

U.S. Department of Homeland Security FY 2025 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 (FY).

The *DHS FY 2025 Annual Evaluation Plan* describes a subset of the Department's evaluation work for the next FY. These evaluations, designated as significant, are shared with the American public and receive additional resources to ensure successful completion.

As required, the *DHS FY 2025 Annual Evaluation Plan* is published at the Department's public website (<https://www.dhs.gov/evaluation-and-evidence-plans>) and at [Evaluation.gov](https://www.evaluation.gov) with the other DHS Evidence Act plans and reports.

DHS invites feedback on the *DHS FY 2025 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 2025 Annual Evaluation Plan* describes a subset of the Department’s evaluation work for the next FY. 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 internal program evaluators, and coordinated with external stakeholders, including the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (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. DHS evaluations are consistent with relevant legal authorities and privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties protections.

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 many entities, including the potential risk for differential or inequitable impacts that should be assessed

Department evaluations follow the published DHS Directive 069-03, Rev 01, *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 the principles of relevance and utility, rigor, independence and objectivity, ethics, transparency, equity, and scientific integrity. 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 laws, regulations, and DHS policies governing data privacy and confidentiality, human subjects research protections, and administrative burden to the public.

¹ [069-03 Program, Policy, and Organizational Evaluations, Revision 01](#) (DHS, 2023)

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

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.

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

Additionally, 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.

Progress and Findings of Previous Evaluations

DHS issued annual evaluation plans in FYs 2022, 2023, and 2024 that identified 22 significant evaluations.

Progress

Exhibit 2 summarizes the focus of DHS evaluations, the publication date of the plans, status of the evaluation questions, phase of the evaluation, and challenges encountered to date.

For most previously published significant evaluations, the key evaluation questions are unanswered and remain a priority. Eleven evaluations are in the Planning phase, during which programs assemble or procure a study team, establish a detailed design and plan for the study, or gain appropriate approvals for data collection activities. Eight evaluations are in the Implementing phase with efforts underway to collect and analyze data, develop conclusions and recommendations, or prepare a report, summary, or key findings of the study. Three evaluations have been completed and the reports have been shared with key stakeholders.

Exhibit 2. Progress of FY 2022 – FY 2024 Significant Evaluations

Program/Policy	Publication Year	Status	Phase	Challenges
CISA High Value Asset Program	FY 2022	Answered	Completed	Data access and quality
CISA Exercises	FY 2022	Unanswered, remains a priority	Implementing	Data access and quality

Program/Policy	Publication Year	Status	Phase	Challenges
CISA Stakeholder Engagement Division Critical Infrastructure Partnership Advisory Council National Convening Activities	FY 2023	Unanswered, remains a priority	Planning	Data access and quality
All-Hazards Communications Unit Position-Specific Training and Stakeholder Communication Unit Program	FY 2023	Unanswered, remains a priority	Planning	Data access and quality
FY2020 DHS Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant Program Evaluation	FY 2023	Answered	Completed	Lag time for rigorous evidence
Implementation of DHS Directive 026-06, Rev 02, <i>Test and Evaluation</i> , 01 October 2020	FY 2023	Unanswered, remains a priority	Implementing	Data access and quality
SAFETY Act	FY 2024	Unanswered, remains a priority	Implementing	Lag time for rigorous evaluation
Alternatives to Detention Programs	FY 2024	Answered	Completed	
Case Management Pilot Program	FY 2024	Unanswered, remains a priority	Planning	Data access and quality; Evaluability of strategies or operations
Asylum Processing Rule	FY 2024	Lower priority	Planning	
Naturalization Outreach	FY 2024	Unanswered, remains a priority	Implementing	
Citizenship and Integration Grant Program: Community and Regional Integration Network Grant Program	FY 2024	Unanswered, remains a priority	Implementing	
E-Verify	FY 2024	Unanswered, remains a priority	Planning	
Encouraging the Use of USCIS Online Services	FY 2024	Unanswered, remains a priority	Implementing	Evaluability of strategies or operations; Lag time for rigorous evaluation
Cybersecurity Binding Operational Directives and Emergency Directives	FY 2024	Unanswered, remains a priority	Planning	
CyberSentry	FY 2024	Unanswered, remains a priority	Planning	Evaluability of strategies or operations
Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative	FY 2024	Unanswered, remains a priority	Planning	
State and Local Cyber Grant Program	FY 2024	Unanswered, remains a priority	Planning	Evaluability of strategies or operations

Program/Policy	Publication Year	Status	Phase	Challenges
Government Emergency Telecommunications Service and Wireless Priority Service	FY 2024	Unanswered, remains a priority	Planning	
Preparedness Grants	FY 2024	Unanswered, remains a priority	Implementing	Data access and quality; Constraints on methods; Lag time for rigorous evidence
Flood Mitigation Assistance Program Swift Current Initiative	FY 2024	Unanswered, remains a priority	Planning	Data access and quality; Evaluability of strategies or operations
Pandemic Public Assistance	FY 2024	Unanswered, remains a priority	Implementing	

Four major challenges encountered in these evaluations are described below:

Evaluability of strategies or operations. To evaluate whether a strategy (program, policy, regulation, or some combination of them) 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, or 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 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 often require new collections or revisions to existing data collections. The Paperwork Reduction Act requires federal agencies to obtain approval for such information collections from the Office of Management and Budget, 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 can also introduce substantial delays of data collection efforts.

Lag time for rigorous evaluation. Carefully structured evaluations can require considerable resources and multiple years to design and complete. In some cases, sustained intervention and measurement over many years is needed to produce and assess effectiveness in achieving mid- and long-term outcomes or societal impacts. Program timelines can affect evaluation timelines. In other cases lengthy internal and OMB approval processes for direct data collection efforts delay data collection. The lag time to results is a key criticism of the utility of evaluation at DHS and requires exploration of creative solutions, including solutions that reduce barriers to direct data collections that are vital to evaluation and using study designs with administrative data that will allow for low-cost, timely evaluations where possible.

Findings

DHS Summary findings from the three evaluations identified as “completed” in Exhibit 2 are provided below.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) **High Value Assets (HVA) program** conducts assessments of risks and vulnerabilities of federal agency information systems identified as so critical, the loss or compromise of their information would seriously impact a federal agency’s mission. The HVA process and outcome evaluation investigated the benefits of the program for participants, how stakeholders were sharing results and recommendations, and whether/ how agencies were taking corrective action and any barriers they faced in implementing recommendations. The evaluation’s results showed that agencies learned how to better manage their HVA systems, gained knowledge about new vulnerabilities so they could address them, and were comprehensively implementing corrective actions and recommendations in a timely manner. Furthermore, analysis showed that participants trusted CISA’s expertise and recommendations, concurred with assessment findings, and valued CISA as strong partner in addressing federal cybersecurity risks.

Leveraging an approach informed by public health research, the DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) **Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Grant Program** brings together mental health providers, educators, faith leaders, public health and safety officials, social services, nonprofits, and others in communities across the country to help people who are on the pathway to violence before harm occurs. The TVTP Grant Program provides financial assistance to eligible applicants to develop sustainable, multidisciplinary TVTP capabilities in communities, pilot innovative prevention approaches, and identify prevention best practices that can be replicated across the country. The DHS Science and Technology Directorate

(S&T) sponsored independent evaluations of six grants under the FY 2020 TVTP Grant Program to measure what is working, what is not, and what is promising in TVTP programming. Process and outcome evaluations of the six grants identified three cross cutting takeaways, six recommendations for how DHS can strengthen the TVTP Grant Program, and twenty recommendations for how prevention practitioners can improve local project design and implementation, such as enhanced multidisciplinary collaboration and improved data collection. S&T and CP3 applied evaluation findings to strengthen CP3's design and oversight of the TVTP Grant Program while identifying promising practices for locally based prevention efforts. By building the evidence base through this evaluation, DHS provides communities with the awareness and insights needed to ensure a local program is designed to efficiently meet local objectives while also contributing to DHS's goal of whole-of-society prevention of targeted violence and terrorism.³

Since 2004, the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) **Alternatives to Detention (ATD)** programs⁴ 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. The ATD program evaluation studied a subset of non-detained noncitizens with charging documents issued 2012-2020 and court hearings between 2014-2020 focused on relationship between ATD participation and outcomes associated with participant attendance at immigration court hearings and participant departures from the U.S. Multiple analyses provided evidence that participation in ATD programs at the time of a court hearing is associated with a lower likelihood that an individual fails to attend that hearing or receive an *in absentia* order, compared to other non-detained noncitizens (bond, humanitarian parole). Analyses of only ATD participants offered some suggestive evidence that different types of supervision under ATD may be associated with higher likelihood of favorable terminations from ATD stints (i.e. verified departures from the country or obtaining relief). Causal analysis could not be completed in this study because of shortcomings in data availability and quality, including lack of data on important confounding factors and for some analyses, small numbers of individuals that could be included in the analyses. ICE has used the evaluation to target resources and efforts, including to modernize and transform its current data enterprise to be able to conduct more robust program evaluations in the future.

³ See https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2023-11/23_1130_st_TargetedViolenceTerrorismPreventionGrantEvaluations_FinalReport.pdf

⁴ See <https://www.ice.gov/features/atd>

FY 2025 Evaluations

This *DHS FY 2025 Annual Evaluation Plan* includes evaluations of the following activities and operations:

1. Known Exploited Vulnerability Catalog
2. CISA ChemLock Training Programs
3. Cyber Workforce Development Program
4. Scientific Leadership Award Program
5. Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant Program
6. Securing the Cities
7. Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities

Known Exploited Vulnerability Catalog

Lead Organization

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)

Program Description

Cyber actors continue to exploit publicly known—and often dated—software vulnerabilities against broad target sets, including public and private sector organizations worldwide. CISA maintains the Known Exploited Vulnerability (KEV) catalog, publishes public mitigation and remediation actions to help organizations better manage vulnerabilities and keep pace with threat activity. Organizations that incorporate these actions into their vulnerability management prioritization framework can significantly strengthen their security and resilience. Collective resilience across the cybersecurity community is built as state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments and private industries commit to address KEV catalog vulnerabilities.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation will help establish a longer-term evaluation, research, or analysis agenda focused on understanding factors associated with reduced risk, reduced CISA response time, and increased visibility to KEVs for driving sector mitigation. The evaluation will assess previously implemented strategies and test new strategies to increase visibility of the KEV catalog and the factors that are associated with successful mitigation among all stakeholder groups—both those obligated to and interested in responding to the published guidance.

The evaluation will assess KEV program activities and related mitigation activities of federal, SLTT, and critical infrastructure and private sector organizations during a one-year program window (FY 2024-FY 2025).

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 (EO) 14028, on Improving the Nation's Cybersecurity, which assigned significant additional responsibilities on CISA.

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted externally, through a CISA contractor, with execution to begin in FY 2024. CISA currently estimates a one-year period of performance.

Questions

The evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. What factors are more or less associated with prompting an immediate response and mitigation efforts for KEVs within federal, state, and local governments, and critical infrastructure and private sector entities?

2. What previously implemented and new strategies are associated with improved KEV catalog visibility (awareness) for federal, state, and local governments, and critical infrastructure and private sector entities?

Information Needed

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

- Characteristics of KEV catalog users relative to the overall intended audience
- Characteristics of strategies implemented or tested for supporting visibility
- Time for CISA and organizations to respond to vulnerabilities

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

- characteristics of non-KEV catalog users relative to the overall intended audience
- level to which KEV and non-KEV catalog users understand purpose and information provided in KEV catalog
- level of awareness of KEV catalog by user type and user responsiveness
- information sources, other than KEV catalog, that stakeholders use for awareness or visibility
- user- and non-user reported perceptions on relative contributions of KEV catalog and other sources for informing awareness or mitigation actions
- ways, other than mitigation (e.g., regulation, policy, standards development) that stakeholders use the KEV catalog
- reasons stakeholders respond and do not respond to catalog elements

Design and Methods

An outcome evaluation will be used to assess program and other factors associated with intended outcomes of KEV catalog such as awareness, understanding of information provided, mitigation, timeliness of mitigation, and other organizational uses of the information. The evaluation will also assess barriers to participants' implementation of mitigation, and may identify other unmet needs that, if addressed, could improve outcomes. The evaluation will use a nonexperimental, mixed methods design. If possible, quasi-experimental designs may be used to compare different outcomes (KEV awareness, responsiveness, other uses) by different user type, or by strategy implemented to support visibility.

Primary data sources for this study include KEV catalog and dashboard key audiences such as Federal, state, and local agencies, critical infrastructure, and private sector entities' key stakeholders in external mitigation, and key CISA personnel who act in response to the KEV visibility and internal mitigation. Secondary data sources include applicable CISA administrative/operational data such as user data on downloads and website analytics. Methods of data collection will include quantitative surveys, and qualitative interviews or focus groups, and extraction of relevant information from administrative/operational data.

Descriptive statistical analysis will be used to examine quantitative survey 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

Challenges involve capturing critical but nonresponsive audiences and underrepresented entities that are not obligated to mitigate KEVs, capturing a representative group of KEV users, and contributions of KEV catalog and other information sources to user knowledge and behaviors. Proposed solutions include a gap assessment between intended vs current users; target potential entities identified as not using KEV catalog during data collection; dedicate outreach and follow-up plan to bolster response rates as much as possible; and a robust mix of qualitative and quantitative data.

A limiting factor is that 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 to increase the visibility of the KEV catalog and responsiveness (i.e., mitigation actions and timeliness of mitigation) of stakeholders will enable DHS to improve efforts to promote the KEV catalog and its use among current users and nonusers, produce more actionable information that enables user responsiveness, and potentially, address barriers to mitigation or other unmet needs through other CISA programs, products, or services. Also understanding what factors influence stakeholders in the SLTT governments, critical infrastructure, and private sector to use or not use the KEV catalog will enable CISA to inform outreach programs, such as the Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative, and to improve CISA efforts such as the KEV catalog and the Stakeholder-Specific Vulnerability Categorization method for vulnerability prioritization. This priority question will engage or benefit CISA, Cybersecurity Directorate subdivision leaders, Vulnerability Management leadership and staff, and other government and organizational stakeholders.

Disclosure of this work is broad, to include restricted and broad DHS internal staff, U.S. government entities, non-Federal partners, and the general public.

CISA ChemLock Training Programs

Lead Organization

CISA

Program Description

More than 96% of all manufactured goods depend on chemicals in some way. These chemicals are used, manufactured, stored, and transported across global supply chains, forming the

bedrock of industries that touch nearly every aspect of American life - from microchips to food processing. Many of these chemicals that businesses interact with every day are dangerous chemicals that could be used in a terrorist attack. Whether a small business or an international company, everyone who interacts with these chemicals has a role to play in understanding the risk and taking collective action to prevent chemicals being weaponized by terrorists. CISA's ChemLock program is a completely voluntary program that provides facilities that possess dangerous chemicals no-cost services and tools to help them better understand the risks they face and improve their chemical security posture in a way that works for their business model. CISA offers live and on-demand training to assist owners, operators, facility personnel, and retailers with understanding the threats that chemicals pose and what security measures can be put into place to reduce the risk of dangerous chemicals being weaponized. Currently, CISA offers two ChemLock courses: ChemLock 1 Introduction to Chemical Security and ChemLock 2 Secure Your Chemicals Security Planning.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation will assess the training delivery, trainee outcomes, and organizational outcomes of CISA's ChemLock training programs. The results of the evaluation would support improvements in training content and instructional approaches and help ensure that CISA's ChemLock training offerings are meeting the needs of its stakeholders. The evaluation will support the establishment of a longer-term training evaluation, research, or analysis agenda.

The evaluation will assess training activities for the two ChemLock training courses (ChemLock 1 Introduction to Chemical Security and ChemLock 2 Secure Your Chemicals Security Planning) and related participant outcomes, such as gains and retention of knowledge, skills, behaviors, or actions in the workplace as well as related organizational outcomes, during a 2-year program window (FY 2024-FY 2026).

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 is anticipated to be conducted externally through a CISA contractor. CISA currently estimates a two-year period of performance (FY 2025-FY 2026).

Questions

The evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. Which training approaches used in ChemLock training programs are best received by participants?
2. What approaches are more or less successful in producing short-term, intermediate, and longer-term knowledge gain and behaviors/ actions among participants?
3. What aspects of training programs are more or less associated with prompting participants to take follow-up actions?
4. What is the right frequency people need to retake trainings to avoid a lapse in knowledge?

Information Needed

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

- nature, type, and number of trainings provided
- participants and their characteristics
- participant perception of training approach and delivery

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

- extent and types of knowledge gained and retained over time
- participant behaviors or actions taken following the training
- participant barriers to taking action and other unmet needs
- organizational outcomes related to behaviors or actions taken
- participant perception of contribution of training to outcomes

Design and Methods

An outcomes evaluation will be conducted that examines training activities for the two ChemLock training program courses. The evaluation will look at participant outcomes such as the gains and retention of knowledge, skills, and behaviors/actions in the workplace, as well as expected organizational outcomes during a two-year period. The evaluation will use a nonexperimental, mixed methods design. If possible, quasi-experimental designs may be used to compare participant characteristics, perceptions, and outcomes for trainings that are delivered through different modalities (e.g., e-learning, instructor led, or hybrid), geographic locations, or providers (or instructors).

Primary data sources are training participants and CISA program teams designing and administering training. Secondary data sources include CISA learning management systems and other course-related artifacts from the design, development, delivery, and evaluation of the courses. Methods of data collection will include quantitative and qualitative surveys, qualitative interviews/focus groups, and extraction of relevant information from CISA learning management systems and other course-related artifacts.

Descriptive statistical analysis will be used for quantitative survey data and learning management system data and course artifacts. Inferential statistics may be used for comparisons of delivery participant characteristics, and outcomes of different modalities (e-learning, instructor led, or hybrid), geographic locations, or providers. 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

Challenges include appropriately scoping the evaluation and data collection approach and securing sufficient response rate to information collections. Proposed solutions include conducting an evaluability assessment to support study design and scope and working with a third-party evaluator to develop a plan to encourage strong response rates.

A limiting factor is that 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 delivery and effectiveness of CISA training in bringing about desired trainee outcomes will enable DHS to support improvements in training content and instruction approaches and help ensure that CISA's training offerings are meeting the needs of its stakeholders. This priority question will engage or benefit Operational division leadership and training program team managers and staff across all CISA sub-divisions, particularly Infrastructure Security Division (ISD), Integrated Operations Division (IOD), and Stakeholder Engagement Division (SED).

There are no limitations on public disclosure anticipated and public disclosure is anticipated at this time.

Cyber Workforce Development Program

Lead Organization

CISA

Program Description

The Cybersecurity Workforce Development (CWD) and Training for Underserved Communities Program (formerly known as the Non-Traditional Technical Training Providers (NTTP) for its employer-driven trainings and work-based learning approach to delivering information technology) addresses the shortage of cybersecurity professionals in the workforce and lack of diversity in the profession. Specifically, the program focuses on supporting “a comprehensive approach to advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved, marginalized, and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality” as addressed in EO 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation will examine how CWD activities contribute to enhancing diversity in the cybersecurity talent pipeline and which program activities are associated with supporting graduates in finding employment in cybersecurity. Just as importantly, it will also assess if grantees executed their programming as intended. The results of the evaluation will be used to inform program improvements.

The evaluation will assess the extent to which grantee program activities were implemented as intended and their outcomes during the two-year program window (FY 2023-FY 2024) focusing on whether enrolled participants 1) successfully complete the training program, 2) obtain apprenticeships, and 3) gain employment in cybersecurity. The performance period for the CWD

pilot grants is FY 2023-FY 2024. The evaluation will look retrospectively at the pilot grantees, NPower and CyberWarrior.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 3.3: Assess and Counter Evolving Cybersecurity Risks.

Resources

The evaluation is anticipated to be conducted externally through a CISA contractor. CISA currently estimates a two-year period of performance (FY 2024-FY 2025).

Questions

The evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. To what extent is the training/placement program being consistently and effectively promoted in, and to, underserved individuals and communities?
2. To what extent are affiliations/partnerships with cybersecurity employers being formed as intended?
3. What barriers to engagement across underserved populations and/or employers were encountered?
4. Which program practices were associated with securing participant placement into apprenticeships?
5. Which program practices were associated with securing entry-level cybersecurity employment for participants?

Information Needed

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

- nature, type, and number of promotions to/in underserved communities
- nature, type, and number of cybersecurity employers, and partnerships among employers
- implementation barriers, including but not limited to barriers to participation and other unmet needs of participants and employers
- number of program participants
- participant demographics
- nature, type, and number of completions of training hub activities
- nature, type, and number of apprenticeships arranged, completed, linked to employment
- nature, type, and number of professional development activities for recent graduates completed and linked to employment

Design and Methods

A combined implementation and outcome evaluation will be used to assess associations between participation in program activities and the outcomes of participants gaining apprenticeships and employment. Further, this evaluation will be used to assess how well grantees executed their programs and to develop further program improvements. The evaluation will use a nonexperimental, mixed methods design.

The primary data sources for this evaluation are grant recipients and program participants, whether they fully completed the program and gained employment or not. Secondary data sources include CWD administrative/operational data and artifacts from the grant activities. Methods of data collection will include quantitative surveys, and qualitative interviews and/or focus groups, and extraction of relevant information from administrative/operational data.

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

Primary challenges for this evaluation include 1) the proposed evaluation of the long-term outcome (e.g., participants securing long-term employment in cybersecurity) given it is likely outside the time frame of the evaluation and therefore will be difficult to fully answer, and 2) the timing of the evaluation given it is planned to be conducted concurrently during the two-year program implementation. Other challenges include coordination and collaboration with the grantee cooperative agreement recipient for the purposes of the evaluation. Proposed solutions include engaging the third-party contractor to provide strong technical support from the program's outset and/or evaluability assessment to ensure evaluation can be completed within program timeline and to work closely with grantees to develop robust data collection mechanisms.

A limiting factor is that 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 CWD program is a new pilot, and there is a need to understand the factors that influence implementation, participation, and outcomes. Understanding how the CWD grant activities contributed to enhancing diversity in the cybersecurity talent pipeline, which activities were associated with supporting graduates in finding employment, and whether grantees executed their programming as intended will enable DHS to improve CWD programming. This priority question will engage or benefit CISA, the Cyber Defense Education & Training team, CISA Cybersecurity Division Leadership, and CISA Capacity Building Sub-Division Leadership. Findings will be shared with the CWD grant community to share lessons learned and foster adoption of promising practices.

There are no limitations on public disclosure anticipated and public disclosure is anticipated at this time.

Scientific Leadership Award Program

Lead Organization

Science & Technology Directorate Office of Innovation and Collaboration (OIC)

Program Description

The ever-evolving threats to homeland security (HS) require novel and untapped ideas, strategies, and innovations developed from a well-trained, diverse Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) workforce to maintain the United States' competitiveness in a global economy. The Scientific Leadership Award (SLA) program conducts outreach, makes and oversees awards, and supports collaboration among U.S. minority serving institutions (MSIs) for a) conducting homeland security -aligned STEM research, b) providing student scholarships, c) developing recruitment strategies for students to enroll in the SLA-funded research via 2- and 4-year institutions, d) collaborating with at least one DHS Center of Excellence (COE) partner, and e) developing HS-related coursework and curricula. The intended result is enhancing STEM programs in MSIs to increase the pool of culturally, geographically, and ethnically diverse multidisciplinary job applicants who possess highly desired skills and competencies in areas of critical needs to the homeland security enterprise (HSE).

The SLA program uniquely offers opportunities to connect minority-serving institution faculty and students with research and STEM activities that align seamlessly with the specific mission of DHS. This alignment ensures a focused and targeted approach to advancing diversity in homeland security related STEM fields and the homeland security workforce pipeline. By fostering these connections, DHS can efficiently channel its resources toward accomplishing its mission through a diversity of knowledge and representation.

Purpose and Scope

The evaluation will examine the extent to which the SLA program is implemented and operating as intended, any implementation barriers and unmet needs, and, if possible, how SLA-funded activities are contributing to enhancing diversity in the homeland security enterprise talent pipeline. The results of the evaluation will be used to inform program improvements and future resource allocations for SLA.

The evaluation will assess SLA program activities and their outcomes during a 3-year program window (FY 2021-FY 2023). This includes the following:

- in FY 2021, six Grants to five MSIs and their partners.
- in FY 2023, nine Grants to eight MSIs and their partners

This study addresses Strategic Objective 6.2: Develop and Maintain a High Performing Workforce.

Resources

The evaluation is anticipated to be conducted externally through an S&T contractor. S&T currently estimates a 2-year period of performance (FY 2025-FY 2026).

Questions

The evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. Is the Scientific Leadership Award (SLA) program implemented and operating as intended?
2. To what extent has the SLA program strengthened the capacity of MSIs to produce STEM graduates with the desired skills and competencies critically needed within the HSE?

Information Needed

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

- SLA grant recipient and applicant characteristics
- SLA application review process
- SLA grant recipient activities/outputs (from award reporting)

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

- Engagement activity descriptions
- Stakeholder perceptions of SLA application process, award activities, and implementation
- HSE-aligned research shared with DHS
- Grant recipient contributions to the HSE (papers, patents, prototypes, and other, as applicable)
- Student course and completion records

Design and Methods

A process/implementation evaluation will examine the extent to which SLA program implemented and operating as intended, any implementation barriers and unmet needs. If possible, the evaluation may examine how SLA-funded activities are contributing to enhancing diversity in the homeland security enterprise talent pipeline through outputs and short-term outcomes, in preparation for a more comprehensive, future outcome evaluation. The evaluation will use a nonexperimental, mixed methods design.

The primary data sources for this evaluation are SLA program staff, grant recipients, and other COE partners. Secondary data sources include various program administrative/operational data and artifacts from program and grant activities, including but not limited to: SLA awardee Annual and Quarterly Performance Reports; Federal student enrollment data from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System; Budgeting office reports; Grant Solutions data; monthly workforce meeting minutes; and MSI grant recipient administrative data (if made available). Methods of data collection may include quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews and/or focus groups, and extraction of relevant information from the administrative/operational data and artifacts for document review, and observations conducted during virtual and on-site visits.

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, focus groups, or for

document review. As appropriate, complementary case study analysis may be performed to deepen understanding of the results.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

The primary challenge involves data gaps, specifically gaps in access to or quality of administrative/operational data or MSI grant recipient data related to information needed, such as student and faculty data and student recruitment information. Limitations in post-award access to awardees introduces challenges to studying some longer-term outcomes that are likely to occur beyond the timeframe of the award. The ability to modify grantee reporting requirements to request additional data would not be possible until the FY 2025 funding cycle.

Findings from the FY 2023 Evaluability Assessment will provide recommendations for identifying and strategically collecting data prior to the implementation of the process evaluation for upcoming awardees, including requiring reporting of data elements as part of the quarterly and annual reporting process. As such, potential proposed solutions include early planning for data needs and data capture tools for program documentation, awardees, and stakeholders and the identification of a dedicated data manager to coordinate across grant recipients and stakeholders.

A limiting factor is that 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 the extent to which the SLA program is implemented and operating as intended; implementation barriers and unmet needs of grant recipients and applicants, and, if possible, how SLA grant activities contribute to enhancing diversity in the HSE STEM talent pipeline will enable DHS to identify and implement program improvements and plan for future resource allocations for SLA. This priority question will engage or benefit S&T OUP SLA Program Manager, S&T OUP Leadership, S&T OIC Leadership, S&T Finance and Budget Division; DHS grants management, DHS Financial Assistance Policy and Oversight (FAPO) Division, DHS Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E) Division; SLA and MSI stakeholders and potential applicants, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and Congressional Oversight. Findings will be shared with the SLA grant community to share lessons learned and foster adoption of promising practices.

There are no limitations on public disclosure anticipated and public disclosure is anticipated at this time.

Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Grant Program

Lead Organization

S&T (Evaluation Lead) and DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) (Program Owner)

Program Description

Lone offenders and small cells of individuals motivated by a range of violent extremist ideologies, of both domestic and foreign origin, represent a persistent and lethal threat to the United States. The DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) educates and trains stakeholders on how to identify indicators of radicalization to violence, where to seek help, and the resources that are available to prevent targeted violence and terrorism. CP3's Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Grant Program provides grant funds to SLTT governments, nonprofits, and institutions of higher education (herein, grant recipients) that help communities across our country develop innovative, locally-based capabilities to combat terrorism and targeted violence through a whole-of-society approach. Leveraging an approach informed by public health research, CP3 brings together mental health providers, educators, faith leaders, public health officials, social services, nonprofits, and others in communities across the country to help prevent people from heading down the pathway to violence and intervening prior to their committing violent attacks.

Purpose and Scope

This portfolio of evaluations will assess the TVTP Grant Program implementation and goal achievement and by measuring how successful grant recipients were in achieving their intended objectives. These evaluations will allow S&T to provide recommendations to CP3 on how to better define effective programs, create useful tools, and understand the outcomes of the TVTP program.

This effort will initiate, conduct, and/or complete evaluations for seven grant recipient projects from the FY 2021 TVTP Grant Program and seven grant recipient projects from the FY 2022, FY 2023, and FY 2024 Grant Programs. The FY 2021 TVTP Grant Program Period of Performance encompasses October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2023. While other evaluation questions for FY 2021 cohort are not in scope, the evaluation related to the sustainability of the grantee does extend into the FY 2025 timeframe. The TVTP Grant Periods of Performance encompass October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2024 (FY 2022 grants), October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2025 (FY 2023 grants), and October 1, 2024 – September 30, 2026 (FY 2024 grants). Some grantees request and receive no-cost extensions (typically 1 to 2 quarters) of their period of performance, which in turn extends the period of performance of the evaluator.

A separate holistic program evaluation will be conducted for each FY cycle, assessing the extent to which 1) the TVTP Grant Program was overseen and implemented by CP3 as designed and 2) grant recipients sustained projects following the end of the grant period of performance. This evaluation will be coordinated and overseen by the S&T Evaluation Officer.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 1.2: Detect and Disrupt Threats. This study addresses *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G1-Q1**.

Resources

The evaluation effort is conducted by a DHS Center of Excellence and its subcontractors. DHS S&T sponsored the evaluations with FY 2022 funds and will continue evaluation efforts and reporting through FY 2025 as funding permits.

Questions

Questions about individual grant recipients include the following:

1. To what extent did FY 2022, FY 2023, and FY 2024 grant recipients succeed in reaching the outcomes and performance measures they established within their Implementation & Measurement Plan (IMP)?
2. What change in knowledge/awareness is demonstrated by FY 2022, FY 2023, and FY 2024 project participants who participate in trainings?
3. To what extent did individual FY 2021 TVTP grantees sustain themselves following the period of performance?

The overarching questions below will focus primarily on the FY 2022 Grant Program, while also drawing from past and current TVTP Grant Program Funding Cycles (FY 2020, FY 2021, FY 2023, and FY 2024):

1. How well was the TVTP Grant Program implemented and overseen by CP3?
2. How did CP3's implementation and oversight of the TVTP Grant Program contribute to its success?
3. How well did CP3's implementation and oversight of the TVTP Grant Program facilitate the achievement of the Grant Program's six (6) Objectives and five (5) Priorities?
4. What facilitators (and barriers) contribute to (or impede) effective implementation and oversight of the TVTP grant program?
5. What elements of program design contribute to or pose challenges for the achievement of intended program outcomes and the provision of data needed to monitor and evaluate program activities?
6. To what extent did the portfolio of TVTP grant recipients achieve what they set out to achieve, measured against the outcomes and performance measures within their individual Implementation & Measurement Plan?
7. To what extent were there common themes in the achievements and outcomes across grant recipients?
8. To what extent were there common challenges and obstacles faced across grant recipients? What strategies did recipients use to address, or attempt to address, those challenges?
9. Sustainability Evaluation: To what extent did the FY 2021 TVTP Grant Program sustain itself following the period of performance?

Information Needed

The evaluations will require information for which data are available including, but not limited to, indicators of grant outputs (project services and products), participation, partnerships, networking, project-defined outcomes, and progress toward achieving them.

The evaluations will require information for which new data collection is necessary including, but not limited to, how practitioners are completing their work, what challenges they face, how grant recipients have adjusted to overcome obstacles, key points of interaction between agency staff members, cross-agency collaborations, and salient community factors. In addition, data may be collected for indicators of short- and mid-term outcomes related to the DHS TVTP program goals of strengthened community resilience through adaptive social capabilities, improved likelihood of referral and self-referrals to community-based interventions prior to criminal conduct and prevented recruitment and deradicalization of at-risk individuals.

Design and Methods

For each cycle of the TVTP Grant Program, independent evaluators from RTI International begins with evaluability assessments of all seven grant recipients, then develops and implements a formative, process/implementation, outcome, or impact evaluation that is appropriate given the results of each grant recipient's evaluability assessment. Most evaluations will use non-experimental, mixed methods designs.

Primary data sources include staff and key stakeholders of the TVTP Grants Program grant recipients selected for this evaluation, including staff members responsible for cross-agency collaboration, supervision of program staff, and agency-setting within agencies. Secondary data sources include DHS TVTP Program administrative data provided by grant recipients through the FEMA Non-Disaster Grants Management System, including proposals, logic models, project implementation and evaluation plans, output databases, other performance reporting, and policy documents. Grant recipients will also provide evaluators with access to their local program administrative data for use in outcome and impact evaluations. Data collection methods include monthly check-ins, qualitative interviews, quantitative surveys, and observations (made during virtual and on-site visits) of program staff and stakeholders, as well as extraction and analysis of DHS TVTP Program and grant recipients' own administrative data.

Descriptive and inferential statistics, as appropriate, will be used to analyze quantitative survey data and administrative data provided by grant recipients (if applicable). Qualitative data analysis will be applied to narrative or text-based data obtained from administrative data, monthly check-ins, qualitative interviews, and observations. Network analysis and case studies will be used as appropriate.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

Challenges include data sources, collection, or analysis; funding for evidence building; and time for evidence building. Proposed solutions include CP3 engagement with SLTT partners and other community partners; and S&T oversight of research and evaluation, including determination of

what type of evaluation each grant recipient project can undergo (e.g., formative, process, outcome, impact) given the results of its evaluability assessment.

A limiting factor is that 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 the effectiveness of targeted violence and terrorism prevention practices on outcomes will allow DHS, its federal partners, and grant recipients to better shape policies and programs to implement the national terrorism and targeted violence prevention strategy. This priority question will engage S&T, CP3, federal partners, practitioners, policy makers, and other researchers in the homeland security enterprise, including state, local and tribal partners, academia, and even international audiences.

Findings will be made publicly available through final evaluations reports, peer-reviewed and academic journals, DHS websites, conferences, webinars, and other audience-appropriate dissemination channels. These products have the potential to reach state, local and tribal partners, academia, and even international audiences.

Public disclosure is anticipated.

Securing the Cities

Lead Organization

Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD)

Program Description

Urban Areas have limited resources and training to detect the presence or movement of uncontrolled radiological and nuclear materials. This limits the nation’s ability to secure or prevent the use of the materials in an attack.

Securing the Cities (STC) was established in 2007 to enhance radiation/nuclear (rad/nuc) detection capabilities amongst eligible SLTT partners. As of 2023, STC operates across multiple regions. STC uses a phased implementation model (engagement, implementation, integration, sustainment) towards providing technical assistance, advisory support, detection equipment, and training to eligible SLTT partners to enhance rad/nuc detection capabilities. SLTT partners typically include law enforcement agencies, fire services emergency management, radiation health agencies, and other regional government agencies. Enhancing SLTT partners’ administrative infrastructure and detection capabilities improves their preparation for and capacity to respond to potential terrorist attacks or other high-consequence events utilizing nuclear or other radiological material in the U.S.

Purpose and Scope

This evaluation will study STC's implementation and sustainment (where applicable) across program sites, identify barriers and approaches for addressing them, and capture important practices and lessons learned that can be shared with the program community to continuously improve implementation and sustainment. This may be particularly helpful for newer program sites.

The study will examine the implementation and sustainment (where applicable) activities of 13 ongoing regional cooperative agreements. Cooperative agreements include five legacy sites that were initially funded during part or all of the FY 2007-FY 2016 period. Legacy sites are mostly in the sustainment phase. In addition eight sites initially funded in 2020 with the designation of high-risk urban areas as defined in FEMA's Urban Area Security Initiative and codified in the CWMD Act of 2018 are mostly in implementation phase, or nearing sustainment phase.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 1.2: Detect and Disrupt Threats.

Resources

The evaluation will be conducted externally, through a contractor sponsored by CWMD and/or PA&E, and is expected to begin in late FY 2024 or FY 2025. CWMD currently estimates a one- to two-year period of performance.

Questions

The evaluation addresses the following key questions:

1. To what extent are STC's federal and regional activities and outputs conducted as intended relative to the phased STC implementation model and operating plan?
2. What implementation variation exists across the regions in which STC operates, and what practices may be contributing to exceptionally good performance (positive deviance) on outcome measures in some regions?
3. What challenges have STC regions identified through implementing and sustaining program activities? How were challenges addressed? What, if any, challenges pose continued opportunities for improvement?

Information Needed

The evaluation will require information from the 13 STC regions for which data are available:

- Phase-specific measures for activities and outputs related to federal and regional program governance, screening operations, alarm reach back and reporting, continuous improvement, and posture of the regional and national STC network
- Outcome measures related to improved detection and reporting of rad/nuc threats and hazards, connectivity between regional assets and federal operations, coordination of decision-making and action across partners, timely and targeted responses, and surge capacity

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

- Participant satisfaction and perceptions of how participation has contributed to key outcomes identified above
- Participant perceptions of implementation challenges and recommended improvements

Design and Methods

A process/implementation evaluation will examine STC program sites' implementation and sustainment. The evaluation will use a nonexperimental, mixed methods design focused on analyses of available program data and collection of new data through quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews/focus groups.

Primary data sources for this study include STC core program staff and Federal Leads supporting regions, other federal partners (e.g., Department of Energy, Federal Bureau of Investigations) at headquarters and in regions, SLTT personnel aligned to regions (e.g., regional program management offices) and SLTT partners (e.g., principal partners and subpartners represented on executive and subcommittees). Annually, program staff have a number of touchpoints with staff of regional program management offices, subject matter experts, and their agency leaders. In addition, regional executive committees and subcommittees meet frequently. These may facilitate new data collection activities. Secondary data sources include STC program administrative/operational data and SLTT regions' implementation plans, status reporting, after action/post-implementation reporting, performance measures, operations reports, and other program documents. Methods of data collection will include quantitative surveys, qualitative interviews or focus groups, observation (if possible), and extraction of relevant information from existing program data and documents.

Descriptive statistical analysis will be used to examine quantitative program administrative/operational and performance data. Qualitative analysis, including content analysis and theme identification, will be used for qualitative data collected through interviews and focus groups or residing in program data and documents.

Anticipated Challenges and Limitations

Anticipated challenges include evaluation capacity of STC program and SLTT partner staff to conduct evaluation, so CWMD will use an external evaluator/evaluation team and may provide additional outreach, technical assistance, or financial support to enable their participation in the evaluation as needed.

An important limiting factor is data quality, specifically a lack of baseline data needed to observe changes in sustainment activities over time for legacy regions. Evaluators will use qualitative data collection to assess the presence of factors identified in the literature that contribute to sustainment over time. This evaluation may support the development of new measures of sustainment that can be applied as new programs funded in or after 2020 transition from implementing to sustainment in the future and as they mature within the sustainment phase.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

Understanding the fidelity of implementation and sustainment activities both overall and at each site of STC will allow DHS to ensure more consistent implementation across regions and continuous improvement for the program as a whole. Further, identifying best practices for implementation and sustainment and the barriers that interfere with these practices will enable DHS to identify lessons learned and develop mitigation strategies for addressing common barriers that can be shared (via improvements to program guidance, technical assistance, etc.) with the program community. This priority question will engage or benefit CWMD, DHS components and divisions, other Federal partners, and SLTT partners.

Disclosure of this work is anticipated to be broad but restricted to DHS internal staff, U.S. government entities, and non-Federal partners.

Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities

Lead Organization

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Program Description

Communities are faced with growing hazards associated with climate change, and the need for natural hazard risk mitigation activities that promote climate adaptation and resilience with respect to those hazards. These hazards include both acute extreme weather events and chronic stressors which have been observed and are expected to increase in intensity and frequency in the future. The Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program makes federal funds and technical assistance available to states, U.S. territories, federally recognized Tribal governments, and local governments for research-supported, proactive investments in hazard mitigation and community resilience. BRIC also contributes to the whole-of-government Justice40 Initiative⁵, which prioritizes financial and non-financial technical assistance to tribes, Economically Disadvantaged Rural Communities and other disadvantaged communities. These investments aim to reduce future disaster losses, including loss of life and property as well as future spending from the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF). BRIC focuses on cost-effective mitigation measures including protecting public infrastructure so that critical services can withstand or more rapidly recover from future disasters, as well as other projects and activities to increase resilience throughout the nation.

⁵ The Justice40 target is specified as 40 percent of funds being allocated to disadvantaged or underserved communities. Using either Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool or other measures of vulnerability or resilience challenges to identify disadvantaged communities and their relative resilience needs, the program will calculate the percentage of funds delivered to these communities.

Purpose and Scope

This evaluation will assess the program's implementation and operation and the degree to which the program structure is appropriate and acceptable to stakeholders, relative to the theory of change. As BRIC has not yet completed an entire funding cycle with the first round of awardees, this evaluation will allow program leadership to implement updates or changes in response to early lessons learned.

The scope of this evaluation will include BRIC grant submissions and selections during the first four years of the program (FYs 2020-2023) as well as formal stakeholder feedback solicited in 2019 and 2023. This analysis will inform ways to improve the overall program and respond to changing external forces, such as the different available funding year-to-year.

This study addresses Strategic Objective 5.3: Support Outcome-Driven Community Recovery and broadly relates to *DHS FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda* Question **G5-Q2** regarding household characteristics that influence flood risk mitigation activities. The study responds to the *President's Management Agenda Learning Agenda*⁶ priority questions about how Federal Government funds from the FY 2022 Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act advance equity and support underserved communities.

Resources

This evaluation will be conducted externally by contractors and is expected to begin in FY 2025. FEMA currently estimates a one-year period of performance.

Questions

1. To what extent are federal investments through the BRIC program accomplishing intended program goals toward supporting the reduction of disaster risk, including the Justice40 Initiative goal of 40 percent of funds allocated to economically-disadvantaged or underserved communities?
2. What are the approaches or processes the BRIC program grantees/recipients have implemented that have demonstrated initial success or promise of outcomes toward reducing disaster risk, adapting to changing conditions, and withstanding and recovering rapidly from disruptions and as such, may be identified as best practices for future applicants?
3. To what extent is the BRIC program meeting the needs of communities to mitigate the risk to anticipated hazards, adapt to changing conditions, and withstand and recover rapidly from disruptions?
4. What factors influence underserved communities, tribal nations, and other potential subapplicants to apply for BRIC funding, and what are perceived barriers to participation? What success factors are associated with receiving BRIC funding?

Information Needed

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

⁶ See <https://www.performance.gov/pma/learning-agenda/>

- BRIC grant applications and awards by hazard, community type, and location
- BRIC grant applications and awards by receipt of prior Direct Technical Assistance (DTA)
- BRIC project grant applications and awards by recipients of prior capability & capacity-building grant
- BRIC DTA requests and reports
- The number and percentage of awards and dollars allocated to each hazard type and community type
- Context factors, such as funding allocations in all previous cycles, annual lives lost by hazard type, and annual dollars lost by hazard type
- Stakeholder engagement data gathered from formal collections with a broad range of recipients and potential applicants in 2019 and 2023 to assess awareness, experience, and barriers encountered

This 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 process evaluation that will utilize available program documentation and requirements as well as participatory methods to assess BRIC investments and the extent to which the BRIC program is meeting the needs of eligible communities. These methods will include semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and surveys. In addition, the analysis will include available data on communities that submit applications, as well as indicators of community challenges when applying to the program. The strategy to assess whether the observed distribution of funding matches the targeted distribution depends on the targets set by policy, such as the Justice40 target to direct 40% of the benefits to disadvantaged communities.

Secondary (existing) data sources include applications to BRIC Direct Technical Assistance, BRIC grant applications, stakeholder engagement data gathered from formal collections, and FEMA Data Exchange (FEMADex) or similar tools. Primary data sources include FEMA staff from headquarters and regional offices. 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:

- As of summer 2023, BRIC has completed three funding cycles, however, selected projects from the first funding cycle have not yet reached the end of their periods of performance.

This limits the availability of the robust data necessary to conduct an outcomes-based evaluation.

- BRIC does not have dedicated staff evaluators, so additional personnel or contract support may be needed to fully answer the questions posed in this evaluation.
- Identifying the points at which subapplicants are eliminated from consideration provides one source of information about application challenges; however, it may not provide enough information to generate an appropriate intervention for the problem.
- Interviews and survey data depend on voluntary participation from key stakeholders, some of whom may decide not to participate, and which could introduce biases to the analyses. For example, if only very dissatisfied communities take the time to respond to the survey, it may appear that BRIC has been performing poorly, when in fact, many communities greatly benefited from the support.

Evidence Use and Dissemination

The BRIC Program is guided by a continuous improvement cycle. Each application cycle reveals important insights about the experience of applicants and subapplicants, and ongoing dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders will bring to the surface considerations and opportunities to explore. Assessment of lessons learned from previous years will direct research needed to explore how to refine subsequent application cycles.

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 Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA), at Headquarters and regional offices, and FEMA HMA External Stakeholder Work Group (ESWG). The evaluation may provide useful information to state, local, tribal, territorial governments and community-based organizations.

Public disclosure is anticipated.

Appendix A. Abbreviations and Acronyms

CFO	Chief Financial Officer	NCITE	National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education
CISA	Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency	NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
COE	Center of Excellence	NOFO	Notice of Funding Opportunity
CP3	Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships	NTTP	CISA Non-Traditional Training Program
CWD	CISA Cybersecurity Workforce Development	OIC	S&T Office of Innovation and Collaboration
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security	OMB	U.S. Office of Management and Budget
EO	Executive Order	ORA	S&T Operations and Requirements Analysis
FCEB	federal civilian executive branch	OUP	S&T Office of University Partnerships
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency	PRA	Paperwork Reduction Act
FSLT	Federal, state, local, and territorial	SLA	S&T Scientific Leadership Award grant program
FY	fiscal year	S&T	DHS Science & Technology Directorate
HS	homeland security	SED	CISA Stakeholder Engagement Division
HSE	homeland security enterprise	SLT	State, local, and territorial
ICE	U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement	SLTT	State, local, tribal, and territorial
ICR	information collection request	STC	CWMD Securing the Cities Program
IJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act	STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
IOD	CISA Integrated Operations Division	TVTP	CP3 Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant Program
ISD	CISA Infrastructure Security Division	USCG	U.S. Coast Guard
KEV	known exploited vulnerability	USCIS	U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service
MGMT	DHS Management Directorate		
MSI	minority serving institution		

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 that 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.