

Program, Policy, and Organizational Evaluations

I. Purpose

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is committed to ensuring a strong culture of evaluation, evidence building, and organizational learning. A robust and coordinated evaluation function is essential to the Department's capacity to build rigorous evidence for better decision making. This Directive provides the overall policy, responsibilities, and principles for the conduct of evaluation within DHS.

II. Scope

This Directive is applicable throughout DHS with the exception of the Office of the Inspector General.

III. Authorities

- A. Public Law 115-435, 132 Stat.5529, "Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018" ('Evidence Act')
- B. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-19-23 "Phase 1 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Learning Agendas, Personnel, and Planning Guidance"
- C. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-20-12 "Phase 4 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Program Evaluation Standards and Practices"
- D. Public Law 114-264, 130 Stat. 1371, "Program Management Improvement Accountability Act of 2016 (PMIAA)"
- E. Public Law 103-62, 107 Stat. 285, "Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA)"
- F. Public Law 111-352, 124 Stat. 3866, "Government Performance and Results Act Modernization Act of 2010 (GPRAMA)"
- G. DHS Delegation 00007, "Delegation to the Deputy Under Secretary for Management"

H. DHS Designation 00-01001, “Designation to the Director of Program Analysis and Evaluation” as the Chief Evaluation Officer.

IV. Responsibilities

A. **DHS Evaluation Officer (EO)** reports to the Chief Financial Officer and has authority and responsibility for providing leadership over the Department’s evaluation activities. The EO:

1. Establishes and oversees Department-wide implementation of this Evaluation Policy.
2. Coordinates and engages with Department stakeholders in carrying out the responsibilities assigned to the EO in the Evidence Act Title 1 requirements.
3. Coordinates and issues the Department’s Evidence Act Title 1 deliverables:
 - a. Capacity Assessments conducted every four years of the coverage, methods, quality, independence, effectiveness, and balance of the Department’s evaluation, statistics, research and analysis portfolio, as well as the Department’s ability to support the planning, conduct, and use of evaluation;
 - b. A four-year long Learning Agenda concurrent with the Strategic Plan, describing priority learning questions and how they will be addressed through the Department’s evidence building; and
 - c. An Annual Evaluation Plan concurrent with the Annual Performance Plan, describing significant evaluations, key information collections, and related acquisitions planned for the subsequent year.
4. Supports internal and public release of evaluation plans, evaluation reports/summaries, and action plans/reports for the use of findings, including advising on principled exceptions to the requirement of public disclosure of evaluations.
5. Chairs and acts as the secretariat for the DHS Evaluation Officers’ Council (EOC).
6. Champions capacity building opportunities for DHS as a whole, while serving as an institutional source of guidance for Components on evaluation and evidence building.

7. Coordinates or commissions Department-wide and cross-cutting evaluations, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, or policy research to address DHS Learning Agenda priority questions.
8. Supports the integration of evaluation and other evidence-building plans and findings from the Department's Evidence Act Title 1 deliverables in the development of DHS Strategic Plans, Annual Performance Plans, Annual Performance Reports, Budget Submissions, and other planning efforts.

B. Component Heads:

1. Ensure compliance with this Evaluation Policy across the breadth of the Component, including meeting the standards outlined in this Evaluation Policy and related published instructions for planning, implementation, dissemination, and use of evaluations.
2. Appoint an individual with in-depth expertise in evidence building and evaluation to advise, manage, and/or conduct Component evaluations and participate in the EOC.
3. In coordination with the EO, engage in the Evidence Act processes and development of deliverables.
4. Consult and coordinate with the Department's relevant officers (e.g., Evaluation, Statistical, Data, Privacy, Information Security, Performance Improvement) on development and release of evaluation plans, evaluation reports/summaries, and action plans/reports on use of findings, as well as the promotion of secondary uses for the data and findings.
5. Develop the Component's capacity for evaluation management and methods.
6. Conduct evaluations to examine the performance and outcomes of programs, policies, regulations, or organizations at a rate commensurate with the scale of the Component's work, the scope of their portfolio, and the size of their budget.
7. Integrate evaluation and other evidence-building plans and findings from the Department's Evidence Act Title 1 deliverables in the development of DHS Strategic Plans, Annual Performance Plans, Annual Performance Reports, Budget Submissions, and other planning efforts.

V. Policy and Requirements

A. **Policy:** DHS conducts well-designed evaluations to more fully characterize and account for the ways the Department uses resources to achieve its goals and objectives. DHS generates and uses rigorous evidence from evaluations to inform decisions about programs, policies, regulations, and organizations, better enabling the Department to achieve the most effective U.S. homeland security outcomes and greater accountability to our primary stakeholders, the American people. At DHS, evaluation supports:

1. **Organizational learning.** Evaluations answer questions that produce valuable knowledge and inform the Department's understanding of and ability to respond to mission needs and changes in the environment.
2. **Program and performance improvement.** Evaluations identify when and how the Department has met its goals, providing leaders with evidence they need to make decisions about changes that should be made to increase efficiency and/or effectiveness.
3. **Resource priority determinations.** Evaluations help DHS allocate resources, highlighting where they are needed for greatest impact. This includes decisions about the future of programs, policies, regulations, or organizations, such as whether to continue as is, enhance/scale up, or reduce/scale down.
4. **Stakeholder engagement.** Evaluations share valuable information internally and externally, promoting transparency and accountability for stewardship of public funds and leading to advances in research, policy, and practice in and beyond the Department.

B. **Requirements:** This Evaluation Policy presents core principles that guide the conduct of evaluation at DHS to ensure credibility and high-quality evidence for learning and decision making. These principles align with published Federal evaluation standards. DHS evaluations should always adhere to these principles:

1. **Relevance and Utility.** DHS evaluations address questions that are important and provide findings that are actionable and available in time for use. DHS evaluations consider (1) the learning priorities related to programs, policies, regulations, or organizations, and (2) the potential impact on the Department's strategic priorities. Evaluation findings inform and are integrated into the Department's activities, such as budgeting, program improvement, management, accountability, and the development of programs, policies, and regulatory actions.
2. **Rigor.** DHS evaluation findings are credible and mean what they purport to mean. DHS conducts evaluations to the highest standards: those who conduct DHS evaluations have appropriate expertise for the

designs and methods undertaken; designs and methods are appropriate for the question(s) asked; documentation of evaluation processes and findings are clear and accurate; and the limitations of findings are transparent. Internal and external stakeholders can act on evaluation findings with confidence.

3. **Transparency.** DHS is committed to ensuring that the Department's leadership and staff, collaborators, policymakers, researchers, and the public at large are able to learn from the Department's work. DHS is transparent in the planning, implementation, and reporting of evaluations to enable learning and accountability. The Department issues a public record of significant evaluations conducted and shares findings for those evaluations in a timely way (including null results and results that run counter to the Department's expectations and goals).

4. **Independence and Objectivity.** DHS evaluations are conducted with an appropriate level of independence from program, policy, regulation, and stakeholder activities. Those who conduct DHS evaluations demonstrate objectivity, impartiality, and professional judgement throughout the evaluation process.

5. **Ethics.** DHS evaluations meet the highest ethical standards and safeguard the dignity, rights, safety, and privacy of participants, stakeholders, and affected entities. DHS complies with relevant professional standards and requirements, such as regulations governing research involving human subjects. The Department's evaluations account for cultural and contextual factors that could influence findings and the use of those findings.

C. **DHS Annual Evaluation Plan:** The DHS Annual Evaluation Plan consists of a subset of the Department's evaluation work for the subsequent fiscal year. These evaluations, designated as significant, are shared publicly and receive additional resources to ensure successful completion. The list below highlights the criteria DHS considers when making the significant evaluation designation:

1. Supports DHS Learning Agenda
2. Responds to mandate
3. Aligns with leadership priorities
4. Has potential for agency-wide impact or engagement
5. Has potential for high financial impact
6. Has potential for high stakeholder impact

VI. Questions

Address any questions or concerns regarding this Directive to Evaluation Officer, Office of Program Analysis and Evaluation, Officer of the Chief Financial Officer.

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R. D. Alles
Deputy Under Secretary for Management

Date