



Homeland Security

Science and Technology

Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention
BAA Call 0002
Systematic Reviews Statement of Objectives

November 2022

1.0 Problem Statement:

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate (S&T) Public Safety and Violence Prevention (PSVP) program aims to conduct evidence-based research to better understand the evolving threat landscape in an effort to improve and/or build tools and techniques to enhance public safety and prevent acts of violence from impacting communities. While the program covers a broad set of requirements from across the Homeland Security Enterprise (HSE), the focus of PSVP is to utilize the application of fundamental research in behavioral, social, economic, human factors and investigative sciences to assist in the development of knowledge, tools, and techniques to support efforts as we aim to mitigate and prevent acts that put an individual(s) and group(s) safety into question while identifying points of intervention for susceptible individual(s) and group(s) before they strike as we strengthen the preparedness and protection of the most vulnerable communities. Effective response requires a proactive, analytical, and qualitative approach to the prevention of, protection from, mitigation of, response to, and recovery from acts that impact our public safety.

The threat posed by targeted violence and terrorism is neither constrained by international borders nor limited to a single ideology. As a result, many partner countries have invested resources into research within their local contexts to build the global body of knowledge in this field. Many of these studies are of exceptionally high quality, however, the benefits of this work are often inaccessible to the intended end-users who may not be capable of effectively retrieving or analyzing the existing literature. DHS S&T has identified an opportunity to systematically review the existing international and multi-disciplinary body of knowledge on targeted violence and terrorism prevention to move towards a global evidence-base for practice and policy.

A central component of the movement towards evidence-based practice and policy is the reliance on systematic reviews of prior research and evaluations. Such reviews - rigorous and explicit syntheses of scientific studies - allow policymakers and practitioners to identify which programs, practices, and interventions are most effective and in which contexts, which programs may need to be redesigned or reconsidered, and which may be in need of empirical testing.

This Call is in support of the National Strategy for Countering Domestic Terrorism (June 2021), Strategic Goal 1.1: Enhance domestic terrorism-related research and analysis, and the DHS Strategic Framework for Countering Terrorism and Targeted Violence Implementation Plan (October 2020), specifically Objective 3.1: Strengthen societal resistance against the drivers of violent extremism and ensure broad awareness of the threat of terrorism and targeted violence.

2.0 Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this Statement of Objectives (SOO) document is to conduct and produce at least four expedited systematic reviews per year, over a three-year period, to help build a global evidence-base for terrorism prevention policy, strategy, and activity. Systematic reviews will assist DHS and key stakeholders in identifying areas in which there are sufficient amounts of quality scientific evidence, a lack of evidence, or a wide range of studies of varying quality. Systematic review methods are designed to synthesize the best available empirical evidence on a topic to arrive at defensible conclusions and generalizations. Systematic review methods are transparent and replicable so that readers can fully evaluate the basis for conclusions.

3.0 Background Environment

PSVP has identified systematic reviews as the preferred approach to achieve the goals and objectives of this requirement. While many evaluations and studies of terrorism prevention programs are carried out, too many result in lying dormant in the academic literature unless someone does the work of identifying, retrieving, and analyzing them to find out what they reveal about what works, and disseminating them to policy makers and practitioners in the appropriate language and format.

Core features of a systematic review shall include the following:

1. Explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria for studies;
2. An explicit and comprehensive search strategy designed to identify both published and unpublished studies;
3. Systematic coding or extraction of information from the studies, including an assessment of the validity of study findings, and;
4. Meta-analysis of results across studies, if feasible.

3.1 Mission Scenarios

PSVP seeks to utilize the advantage of conducting systematic reviews over a traditional narrative literature review, which is that it minimizes the possibility of drawing biased conclusions. One source of bias comes from the methods used for identifying relevant studies. Traditional reviews often do not make explicit the search strategy used. Moreover, traditional reviews often search in specific literature; for example, looking for published studies or examining only selected peer-reviewed journals. Systematic reviews search in both the published and unpublished literature to develop unbiased samples of studies.

3.2 Current Technology Shortfalls and Threats

Traditional reviews often rely on a narrative approach to cumulate findings across studies. A narrative approach has the advantage of allowing the reviewer to draw qualitative conclusions for a group of studies, however such an approach is often not transparent and fails to take advantage of the benefits of meta-analysis—statistically combining results across studies. Systematic reviews include narrative descriptions of studies, but also cumulate study findings using meta-analytic approaches (when appropriate) that allow the reviewer to draw statistical conclusions. Using such methods, a researcher draws conclusions as to whether each study is effective based on statistical significance.

4.0 Potential Solutions Attributes

As stated above, this effort shall (1) produce at least four systematic reviews per year to help policymakers and practitioners take into account the least biased and most scientifically rigorous evidence in their decision-making; and (2) aim to make the reviews easily accessible to decision-makers, other researchers, and the general public by publishing all findings via an academic journal and/or peer-reviewed outlet. Our goal is to provide up-to date information to those who need to know public safety and violence prevention strategies.

4.1 Concept of Operations (ConOps)

This effort seeks to conduct at least **four (4) systematic reviews per year** on topics of targeted violence and terrorism prevention, which are determined in consultation with DHS S&T. All reviews produced under this project will follow an intensive research process consisting of three stages: title registration, protocol design, and final review.

In order for a title to be registered, the contractor shall screen proposed titles for obvious deficiencies or overlap with existing reviews. If no issues are identified, the titles will be prioritized and approved by the DHS Program Manager.

Once a title is approved, the contractor shall produce a protocol, which lays out a detailed strategy for conducting the research. The protocol is submitted to the DHS Program Manager for review. The DHS Program Manager may return the protocol to the contractor for revisions if any issues are identified that may hinder the peer review process. Once the DHS Program Manager is satisfied with the protocol, the contractor shall identify at least two substantive peer reviewers with expertise in the specific topic of the review for approval by the DHS Program Manager.

The contractor shall summarize the main concerns and recommendations of the peer reviewers in a letter to the authors. The contractor shall monitor the revisions until all the issues have been addressed. The protocol will then be sent to the DHS Program Manager for approval. The contractor then conducts and submits the final review report according to the plan described in the protocol. Final review shall also include a plain language summary that summarizes the objectives, methods, criteria, and key findings. DHS encourages the sharing of the final review via academic journals and peer-reviewed outlets.

4.2 Additional Capabilities

N/A

5.0 Solution Capabilities and Requirements

5.1 Must Have Requirements/Key Performance Parameters (KPPs)

The proposed solution must include:

1. Kick-Off Meeting
2. Project Management Plan (PMP)

3. Monthly Management Meetings
4. Title Registration
5. Research Protocol
6. Publication of Protocol
7. Final Review
8. Publication of Full Systematic Review
9. Publication of Plain Language Summaries (for each review)
10. Systematic Review Stakeholder Meeting

5.2 Desirable Capabilities or Characteristics

The contractor shall establish clear and explicit eligibility criteria in the development of the systematic review. Inclusion/exclusion criteria should address different dimensions to allow for reliable determination of study eligibility. These can include particular programs or policies, outcome measures, research designs, sample features, required statistical data, geographic or linguistic restrictions, timeframe, or publication time. The inclusion/exclusion criteria must be developed and specified prior to collecting the studies.

Systematic reviews conducted as part of this project will include a systematic, and transparent, search process that includes searching bibliographic databases such as Criminal Justice Abstracts and ProQuest, scanning reference lists of existing reviews and eligible studies, scanning conference proceedings, forward citation searching of seminal articles, contacting scholars with expertise on the topic, and searching the Internet (e.g., Google Scholar and websites of research organizations and government agencies).

The contractor shall conduct systematic coding to extract relevant information from each study and categorize the study with respect to methodological and study features. This coding protocol will be transparent and replicable, allowing others to evaluate and critique how information was extracted from the studies.

To the greatest extent possible, the contractor shall apply the statistical methods of meta-analysis to synthesize findings across studies when the treatment effect is consistent. When the effect varies, the contractor shall use meta-analysis to identify the reason for the variation to make an informed determination about the utility of an intervention or the validity of a hypothesis.

6.0 Systems Support:

6.1 Contractual Requirements

6.1.1 Period and Place of Performance

Three-year period of performance with a base of twelve months and two option periods of twelve months each, respectively. DHS may require the contractor to perform critical design reviews and/or product presentations at DHS-specified locations.

6.1.2 System Affordability

Although subject to official fiscal appropriation, it is anticipated that PSVP will

have a total of \$1,500,000.00 over the next 3 years to support this Call. The estimated value is not a promise of assured funding in that amount. Funding is uncertain and is subject to change. Changes in availability may occur as a result of Government discretion.

6.1.3 Regulatory/Legal Requirements

N/A

6.1.4 Contract Deliverables

Sample deliverables below:

Tasks & Deliverables			
Task #	Tasks/Deliverable	Description	Due Date
1.0	Project Management & Reporting		
1.1	Kick Off Meeting	A kick-off meeting with DHS stakeholders to initiate project.	Within 15 days of award
1.2	PMP	A project management plan that will accomplish the program's objectives as outlined in the SOW and proposal. The final version requires approval by the DHS Program Manager.	Within 30 days of award
1.3	Monthly Management Meetings and Reports	Monthly Management Meetings will be scheduled by the contractor and include written meeting minutes and action item tracking. The final version requires approval by the S&T Program Manager.	Initial meeting part of Kick Off (1.1) then monthly through the period of performance
2.0	Systematic Review Design & Approval		
2.1	Title Registration	Contractor reviews titles for deficiencies/overlap and conducts a title registration for each of the systematic reviews.	Within 2 months of award
2.2	Research Protocol	The contractor shall produce a protocol, which lays out a detailed strategy for conducting the research. Contractor shall develop a research protocol for each of the systematic reviews.	Within 4 months of award
3.0	Systematic Review		
3.1	Conduct Systematic Search for Studies	Contractor shall determine inclusion/exclusion criteria for studies and will search for, and code, all studies that satisfy the inclusion criteria. Upon completion of coding, contractor shall, where appropriate, apply meta-analytic methods to synthesize findings.	Initiate systematic reviews within 6 months of award

4.0	Dissemination of Findings		
4.1	Deliver Draft Systematic Reviews and Draft Plain Language Summary	Submit draft systematic reviews and draft 2-page plain language summaries for each systematic review for DHS review and comment.	Within 10 months of award
4.2	Publish Final Systematic Reviews and Plain Language Summary	Deliver and publish identified number of full systematic reviews to include the plain language summary for each systematic review.	Within 12 months of award
5.0	Close Out		
5.1	Close Out Meeting	Performer will coordinate a close-out meeting at the conclusion of the period of performance.	15 days before termination of period of performance.

6.2 Solution Support

6.2.1 Support Concept

The contractor shall support all necessary requirements needed to obtain compliance approval for each research study.

6.2.2 Training

N/A

6.2.3 Other Considerations

N/A

6.2.4 Storage and Maintenance

N/A