A Comprehensive Approach for Countering Violent Extremism at the Local Level

On 18 February 2014, the National Security Council Staff tasked the Preventing Violent Extremism Interagency Policy Committee (IPC) with developing a process to establish comprehensive frameworks for countering violent extremism (CVE). The process includes:

1. Mapping out department and agency programs and activities
2. Establishing measureable goals for each line of effort
3. Formulating assessments focused on outcomes and specifically designed to address programs, training, and our return on investment (e.g., impact).

As agreed in the IPC, this effort should be focused on the regions of Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Boston, with customizable aspects to accommodate for future implementation at a range of regions with varying demographics and stakeholder relationships.

Proposed Process for Developing Local Framework

In order to achieve success, local stakeholders should take the lead in building out and implementing a CVE framework that best addresses the unique issues facing their communities. In some locations, efforts to counter violent extremism may be incorporated into a larger anti-violence prevention, intervention and enforcement strategy. Local stakeholders—which include federal, state, and local government partners—are in the best position to identify needs and gaps in services, assess existing local programs, leverage existing networks, and define and develop measurable goals that they have the capacity to implement.

Meanwhile, federal partners need a shared collaborative plan to support local stakeholders' efforts to address terrorist radicalization to violence and recruitment, one of the many forms of violence these stakeholders seek to prevent. Our collaborative efforts will result in a unified work-plan that promotes community solutions while leveraging federal support.

The work-plan will include but not be limited to the following phases:

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nongovernmental organizations; faith-based organizations, mental health providers; social service providers; educational services, and youth-affiliated groups. (Estimated Completion Time: 30 days)

- **Share inventory and information amongst the network**: Federal partners will initiate a collaborative dialogue with local stakeholders to share inventories of local resources, activities, and networks; learn about the community's strengths and weaknesses with respect to violent extremism specifically; identify gaps and opportunities to fill gaps; develop a comprehensive framework for countering violent extremism; and determine how success could be defined and measured. Local stakeholders will determine leadership roles to further develop the framework for ensuring safe and resilient communities. Such a dialog may be achieved through roundtable discussions or focused outreach. (Estimated Completion Time: 60 days)

- **Develop a framework**: Key local leaders (perhaps utilizing a steering committee) will meet with federal partners and generate a comprehensive framework, using the inventories collected and qualitative analysis, for countering violent extremism that includes elements of community engagement, community-oriented policing, information sharing, capacity building, and community interventions, and other tools for developing safe and resilient communities (e.g., youth organizations and human relations programs). The framework will include objectives/goals, current inventories, opportunity analysis, projected next steps, and suggested assessment processes. Federal partners may offer examples of best practices and connect local stakeholders with a national network of practitioners. (Estimated Completion Time: 90 days)

- **Incorporate community input**: The proposed framework will be presented for broader community input via local community engagement mechanisms (e.g., community roundtables or focused outreach). Based on that input, local leaders will determine areas of responsibility and the measurable steps necessary for implementation. (Estimated Completion Time: 90 days)

- **Share potential resources and guidance**: Federal partners will offer programmatic resources and guidance on potential funding and grant opportunities to support local stakeholders in implementing the framework and ensuring its continued sustainability. (Estimated Completion Time: 120 days)

- **Implement assessment processes**: Federal partners will collaborate with local partners to identify the goals of the implementation of the framework, including the end state of the community post-intervention (e.g., a community with higher levels of trust in authorities and enhanced legitimacy of criminal justice partners). At this stage the Federal partners will identify the appropriate short, medium, and long term outcomes from the outputs of the program and ensure assessment processes are being carried out to measure these outcomes as progress towards the overall goal of the framework (Estimated Completion Time: 365 days).

- **Update the inventory of resources, activities, and networks**: As resources, activities, and networks are all dynamic, stakeholders should plan to systematically update inventories on an ongoing basis (Estimated Completion Time: 365 days).

LOCALLY-DRIVEN CURRENT INVENTORY: EXAMPLE OF LOCAL INVENTORY

An inventory of an existing city-wide program might reveal a large and robust infrastructure of federal, state, and local officials who are engaged on a number of prevention issues, including CVE (i.e. outreach, threat awareness, trainings, etc.). This direct infrastructure at the federal level mostly consists of local FBI reps, local USAO reps, and DHS components such as CRCL and USCIS.

Local DOJ, FBI, and DHS have shown great collaboration and coordination among federal, state, and local partners on the issue of radicalization to violence, and have also had several high-profile terrorism related prosecutions.

Other federal agencies are involved on occasion and some on an as-needed basis for training, community forums, or subject-specific issues. Some examples of this are presentations by IRS officials on trends in tax preparations scams that target minority owned businesses, by TSA officials on TSA Pre, and other similar initiatives. There is no substantive participation in CVE-related outreach or training efforts from mental health, social service, youth-affiliated groups, or education administrators.

LOCAL INPUT NEEDED TO DIRECT SUPPORT

An inventory of activities and resources might reveal the following next steps:

Local DOJ, FBI, and DHS inventory federal engagement forums and networks include monthly or quarterly outreach meetings, regular briefings, and training focused on regional and national trends of HVE cases or CVE-related issues.

Local DOJ, FBI, and DHS compile a comprehensive list and assess the viability of improving prevention/intervention capability by incorporating mental health, social service, or education administrators whom the Federal Government may engage on other matters but could more regularly involved in CVE programing (e.g., Department of Mental Health, City Department of Social Services, and the City School District).

Local DOJ, FBI, and DHS should include CVE-specific programing into federal work plans. This should also include associated agency, office, or individual employee goals. Some examples of this are a field office goal of conducting two Community Awareness Briefings to all the major religious leaders in a 6-month period, or a manager-specific goal of one Community Resiliency Exercise in 2014. Other goals might include ensuring 50% of the front-line officers of the local police department and county sheriff have access to the DHS Web Portal or FBI's LEEP CVE Special Interest Group, scheduling subject-specific speakers from the TSA Redress Office, the TSC, USCIS FDNS, or threat-specific briefings from the local FBI field office on trends in international and domestic terrorism.

Support for Field Office or Regional Efforts

The goal for any city should be to develop a CVE framework that parallels or leverages federal efforts. This action plan should provide an outline for applicable outreach, training, and CVE-specific programing for local DOJ, FBI, and DHS officials. This could be done through the following steps:

1. **Support and Facilitate the Strengthening of Local Partnerships**: Washington-based policy officials and intelligence analysts who have subject matter expertise on CVE should work collaboratively with local experts to understand the local landscape, identify potential catalysts to violent extremism, and determine if existing programs can meet the community's needs. Washington-based experts and local experts in the field should work together to assess the depth and breadth of local partnerships supporting CVE-specific programing and recommend, where needed, formulating new partnerships and strengthening others. While the selected cities all have pre-existing partnerships, it may help enhance the efforts to include communities that have not previously been engaged.

2. **Continue to Improve and Expand Training**: CVE-specific training is regularly improving and evolving, but each metro area may have different training needs. Federal partners need to work with training experts to help establish a baseline for CVE training, or at a minimum what does CVE "101" look like for the field? Our city/regional training should focus on several basic points: (a) What is violent extremism and how is it related to counterterrorism? (b) What are some possible indicators of violent extremism? (c) What role does my department/agency have in this effort? (d) How do I work to prevent an act of violent extremism in my city/region? (e) How do I leverage existing engagements on more universal issues (e.g., child safety or school resource office programs) to address CVE and promote broad based intervention and prevention approaches?

3. **Share Best Practices and Known Violence Prevention Frameworks or Specific CVE Models**: Washington-based policy officials and intelligence analysts need to do a better job of packaging best practices in a manner that can be used by cities and municipalities across the country. We may want to consider using case studies to improve consistency and increase practitioner consumption.

4. **Raising Awareness of Existing Funding Opportunities and Leveraging Additional Resources to Support Local Efforts**: Federal agencies must continue efforts to coordinate, disseminate, and address gaps in federal resources, both in terms of grant funding and deliverables, such as training and knowledge products. Careful attention should be paid to funding opportunities and deliverables that simultaneously address CVE concerns alongside other concerns. Examples might include efforts to build partnerships with disenfranchised segments of the community, efforts to address group and organized violence, and efforts to implement analytic tools such as social network analysis applied to illicit networks writ large (including criminal and terrorist networks).

5. **Sharing Lessons Learned for Assessment and Monitoring:** Washington-based experts can provide peer-to-peer exchanges, training opportunities, or direct instruction on the proper ways to develop measurable goals and implement mechanisms for gathering program assessment data to ensure progress.