

PROGRAM, POLICY, AND ORGANIZATIONAL EVALUATIONS

I. Purpose

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

II. Scope

This Directive is applicable to all evaluation and evaluation activities conducted, sponsored, or funded by DHS with the exception of the Office of Inspector General.

III. Authorities

- A. Public Law 115-435, 132 Stat.5529, "Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018" (Evidence Act)
- B. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Memorandum M-19-23 "Phase 1 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Learning Agendas, Personnel, and Planning Guidance"
- C. OMB Memorandum M-20-12 "Phase 4 Implementation of the Foundations for Evidence-Based Policymaking Act of 2018: Program Evaluation Standards and Practices"
- D. OMB Memorandum M-21-27 "Evidence-Based Policymaking: Learning Agendas and Annual Evaluation Plans"
- E. Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security Policy Statement 076-01 "Evidence Act Title 1 and Evaluation Implementation"
- F. Public Law 107-296, 116 Stat. 2135, "Homeland Security Act of 2002," codified in Title 6, United States Code; amended Public Law 108-330, "The Department of Homeland Security Financial Accountability Act"

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

IV. Responsibilities

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

1. Establishes and oversees Department-wide implementation of this Evaluation Policy.
2. Coordinates and engages with Department stakeholders in carrying out the responsibilities assigned to the EO in the Evidence Act Title 1 requirements (i.e., development, implementation, and scientific integrity of evaluations, quadrennial Capacity Assessments, quadrennial Learning Agendas, and Annual Evaluation Plans) and related implementing guidance.
3. Chairs and acts as the secretariat for the DHS Evaluation Officer Council (EOC).
4. Champions capacity building opportunities for DHS as a whole, while serving as an institutional source of guidance on evaluation and evidence building.
5. Coordinates or commissions Department-wide, cross-cutting and other priority evaluations, systematic reviews, meta-analyses, or policy research to address DHS priority learning questions.
6. Coordinates with Department stakeholders for the oversight of Department-wide evaluation activities, including but not limited to prioritization of topics to be evaluated, implementation of external requirements, development of evaluation procurement requirements, selection of appropriate evaluation designs and methods, and reporting of evaluation findings, to ensure adherence to evaluation standards, scientific integrity principles, and other administrative requirements.
7. Coordinates with appropriate Department officials on the release of findings from evaluation and other evidence building conducted for the DHS Learning Agenda and Annual Evaluation Plans.
8. Supports internal and public release of evaluation study plans, evaluation reports/summaries, and action plans/reports for the use of findings, including advising on principled exceptions (exemptions or limitations) to the requirement of public disclosure of evaluations.

9. Supports the integration of evaluation and other evidence-building plans and findings from the Department's Evidence Act Title 1 deliverables with the Department's strategic plans, regulatory agendas, strategic reviews, annual program performance measures and plans, annual program performance reports, budget submissions, federal assistance program funding announcements, and foreign assistance programs.

B. **Component Heads** advance and prioritize evaluation and other evidence building, creating a culture of evidence and support for staff in undertaking evaluation. The Component Head:

1. Designates a Component Evaluation Officer with senior-level technical expertise in evaluation methods and practices who participates in the EOC and is responsible for supporting the Component Head in carrying out all activities in this section in coordination with the EO.

2. Ensures compliance with this Evaluation Policy across the breadth of the Component, including meeting the standards outlined in this Evaluation Policy and related published instructions and guidance for planning, conduct, dissemination, and use of evaluations.

3. Develops the Component's capacity for evaluation management and methods, including making investments needed to support evaluation and its scientific integrity, which should extend to allocating adequate funding for third-party evaluation studies and to hiring, retaining, and developing qualified employees to design and oversee evaluation activities.

4. Leads Component engagement in annual and quadrennial Department-wide processes led by the EO for Evidence Act Title 1 deliverable development and updates.

5. Develops Component Evidence Act Title 1 deliverables that address Administration priorities and external requirements, are informed by robust engagement with internal and external stakeholders, and align with Department-wide plans.

6. Undertakes, accelerates, and reports on evaluation and other evidence-building activities contained in Component and Department-wide Learning Agendas and Annual Evaluation Plans.

7. Establishes a strategic portfolio of evaluations to examine and generate recommendations for improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and equity of programs, policies, regulations, or organizations at a rate

commensurate with the scale of the Component's work, the scope of their portfolio, and the size of their resources.

8. Ensures Component evaluations maintain scientific integrity while drawing on a full range of evaluation types and approaches, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed- methods approaches, as appropriate to address evaluation questions, and evaluations making claims about efficacy, effectiveness, or impact are supported by appropriate quasi-experimental or experimental designs and quantitative methods.

9. Consults and coordinates with the relevant DHS Chief and Component officers (e.g., for Evaluation, Statistical, Data, Information, Privacy, Human Subjects Protection) to ensure that evaluations and those who conduct and manage them comply with the requirements of federal laws, regulations and Department policies for evidence building, information collections, data privacy protections, human subjects research protections, and information dissemination.

10. Integrates evaluation and other evidence-building plans and findings from the Department's Evidence Act Title 1 deliverables with the Component's strategic plans, regulatory agendas, annual strategic reviews, annual program performance measures and plans, program performance reports, budget submissions, federal assistance program funding announcements, and foreign assistance programs.

11. Uses evidence from evaluation to further mission and operations, and commits to building evidence of effectiveness to strengthen and advance the Department's mission.

C. **DHS Chief Data Officer (CDO) and Component Data Officers** advise and collaborate with the EO, Component Evaluation Officers, and other DHS officials to ensure appropriate data governance, data stewardship, and data lifecycle management processes that align with scientific integrity principles to support systematic data collection and use for evaluation and other evidence-building.

D. **DHS Statistical Official (SO) and Component Statistical Officials** advise and collaborate with the EO, Component Evaluation Officers, and other Department officials to enable access, acquisition, and linkage to federal statistical data and ensure that statistical methods or techniques provide optimal levels of data quality and confidentiality.

VI. Policy and Requirements

A. **Policy:** DHS conducts well-designed evaluations to more fully characterize and account for the ways the Department uses resources to achieve its goals and

objectives. DHS generates and uses rigorous evidence from evaluations to inform decisions about programs, policies, regulations, and organizations, better enabling the Department to achieve the most effective U.S. homeland security outcomes and greater accountability to our primary stakeholders, the American people. At DHS, evaluation supports:

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

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

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

designs and methods undertaken, evaluation designs and methods are appropriate for the questions asked, documentation of evaluation processes and findings are clear and accurate, and limitations of findings are transparent so that internal and external stakeholders can act on evaluation findings with confidence.

3. **Transparency.** DHS is committed to ensuring that the 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. DHS 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) in accordance with applicable law.

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

5. **Ethics.** DHS evaluations meet the highest ethical standards and safeguard the dignity, rights, safety, and privacy of participants, stakeholders, and affected entities. DHS evaluations comply with relevant professional standards and requirements, such as laws, regulations, and DHS policies governing data privacy and confidentiality, human subjects research protections, and administrative burden to the public.

6. **Equity.** DHS evaluations are equitable, fair, and just, and account for cultural and contextual factors that could influence findings and the use of those findings. Those who plan, implement, disseminate, and use DHS evaluations seek and gain understanding of the diversity of perspectives and experiences that stakeholders bring to an evaluation, including those not usually represented. Evaluations examine equity of access, experiences, benefits, and unintended consequences of programs and policies across relevant groups, including underserved communities, of the affected populations.

7. **Scientific integrity.** As evaluation is a scientific activity, those who conduct DHS evaluations must uphold scientific integrity principles and requirements.

VII. Questions

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

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R.D. Alles

Senior Official Performing the Duties of the
Under Secretary for Management

Date