effort for each year, as well as the cost. Section D should also include a breakdown of the fees to consultants, a listing of each piece of equipment to be acquired, itemization of supplies into separate categories, and itemization of travel requests (e.g., travel for data collection, conference travel, etc.) into separate categories. Itemize any other expenses by category and unit cost. The budget justification must provide sufficient detail to allow reviewers to judge whether reasonable costs have been attributed to the proposed effort. It must include the time commitments and brief descriptions of the responsibilities of key personnel. The budget justification should correspond to the itemized breakdown of costs that is provided in Section C. For consultants, the narrative should include the number of days of anticipated consultation, the expected rate of compensation, travel, per diem, and other related costs. A justification for equipment purchase, supplies, travel and other related costs should also be provided in the budget narrative for each project outlined in Section C. For applications that include contracts for work conducted at collaborating institutions, proposers should submit an itemized budget spreadsheet for each contract for each project year, and the details of the contract costs should be included in the budget narrative. Proposal writers should use their institution's federal indirect cost rate and use the off-campus indirect cost rate where appropriate.

(c) Special Requirements: Proposers should budget for three (two-day) meetings each year with other Centers and DHS staff. Location of the meetings is unspecified.

8. Letter of Agreement: The proposer may include letters of agreement from all partners (e.g., schools) and consultants. Letters of agreement should include enough information to make it clear that the author of the letter understands the nature of the commitment of time, space and resources to the research project that will be required. These letters may be scanned, but uploaded as a separate file.

9. Assurances Requested: (a) Use of Animals and Human Subjects in Research: If animals are to be utilized in the research effort proposed, the proposer must complete a DoD Animal Use Protocol with supporting documentation (copies of AAALAC accreditation and /or NIH assurance, IACUC approval, research literature database searches, and the two most recent USDA inspection reports) prior to award. Similarly, for any proposal that involves the experimental use of human subjects, the proposer must obtain approval from the proposer's committee for protection of human subjects (normally referred to as an Institutional Review Board, (IRB)). The proposer must also provide NIH (OHRP/DHHS) documentation of a Federal Wide Assurance that covers the proposed human subjects study. If the proposer does not have a Federal Wide Assurance, a DoD Single Project Assurance for that work must be completed prior to award at: http://www.onr.navy.mil/sci_tech/personnel/prop_format_instructions.asp. (See Item N at this site for further information.

(b) Special information that is needed when experiments will be performed using recombinant DNA: proposals using recombinant DNA must include documentation of compliance with DHHS recombinant DNA regulations, approval of the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC), and copies of the DHHS Approval of the IBC letter.

D. Submission Dates, Times and Place

Verify instructions prior to submitting at: www.ora.gov/dhsuce4. Proposals must be received by September 30, 2004 at 4:00PM EST. Submit Proposals to: www.ora.gov/dhsuce4. Help desk email address is: dhs-help@ora.gov and the help desk phone number is: 865-576-6200.

E. Funding Restrictions

Funds awarded under this program may not be used for the renovation or refurbishment of research or education space; the purchase or installation of fixed equipment in such space; or the planning, repair, rehabilitation, acquisition, or construction of buildings or facilities.

F. Other Submission Requirements

In addition to OMB Form 424A, submit completed OMB Form 424 and OMB Form 424B. After filling out these forms, include with the electronic proposal submission.

PART V—PROPOSAL REVIEW REQUIREMENTS**A. General**

Proposals submitted to DHS, University Programs are always reviewed by panels (external and internal) composed of professional peers, who have been screened for conflicts of interest. In addition, panel reviews may be augmented by one or more reviews solicited by mail by the Program Officer and made available to the panel reviewers once they convene. As a general rule, and as based on deliberations, peer review panels are authorized to wholly or partially accept or reject any such mail reviews.

Typically panel members are provided with only a few of the proposals for which each reviewer is specifically tasked to read and report in detail during the meeting of the group. At minimum, there are two reviewers for each proposal. In all cases, however, copies of every proposal are available for inspection by all of the members of the external panel while it is in session. Each review and panel summary of the external review panel is reviewed and approved by the attending DHS official. In addition to this external review, DHS may conduct an internal review and a site review. The internal review by peer government personnel for relevancy may be used to augment the panel review. The final selection will be made by DHS officials based upon the proposal, the external peer review, internal review, Federal agency review, and a site visit. Any other materials, including external letters of support, are discouraged and **will not** be considered as part of the review process.

B. Evaluation Criteria for Scientific Merit

The goals of the HS Centers of Excellence program are to contribute to specific areas that leverage the multidisciplinary capabilities of universities filling gaps in knowledge, enhancing the Nation's ability to counter terrorist attacks and providing overall security of the Nation. Also, DHS envisions that the education plan addresses the need to prepare the next generation of diverse scholars, scientists and engineers to meet present and future challenges of Homeland Security. This should involve consideration of gender, race, ethnicity and economics.

Reviewers will be expected to assess the following aspects of an application in order to judge the likelihood that the proposed research and education will have a substantial impact on the theme of the program announcement.

- Significance** Does the proposal make a compelling case for the potential contribution to the solution of the problem(s) addressed in the BAA?
- Research Plan** Does the research plan meet the requirements described in the sections: Purpose and Priorities, Deliverables and Outcomes, and Program Elements?
- Educational Plan** Does the education plan address the objectives of producing the best qualified graduates (undergraduate and graduate students) for the future intellectual capital and is it well integrated at all levels with the research?
- Management Plan** Does the management plan convincingly demonstrate that the collaborative partnerships and linkages are truly integrated, diverse and will lead to a successful program? Does the commitment of each partner show support for the implementation and success of the project?
- Personnel** Do the descriptions of the personnel make it apparent that the principal investigator and other key personnel possess the training, knowledge, experience and time commitment to competently implement the proposed research?
- Resources** Are the facilities, equipment, supplies, databases, and other resources to support the proposed activities adequate?

Conflicts of Interest and Confidentiality

During the peer evaluation process, extreme care will be taken to prevent any actual or perceived conflicts of interest that will impact review or evaluation of the proposals. For the purpose of determining conflicts of interest, potential reviewers are asked to complete and sign conflicts of interest and nondisclosure forms.

Names of submitting institutions, partner institutions and participants, as well as application content and peer evaluations, will be kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. In addition, the identities of peer reviewers will remain confidential. Therefore, the names of the reviewers will not be released.

PART VI—AWARD ADMINISTRATION

A. General

ONR will issue and administer the grant award under the procedures set forth in this BAA for University Programs, Office of Research and Development, DHS. The award of such grant is expected to be in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as will be determined by ONR prior to grant award.

B. Award Decision

The following will be considered in making the award decision:

- Scientific merit as determined by the external and internal peer review;
- Relevancy to the mission of DHS as determined by internal peer review;
- Contribution to the overall program of research and education as described in this BAA; and
- Availability of funds

Inquiries may be sent to: universityprograms@dhs.gov