

U.S. Department of Homeland Security FY 2024 Annual Evaluation Plan



With honor and integrity, we will safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values.

About this Report

The *Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018* (Evidence Act) requires that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) issue an Annual Evaluation Plan concurrent with the Department’s annual performance plan describing “significant” evaluations and the related information collections and acquisitions planned for the subsequent fiscal year.

The *DHS FY 2024 Annual Evaluation Plan* describes a subset of the Department’s evaluation work for the next fiscal year. These evaluations, designated as significant, are shared with the American public and receive additional resources to ensure successful completion.

As required, the *DHS FY 2024 Annual Evaluation Plan* is published at the DHS public website and at [Evaluation.gov](https://www.dhs.gov/evaluation) with the Department’s other Evidence Act plans and reports.

DHS invites feedback on the *DHS FY 2024 Annual Evaluation Plan* and continued collaboration from relevant communities on potential priority questions, data, methods, and analytic approaches that could guide these and future DHS evidence building activities. Public feedback and input may be submitted to: dhslearningagenda@hq.dhs.gov.

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Overview

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has a diverse and complex mission to prevent attacks and mitigate threats against the United States and our allies, respond to national emergencies of all kinds, and advance American prosperity and economic security. Since DHS was established from its predecessor agencies in 2003, the Department has continued to expand and mature capabilities to build and use evidence in shaping strategy and operations. 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.

The *DHS FY 2024 Annual Evaluation Plan* describes a subset of the Department’s evaluation work for the next fiscal year. These evaluations, designated as significant, are generally shared with the American public and may receive additional resources to ensure successful completion. New evaluations are identified annually through systematic consultation with DHS Components, developed with the assistance of and reviewed by internal program evaluators, and coordinated with external stakeholders, including OMB. Many evaluations are designed to address priority questions identified in the *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda*. As such, they intend to empower Department decisionmakers to achieve their objectives while fostering organizational learning.

Exhibit 1 lists and describes the criteria DHS considers when making the significant evaluation designation. Evaluations included in the Annual Evaluation Plan meet one or more of the listed criteria.

Exhibit 1. DHS Criteria for Significant Evaluations

Criteria	Description
Supports the <i>DHS Learning Agenda</i>	The evaluation is identified in the Department learning agenda as a strategic priority to support decision making
Aligns with leadership priorities	The evaluation addresses leadership priorities at the Component, DHS, or Administration levels
Responds to a mandate	The evaluation responds to requirements or recommendations of the Administration, OMB, Congress, Government Accountability Office (GAO) or the DHS Office of the Inspector General (OIG)
Has potential for agency-wide impact or engagement	The scope of the evaluation activity or the resulting learning affects multiple Components, the entire Department, federal agencies, or other external partners
Has potential for high financial impact	The subject of the evaluation, or evaluand, requires substantial Department funding and/or may pose higher financial risk
Has potential for high stakeholder impact	The subject of the evaluation, or evaluand, affects a large number of entities, including the potential risk for differential or inequitable impacts that should be assessed

Department evaluations follow DHS Directive 069-03, Rev 00, *Program, Policy, and Organizational Evaluations*¹ and may include a range of evaluation types to best answer the questions proposed. To ensure credibility and quality of evidence for learning and decision making, DHS evaluations and those who conduct or manage them, follow these principles of relevance and utility, rigor, independence and objectivity, ethics, and transparency. These principles align with published federal evaluation standards.²

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.

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.

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).

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.

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

¹ [069-03 Program, Policy, and Organizational Evaluations, Revision 00](#) (DHS, 2021)

² [Phase 4 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Program Evaluation Standards and Practices, M-20-12](#) (OMB, 2020)

³ Federal peer agencies would be agencies that perform similar reviews, such as the US Patent and Trademark Office and the Food and Drug Administration. These organizations have well established review processes that can be leveraged to develop evidence-based best practices for OSAI. Within DHS, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's Protective Security Advisor program may be of interest.

involving human subjects. The Department’s evaluations account for cultural and contextual factors that could influence findings and the use of those findings.

DHS evaluations are conducted consistent with relevant legal authorities and privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties protections. All evaluation efforts prepare requisite DHS privacy compliance documentation to account for the data sources, collection methods, and data analysis described, and adopt appropriate safeguards in preparation for conducting the program evaluation. All evaluation efforts involving living individuals (regardless of citizenship status) or their data are coordinated through and reviewed by the DHS Compliance Assurance Program Office (CAPO) Human Research Protections Group prior to initiation of research activities.

Where possible, DHS evaluations examine equity of access, experiences, benefits, and unintended consequences of programs and policies across relevant groups of the affected populations.

Progress of Previous Evaluations

DHS issued annual evaluation plans in FY2022 and FY2023 that identified six significant evaluations. Exhibit 2 summarizes the focus of those evaluations, the publication date of the plans, status of the evaluation questions, phase of the evaluation, and challenges encountered to date.

Exhibit 2. Progress of FY2022 and FY2023 Significant Evaluations

Program/Policy	Publication Year	Status	Phase	Challenges
CISA High Value Asset (HVA) Program	FY2022	Unanswered, remains a priority	Implementing	Data access and quality
CISA Exercises	FY2022	Unanswered, remains a priority	Implementing	Data access and quality
CISA Stakeholder Engagement Division Critical Infrastructure Partnership Advisory Council (CIPAC) National Convening Activities	FY2023	Unanswered, remains a priority	Planning	Data access and quality
All-Hazards Communications Unit Position-Specific Training and Stakeholder Communication Unit Program	FY2023	Unanswered, remains a priority	Planning	Data access and quality
DHS Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant Program Evaluation	FY2023	Unanswered, remains a priority	Implementing	Evaluability, constraints on methods, data access and quality
Implementation of DHS Directive 026-06, Rev 02, <i>Test and Evaluation</i> , 01 October 2020	FY2023	Unanswered, remains a priority	Implementing	Evaluability, constraints on methods, data access and quality

For all FY2022 and FY2023 program evaluations, the key evaluation questions are unanswered and remain a priority. Two evaluations are in the Planning phase, during which programs assemble or procure a study team, establish a detailed design and plan for the study, and gain appropriate approvals for data collection activities. Four evaluations are in the Implementing phase, meaning efforts are underway to collect and analyze data, to develop conclusions and recommendations from data, or to prepare a report, summary, or key findings of the study/analysis.

Three major challenges encountered in these evaluations are explained below:

Evaluability of strategies or operations. To evaluate whether a strategy (program, policy, regulation, or some combination) or operation achieves its outcomes it must be *evaluable*—that is, we must clarify what the desired outcomes are, how activities are logically linked to those outcomes, and what indicators and measures provide data to assess them. DHS programs are complex constellations of activities that may be conducted through multiple touchpoints over time and in different settings and locations. Among the more challenging cases of evaluability, grant programs do not prescribe an activity; rather, these programs provide grantees discretion to pursue many eligible activities that collectively contribute to the achievement of program outcomes. The DHS Evaluation Officer encourages evaluability assessments be conducted by a qualified third-party evaluator when no prior evaluations have been conducted and as a tool for building program and organizational evaluation capacity. Evaluability assessments can help determine whether programs are ready for meaningful evaluation and whether an evaluation is likely to provide useful information. However, such assessments can extend the timeline for an evaluation.

Constraints on methods. Randomized control trials and quasi-experimental designs that also study comparison groups are often not feasible for DHS programs and policies. Furthermore, the Department’s recent capacity assessment suggests DHS makes limited use of more advanced quantitative methods, such as inferential statistics, time series, and economic analysis. Thus, evaluation questions about “effects,” “impacts,” and “effectiveness” of DHS programs, policies, and regulations may be difficult to answer with definitive statements about causality or attribution.

Gaps in data access or quality. Gaps in sufficiently detailed, accurate, and complete data, lack of existing data, or lack of measures for all relevant indicators to answer a question are common in evidence building. Such gaps result for many reasons. Most common is that legacy data collections were initially designed to support operations, not specific evidence-building activities or indicators, like equity. Some data may not be collected, or when collected, they may have high non-response rates or restrictions on use. In some cases, gaps can be mitigated by updating System of Record Notices (SORNs) to allow data to be used for evidence building. Often, gaps in data access or quality require new collections or revisions to existing data collections. The Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) requires federal agencies to obtain approval for such information collections from the OMB, which generally consists of a public comment period and OMB review

of the survey instrument to be administered to more than nine respondents. This process must be completed before beginning data collection efforts.

FY 2024 Evaluations

This *DHS FY 2024 Annual Evaluation Plan* includes evaluations of the following activities and operations:

1. Support Anti-Terrorism by Fostering Effective Technologies Act (the SAFETY Act)
2. Alternatives to Detention (ATD) Programs
3. Case Management Pilot Program (CMPP)
4. Asylum Processing Rule (APR)
5. Naturalization Outreach
6. Citizenship and Integration Grant Program (CIGP): Citizenship Instruction and Naturalization Application Services (CINAS) Grant and Community and Regional Integration Network Grant (CARING) Program
7. E-Verify
8. Encouraging the Use of USCIS' Online Services
9. Cybersecurity Binding Operational Directives (BODs) and Emergency Directives (EDs)
10. CyberSentry
11. Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative (JCDC)
12. State and Local Cyber Grant Program (SLCGP)
13. Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) and Wireless Priority Service (WPS)
14. Preparedness Grants
15. Flood Mitigation Assistance Program Swift Current Initiative
16. Pandemic Public Assistance

Support Anti-Terrorism by Fostering Effective Technologies Act (the SAFETY Act)

Lead Organization

Science and Technology (S&T) Directorate, Operations and Requirements Analysis (ORA)

Program Description

Securing the homeland requires deployment of a broad range of technologies that includes products, services, software, and other forms of intellectual property. The threat of liability for damages from potential future attacks can deter manufacturers or sellers of effective anti-terrorism technologies from developing, commercializing, and deploying technologies that could save lives.

The SAFETY Act program was enacted by Congress to provide incentives for the development and deployment of anti-terrorism technologies by creating systems of risk and litigation management for sellers. Sellers that develop and deploy anti-terrorism technologies can apply for SAFETY Act protections by submitting applications to the Office of SAFETY Act Implementation (OSAI). Designation as a Qualified Anti-Terrorism Technology (QATT) provides the seller of the QATT limited liability for claims against the QATT arising out of, relating to, or resulting from an act of terrorism. Certification affords the seller the protections of Designation, as well as being placed on the “Approved Product List for Homeland Security,” and a rebuttable presumption that the government contractor defense applies to lawsuits for claims arising out of, relating to, or resulting from an act of terrorism. These liability protections are intended to incentivize the development and deployment of these protective technologies and services to safeguard the Nation.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation will assess the extent to which (a) essential elements of the SAFETY Act program are in place; (b) the program conforms to statutory and regulatory procedural requirements and program design best practices gleaned from other federal peer agencies³; (c) it meets customer/stakeholder/applicant expectations; and (d) it can deliver positive outcomes. The evaluation results will inform process improvements to increase the timeliness of application reviews.

The scope of the evaluation will be SAFETY Act program applications from 2014 to present. All aspects of the program will be examined, including, but not limited to, the application procedures, the review procedures, and stakeholder engagement efforts.

³ Federal peer agencies would be agencies that perform similar reviews, such as the US Patent and Trademark Office and the Food and Drug Administration. These organizations have well established review processes that can be leveraged to develop evidence-based best practices for OSAI. Within DHS, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency’s Protective Security Advisor program may be of interest.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 1.2: Detect and Disrupt Threats. The study supports the national security and economic resilience priority of the “Multi-Agency Research and Development Priorities for FY 2023 Budget.”⁴

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted externally, through an ORA-funded contractor, and is expected to begin in FY 2024. S&T currently estimates a two-year period of performance for the evaluation.

Questions

The evaluation will address the following key questions:

1. To what extent do the SAFETY Act program’s application and adjudication procedures and practices adhere to best practices and statutory and regulatory procedural requirements, and what are the barriers to implementing best practices?
2. How do the SAFETY Act program’s application and adjudication procedures and practices differ across applications and technology types, and how consistent are they?
3. What strategies can OSAI use to improve the SAFETY Act program’s application and adjudication procedures and practices while utilizing effective change management, expand SAFETY Act protected technologies, and broaden program participation to further support the DHS mission?
4. What output and outcome metrics are most relevant to future SAFETY Act program evaluations?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require the following information for which data are available:

- Application characteristics and technology types
- Time to process applications
- Outcomes of application reviews
- OSAI review process itself

The evaluation will require the following information for which new data collection is necessary from the evaluation or preparatory foundational fact finding:

- Peer agency review processes
- Applicant, stakeholder, and program staff perspectives of processes, outcomes, and challenges
- Program staff perspectives on expertise, objectivity, independence, and resources available
- Cases and metrics related to adoption of approved technology

⁴ [Multi-Agency Research and Development Priorities for the FY 2023 Budget, M-21-32](#), (OMB, 2021)

Design and Methods

The primary evidence building activity is a process/implementation evaluation to understand the current SAFETY Act application and adjudication procedures and practices, how these can be improved, and how improvements can be effectively measured. The evaluation will use a non-experimental design.

Primary data sources include SAFETY Act program applicants and other stakeholders; SAFETY Act program staff; and peer agencies' staff. Secondary (existing) data sources include administrative/operational data, program documentation, SAFETY Act applications, SAFETY Act Management System (SAMS), and OSAI and peer data. Data to be collected and collection methods include applicant and stakeholder surveys and interviews, peer agency program documentation and interviews, OSAI internal documents, and data from virtual and on-site visit observations with SAFETY Act applicants.

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis will be used for quantitative data. Qualitative data will be analyzed using content and relationship analysis, and case studies. The case studies inform subsequent quantitative analysis by developing insights into important relationships.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

Anticipated challenges include the rapid pace of change in private sector needs, finding and engaging with appropriate peer agencies, timely Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) information collection request (ICR) submission, and concurrent OSAI process improvements and policy changes during the study. Proposed solutions include staying abreast of the changing context, thinking of relevant variables of interest to identify similar peer agencies, leveraging cross-agency councils, managing the evaluation to ensure timely PRA ICR submission and leveraging generic clearances, and coordinating with OSAI on process improvements that can be evaluated or are being phased in during FY 2024.

A limitation of this evaluation may be data availability. Availability of OSAI's historical data is limited in some respects to include identifying process time between steps of application review and recalling data from a specific date. This can be mitigated by reviewing archived reports and conducting studies of applications currently in review. The program also lacks private stakeholder information for certain groups with historically less or no engagement in the SAFETY Act. Additionally, private stakeholders may be concerned about sharing proprietary and confidential information with competitors. Evaluators will use document review and work closely with the program staff to determine the most appropriate businesses for interviews and case studies and will ensure evaluation participants' privacy and confidentiality protections to motivate willingness to share business-sensitive information.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding to what extent the SAFETY Act program's application and adjudication process adheres to peer agency best practices; how the SAFETY Act application and adjudication processes differ across applications, technology types, and stakeholder groups; and what strategies OSAI can use to improve review processes and procedures while utilizing effective

change management may increase OSAI's review capacity (e.g., application review time and staff expertise), expand the number of SAFETY Act protected technologies, and broaden program participation. Findings may also inform allocation of resources for and within OSAI, S&T Office of Innovation and Collaboration (OIC) and OSAI Future Years Homeland Security Program budget requests and justification, SAFETY Act program and related process updates, and increased coordination/communication with program stakeholders.

The study will solely inform the execution of the SAFETY Act within DHS in that it will assist with program improvements. In turn, these improvements will ensure successful engagement by private and public sector stakeholders. The evidence building activities will engage or inform the S&T OSAI Program Director, S&T OIC leadership, S&T Finance and Budget Division, DHS Program Analysis and Evaluation, existing DHS and federal Evidence Act groups, OMB, Congressional Oversight, other federal peer agencies and programs, and private and public sector stakeholders and applicants.

Public disclosure is anticipated. For Official Use Only versions or extracts of reports will be created for internal DHS dissemination as appropriate.

Alternatives to Detention (ATD) Program

Lead Organization

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO)

Program Description

DHS manages detention and custody of noncitizens who are present in the U.S. without lawful status or permission; however, it does not have the capacity to detain all removable noncitizens from the U.S., and a growing immigration court backlog makes detaining individuals awaiting a court hearing increasingly expensive. Since 2004, Alternatives to Detention (ATD) programs⁵ have provided DHS an important tool for supervising individuals and families as they await the outcome of immigration proceedings utilizing tailored tools like technology and case management, including access to legal information and referrals to other critical services, while allowing noncitizen participants to remain in their community. Such programs intend to increase noncitizens' compliance with their release conditions, appearance at immigration court hearings, and compliance with final orders of removal.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation will assess the effectiveness of ATD for the non-detained population relative to other forms of release, such as parole or bond, on key outcomes including compliance with court appearances and compliance with orders of removal. The evaluation will also assess the relative effectiveness of different treatment conditions, namely supervision types within ATD, on key outcomes of program termination (e.g., relief, removal or return, or other termination reason), court appearances, and violations of release terms. The results of the evaluation will inform

⁵ See <https://www.ice.gov/features/atd>

resource allocation, policy and program updates, and coordination and communication with stakeholders.

This assessment will study the impact of treatment condition(s) on the outcomes of removable, non-detained noncitizens for whom final orders were issued between 2012 and 2020 and who were eligible for or participated in an ATD program. Beginning in August of 2019, ERO Field Operations rolled out a program whereby every ATD participant who is a head of household in 10 large U.S. cities was kept on GPS monitoring throughout their participation in the program until the completion of their removal proceedings. Data from the 10-city pilot may be analyzed to assess effects of this requirement on key outcomes.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 2.3: Enforce U.S. Immigration Laws and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G2-Q4**. The study addresses Administration priorities for a fair, orderly and efficient immigration system.

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted externally by the Homeland Security Operational Analysis Center, a Federally Funded Research and Development Center for the Department of Homeland Security. In FY 2020, Congress appropriated \$4 million to the ATD program for conducting program evaluation. Evaluation planning occurred in FY 2021, and the analysis was conducted in FY 2022 and continues throughout FY 2023.

Questions

The evaluation will address the following key questions:

1. What effect does ATD participation have on removable noncitizens' likelihood of departure, compared to removable noncitizens who do not participate in ATD?
2. What effect does ATD participation have on removable noncitizens' compliance with court appearances, compared to removable noncitizens who do not participate in ATD?
3. What are the comparative and cumulative effects, if possible to determine, of ATD supervision technologies on participating noncitizens' program termination?
4. What are the comparative and cumulative effects of ATD supervision technologies on participating noncitizens' court appearances?
5. What are the comparative and cumulative effects of ATD supervision technologies on participating noncitizens' violations?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require the following information for which data are available:

- Noncitizen treatment conditions, such as location (ERO area of responsibility), ATD type or other form of release, monitoring technology, program status, dates of participation, and legal stage
- Noncitizen outcomes, including court appearances attended/not attended, final decision(s), violation(s), and ATD termination reason

Design and Methods

The planned study is an impact evaluation. The evaluation uses quasi-experimental designs and related analysis appropriate for each question to assess effectiveness. Questions will be studied with two primary designs and analysis to mitigate limitations. These methods differ in their assumptions and details for each question, but fundamentally they are aimed at identifying appropriate comparison groups, where differences in outcomes can be reasonably attributed to the program rather than differences between individuals in each group or other factors.

Cross-sectional comparison compares outcomes for ATD program participants (treated cases) to non-participants that were not subject to the program (non-treated cases).

Longitudinal with cross-sectional comparison, also known as difference-in-differences, compares the change in the outcome observed over two or more time periods (both before and after program start) for ATD program participants, to the change in outcomes over the same time periods for non-participants.

Secondary (existing) data sources include the ATD program data, the Person Centric Query System (PCQS), the Principal Legal Advisor Network (PLANet) system, ENFORCE Alien Removal Module (EARM) data, and the Department of Justice (DOJ) Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR) Automated Case Information system. No additional data collection methods are necessary.

Analytic approaches include descriptive and inferential statistics, such as aggregated longitudinal difference-in-differences, regression models, and propensity scoring and weighting.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

There are roughly three sets of outcomes that are identified as relevant to program effectiveness: court appearance, compliance with removal orders, and compliance with other release conditions.

There is no singular, comprehensive, and accessible source of data to measure potential outcomes or that captures the lifecycle of an individual's movement through various parts of the immigration system, from initial contact to final resolution. In the absence of such data, researchers will assemble several distinct data sets, each tailored to a specific research question.

Statistical methods that seek to approximate experimental conditions insofar as possible—so-called quasi-experimental methods—must be relied on. However, because every method does rest on (largely) untestable assumptions, to reduce the dependence of conclusions on any one assumption, researchers will also use multiple methods and/or multiple models within the same general method, for every research question. This will serve as a robustness check on the findings: where different, appropriately chosen methods and models produce the same or similar results, researchers can attach more confidence to such results.

The biggest obstacle to making use of the GPS pilot is the simultaneous expediting of processing for the pilot population, but not other ATD participants (therefore, we cannot disentangle the

effect of GPS from that of expedited processing in this analysis, although it may be informative to evaluate the simultaneous effect of both). Moreover, it is possible that not enough time has passed since its implementation to see sufficiently large numbers of outcomes (especially for those not in the pilot cities).

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding the effectiveness of ATD models relative to other forms of release and understanding the relative effectiveness of different supervision types, will enable DHS to make better informed decisions regarding the allocation of its custody management resources, policy and program updates related to ATDs, and to better inform its stakeholder community.

Evidence building may engage or be used by the ICE ERO ATD program, the ICE Non-Detained Unit, the ICE Statistical Unit, , the ICE Office of the Principal Legal Advisor (OPLA), the DOJ EOIR, the DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, the Case Management Pilot Program (CMPP) National Board, Congress, OMB, the Domestic Policy Council, immigration advocacy organizations, and contractors implementing ATD (BI Incorporated).

Public disclosure is anticipated.

Case Management Pilot Program (CMPP)

Lead Organization

Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL)

Program Description

Accommodating growth in pending and new cases of noncitizens seeking asylum in a resource constrained environment requires exploring Alternatives to Detention (ATD) models that better facilitate noncitizens' engagement in and compliance with immigration proceedings, ensuring fair and timely immigration processes and resolutions with minimal use of government resources, while upholding noncitizens' rights and dignity. In FY 2021, Congress appropriated \$5 million for the Case Management Pilot Program (CMPP), in which funds should be awarded to local governments and nongovernment organizations (NGOs), administered by a National Board chaired by the DHS Officer for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, to provide voluntary, community-based case management and other services to noncitizens who are enrolled in ICE ATD. Congress appropriated an additional \$15 million for the program in FY 2022 and \$20 million in FY 2023, for a total of \$40 million for the CMPP. Such programs intend to increase noncitizens' compliance with their release conditions, appearance at immigration court hearings, and for individuals who will return to their home countries, final orders of removal, while allowing participants to remain in their communities. The provision of critical services in the communities may also contribute to positive outcomes for noncitizens, including ability to secure legal representation and other stabilizing services, appropriate identification of victims of human trafficking, and ability to pursue all options to remain lawfully.

Purpose and Scope

CRCL will undertake a two-part formative evaluation of the CMPP. An impact evaluation will assess the effectiveness of CMPP relative to other forms of release, such as other ATDs, parole, or bond, for the non-detained population on key outcomes, including compliance with court appearances and compliance with orders of removal or return. A process/implementation evaluation will assess the feasibility and acceptability of the community-based case management model in providing noncitizen case management at the levels and with the quality of services that meet government and participant requirements and ways in which the funding structure supports community capacity for case management and stabilization services. Although the evaluation will assess impact, the primary purpose is for process improvement and program development and updates as the program expands.

Evaluating the effectiveness of the CMPP requires answering causal questions. If possible, the impact evaluation of the pilot will use controlled experiments to make inferences about the causal impact of any policy or program, where differences in outcomes can be reasonably attributed to the program. Such designs also improve equitable access to programmatic benefits. In FY 2023, researchers will work with the National Board to identify and implement possible enrollment designs that adhere to the statutory eligibility requirements, enhance equity in receiving program benefits, and maintain the rigorous experimental design. If this is not possible, a well-constructed quasi-experiment may be possible.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 2.3: Enforce U.S. Immigration Laws and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G2-Q4**. The study addresses Administration priorities for a fair, orderly and efficient immigration system.

Resources

The impact evaluation will be conducted by external researchers who are detailed to CRCL through an Interagency Personnel Agreement and/or Memorandum of Understanding. DHS CRCL, in collaboration with DHS Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E), will commission the process evaluation. Implementation of the studies is expected to begin in FY 2024 with a two- to four-year period of performance that accounts for average case completion (i.e. relief/removal decisions) for immigration proceedings for non-detained individuals.

Questions

The evaluations will likely address the following key questions:

1. Does CMPP positively affect immigration enforcement outcomes with greater effectiveness, efficiency, and economy, compared to ICE ATD (including release on parole and/or bond)?
2. To what extent can we attribute the CMPP with:
 - a. increased appearance rates before courts and compliance with final orders?
 - b. reduced duration of relief/removal decisions?
 - c. reduced cost per day or cost per immigration outcome?
 - d. Increased rate of relief?

3. To what extent do communities/local providers have the capacity to provide services and programming as identified in the logic model at acceptable levels and quality?
4. What are barriers to implementation that must be addressed to support feasibility of scaling?
5. How does funding structure (i.e., a grant to sites, rather than pay per service) increase capacity?
6. From the perspective of the participants and case workers, do the services and programming rendered fulfill the identified needs of participants, and what improvements could serve unmet needs?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require the following information for which data are available: location (DHS area of responsibility), release status (CMPP, ATD, parole, bond, etc.), dates of participation, legal stage, court appearances attended/not attended, legal representation in court, final decision, and program costs.

The evaluation will require the following information for which new data will be collected and metrics monitored on a quarterly basis:

- Number and diversity (e.g., gender, age, nationality, country of origin, language) of CMPP participants who:
 - received case management and participant-led service planning
 - received legal orientation and referrals
 - identified as a need and received service or connection to mental health screening and services, human trafficking screening, cultural orientation programming, departure planning and reintegration, connection for other needed services
 - were without legal counsel at CMPP enrollment and who subsequently secured legal counsel during their CMPP enrollment
- CMPP case worker and participant satisfaction with level and quality of services, unmet needs, and areas for improvement

Design and Methods

The formative evaluation will include an impact evaluation and process/implementation evaluation of the pilot program.

The impact evaluation will use an experimental/randomized control trial or matched quasi-experimental design and related analysis, such as cross-sectional comparisons and difference-in-differences, as appropriate for each question to assess effectiveness. Cross-sectional comparison analysis compares outcomes for CMPP participants (treated cases) to non-participants that were not subject to the program (non-treated cases). Longitudinal, cross-sectional comparison, also known as difference-in-differences, compares the change in the outcome observed over two or more time periods (both before and after program start) for CMPP participants, to the change in outcomes over the same time periods for non-participants.

Primary data sources include CMPP grantees (local governments and NGOs) and service providers, case workers, and noncitizen participants. Existing secondary data sources include administrative/operational data in Person Centric Query System (PCQS), Principal Legal Advisor Network (PLANet), and ENFORCE Alien Removal Module (EARM) systems. Additional secondary data sources are in development, including CMPP-defined performance measures that grantees collect, analyze, and transmit to CRCL on a quarterly basis. Additional methods of data collection for satisfaction and unmet needs may include qualitative interviews and focus groups.

Analytic approaches include descriptive and inferential statistics (e.g., aggregated longitudinal and/or cross-sectional comparisons, regression models, propensity scoring and weighting for matched comparisons) for quantitative administrative/operational data and performance measures data. Qualitative analysis, including cross-site analysis of pilot locations and theme identification, will be used for qualitative data collected through qualitative interviews and focus groups.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

There is no singular, comprehensive and accessible source of data to measure potential outcomes or that captures the lifecycle of a noncitizen's movement through various parts of the immigration system, from initial contact to final resolution. In the absence of such data, researchers will assemble several distinct data sets, each tailored to a specific research question.

Difference-in-differences analysis – that is, differences in the outcome before and after participation in the program, between program participants and non-participants – can be interpreted to be the effect of the program under certain conditions. Therefore, whenever possible, researchers will seek a way to evaluate the CMPP effectiveness using longitudinal data from a randomly assigned control group or a well-matched non-participant group. When that is not possible, researchers may resort to comparisons of cross-sectional data using propensity score methods; researchers will avoid purely longitudinal comparisons in analysis.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding the effectiveness of CMPP relative to other ATD models and forms of release and whether CMPP can deliver services with acceptable levels and quality to individuals who are eventually identified for relief, will enable DHS to make better informed decisions regarding the allocation of its custody management resources, policy and program updates related to ATDs, and to better inform its stakeholder community.

Evidence building may engage or be used by DHS CRCL, the CMPP National Board, CMPP-funded state/local governments and NGOs, ICE Statistical Unit, BI Incorporated, ICE ERO ATD program, ICE Non-Detained Unit, ICE Office of the Principal Legal Advisory, Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review, Congress, OMB, the Domestic Policy Council, and immigration advocacy organizations.

Public disclosure is anticipated.

Asylum Processing Rule (APR)

Lead Organization

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)

Program Description

Due to immigration court backlogs, the recent average case completion time in immigration court has been 3.75 years for non-detained individuals in removal proceedings, including individuals subject to expedited removal who establish a credible fear of persecution or torture during their required credible fear screening. On March 29, 2022, an Interim Final Rule “Procedures for Credible Fear Screening and Consideration of Asylum, Withholding of Removal, and CAT Protection Claims by Asylum Officers” (The Asylum Processing Rule or APR) was published in the *Federal Register* which went into effect May 31, 2022. The Asylum Processing Rule authorizes USCIS to maintain jurisdiction over asylum applications of certain individuals subject to expedited removal who establish a credible fear of persecution or torture, instead of those cases automatically going to an immigration judge within the Department of Justice’s (DOJ) Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR). If successful, this rule should result in more efficient processing of these case types, potentially shortening the administrative process to adjudicate the asylum application from several years to several months. Individuals who qualify for asylum will receive protection more swiftly, and those who are not eligible for asylum or alternative forms of relief will be promptly removed, rather than remaining in the United States for years while their cases are pending.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation will assess the phased implementation of the rule by USCIS and its immigration partners—Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and DOJ EOIR—as compared to the details outlined in the final concept of operations (. Following the implementation evaluation, an outcome evaluation will provide USCIS, DOJ, DHS, the Administration, Congress, and other stakeholder groups with evidence on if the APR had the intended effects (or unintended effects) on case decisions and processing times. The evaluation will inform program development or updates.

Only individuals who are placed into expedited removal proceedings after May 31, 2022, are potentially subject to the new process. Specifically, the APR “applies prospectively and only to adults and families who are placed in expedited removal proceedings and indicate an intention to apply for asylum, a fear of persecution or torture, or a fear of return to their home country, after the rule’s effective date.”⁶ The APR does not apply to unaccompanied children. The first locations for placement under this process were two detention facilities in Texas, with additional facilities added incrementally. Referrals to USCIS for the Asylum Merits Interview (AMI) during the first phase of implementation included individuals with an intent to reside in one of seven cities: Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Newark, or San Francisco. Additional cities,

⁶ [Procedures for Credible Fear Screening and Consideration of Asylum, Withholding of Removal, and CAT Protection Claims by Asylum Officers, 87 Fed. Reg. 18,087](#) (March 29, 2022).

including New Orleans and Annandale, Virginia, were added in December 2022 and additional cities will be added as implementation progresses. A small number of non-detained credible fear referrals were also included as potential AMI cases beginning in mid-August 2022. The evaluation would primarily analyze administrative processes, case characteristics, and case decisions related to this group of participating individuals; however, the evaluation will attempt to compare trends in case decisions and processing times before and after the APR implementation.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 2.4: Administer Immigration Benefits and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda Question G2-Q6*. The study addresses Administration priorities for a fair, orderly, and efficient immigration system.

Resources

The APR evaluation will be conducted externally and is expected to begin in FY 2023. USCIS currently estimates a one-year period of performance for the implementation evaluation. USCIS will review the implementation evaluation results to determine the timeline for conducting the non-experimental outcome evaluation within the contract.

Questions

The overall evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. Was the APR implemented consistent with the interim final rule and corresponding procedures?
2. If the implementation deviated, what were the factors that caused the change?
3. Were there any unintended consequences to other implementer operations?
4. Did implementation vary by geographic location, case type, or other factors?
5. Did implementation result in the intended outputs?

The secondary evaluation questions are:

1. What are the differences in case decisions between cases initially adjudicated by USCIS under the APR vs. cases initially adjudicated by EOIR and does this vary by case characteristic?
2. What are the differences in case processing times between cases initially adjudicated by USCIS under the APR vs. cases initially adjudicated by EOIR and does this vary by case characteristic?
3. Has the average case processing time for asylum applications adjudicated by USCIS and EOIR following a positive credible fear determination under the APR decreased as compared to the average case processing time for asylum applications adjudicated by EOIR following a positive credible fear determination before the APR was implemented?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require the following information for which data are expected to be available:

- Multi-agency implementation data for key activities, milestones, and timelines

- Information about individual cases as they enter the system and are referred to USCIS and/or EOIR
- Case processing times
- Case decisions

The evaluation will require the following information for which new data collection is necessary:

- Deviations from the concept of operations and root causes for those deviations
- Unintended consequences to implementer operations

Design and Methods

The planned study is a two-phase evaluation. The first phase is a process/implementation evaluation that describes the phased implementation of the APR by USCIS, CBP, ICE, and DOJ EOIR. The second phase is a non-experimental outcome evaluation that aims to measure contributions of the APR to processing times and case decisions of applicable case types. Although the intent is to compare before and after rule implementation, it is unlikely that an interrupted time series quasi-experimental design would be possible.

Primary data sources include program staff supporting APR implementation by USCIS, CBP, ICE, and DOJ EOIR. USCIS may collect qualitative data from program staff, especially from USCIS and EOIR staff, through some combination of qualitative questionnaires, interviews, or focus groups to understand implementation deviations, root causes, and unintended consequences to operations in the first study. Secondary sources include administrative data, which account for the vast majority of data needed for both evaluations.

Descriptive statistics will be used for quantitative data and qualitative data that can be quantified to determine if/how the APR implementation varied from the original concept of operations and case processing times and decisions by various case characteristics. Trend analysis will be used to compare these from before and after the APR change but will not be used to make claims about causality in the evaluation. Qualitative analysis, including cross-site analysis and theme identification, will be used for qualitative data to describe root causes for deviations and unintended consequences.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

The primary challenge will be in the outcome evaluation. The APR represents a new process with many changes that could happen during that same time that can influence case processing. Evaluators may find it difficult to draw many conclusions about the change, even with four years' worth of data. The first phase seeks to document the implementation of the new APR process and attempt to identify the effects of both internal and external changes to the environment during the study period. This step will help to establish the parameters of a baseline from which differences in case processing time can be measured for the second phase.

Multiple limitations may exist. Data will be collected across agencies and offices, and challenges may arise when analyzing these disparate data sets. USCIS will focus on descriptive statistics and

trend analysis to describe outcomes of interest. Initial data collected and shared might include measurement and representation error. For example, the initial implementation sites might not be a true representation of the universe of cases. While pre- and post-implementation data exist, there is no way to account for all confounding variables in this rapidly changing environment. Since some confounding variables could influence the supposed cause-and-effect relationship in unknown ways, no claims of causality or attribution can be made in this study. Inclusion of the qualitative data collection will enable the evaluators to discuss and contextualize the limitations.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding how the APR was implemented and how its implementation affected case decisions and processing times will enable DHS to determine the next steps in the phased implementation and roll-out of this new rule. The outcome evaluation will provide USCIS, DOJ, DHS, the Administration, Congress, and other stakeholder groups with evidence on whether the APR had its expected effects (or unintended effects).

This evaluation will engage or inform USCIS - Office of the Director, Office of Policy and Strategy, Refugee, Asylum, and International Operations, DHS Office of Strategy, Policy and Plans, DHS Office of Immigration Statistics, ICE, CBP, and DOJ EOIR. The results of these studies may have broad implications for the Administration, Congress, and advocates. Public disclosure is anticipated.

Naturalization Outreach

Lead Organization

USCIS, Office of Performance and Quality

Program Description

DHS estimates that there are 9.1 million people who may be eligible to naturalize and have not taken steps to become U.S. citizens. USCIS has not historically conducted outreach with individuals who may be eligible to naturalize. USCIS plans to conduct naturalization outreach to the population that may be eligible to naturalize and rigorously test the impact of the outreach on individuals filing for naturalization. With the outreach, USCIS hopes to increase the likelihood of lawful permanent residents applying for naturalization and naturalizing.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation will assess the effects of a “nudge,” an outreach or promotion effort not regularly part of USCIS services/processes, on positive lawful permanent resident behavior, specifically naturalization application filing, and the long-term outcome of naturalization. The evaluation results will inform process improvements, including coordination and communication with stakeholders.

The evaluation will assess whether USCIS adding outreach activities, such as outreach letters mailed to lawful permanent residents who may be eligible for naturalization, results in changes in the outcome of more applications for naturalization (Form N-400s) filed within six months of the outreach activity.

The study will include outreach via direct mailings to 200,000-300,000 individuals, randomly selected from a group of millions of eligible lawful permanent residents. The group of likely eligible individuals will be a broad categorization, including all those who have obtained their residency five or more years prior and have not yet taken the step to submit a naturalization application. The study will exclude those who require special protection such as T Visa, U Visa, and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) recipients, and provides appropriate protection of status for those admitted as refugees and granted asylum.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 2.4: Administer Immigration Benefits and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G2-Q7**. The study addresses Administration priorities for a fair, orderly, and efficient immigration system.

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted externally with the General Services Administration Office of Evaluation Sciences and Immigration Policy Lab at Stanford University supporting the design development, treatment and control selection, and analyses. USCIS currently estimates a two-year period of performance.

Questions

The evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. Does the receipt of a mailed notification of potential eligibility impact the likelihood of a lawful permanent resident to apply for naturalization (submit Form N-400)?
2. Does the receipt of a mailed notification of potential eligibility impact the likelihood of a lawful permanent resident to submit a Form N-400 online?
3. Does the receipt of a mailed notification of potential eligibility impact the likelihood of naturalization?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require the following information for which data are available:

- Length of time spent as a lawful permanent resident
- Status before granted lawful permanent residence
- Country of birth
- Age when lawful permanent resident status was obtained
- Year of birth
- Geographic area of intended residence when lawful permanent resident status was obtained
- Gender
- N-400 submitted
- N-400 approved / denied / withdrawn

The evaluation will require new data collection on the likelihood that outreach letter mailings reached intended recipients.

Existing administrative data analysis and a pilot will be conducted to gain a general sense of the likelihood that outreach letter mailings reach the intended recipients. USCIS is exploring whether it can, based on returned mail, determine if a lawful permanent resident received the mail or not.

Design and Methods

The planned study is an impact evaluation of a behaviorally informed intervention (i.e., outreach) to identify the effect of direct communication to lawful permanent residents on: (1) their likelihood of applying for naturalization (i.e., submitting the Form N-400) and (2) submitting the online Form N-400. As a secondary and longer-term outcome, USCIS may examine whether the direct communication increases the likelihood of naturalization.

The nudge will consist of a letter mailed to lawful permanent residents who are likely eligible for naturalization. This letter addresses various behavioral barriers by including: a fresh start motivator (framing moments in time as new beginnings), the benefits of U.S. citizenship, a checklist of next steps and includes a social motivator (information on peer behavior). The evaluation will use a randomized control trial design in which lawful permanent residents are randomly assigned to a treatment group that receives the nudge, or a control group that does not receive the nudge.

Primary data will be collected from observation of returned mail during the pilot to determine the likelihood that outreach letter mailings reached the intended recipient.

Secondary (existing) data sources include USCIS administrative data, such as gathered in Form I-485 (Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status), Form AR-11 (Alien's Change of Address Card), Form I-90 (Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card), and Form N-400, managed in USCIS Electronic Immigration System, USCIS Computer Linked Application Information Management System, and Enterprise Citizenship and Immigration Services Centralized Operational Repository.

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis will be used for quantitative administrative data. Researchers will conduct a simple t-test to determine the statistical significance in the difference of mean N-400 submission rates for treatment and control groups. Then researchers will estimate the average treatment effect of the nudge using regression to gain further statistical power. The regression model will include a binary (yes/no) treatment indicator, a set of pre-determined control variables, and interactions between the treatment indicator and the control variables. Control variables may include country of birth, age when lawful permanent resident status was obtained, class of admission, year of birth, geographic area of intended residence when lawful permanent resident was obtained, and/or gender among others. The sample size will be selected to ensure the Minimum Detectable Effect Size would be roughly 0.3 percentage points.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

Challenges include accurate lawful permanent resident address information and broad sampling. USCIS is using address information from the Form I-485, form I-90, and any subsequent Form AR-11 address updates; however, these data may be outdated. The study includes a pilot to

determine success in outreach letter mailings (which would be indicated by low rates of return mailings). There is little to no information on the likelihood of action individuals will take after receiving the letter or the demographics who are more likely to respond to the letter. The broad sampling approach is logistically burdensome but will enable analysis of heterogenous effects across demographics after implementation and possibly help USCIS determine how to best target outreach in the future.

Out of date addresses is a primary limitation. Outreach letters will be sent to addresses that, in some cases, may be outdated. A high level of failure for outreach letters could reduce the power of the statistical calculations, which means a reduced ability to detect variation in effects across subgroups. The study design assumes some level of failure and the sampling and randomization methods will mitigate that. If the pilot finds a large percent of letters are returned to USCIS, and the power to detect variation in effects across subgroups is reduced, then the analysis plan will be revisited.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding if the evaluation demonstrates that the outreach increases naturalization filing will enable DHS to incorporate the nudges into its regular services/processes. This priority question will engage or inform the USCIS Office of the Director, Office of Citizenship, Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman, Field Office Directorate, Office of Policy and Strategy, Office of Privacy, Office of the Chief Counsel, Office of Intake and Documentation Production, and Office of Information Technology. Testing the impact of nudges on behavior change will be valuable research to other federal agencies, universities and research organizations, as well as state and local government.

Public disclosure is anticipated.

Citizenship and Integration Grant Program (CIGP): Citizenship Instruction and Naturalization Application Services (CINAS) Grant and Community and Regional Integration Network Grant (CARING) Program

Lead Organization

USCIS

Program Description

The goal of the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program (CIGP) is to expand the availability of high-quality citizenship preparation services for immigrants across the nation and to provide opportunities for immigrants to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to integrate into the fabric of American society. The Citizenship Instruction and Naturalization Application Services (CINAS) grant is for public or nonprofit organizations that prepare immigrants for citizenship by offering both citizenship instruction and naturalization application services. The Community and Regional Integration Network Grant (CARING), (formerly known as the Refugee and Asylee Integration Services Program or RAIS) is for organizations that provide extended integration services to vulnerable immigrant populations who entered the United States through USCIS'

humanitarian programs or benefitted from those programs while already in the United States. These groups often experience unique challenges with civic, linguistic, economic, cultural, and institutional integration when resettling in the United States, which may affect their progress toward full civic integration.

Through the CINAS and CARING programs, grantees offer the same services to provide opportunities for immigrants to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to integrate into the fabric of American society. While CINAS serves all immigrant populations, CARING specifically serves immigrant populations who were refugees, asylees, Cuban or Haitian entrants; individuals admitted on a Special Immigrant Visa; victims of human trafficking or criminal activity; and abused spouses, children, and parents under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). CARING also provides additional integration services (e.g., referrals to employment training) that CINAS does not.

This assistance promotes noncitizens' engagement and integration in their communities, satisfaction and success in their personal and professional lives, positive contributions to their communities and the Nation, and naturalization for those who have identified naturalization as a goal.

Purpose and Scope

The first phase of the evaluation will assess CINAS and CARING processes, implementation, and related challenges. The second phase of the evaluation will assess the programs' contributions to intended outcomes, such as improved English language proficiency, civics knowledge, and naturalization of participating noncitizens. The evaluation results will inform program development and updates.

The evaluation will examine program implementation and accumulated contributions to intended noncitizens' outcomes since FY 2018. Where possible, participant outcomes may be compared with those of eligible lawful permanent residents who did not enroll in grant recipient programs to receive services.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 2.4: Administer Immigration Benefits and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G2-Q7**. The study addresses Administration priorities for a fair, orderly and efficient immigration system.

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted internally and is expected to begin in FY 2023. USCIS currently estimates a two- to four-year period of performance to conduct implementation and outcome evaluations.

Questions

The overall evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. How did CINAS and CARING grant recipients implement the grant? What were the causes of variation among grant recipients?

2. What external factors influenced implementation?
3. Did implementation result in the intended outputs?
4. Are participants being reached as intended?

The outcome evaluation questions are:

1. To what extent do CINAS and CARING program participants increase their English language proficiency?
2. To what extent do CINAS and CARING program participants increase their civics knowledge?
3. To what extent do CINAS and CARING program participants apply for naturalization? How does this compare to similar eligible lawful permanent residents who did not enroll in the program?
4. To what extent are CINAS and CARING program participants successful in obtaining naturalization? How does this compare to similar eligible lawful permanent residents who did not enroll in the program?
5. Which services provided through grantees help program participants achieve intended outcomes?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require the following information for which data are available:

- Grant recipient implementation plans and progress/performance
- Individual, socioeconomic, and case characteristics
- Nature and quantity of grant recipient activities and services provided to noncitizen participants
- English proficiency and civics test scores of participants and comparison lawful permanent residents, if available
- Naturalization application data of participants and comparison lawful permanent residents, if available

The evaluation may require the following information for which new data collection is necessary:

- USCIS' CINAS and CARING staff and grant recipient staff perspectives on fidelity to program design, including deviations and root causes of deviations

Design and Methods

The first phase of the study is an implementation evaluation which will assess whether the CINAS and CARING programs are being implemented as intended, including deviations and root causes of deviations from the grant recipient implementation plan, toward identifying implementation challenges to be addressed. The second phase of the evaluation is an outcome evaluation which will determine whether the program contributes to intended outcomes such as improved English language proficiency, civics knowledge, and naturalization of participating noncitizens. Non-experimental designs will be used unless researchers determine it is possible to construct an ex

post quasi-experiment to compare participant outcomes with the outcomes of similar, eligible lawful permanent residents that did not receive grant recipient services.

Primary data sources may include USCIS CINAS and CARING program staff and grant recipient staff. Methods of primary data collection will include qualitative interviews or focus groups. Secondary data sources include the following:

- grant recipient administrative/operational data reported to USCIS, which include data on grant recipients' implemented activities, services provided, and individual participants
- CINAS and CARING program administrative data, including original proposals and required progress reporting
- USCIS Electronic Immigration System, USCIS Computer Linked Application Information Management System, and Central Index System data, mainly collected in Form I-485 (Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status), Form N-400 (Application for Naturalization), and Form G-28 (Notice of Entry of Appearance as Attorney or Accredited Representative).

Descriptive statistical analysis will be used for quantitative data. Inferential statistical analysis will be used to compare participants to themselves over time, or to compare with non-participating lawful permanent residents. Qualitative analysis, such as content analysis and theme identification, will be used for qualitative data.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

Although noncitizens' naturalization is the primary long-term outcome of interest, lengthy processing times for naturalization applications may hinder measurement of the outcome during the evaluation's period of performance. The median processing time for a Form N-400 was 11.5 months in 2021.

If an ex post quasi-experimental design is feasible and used, the study could compare naturalization outcomes of non-participating lawful permanent residents who are statistically similar to participating lawful permanent residents using data that USCIS already collects on these populations. However, we cannot account for all potential confounds using this method. For example, there may be some unaccounted-for personal characteristics, for which we cannot control using USCIS data, that affects naturalization outcomes. Additionally, that an eligible lawful permanent resident seeks assistance from a CINAS or CARING program grant provider may indicate that they are personally more motivated to naturalize or, conversely, that they need more help than others to achieve naturalization. Therefore, USCIS does not intend to make definitive statements about causality or attribution.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding if the CINAS and CARING programs are being implemented as intended, the challenges with implementation, and the programs' contribution to civic integration and naturalization outcomes will help USCIS determine what, if any, changes are needed to improve program design and implementation to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of future

iterations of the CINAS and CARING grant programs. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.301, USCIS will use findings to share lessons learned, improve program outcomes, and encourage the adoption of promising practices by grant recipients. This evaluation may engage or inform USCIS leadership and program staff, Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman, CINAS and CARING program grant recipients, Congress, OMB and the interagency Naturalization Working Group.

Public disclosure is anticipated.

Immigration Services E-Verify

Lead Organization

USCIS

Program Description

Employers need to be able to quickly and easily confirm the eligibility of their employees to work in the United States. E-Verify is a web-based system that allows enrolled employers to confirm the identity and employment eligibility of newly hired employees by electronically matching information provided by employees on Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification, against records available to the Social Security Administration (SSA) and DHS. In the current E-Verify process, employers create cases based on information taken from the employee's Form I-9. In the proposed enhancement to E-Verify, referred to as "NextGen," the employer initiates the case and then the employee receives an invitation to privately upload their data into the system. If an employee receives a mismatch and needs to provide more information, the employee may review and respond to the request for information in the system. These changes are intended to enhance the E-Verify process to provide easier, faster, and more accurate requests for employment authorization verification and to improve employer and employee use and trust in the E-Verify system.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation will assess enhancements that will be made to E-Verify as part of the demonstration project pilot NextGen. The results of this evaluation will inform process improvements, resource allocations, program development, and updates needed to scale E-Verify, if successful.

Data collection covering employers and their employees submitting Form I-9 will predominantly occur as the project iterates into a production setting (approximately FY 2024) where real scenarios and data will be used. Live production data will not be available in the Proof-of-Concept phase but will be available after the Alpha and Minimum Viable Product releases accordingly.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 2.4: Administer Immigration Benefits and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G2-Q6**. The study addresses Administration priorities for a fair, orderly and efficient immigration system.

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted externally and is expected to begin in FY 2023. USCIS currently estimates a two-year period of performance.

Questions

The evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. How do processing times, mismatches, mismatch resolution times, and customer experiences vary between the enhancement and the current system?
2. Do these vary by business or employee characteristics?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require the following information for which data are available:

- System use characteristics
- User (business and prospective employee) characteristics
- Efficiency and accuracy information, such as processing times, false data mismatches, and mismatch resolution times

The evaluation will require new data collection on employer and employee user experience, satisfaction, and trust.

Design and Methods

USCIS will undertake a formative evaluation of enhancements that will be made to E-Verify as part of the demonstration project pilot. The formative assessment will examine outcomes, such as processing times, false mismatches, mismatch resolution times, and customer experience with and perceptions of the process.

Primary data sources include employer and employee users. Methods of qualitative data collection for user experience, satisfaction, and trust will include some combination of surveys, interviews, and focus groups. Secondary (existing) data include quantitative data captured by the E-Verify system on the system use, user (business and prospective employee) characteristics, and processing times.

Descriptive statistical analysis and inferential statistical analysis, such as correlational analyses and trend analyses of quantitative data, will be used to assess primary outcomes (efficiency information) and user characteristics. Qualitative analysis, such as sentiment analysis and theme identification, will be used to assess secondary outcomes of user experience, satisfaction, and trust. Both sets of data will be compared to data from the current E-Verify system to determine if the desired outcomes are improved.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

Adequately capturing the experiences of each user type may pose a challenge since E-Verify provides a service to all types and sizes of businesses and all classes of potential employees. Large amounts of user data will be automatically collected by the system itself that should allow for

various ways of analyzing across user groups. Targeted outreach to various groups for qualitative data collection could also mitigate this challenge.

While the evaluation intends to determine if the NextGen process improves certain outcomes and for which customers, the evaluation will not use an experimental design. Customers can choose which E-Verify process to use, and findings may be limited by this self-selection bias. However, currently USCIS does not intend to require customers use the NextGen process, so this limitation does not materially reduce the utility of the findings. Users may continue to use the process they prefer and USCIS will not claim that one process is more effective than the other.

This evaluation requires primary collection of customer experiences with NextGen. There are many different E-Verify user types, including large and small businesses throughout the United States. Additionally, the NextGen system requires employees to interact with the verification process in a way they have not previously. Therefore, getting sufficient and valid user experience data to adequately describe the multitude of user types may be difficult. USCIS will validate any data collection instruments and make a concerted effort to achieve a large and diverse user response.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding the characteristics and numbers of employers and employees that may participate, and the costs and benefits to them opting into the alternative process created by E-Verify NextGen will enable DHS to plan for future business processes, strategically prioritize investments on system enhancements and improvement, policy changes, and outreach. The evaluation will inform decisions on making NextGen a permanent and scalable option for verification.

This priority question will engage or inform USCIS Immigration Records and Identify Services, USCIS leadership, USCIS Verification Division Data Analytics and Processes Branch. Public disclosure is anticipated.

Encouraging the Use of USCIS' Online Services

Lead Organization

USCIS

Program Description

The USCIS online account and filing options offer a number of benefits to customers, including the ability to track case status, view personalized processing times (for some forms) for various case milestones and overall completion, send a secure message to the USCIS Contact Center, and instantly receive and respond to Requests for Evidence online rather than waiting for mail correspondence. This results in faster processing times for Requests for Evidence to support a case decision. The use of online services also reduces costs and burdens on the agency.

A priority for USCIS is increasing the number of customers who use these online services. Customers may underutilize online tools for a variety of reasons, including a lack of awareness

that they exist, a (mis)belief that such tools are not secure, or a perception that online tools are complicated or cumbersome. For example, only around 60 percent of those who file to replace or renew their green card do so online.

Evidence on the impact of light-touch solutions for reducing these administrative burdens is mixed.⁷ This evaluation aims to rigorously measure the impact of light-touch methods, specifically, messages aimed at encouraging more USCIS customers to utilize online services.

USCIS offers online services and filing for several forms through the USCIS online account. Each month, the agency conducts outreach to two key groups to increase the usage of online tools and services:

- **Green Card Holders:** USCIS sends emails and texts to lawful permanent residents whose green cards are due to expire within six, four, and two months, notifying them that they can renew online and providing links to the account.
- **Paper Filers:** The agency also sends emails to applicants who recently filed certain paper forms (that are also available for online filing), notifying them that they can connect their paper application to their USCIS online account and providing a link to sign up.

Purpose and Scope

This evaluation will assess the effects of different messages to encourage online filing, rather than mail filing, for Form I-90, Application to Replace Permanent Resident Card, and for creating online accounts and linking recent paper filed forms. USCIS hopes to understand if these messages are effective in promoting online services and which messages are most effective in order to determine if and how to scale this type of outreach and promotion.

The evaluation will focus on text messages to lawful permanent residents who are nearing their renewal deadline (approximately 16,000 people per month) and will need to submit a Form I-90 to receive an updated Green Card and on email messages to recent paper filers who could have filed online (approximately 70,000 people per month). The study will exclude individuals who require special protection such as T Visa, U Visa, and Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) recipients, and provides appropriate protection of status for those admitted as refugees and granted asylum.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 2.4: Administer Immigration Benefits and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G2-Q8**. The study responds to the *President's Management Agenda Learning Agenda*⁸ priority questions about how the federal government can deliver programs and services effectively and build trust.

The study addresses Administration priorities for a fair, orderly, and efficient immigration system.

⁷ [Take-Up and Targeting: Experimental Evidence from SNAP](#) (Finkelstein & Notowidigdo, 2019)

⁸ See <https://www.performance.gov/pma/learning-agenda/>

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted externally with the General Services Administration (GSA) Office of Evaluation Sciences and The People Lab at Harvard University supporting the design, development, treatment and control selection, and analyses. The project will begin in FY 2023 and USCIS estimates a one-year period of performance.

Questions

The evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. Are messages effective in promoting the use of online services? For example, does receiving a text message affect the likelihood that a lawful permanent resident submits a renewal application online rather than by mail?
2. Which message(s) are most effective? For example, which, if any, text message alternatives increase the likelihood that a lawful permanent resident submits a renewal application online rather than by mail?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require the following information for which data are available:

- Class of admission
- Country of birth
- Age when lawful permanent residency status was obtained
- Green Card Expiration date
- Year of birth
- Gender
- I-90 submitted, submission modality, and submission date
- Online Account Created and Case Linked

No new data will need to be collected.

Design and Methods

The planned study is an impact evaluation of a behaviorally informed intervention to identify the effect of different messages on the likelihood of using online services.

The first study involves modifications to existing text message outreach processes to notify lawful permanent residents of the availability of online filing for Form I-90 at six, four, and two months prior to their renewal deadlines. Approximately 16,000-17,000 lawful permanent residents in each renewal group (six, four, and two months) are contacted each month, for a total of 48,000-51,000 contacted each month. This evaluation will only affect outreach conducted to lawful permanent residents in the two-month group. Each individual in the study will be randomly assigned to one of three groups: (1) control (no text message), (2) status quo text message, or (3) modified language text message. The analysis will identify: (1) the average effect of text messages on modality of renewal filing; (2) the average effect of the modified text message language

(relative to the status quo language) on modality of renewal filing; and (3) any heterogeneous effects by relevant subgroups (e.g., country of birth).

The second study involves modifications to existing email notifications aimed at increasing online account creation for those who have recently filed a paper form that was eligible for online filing. The email notifications encourage the filer to create an online account and link their recently filed case to the online account. Approximately 70,000 filers on average receive this email outreach each month. Filers will be randomly assigned to one of three conditions: (1) the status quo email, (2) modified language email that emphasizes operational transparency and benefits, or (3) modified language email that emphasizes social norms. The analysis will determine (1) the average effect of each email notification variation on customers' likelihood of setting up an online account and linking their case; and (2) any heterogeneous effects by relevant subgroups (e.g., country of birth).

No primary data will be collected for this study. Secondary (existing) data sources include USCIS administrative data, such as data gathered in Form I-485 Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status and Form I-90, and managed in USCIS Electronic Immigration System, USCIS Computer Linked Application Information Management System, and Enterprise Citizenship and Immigration Services Centralized Operational Repository.

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis will be used for quantitative administrative data. Predetermined control variables, such as country of birth, will be used to determine heterogeneous effects by relevant subgroups.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

The study designs are experimental and intended to identify which messages, if any, increase the likelihood of the use of online services. However, absent additional qualitative data, the study will not reveal why a certain message was more impactful. This may limit the ability to generalize findings to other contexts or for different populations.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding which messages are more effective at promoting the use of online services will enable DHS to deploy successful messages at scale, increase the use of online services, and ultimately decrease the use of paper filing and communications. This priority question will inform USCIS communications strategies.

Public disclosure is anticipated.

Binding Operational Directives (BODs) and Emergency Directives (EDs)

Lead Organization

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E)

Program Description

Due to consistently emerging and dynamic cyber threats and wide variation in the maturity of cybersecurity programs across Federal Civilian Executive Branch (FCEB) agencies, at times CISA

must leverage its congressionally mandated authority to drive collective action and address unacceptable risk to protect agency information security systems. Binding Operational Directives and Emergency Directives spur collective and consistent action on key cybersecurity practices for comprehensive cyber defenses across the Federal government. These directives are compulsory direction to federal, executive branch, departments and agencies for purposes of safeguarding federal information and information systems. Section 3553(b)(2) and Section 3553(h) of title 44, U.S. Code authorizes the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to develop and oversee the implementation of Binding Operational Directives and Emergency Directives. Section 2205(3) of the Homeland Security Act of 2002, as amended, delegates this authority to the Director of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. As a result, cybersecurity practices and defenses are hardened across the Federal enterprise in a consistent manner and meet key baseline standards.

Purpose and Scope

The primary purpose of the study is to assess what aspects of Binding Operational Directive and Emergency Directive requirements are more or less associated with federal civilian executive branch (FCEB) actions to improve cybersecurity practices. For a subset of directives, the study will elicit FCEB agency staff perspectives on whether directive requirements drove agency action compared to other factors. For agencies that did not meet requirements in a timely fashion and at an acceptable quality level, the study will elicit barriers to compliance, and what additional instructions or resources from CISA, if any, could have enabled agency compliance. The results of the evaluation will inform updates to the Directive issuance process, including potential refinement to coordination and communication with stakeholders.

Directives have been issued since 2015. CISA will review the full suite of directives and identify a representative subset to focus on within the evaluation that will provide illustrative examples of a range of roll-out approaches, cybersecurity priorities, and implementation mechanisms.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 3.1: Secure Federal Civilian Networks and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G3-Q1**. This study will align with the Administration's focus on cybersecurity, including in support of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and Executive Order 14028, on Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity, which imparted significant additional responsibilities on CISA.

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted externally, through a CISA contractor, with execution expected to begin in FY 2023. CISA currently estimates a one-year period of performance.

Questions

The overall evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. What are the outcomes of the BODs and EDs authority in relation to cybersecurity posture and practices in the FCEB?

2. How do agencies respond to BODs and EDs and how do BODs and EDs influence their actions and decisions?
3. Are there improvements CISA can make to the roll-out approach of BODs and EDs to better assist agencies with implementing the required actions?
4. What are facilitators and barriers to compliance with BODs and EDs?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require the following information for which data are available:

- Agency compliance and timeliness and extent of compliance to be provided by CISA CyberDirectives team
- Data and information on change in agency-level and federal enterprise-level cybersecurity risk posture and resilience level to be provided by CISA CyberDirectives team

The evaluation will require the following information for which new data collection is necessary:

- Perspectives on requirements, including value, feasibility, and utility of guidance and engagement; and barriers to and enablers of compliance
- Perspectives from agencies on the extent to which ED and BOD requirements drove agency actions in compliance

Design and Methods

This process/implementation and outcomes study will examine the steps that FCEB agencies took in response to Binding Operational Directives and Emergency Directives from 2015 to 2022.

Primary data sources include required data provided by agencies to CISA CyberDirectives team and agency perspectives on their required actions. Secondary (existing) data sources include BODs and EDs, program implementation documentation (e.g., roll out approach), and BOD/ED-specific FCEB agency compliance data (e.g., plans, reports, timelines, or other measures/metrics). New data collection may include qualitative interviews and focus groups with agency staff about FCEB agency responses to particular Binding Operational Directives and Emergency Directives.

Descriptive statistical analysis will be used for FCEB agency compliance data. Qualitative analysis will be used for qualitative program and compliance data and qualitative data collected through focus groups and interviews.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

Challenges include difficulties identifying the most appropriate and knowledgeable stakeholders from participating entities to provide perspectives and insights needed to address evaluation questions and the potential for low response rates from those stakeholders requested to participate in data collection activities. Proactive stakeholder consultations to identify appropriate participants and mechanisms to monitor, respond to, and improve response rate issues may mitigate these challenges.

Limitations for non-causal analysis reflected in descriptive or implementation evaluation include representativeness related to the limited number of people interviewed or surveyed and recall bias or missing information due to the subjects' inability to recall or provide responses about the activities. In addition, randomized control trials and quasi-experimental designs that also study comparison groups are often not feasible for evaluations of DHS programs and policies. Evaluative questions about "effects," "impacts," and "effectiveness" of DHS programs, policies, and regulations that do not use such methods will not be answered with definitive statements about causality or attribution.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding how FCEB agencies respond to, use, and comply with Binding Operational Directives and Emergency Directives will enable CISA to refine and improve future directives and associate roll-out approaches to support agency compliance. A deeper understanding of how agencies respond to directives and how seriously they take them would be helpful to improve how the directives are crafted. Understanding the effectiveness of these directives' roll-out would help refine the roll-out process. It would also be helpful to understand how FCEB agencies use the directives to inform decisions and actions as they comply.

This evaluation will engage or benefit the Capacity Building Division Staff and Business Operations Branch, as well as federal stakeholders who work on Binding Operational Directives and Emergency Directives implementation and engagement.

Disclosure of findings and information appropriate to share with Federal and nonfederal partners is anticipated; however, CISA will need to assess in further detail what types of findings and summary information can be disseminated to the public within the information protection safeguards and standards that have been defined for the program, given the sensitivity of some of the program data on Federal Departments and Agencies. CISA will conduct a more detailed dissemination assessment as part of the evaluation planning and design.

CyberSentry

Lead Organization

CISA PA&E

Program Description

CISA is responsible for providing timely technical assistance, risk management support, and incident response capabilities, upon request, to federal and non-federal entities, including members of the 16 critical infrastructure sectors. Successful cyberattacks on our nation's critical infrastructure can have severe consequences for national security, public safety, and economic prosperity. To address these cybersecurity concerns, CISA is increasing operational visibility within a subset of critical infrastructure organizations through a program called CyberSentry.

CyberSentry is a CISA-managed threat detection and monitoring capability and is comprised of integrated hardware and software capabilities that CISA strategically positions at critical infrastructure partner facilities to achieve visibility on internal information and operational

technology networks. As a result, the program provides real-time visibility into the network activity of these systems, which can enhance the cybersecurity of individual organization participants, as well as provide sector-level visibility across the critical infrastructure space.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation will study which elements of the partnership selection methodology are more or less effective, and how participants use the information they receive. The evaluation will assess to what extent the CyberSentry program was implemented as intended, and how it has increased operational visibility for CISA and what aspects of implementation are more or less effective in supporting cyber defense operational activities. The results of the evaluation will inform further program development and updates as the program expands. This study addresses Strategic Objective 3.3: Assess and Counter Evolving Cybersecurity Risks and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G3-Q1**. This study will also align with the Administration's focus on cybersecurity.

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted externally, through CISA contractors, and is expected to begin in FY 2025. CISA currently estimates a two-year period of performance.

Questions

The overall evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. How did the actual implementation of the program compare to what was intended in its design?
2. How can CISA improve the use of information provided to critical infrastructure entities through CyberSentry?
3. What elements of the partnership selection methodology are more or less effective?
4. What are factors that are barriers to adoption of CyberSentry?
5. How does CyberSentry support and contribute to CISA's cyber defense operational activities?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require the following information for which data are available:

- CyberSentry adoptions and other characteristics of participating critical infrastructure entities
- Available and implemented CyberSentry tools or practices
CyberSentry program design documentation

The evaluation will require the following information for which new data collection is necessary:

- Factors that influence interest and participation/adoption of CyberSentry tools or practices
- Actual uses of CyberSentry information
- Indirect or unintended consequences of program implementation

Design and Methods

The planned study is a formative evaluation that assesses the implementation of a program and its contributions to intended outcomes. The evaluation will use a non-experimental design. To the extent possible, the evaluation will identify implementation variations, improvements in CyberSentry partner selection, unintended and intended programmatic outcomes, and areas for program improvement.

Primary data sources include representatives from critical infrastructure entities and CyberSentry program managers. Secondary (existing) data sources include CyberSentry program administrative/operational data and documentation. Methods of data collection may include quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews or focus groups.

Descriptive statistical analysis will be used for quantitative survey data and program administrative/operational data. Qualitative analysis, such as content analysis or theme identification, will be used for qualitative data collected through administrative documents, surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

Challenges involve data gaps, specifically, gaps in data access or data quality due to a lack of clear incentives to accurately describe use of the CyberSentry tools and for the need for new collections to fill those data gaps. To mitigate these challenges, CISA may conduct an evaluability assessment to review all available data, including other Federal agency and statistical data, and will use this assessment to inform the development of needed data collections, using existing Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) vehicles and formats that have previously been approved by OMB to the fullest extent possible to expedite clearance.

Randomized control trials and quasi-experimental designs that also study comparison groups are often not feasible for evaluations of DHS programs and policies. Evaluative questions about “effects,” “impacts,” and “effectiveness” of DHS programs, policies, and regulations that do not use such methods will not be answered with definitive statements about causality or attribution.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

The CyberSentry program is expected to expand, and there is a need to understand the factors of the partner selection model that are associated with effective participation, as well as how participating organizations are using the alerts and information they receive, and barriers to participation. Understanding how CyberSentry is supporting CISA’s cyber defense operational activities also will enable CISA to refine the program and enhance its effectiveness as it expands. This priority question will engage or inform Congress, critical infrastructure entities, the CISA Threat Hunting Subdivision and Threat Hunting Business Operations Branch.

Disclosure of findings and information appropriate to share with Federal and nonfederal partners is anticipated; however, CISA will need to assess in further detail what types of findings and summary information can be disseminated within the information protection safeguards and standards that have been defined for the program, given the sensitivity of its activities and

program data. CISA will conduct a more detailed dissemination assessment as part of the evaluation planning and design.

Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative (JCDC)

Lead Organization

CISA PA&E

Program Description

The Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative (JCDC) was established to drive real-time operational collaboration, analysis, coordination, and communication between industry and government. This enhanced operational partnership improves information sharing and fusion operational planning between government and industry, and synchronized action that increases visibility into the threat landscape, unifies operational coordination and response, and reduces cyber risk to critical infrastructure. The depth and scope of operational collaboration through the JCDC establishes a new partnership baseline that already benefits the entire cybersecurity community, even as the JCDC continues to further elevate its capabilities and operational functions.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation will assess how implemented JCDC approaches, activities, and other factors contribute more or less to the development and execution of operational partnerships across government at all levels, between government and industry, and with the international community. The results of the evaluation will be used to improve the JCDC's operational partnerships as well as public-private partnerships more broadly.

This outcomes study will examine the associations between various approaches that the JCDC uses to build voluntary partnerships and the qualities of those partnerships. The study will cover JCDC activities from FY 2022-2024.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 3.3: Assess and Counter Evolving Cybersecurity Risks and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G3-Q1**. This study will also align with the Administration's focus on cybersecurity, including in support of the NDAA and Executive Order 14028, on Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity, which imparted significant additional responsibilities to CISA.

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted externally through a CISA contractor and is expected to begin in FY 2024. CISA currently estimates a two-year period of performance.

Questions

The evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. What JCDC approaches, activities, and other factors were more or less influential in
 - a. establishing and strengthening partnerships in the voluntary space?
 - b. how well partnerships function?

- c. increasing operational coordination and information-sharing among CISA and partners?
2. How do JCDC partners use information to achieve their respective organizational outcomes?
3. What is the value of the partnership to both sides?
4. What results do partnerships achieve?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require the following information for which data are available:

- Number and characteristics of partners and partnerships
- Number and nature of implemented approaches and activities, including participating partners
- Number and nature of coordinated operations, including participating partners
- Number and nature of information, resources, or solutions shared, including participating partners

The evaluation will require the following information for which new data collection is necessary:

- Perspectives on value, feasibility, and utility of approaches and activities for operational coordination; and barriers to and enablers of coordination
- Perspectives on value, feasibility, and utility of information, resources, or solutions shared; and barriers to and enablers of information sharing and use
- Perspectives on contributions of information shared on partner organization outcomes

Design and Methods

The planned study is a non-experimental outcome evaluation to assess associations between implemented JCDC approaches and outcomes, such as (1) success in establishing, strengthening, and leveraging voluntary partnerships toward (2) individual partner outcomes and collective JCDC outcomes of operational coordination and information-sharing.

Primary data sources are JCDC staff. Secondary (existing) data sources include JCDC program administrative/operational data and documentation, including implementation data and existing assessments of partnership strength. Data collection methods include quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews or focus groups.

Descriptive statistical analysis will be used for quantitative survey data and program administrative/operational data. Qualitative analysis, such as content analysis or theme identification, will be used for qualitative data collected through administrative documents, surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

JCDC is a relatively new program that is still maturing and faces a steadily increasing operational demand, which could make it challenging to pinpoint data sources and support consistent data collection. JCDC is also a dynamic program, which requires collecting the right data at the right

time to meet the data and analytical needs of the evaluation. To mitigate these challenges, surveys and data collection mechanisms will be as agile as possible, while also seeking similar data in a standardized manner to support consistency throughout the study. CISA will use existing Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) vehicles and formats that have been previously approved by OMB to the fullest extent possible to facilitate timely data collection in support of the evaluation's needs.

Randomized control trials and quasi-experimental designs that also study comparison groups are often not feasible for evaluations of DHS programs and policies. Evaluative questions about "effects," "impacts," and "effectiveness" of DHS programs, policies, and regulations that do not use such methods will not be answered with definitive statements about causality or attribution.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding how JCDC partnerships are working and how information shared is being used will enable CISA to refine and enhance the partnership management approach. This evaluation will engage or inform the JCDC Sub-division & Offices, JCDC partners, and other DHS organizations using partnerships to advance operational coordination and information sharing.

Disclosure of findings and information appropriate to share with Federal and nonfederal partners is anticipated; however, CISA will need to assess in further detail what types of findings and summary information can be disseminated within the information protection safeguards and standards that have been defined for the program, given the sensitivity of its activities and program data. CISA will conduct a more detailed dissemination assessment as part of the evaluation planning and design.

State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP)

Lead Organization

CISA Stakeholder Engagement Division

Program Description

State, Local, and Territorial (SLT) governments lack the resources (e.g., funding, governance structures, and plans) and capabilities to develop the necessary procedures that need to be in place to prevent major disruption to systems and services in the event of a cyberattack for the entire state. The goal of the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP) is to reduce systemic cyber risk and cybersecurity threats within SLT government structures' information systems, increase the resilience of services these entities provide to the community at a statewide level, and improve the security of critical infrastructure upon which Americans rely.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation will primarily examine the current state of participating SLT entities and the extent to which the participating SLT entities access, understand, and use SLCGP grant funds and services to design and implement interventions that prevent cybersecurity incidents and ensure continuity of operations. The evaluation includes a non-experimental process/implementation evaluation of the SLCGP. The results of the evaluation will inform further program development

and processes as the program expands. The study focuses on the SLCGP and eligible entities that participated during FY 2023- FY 2025.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 3.3: Assess and Counter Evolving Cybersecurity Risks and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G3-Q1**. This study will also align with the Administration's focus on cybersecurity and is funded under the FY 2022 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA).

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted externally, through a CISA contractor, with execution expected to begin in FY 2023. CISA currently estimates a two-year period of performance.

Questions

The overall evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. Is the program implemented and operating as intended, including meeting the requirements of the IIJA legislation? Sub-questions to be studied may include
 - a. Is the SLCGP reaching the target number of SLT entities?
 - b. Are the right kind of participants reached, based on who the program is targeting, and if so, is it reaching them at the level required/expected?
 - c. How well are entities understanding and producing the required deliverables?
 - d. What barriers, if any, are preventing the entities from utilizing the grant funds?
 - e. What challenges is CISA facing in meeting the requirements of the IIJA legislation? And what went well in terms of meeting those requirements?
2. What was learned about awarded entities' capacity for these activities, including meeting IIJA and SLCGP Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) requirements, and what variation exists? Sub-questions to be studied may include
 - a. How do SLT governments establish their cybersecurity planning committees?
 - b. To what extent are SLT entities' statewide cybersecurity planning committees meeting the IIJA and SLCGP NOFO requirements?
 - c. How do the implementation approaches vary?
 - d. To what extent are SLT entities' statewide cybersecurity plans meeting the IIJA and SLCGP NOFO requirements?
 - e. What if any, is the correlation between the quality of the plans and who sits on the committees?
 - f. What factors contribute to completing the plans?
 - g. What elements are and are not commonly addressed in plans?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require information on the current cybersecurity characteristics of participating SLT entities, for which data are available.

The evaluation will require the following information for which new data collection is necessary:

- Information on CISA's implementation approach and other administrative information

- Challenges or barriers of CISA and awarded entities' in meeting the requirements of the IIJA legislation
- The number of entities with CISA approved state-wide cybersecurity plans
- The number of entities with statewide cybersecurity planning committees that meet the SLCGP NOFO requirements
- The type of activities, approaches and interventions identified in the entities' state-wide cybersecurity plans
- Performance information collected from the entities' annual progress reports
- Factors that influence interest and participation/adoption of state-wide cybersecurity plans tools or practices
- Actual uses of the SLCGP grant funds and performance information for improving cybersecurity practices
- Indirect or unintended consequences of participation

Design and Methods

The planned study is a formative evaluation that assesses the processes and implementation of the SLCGP and its contributions to intended outcomes. The evaluation will use a non-experimental design.

Primary data sources include CISA staff and SLT entities participating in the SLCGP activities. Secondary data sources include SLCGP administrative/operational data and artifacts from the grant activities. Methods of data collection may include quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews or focus groups with federal government, SLT entities, and CISA staff as the population of interest, and a review of reports and other documents. Additional assessment will be conducted during the detailed design phase to determine any applicable sub-group analysis that should be considered.

Descriptive statistical analysis will be used for quantitative survey data and program administrative data. Qualitative analysis, including subgroup analysis and theme identification, will be used for qualitative data collected through surveys, interviews, and focus groups.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

The need for new collections with Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) approval and potential for low response rates from stakeholders requested to participate in data collection activities make it challenging for CISA to collect the right data at the right time to meet the data and analytical needs of the evaluation. To mitigate these challenges, CISA will conduct an evaluability assessment within the first two years of the program and will use this assessment to inform the development and PRA clearance of needed data collections early in the program's lifecycle. The evaluation will also use data provided by the entities and existing PRA vehicles and formats that have previously been approved by OMB to the fullest extent possible. CISA will proactively plan and implement mechanisms to monitor, respond to, and improve response rate issues.

Randomized control trials and quasi-experimental designs that also study comparison groups are often not feasible for evaluations of DHS programs and policies. Evaluative questions about “effects,” “impacts,” and “effectiveness” of DHS programs, policies, and regulations that do not use such methods will not be answered with definitive statements about causality or attribution. Factors that may significantly affect the program outcomes include reductions in funding or other resources, natural disasters/health crises, technology, state-level decision-making, and advanced persistent threat actors or hackers.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

The SLCGP is a new program and there is a need to understand the factors that influence interest in and participation/adoption by SLT entities, as well as how participating organizations are using the funds to improve the security and resilience of critical infrastructure. Understanding which SLCGP interventions were influential in reducing systemic cyber risk and cybersecurity threats within SLT government structures’ information systems will enable CISA to refine the program and enhance its effectiveness.

The evaluation will engage or benefit the Stakeholder Engagement Division (SED), CISA Cybersecurity Coordinators, and participating SLT entities. The SLCGP will also provide reports to Congress sharing progress updates, a risk-based formula needs study report, and annual report submissions.

Disclosure of findings and information appropriate to share with Federal and nonfederal partners is anticipated; however, CISA will need to assess in further detail what types of findings and summary information can be disseminated to the public within the information protection safeguards and standards that have been defined for the program.

Emergency Communication: Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) and Wireless Priority Service (WPS)

Lead Organization

CISA PA&E

Program Description

Calls must be prioritized during emergencies and incidents to ensure that first responders, emergency workers, and other key personnel have reliable networks access and interoperability. The Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS) and the Wireless Priority Service (WPS) programs provide priority call access for subscribers to ensure calls are connected during an incident and are not subjected to network congestion and degradation. GETS is an easy-to-use calling card program that provides users improved call completion on the public landline networks. WPS improves end-to-end call completion on wireless public telephone networks. As a result of these Priority Telecommunications Services (PTS), Congress, Federal, state and local governments and other authorized natural security and emergency prepared users (subscribers) receive reliable access and interoperability to support their work during emergencies and incidents.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation will examine associations between implementation of current outreach and promotion efforts for PTS and outcomes of subscriber awareness, perceptions of value, and behaviors of subscribership and service usage. A second portion of the evaluation will assess the effects of nudges (that is, the use of new outreach and promotion efforts that are not a regular part of PTS processes) on positive subscribership behaviors and service usage. The results of the evaluation will inform program development and updates, including coordination and communication with stakeholders.

The evaluation will focus on changes in subscribership, behaviors of subscribership, and service usage from 2023 to 2025. As part of the evaluation design, a detailed sampling plan will be developed to assess relevant sub-groups, including geographic area, type of subscriber, and locality socio-economic factors.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 3.2: Strengthen the Security and Resilience of Critical Infrastructure and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda Question G3-Q1*.

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted externally, through a CISA contractor, with execution expected to begin in FY 2023. CISA currently estimates a two-year period of performance.

Questions

The overall evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. What currently implemented outreach and promotion efforts for PTS programs are associated with more or less outcomes of subscriber awareness, perceptions of value, and behaviors of subscribership and service usage? Does it vary by subgroup of the target population?
2. What other context factors are enablers and barriers of positive subscribership behaviors and service usage?
3. To what extent does receiving a nudge impact positive subscribership behaviors, such as subscribing to, maintaining subscription with, or using the services?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require the following information for which data are available:

- Implemented PTS outreach and promotion efforts
- Number and characteristics of PTS subscribers, including their jurisdictions, over time and relative to specific outreach and promotion efforts
- Historic and current subscriber behavior and usage data

The evaluation will require the following information for which new data collection is necessary:

- User perspectives on value of PTS, enablers and barriers to PTS subscription or use
- Potential subscribers' receipt of the nudge (for the nudge study)

Design and Methods

A non-experimental outcome evaluation will assess associations between implementation of current outreach and promotion efforts for GETS and WPS programs and subscriber outcomes of awareness, perceptions of value, and behaviors of subscribership and service usage.

The planned study will also assess impact evaluation of one or more behaviorally informed interventions (nudges) to identify the effect of direct communication on subscribership behaviors and service uses. The nudge will consist of an email, letter, or other outreach to potential subscribers, or an incentive offered that addresses various behavioral barriers identified in the first study. This portion of the study will use a randomized control trial design in which potential subscribers are randomly assigned to a treatment group that receives the nudge, or a control group that does not receive the nudge or that receives a different version of the nudge (A/B testing). This study assumes that CISA can identify the universe of potential subscribers from which to randomly assign treatment and control groups.

The primary data sources for this study are Congress, Federal, state, and local governments, and other authorized natural security and emergency prepared users (subscribers). New data may be collected from subscribers through quantitative surveys or qualitative interviews or focus groups. Secondary (existing) data sources include administrative/operational data on subscriptions, subscribers, and service usage; these data will be critical for assessing the effectiveness of nudges in motivating positive behavioral outcomes.

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis will be used for quantitative administrative data. Qualitative analysis, including content analysis, theme identification, and cross-case comparison, will be used for qualitative data collected from administrative/operational data, interviews, and focus groups.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

Developing new collections and potential for low response rates from stakeholders requested to participate in data collection activities make it challenging for CISA to collect the right data at the right time to meet the data and analytical needs of the evaluation. To the fullest extent possible, CISA will use existing Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) vehicles and formats that have previously been approved by OMB and will proactively plan and implement mechanisms to monitor, respond to, and improve response rate issues to mitigate these challenges.

For the non-experimental outcome evaluation, this approach was selected because a randomized control trial and/or quasi-experimental designs that also study comparison groups would not be feasible. Evaluative questions about “effects,” “impacts,” and “effectiveness” of DHS programs, policies, and regulations that do not use such methods will not be answered with definitive statements about causality or attribution.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding what current outreach and promotion efforts are promising and the effectiveness of small nudges (outreach and promotion efforts not currently used) for increasing positive

subscriber behaviors and service usage will enable CISA to create the most effective campaign to increase subscriptions with the least amount of dropped users, efficiently recruit new subscribers, increase awareness of service value, keep current subscribers, and increase usage of services.

This evaluation will engage or inform CISA Associate Director for Priority Services, Executive Assistant Director and all divisions in Emergency Communications Division, the Stakeholder Engagement Division (SED), Field Forces in the Integrated Operations Divisions (IODs) (Emergency Communication Coordinators), and Regional Directors.

Public disclosure is anticipated.

Preparedness Grants

Lead Organization

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), National Preparedness Assessment Division

Program Description

The prevalence of disaster declarations and recovery costs over the past decade demonstrates the need for everyone—at the individual, community, state, local, tribal, territorial, and federal levels—to improve their preparedness for predictable and unpredictable catastrophic events of all kinds. FEMA’s preparedness grants support citizens, first responders, private industry, and state, local, tribal, and territorial governments to build and sustain capabilities to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate terrorism and other high-consequence disasters and emergencies. FEMA’s preparedness grants portfolio includes:

- **Emergency Management Performance Grant:** Provides state, local, tribal, and territorial emergency management agencies with the resources required for implementation of the National Preparedness System and works toward the National Preparedness Goal of a secure and resilient nation.
- **Homeland Security Grant Program:** A suite of risk-based grants to assist state, local, tribal, and territorial efforts in preventing, protecting against, mitigating, responding to and recovering from acts of terrorism and other threats.
- **Intercity Bus Security Grant Program:** Helps protect surface transportation infrastructure and the traveling public from acts of terrorism and increase the resilience of transit infrastructure.
- **Intercity Passenger Rail - Amtrak Program:** Provides funds to protect critical surface transportation infrastructure and the traveling public from acts of terrorism and increase the resilience of the Amtrak rail system.
- **Nonprofit Security Grant Program:** Provides funding support for target hardening and other physical security enhancements and activities to nonprofit organizations that are at high risk of terrorist attack.
- **Port Security Grant Program:** Provides funding to state, local, and private-sector partners to help protect critical port infrastructure from terrorism, enhance maritime domain

awareness, improve port-wide maritime security risk management, and maintain or reestablish maritime security mitigation protocols that support port recovery and resiliency capabilities.

- Transit Security Grant Program: Provides funds to eligible public transportation systems (which include intra-city bus, ferries, and all forms of passenger rail) to protect critical transportation infrastructure and the travelling public from terrorism, and to increase transportation infrastructure resilience.
- Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program: Provides funding directly to eligible tribes to strengthen their capacity to prevent, prepare for, protect against, and respond to potential terrorist attacks.

Purpose and Scope

The study will assess the effectiveness of preparedness grant programs and build capacity of FEMA and grant recipients for robust performance measurement and evaluation.

FEMA will establish a multi-phase evaluation program that

- uses a logic model and theory of change informed by preparedness grant program stakeholders;
- conducts evaluability assessments⁹ of its eight grant programs to determine appropriate approaches for evaluation;
- undertakes a series of three related evaluations (e.g., formative, implementation, and outcome evaluations) that are informed by the evaluability assessments and each have a distinct focus and purpose; and
- provides technical assistance to participating grant recipients to support evaluation data collections and build evaluation capacity of grant recipients and other FEMA programs.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 5.1: Build a National Culture of Preparedness and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G5-Q1**.

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted externally and is expected to begin in FY 2023. FEMA currently estimates the evaluation activities to occur over a five-year period.

Questions

The overall evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. How well do FEMA grant funded plans, trainings and exercises sustain or build core capabilities?
2. How well do FEMA grant funded equipment purchases sustain or build core capabilities?

⁹ **Evaluability Assessment** is a process that identifies, for an implemented program or policy, whether program evaluation is justified, feasible, and likely to produce useful information.

Researchers may modify research questions and propose an alternative research question that aligns with the goals and objectives of FEMA preparedness grants as the evaluation program progresses.

Information Needed

The evaluation activities will require the following information for which data are available:

- Logic models for each of the eight grant programs (currently under development)
- Grantee perspectives on grant program activities, outputs, outcomes, and assumptions of grant programs for logic model and theory of change development
- Plans, training, exercises, and equipment purchases that sustain or build core capabilities

Information to be collected or acquired will be determined through the evaluability assessments and subsequent planning of the formative, implementation, and outcome or impact evaluation.

Design and Methods

The study will be conducted as a series of three evaluations (a formative evaluation, an implementation evaluation, and an outcome or impact evaluation) with primary data collection to answer research questions that assess the effectiveness of a sample of grant projects in achieving outcomes. Researchers will propose study designs, additional research questions, and the multi-site/grant sample. These will be informed by evaluability assessment results and recommendations and developed in coordination with FEMA, preparedness grant stakeholders, evaluation subject-matter experts.

Primary data sources are grant recipients and may include additional organizations providing support and services to disaster survivors, including individuals with disabilities, older adults, and individuals with limited English proficiency, limited access to transportation, or limited access to financial resources. Secondary data sources for this study may include existing administrative/operational sources such as proposals, quarterly performance reporting, and annual reports. The activity involves new performance measure development, developing and testing data collection tools with grant recipients, and refining data collection tools before seeking OMB approval to use these tools at scale under the Paperwork Reduction Act. New data collection instruments for performance measures will be developed in consultation with researchers and stakeholders. We expect evaluation activities will use typical and innovative data collection approaches including, but not limited to, document review, quantitative surveys, qualitative questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, and observations conducted through site visits.

The data analysis approaches will be developed in consultation with researchers when designing and planning evaluation activities. We expect to use typical and innovative data analysis approaches including, but not limited to, descriptive and inferential statistical analysis for quantitative data, and qualitative analysis, such as content analysis, theme identification, and case studies for qualitative data.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

Carefully structured evaluations can require considerable resources and multiple years to design and complete. However, FEMA will undertake evaluation activities that can be completed concurrently. Gaps in data access or quality will require new collections or revisions to existing data collections, which can create an additional burden for grant recipients. FEMA will leverage technical working groups to identify how to minimize burden on grant recipients while ensuring high quality data are available for this and future evaluations.

First, the evaluation designs depend on the evaluability assessment findings. Although we intend to conduct some type of evaluation for each grant program, some evaluation designs may be more rigorous than others, depending on the program. Further, outputs and outcomes of these programs may not be easily quantifiable. Finally, randomized control trials and quasi-experimental designs that also study comparison groups are often not feasible for evaluations of FEMA preparedness grants due to certain policies and legislative mandates. Evaluation questions about “effects,” “impacts,” and “effectiveness” of DHS programs, policies and regulations that do not use such methods will not be answered with definitive statements about causality or attribution.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding how effectively FEMA preparedness grant-funded projects contribute to preparedness outcomes will better enable DHS to educate the public and preparedness grant stakeholders about the effectiveness of the grant projects in achieving outcomes, share lessons learned, improve program outcomes, and encourage the adoption of promising practices. The evaluation program will build FEMA and grant recipient capacity for evaluation, inform improvements in grant policy or administration, and inform permanent, re-occurring new data collection requirements to capture performance data for preparedness grant recipients.

This evaluation will engage or inform FEMA; state, local, tribal, and territorial government agencies; federal preparedness grant recipients; OMB, Congress, and interested researchers/academics who study or support preparedness efforts.

Public disclosure is anticipated.

Flood Mitigation Assistance Program Swift Current Initiative

Lead Organization

FEMA

Program Description

Through the Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) program, FEMA makes funds available to reduce or eliminate the risk of repetitive flood damage to buildings and structures insured under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Current FMA policies and procedures can inhibit the equitable and timely delivery of flood mitigation assistance to these properties. There are approximately 29,000 unmitigated Severe Repetitive Loss/Repetitive Loss properties nationwide. The FMA annual grant NOFO cycle can take an estimated eighteen months to award funds and

frequently misses the window of opportunity immediately following a disaster when homeowners are making repairs, deciding to move, or are required to bring their structures into compliance.

The FMA Swift Current initiative, part of the FMA program, aims to more quickly and equitably reduce flood risks posed to repetitively flooded properties that are insured under the NFIP after a state receives a Major Disaster Declaration. The initiative cultivates new headquarters and regional support systems; enables development and delivery of trainings, webinars, and outreach to states and communities; and expands technical assistance to applicants and sub applicants during project formulation.

Under this initiative, funds will be made available to Louisiana, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Mississippi for individual flood mitigation projects received after major disaster declarations from Hurricane Ida or Remnants of Hurricane Ida. These states were selected because they have the highest Severe Repetitive Loss/Repetitive Loss insured unmitigated properties and total claims (by count) within their respective FEMA Regions. FEMA will use information and critical data from state recipients and their beneficiaries for program evaluation.

Key objectives of the FMA Swift Current initiative include:

- Reducing the average number of days between the date of a disaster declaration and obligation for individual flood mitigation projects. FEMA believes that individual flood mitigation projects can be more impactful to communities if funds are made available to states more quickly following a disaster event.
- Increasing the number of Severe Repetitive Loss, Repetitive Loss, and Substantial Damage properties included in obligated sub applications (i.e., projects).
- Understanding the extent to which FMA Swift Current initiative outreach efforts are reaching socially vulnerable communities (based on the Centers for Disease Control Social Vulnerability Index) or communities with high saturation of Severe Repetitive Loss/Repetitive Loss properties. These findings will be used to develop future enhancements in how FEMA delivers outreach.

Being able to not only repair but also build back better immediately following a disaster will save resources, encourage more mitigation, and improve the flood survivor experience.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation will assess enhancements made to the FMA program through the Swift Current initiative. The evaluation will inform FMA program development and updates, process improvements, and coordination and communication with stakeholders necessary to determine the extent to which the FMA Swift Current initiative can be scaled and, if so, determine how to best do so. Analysis will include program level data and information across the four states where the FMA Swift Current initiative is available (Louisiana, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Mississippi).

This study addresses Strategic Objective 5.3: Support Outcome-Driven Community Recovery and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G5-Q2**. The study responds to the *President's Management Agenda Learning Agenda*¹⁰ priority questions about how Federal Government funds from the FY 2022 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act advance equity and support underserved communities.

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted externally and is expected to begin in FY 2023. FEMA currently estimates a one-year period of performance.

Questions

The overall evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. Is the FMA Swift Current Initiative design acceptable to the target beneficiaries for addressing individual flood mitigation in the states selected?
2. Can the FMA Swift Current Initiative be feasibly implemented as designed? If yes, is it scalable? If no, can it be reoriented in another way?
3. Did the FMA Swift Current Initiative meet all desired outputs?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require the following information for which data are available:

- Average days to obligation for Individual Flood Mitigation Projects
- Number of Severe Repetitive Loss, Repetitive Loss, and Substantial Damage properties included in obligated sub applications
- Average benefit to cost ratio for sub applications obligated
- Number of Severe Repetitive Loss, Repetitive Loss, and Substantial Damage properties in sub applications obligated within socially vulnerable communities defined by CDC Social Vulnerability Index score at the Census tract level at or greater than 0.5001
- Number of outreach activities (touchpoints) to disproportionately affected communities with high saturations of Severe Repetitive Loss/Repetitive Loss properties, and CDC Social Vulnerability Index scores at or greater than 0.5001

The evaluation will require the following information for which new data collection is necessary:

- Staff perspectives on fidelity to concept of operations, including deviations and root causes of deviations
- Staff perspectives on beneficiary awareness, experience, and barriers encountered during touchpoints with them

Design and Methods

FEMA will undertake a formative evaluation of enhancements that will be made to FMA Swift Current initiative. The formative evaluation will examine whether the changes are acceptable,

¹⁰ See <https://www.performance.gov/pma/learning-agenda/>

feasible, and have the potential to deliver positive outcomes (by ensuring key outputs) before the FMA Swift Current initiative is fully implemented or scaled. Non-experimental design will be used.

Primary data sources include FEMA staff from headquarters and regional offices. Secondary (existing) data sources include applications from individual survivors seeking flood mitigation assistance (including through application submitted via FEMA's Mitigation eGrants management system), National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) PIVOT system data, and CDC Social Vulnerability Index data. New data collection may include quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews or focus groups, and observations conducted during site visits.

The evaluation will use descriptive statistical analysis for quantitative data, and content analysis, theme identification, and case studies for qualitative data.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

Challenges and limitations include the following:

- State staff evaluation capacity of Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, and at FEMA's Regional Offices is limited, so FEMA will use an external evaluator/evaluation team and conduct additional outreach and technical assistance to support their participation in the evaluation as needed.
- FEMA is unable to share NFIP policyholder information (e.g., Severe Repetitive Loss/Repetitive Loss data) without the community executing an Information Sharing Access Agreement. FEMA will identify and expedite data sharing agreements to conduct the evaluation.
- This evaluation will be limited to administrative data and, if possible, data collections from FEMA staff from HQ and regional offices.
- Only four states in four regions were selected and each state had a different declaration date, so performance measures focused on timeliness will need to account for this variation.
- Several factors delayed launch of FMA Swift Current initiative that could negatively affect performance measures focused on timeliness (e.g., new Congressional notification requirements, NOFO concurrence process, and additional reviews due to FEMA receiving additional funds through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)).

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding the FMA Swift Current initiative's feasibility, acceptability, and potential to deliver outcomes will enable FEMA to determine whether and how to scale the initiative.

This priority question will engage or inform OMB, the White House Infrastructure Implementation Task Force, the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), FEMA Office of Policy & Programs Analysis (OPPA), FEMA Grants Program Directorate (GPD), FEMA Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration (FIMA), FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA), FEMA Flood Mitigation Assistance (FMA) at Headquarters and regional offices, and FEMA HMA External

Stakeholder Work Group (ESWG). The evaluation may provide useful information to state governments, community-based organizations, and NFIP Severe Repetitive Loss/Repetitive Loss insurance holders in participating states of Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

Public disclosure is anticipated.

Pandemic Public Assistance

Lead Organization

FEMA, Office of Response and Recovery

Program Description

The COVID-19 pandemic created widespread need for state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) government entities and certain private non-profit organizations to undertake emergency measures that addressed the evolving public threats of COVID-19. Socially vulnerable counties, including counties in less urban areas with higher percentages of racial and ethnic minority residents and people living in crowded housing conditions, had persistently high COVID-19 incidence. Under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2021 and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) of 2021, DHS provides funding for COVID-19 relief to ease some of the financial stress and burden caused by the virus. This funding supports, among other things, medical care, purchase and distribution of food and certain supplies, non-congregate medical sheltering, and operation of emergency operations centers. The Administration and DHS are committed to the equitable delivery of assistance to support the resilience of socially vulnerable communities.

Purpose and Scope

The study will assess the extent to which Public Assistance distributions were equitable, including Public Assistance obligations to areas of social vulnerability and high case rates in those areas, the range and frequency of activities supported, and what gaps and barriers to equitable distribution exist. The evaluation results will inform process improvements and notify stakeholders of program efforts and outcomes.

This evaluation will include Public Assistance funds for COVID-19 from January 2020 to present. A final report will determine whether there appears to be a statistically significant relationship between Public Assistance COVID funding, COVID case rates, and/or social vulnerability. The results of this analysis may prompt additional analysis or opportunities for process changes that may enhance future programmatic efforts to improve equity.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 5.3: Support Outcome-Driven Community Recovery and *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G5-Q6**. The study also responds to the *President's Management Agenda Learning Agenda*¹¹ priority questions about how Federal Government funds from the ARP and CARES Act advance equity and support underserved communities.

¹¹ See <https://www.performance.gov/pma/learning-agenda/>

Resources

This analysis will be conducted by the FEMA Office of Response and Recovery, Recovery Directorate. FEMA currently estimates a one-year period in which the evaluation activities will occur.

Questions

The overall evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. To what extent were COVID-19 Public Assistance obligations aligned with areas of social vulnerability and/or high COVID-19 case rates?
2. To what extent were COVID-19 Public Assistance applicants from counties of high social vulnerability and/or high case rates?
3. Were any gaps and/or barriers to the equitable distribution of Public Assistance funds identified?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require the following information for which data are available:

- SLTTs and organizations seeking assistance, descriptions of activities and associated costs, obligated Public Assistance or other direct federal assistance rendered
- Jurisdictional (e.g., county level) Social Vulnerability Index and COVID-19 case counts

No new data collection is needed.

Design and Methods

This process evaluation will utilize a non-experimental, outcome-driven design to assess trends in COVID Public Assistance (PA) funding distribution. The scale and activity for COVID-19 projects largely differs from previous FEMA activity, therefore conducting a statistical post-hoc review of funding is reasonable to understand how demands of the Incident Type (ongoing case rate) influenced funding.

The unit of analysis is U.S. counties to which Public Assistance funds are distributed and for which there exists individual vulnerability measures. The relevant factors are pre-existing vulnerability level (CDC Social Vulnerability Index; generally grouped into four quartiles from low to high vulnerability), PA funding (per capita) and applicants across the various counties, and COVID-19 case rates. The analyses will examine the ways in which these three variables are related, if at all. The analyses will examine relationships, if any, between COVID-19 case rates on Public Assistance Funding/applicants, between CDC Social Vulnerability Index score on Public Assistance funding/applicants, and between COVID-19 case rates and CDC Social Vulnerability Index score on Public Assistance funding/applicants.

Secondary data sources for this study may include administrative or operational data from Public Assistance program applications, COVID-19 case data, and the CDC Social Vulnerability Index data, which will be acquired for linking with administrative data sets to fill demographic and socioeconomic data gaps and case rates in affected applicant counties.

Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis will be used for quantitative data.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

Challenges to evidence building include gaps in data access or quality, lag time for rigorous evaluation, and evaluability of strategies or operations.

The CDC Social Vulnerability Index does not provide vulnerability scores for the U.S. territories. Further, the CDC Social Vulnerability Index is an aggregate score which measures elements of vulnerability that may not correlate well with COVID-19 impacts. Information on how funds were disbursed at county-level may not be available or may have been inconsistently provided by applicants in free-text fields. FEMA will evaluate the relationship between Public Assistance funding, the CDC Social Vulnerability Index subscales, and other potential measures of community differences (in vulnerability and other factors). Additionally, FEMA may employ data mining techniques to leverage free text fields, look at per capita funding rather than total obligations, and/or conduct comparative analysis or case studies on a subset of data available at the necessary level of granularity.

In addition, carefully structured evaluations can require considerable resources and multiple years to design and complete. FEMA's COVID-19 response is ongoing and Public Assistance funds will continue to be obligated through the lifecycle of this evaluation. Further, the academic community continues to seek out and develop new methodologies for understanding equity in the pandemic context. Public Assistance funding for a specific time-period will be evaluated in this analysis. Further analysis of all Public Assistance obligations once the COVID-19 pandemic is closed would be appropriate. FEMA will continue academic literature reviews of emerging approaches to understanding equity.

Available data will not support definitive statements about causality or attribution. FEMA data also does not account for all COVID-19 funding and recovery activity. If existing data does not support the identification of causal relationships, FEMA will provide recommendations on data collection or structure to support future analysis.

In addition, limitations include the following:

- While FEMA can quantitatively evaluate how Public Assistance COVID funding was distributed across areas of social vulnerability in relation to high case rates, understanding the impact of those funds on SLTT recovery from the applicants' perspective is beyond the scope of this evaluation.
- FEMA's data collection mechanisms do not yet support consistent or reliable identification of obligations to tribal entities when these entities are sub-recipients versus recipients. Understanding the relationship of Public Assistance funding to tribal vulnerability and case rates may not be possible.
- FEMA is not the only funding source for addressing impacts of COVID-19, however, assessing the moderating effect that other funding and activities external to FEMA had on Public Assistance funding and applications is outside the scope of our analysis.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding the extent to which COVID-19 Public Assistance obligations align with socially vulnerable and high case rate communities, the range and frequency of needs addressed and what

unmet needs and gaps remain can help FEMA improve its communication and outreach to vulnerable communities and application processing to ensure equitable awareness and access to assistance.

Evidence building may engage or be used by FEMA disaster assistance programs and activities, CDC, FEMA Office of Equal Rights, Office of Disability Integration and Coordination, FEMA Equity Enterprise Steering Group, DHS Equity Working Group, Recovery Support Function Leadership Group, the White House ARP Implementation Team, and public assistance recipients.

Public disclosure is anticipated.

Appendix A. Abbreviations and Acronyms

APR	Asylum Processing Rule	GETS	Government Emergency Telecommunications Service
ARP	American Rescue Plan Act	ICE	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement
ATD	Alternatives to Detention	ICR	information collection request
CARING	Community and Regional Integration Network Grant	IJJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection	MGMT	DHS Management Directorate
CDC	Centers for Disease Control	NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
CFO	Chief Financial Officer	NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
CINAS	Citizenship Instruction and Naturalization Application Services	NOFO	Notice of Funding Opportunity
CISA	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency	OIC	S&T Office of Innovation and Collaboration
CMPP	Case Management Pilot Program	OMB	U.S. Office of Management and Budget
CRCL	Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties	ORA	Operations and Requirements Analysis
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	OSAI	S&T Office of SAFETY Act Implementation
DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice	PCQS	Person Centric Query System
EARM	ENFORCE Alien Removal Module	PLANet	Principal Legal Advisor Network
ED	Emergency Directive	PRA	Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995
EOIR	Executive Office for Immigration Review	PTS	Priority Telecommunications Services
ERO	Enforcement and Removal Operations	QATT	Qualified Anti-Terrorism Technology
FCEB	Federal Civilian Executive Branch	RL	Repetitive Loss
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency	S&T	DHS Science & Technology Directorate
FMA	Flood Mitigation Assistance	SED	CISA Stakeholder Engagement Division
FY	fiscal year		

SLT State, local, and territorial

SLTT State, local, tribal, and territorial

SRL Severe Repetitive Loss

SVI Social Vulnerability Index

USCIS U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

VAWA Violence Against Women Act

WPS Wireless Priority Services

Appendix B. Glossary

Terms used in the evaluation plans are defined below.

Case studies – A case study is an in-depth, qualitative analysis of a single subject or small group of subjects, such as an individual, group (e.g., organization, community, or “site”) or event. The analysis integrates data collected through several methods, such as quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews/focus groups, observations, and documents to draw conclusions only about the studied subject(s) and within the given context. Although case studies cannot be used to infer causality or to measure effectiveness, they are often valuable for theory building and developing awareness of factors that affect outcomes.

Descriptive statistics – A set of methods for tabulating summary statistics that characterize cases in a sample data set. Descriptive statistics often focus on quantifying the proportions of various characteristics, major subgroups in the sample, and the shape of the distribution.

Formative evaluation – Formative evaluation assesses whether a program, policy, regulation, or organization approach (or some aspect of these) is feasible, appropriate, and acceptable before it is fully implemented. It may include process and/or outcome measures. However, it focuses on learning and improvement and does not aim to answer questions of overall effectiveness. It can help answer the questions, "Is the program, policy, regulation, or organization appropriate for this context," "Does it feasibly address the identified needs," and "Can it be implemented as designed?"

Impact evaluation – Often used for summative purposes, impact evaluation assesses the causal effect or impact of a program on outcomes by estimating what would have happened in the absence of the program or aspect of the program. This estimation requires the use of experimental/randomized control trial designs or quasi-experimental designs in which another group is compared to program participants. Experimental designs randomly assign (e.g., lottery draw) persons to either a treatment group that receives the program or policy intervention or to a control group that does not. Quasi-experimental groups identify a program or policy intervention group and comparison group from pre-existing or self-selected groups and not through random assignment. Impact evaluation can help answer the question, “Does the program, policy, regulation, or organization work, or did it lead to the observed outcomes?”

Inferential statistics – A set of methods for drawing conclusions that extend beyond simply summarizing the characteristics of the immediate data. Inferential statistics may specify under what circumstances a sample represents the population (population estimates and confidence intervals). Inferential statistics may also be used to identify statistical relationships by testing hypotheses to determine if differences between two or more groups, changes over time, or associations between two or more variables are not likely to occur randomly.

Observation – An immersive qualitative method for collecting data about people, processes, and cultures, but may be entirely or partially structured (quantitative) or unstructured (qualitative). Structured observations systematically classify behaviors into distinct categories using numbers or letters to describe a characteristic or use of a scale to measure behavior intensity. Unstructured observation records all relevant behavior without a system.

Outcome evaluation – Used for summative purposes, outcome evaluation assesses the extent to which a program, policy, regulation, or organization approach has achieved certain objectives, and how it achieved these objectives. Outcome evaluations use non-experimental designs characterized by the absence of a control or comparison group. Unlike impact evaluation, outcome evaluation cannot discern whether outcomes result from or are a causal effect of the program. It can help answer the question, “Were the intended outcomes achieved?”

Primary data sources – Individuals, groups, or organizations from which new data collection is expected, designed specifically for the evaluation.

Process/implementation evaluation – Process/implementation evaluation assesses the extent to which essential elements of a program, policy, regulation, or operation are in place; conform to requirements, program design, professional standards, or customer expectations; and are capable of delivering positive outcomes. It can help answer the questions, “Was the program, policy, regulation, or organization implemented as intended?” or “How is it operating in practice?” In the learning agenda, several evaluations study process-related questions to understand underlying mechanisms of outcomes achievement.

Quantitative surveys – Surveys are predetermined set of questions, often with set response options administered to samples or panels of respondents to cost-effectively compile statistical information about individuals, households, and organizations. DHS uses surveys in different ways. DHS uses surveys to track variables of longer-term interest, as well as to obtain reliable information about conditions through shorter-term studies. DHS conducts low-burden Customer Experience (CX) surveys to gather near real-time impressions of customers’ touchpoint(s) or transaction(s) with a government service in terms of trust, overall satisfaction, and experience drivers (e.g., service quality, process, and people, when applicable). DHS also uses surveys of participants in program evaluations to determine their baseline conditions and subsequent outcomes.

Qualitative data analysis – A flexible set of approaches to examine patterns in communicated information. Content analysis may focus on the presence and frequency of concepts—typically words, phrases, or images— or show how concepts are related to each other and the context in which they exist. Thematic Framework Analysis identifies patterns of meaning, or themes. Themes may be determined deductively (themes selected from existing research or theory) or inductively (themes built from the data) to develop patterns. The analysis may examine explicit content of data or examine subtext or assumptions from the data.

Qualitative interviews/focus groups – These qualitative data collections use primarily open-ended questions to converse with an individual respondent or with a small group of respondents simultaneously to collect narrative information about a subject, circumstance, or event. DHS uses this method across evidence-building activities to understand the way people think, their motivation, and their attitudes toward the topic or experience. Although qualitative interviews/focus groups cannot be used to infer causality or to measure effectiveness, they are often valuable tools for theory building and developing awareness of factors that affect outcomes. As such they often complement other evidence building such as surveys, economic analysis, and different types of program evaluation.

Secondary data sources – Existing data, or data collected for purposes other than the specific evidence building activity.