

Enhancing the Assessment of Domestic CVE Activities

Initial findings of a review by departments and agencies of the Administration's "2011 National Strategy on Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States" suggested the need for improved metrics for understanding the impact of current Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) efforts. To date, measuring the impact of CVE programs has proven challenging, and largely focused on measures of performance¹ rather than measures of effectiveness² that address programs in achieving desired end-states and policy objectives.

Incorporating more quantitative and systematic measures of effectiveness would enhance our ability to understand the impact of our CVE activities and assess our progress against the CVE Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP). The following are suggestions of the types of metrics related to each core program area outlined in the CVE SIP that might be appropriate, although further study is needed to fully develop these categories and add specificity based upon any significant changes in policy or objectives.

Suggested Metrics for CVE SIP Core Program Areas

The evaluation of program results is an inherently challenging task, especially in sensitive programming areas like CVE, and the inability to measure a counterfactual result has posed significant limitations for program implementers in evaluating the efficacy of CVE activities. Despite these challenges, the following examples highlight the types of evaluation tools that can be leveraged to strengthen program design, implementation, and accountability.

Strategic Objective 1:³ Enhancing Federal Engagement with and Support to Local Communities that May be Targeted by Violent Extremists

Possible Evaluation Metrics:

- A measure of performance could include communication of the radicalization pathway to agencies and individuals responsible for interacting with local communities on completion of analysis of the local population's overlapping factors that contribute to radicalization or recruitment;
- Another measure of performance to address the resiliency aspect could address the use of grants and other assistance programs for local communities. The specific elements could include:
 1. The identification of specific, carved-out funding sources (public or private) that support strengthening local communities,
 2. The rate of disseminating knowledge of these resources to local leaders,
 3. The designation of specific federal officials to oversee and execute these programs, and

¹ Quantitative measures of what a program or activity produces as a product or service.

² Measures of how well the product or service meets the intended needs, especially those of the local partners / communities.

³ These are the top level actions contained in the President's strategy "Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States", August 2011.

4. The establishment of metrics for all approved requests for assistance that address the outcomes of the efforts.
- Measures of effectiveness could include:
 1. Analysis of polling data that tracks issues as identifying past radicalization factors and how they resonate in various populations and communities, or
 2. Indications that terrorist organizations have altered their message or target populations in response to US actions, or
 3. Satisfaction of local communities with federal, state or local authorities and the services provided improves, or
 4. Local populations and communities believe federal, state and local authorities are attempting to find creative and non-punitive actions to address suspicions of potential radicalization in individuals.
 - Measures of effectiveness that assess the *impact* of community-led CVE programs could be made a requirement for community organizations to provide in return for receiving federal funding and support.

An evaluation template could be designed by the USG to ensure all metrics being provided by community groups are standardized. This template would articulate a theory of change chosen by the USG that posits a set of desired outcomes related to CVE and then uses specific evaluation tools to measure whether these outcomes occurred.

Strategic Objective 2: Building Government and Law Enforcement Expertise for Preventing Violent Extremism

Possible Evaluation Metrics:

- Measures of performance for this core area could include:
 1. The establishment of a certification standard on CVE issues that federal, state and local authorities could obtain by taking a series of courses,
 2. The population of on-line training courses available to state and local officials,
 3. Analysis of trend lines in the number of local and state authorities assigned to joint efforts with federal agencies,
 4. Analysis of the trend lines in funded and published research on radicalization,
 5. Coverage of training course that span the full spectrum of radicalization issues
- Measures of effectiveness for this area could include:
 1. Complaints against federal, state or local authorities concerning civil rights issue involving CVE topics,
 2. Public opinion polls assessing the effectiveness and fairness of law enforcement personnel addressing those issues, and
 3. Analysis of the effectiveness of trained and certified personnel addressing local radicalization issues compared with untrained personnel.

Strategic Objective 3: Countering Violent Extremist Propaganda While Promoting Our Ideals

Possible Evaluation Metrics:

- A measure of performance could include coordinated and regularly updated quantitative data on the total number of
 1. Community-led counter messaging initiatives;
 2. Training and education provided to communities on countering violent extremist propaganda;
 3. Public statements and speaking engagements by USG officials about violent extremist radicalization and our efforts to counter the threat;
 4. Official tech and private sector outreach policies and dedicated staff in departments and agencies.
- Measures of effectiveness could include:
 1. Analysis of polling data before and after intervention campaigns,
 2. Analysis of trend lines nationally, regionally and locally on how the population views radicalization and the threat it poses to their way of life,
 3. Changes in the flow of funds or other means of support to known or suspected individuals, or
 4. Changes in the approach used by terrorist organization to recruit or generate support.

Methods

There are a variety of different methods and data collection instruments that could be used to gather the required data for the metrics suggested above. The following seven methods listed below are only a small selection of possible methodologies and were chosen because they have been used to evaluate CVE programs in the past. The first three are traditional methods commonly used in evaluation, and the last four depart from traditional approaches familiar to most CVE practitioners and more study would be needed to explore their efficacy.

- Surveys;
- Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI);
- Focus Group Discussions (FGD);
- Integrative Complexity through Moral Dilemmas (IC);
- Social Network Analysis (SNA);
- Q Methodology;
- Social Media Analysis and Content Analysis.

Conclusion

Additional study is need to identify the full spectrum of innovative evaluation tools and techniques that could be applied for each core program area of the CVE SIP. This paper highlighted some possible ideas that could provide the building blocks for a more in-depth analysis, ideally with the input of CVE evaluation experts, to determine how best to incorporate more rigorous evaluation metrics for domestic CVE efforts.