GUIDANCE FOR DEVELOPING A LOCAL FRAMEWORK FOR PREVENTING AND COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND PROMOTING RESILIENCE

Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism

Communities face many safety and security challenges, including deteriorating transportation infrastructure, gang violence, and even increased vulnerability to natural disasters. Unfortunately, efforts by violent extremists to recruit and radicalize individuals to commit acts of violence have also become a challenge for American communities. Violent extremist threats stem from members, supporters, and individuals inspired by various foreign terrorist organizations, and individuals who commit violence based on an array of domestic extremist ideologies. In the face of these threats, governments and communities have come together to establish programs to prevent and counter violent extremism (CVE) and build resiliency. Like many safety and prevention efforts, initiatives addressing CVE recognize that local government and community stakeholders are often best situated to identify and implement solutions. This guidance is not a "how-to" but merely introduces issues to consider as local partners contemplate developing a local framework for CVE.

Building Resilience

The concept of resilience is being used in many cities to not only respond to and mitigate the impact of adverse social and safety challenges, but also prevent them. Some towns and cities have public health managers, resilience officers, outreach staff, and/or policy advisors who help assess needs and gaps and work collaboratively to develop and implement resiliency strategies on a variety of levels including health and welfare based resiliency programs. Resilience efforts may support communities, families, and even individuals.

Community stakeholders play an important role in developing and implementing resiliency strategies based on local conditions and needs. In many locations, efforts to build protective factors to mitigate or eliminate risk may be incorporated into existing local, regional or statewide engagement and prevention efforts. Relevant protective factors for reducing the threat of violent extremism may include increasing community awareness of the threat, increasing social connections among community members to help solve problems, or providing concrete support for individualized interventions.

Federal, state and public safety officials in local communities may also be equipped with staff resources such as Community Police Officers, Crime Prevention Officers and Terrorism Liaison Officers who routinely provide technical assistance support in this specialty area. However, in developing a prevention framework to address violent extremism, it is important to distinguish CVE from traditional counterterrorism measures. While counterterrorism efforts work to detect and disrupt criminal activity, CVE efforts aim to prevent violence from taking root in the first place by addressing the spectrum of drivers and building protective factors.

Developing a Strategic Local Approach to CVE

Representatives in the Greater Boston, Los Angeles, Minneapolis-St. Paul regions, and others, have come together to build prevention-based frameworks and strategies for addressing violent extremism in their communities. While these approaches differ in important ways, they all aim to improve public awareness and safety around the threat of violent extremism. What follows is a set of guidelines and considerations for developing locally-tailored, evidence based approaches for CVE framework development.

DEVELOPING A LOCAL FRAMEWORK:
PLANNING AND GUIDANCE

These steps may assist local stakeholders in designing and developing a CVE framework in their community. Community stakeholders are those who have an expressed or identified role in countering violent extremism and can include federal, state, local and tribal agencies, educators, non-governmental and social service organizations, mental health providers, youth, law enforcement, and the private sector.

1. INITIAL ORIENTATION & PLANNING	2. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT	3. INVENTORY EXISTING PROGRAMS
- Analyze local threats, vulnerabilities, and dynamics associated with recruitment and radicalization to all forms of violent extremism in a region or jurisdiction. - Visit local stakeholders, including community organizations, to understand priorities, concerns, and perceptions of CVE. - Review relevant terrorism or broader violence prevention strategies and initiatives. - Decide on the scope of the framework and whether it will be focused on a city, region, or state, recognizing that violent extremist threats may differ from one area to the next.	- Identify and build relationships with diverse stakeholders. Plan strategically to bring all relevant parties to the table. - Discuss potential roles for stakeholders in the planning process, recognizing that, sometimes, some stakeholders in different sectors are reluctant to partner with each other. - Consider any risks or unintended consequences of CVE engagement and identify ways to mitigate risks. - Identify core team of individuals to draft the framework.	- Develop a needs assessment and an inventory of local school resilience, violence prevention, and crisis intervention programs. - Consider strategies for adapting or expanding related violence prevention programs e.g., gangs, human trafficking, school-based violence, online safety, and bullying. - Identify available resources, including state, county, and city funding; federal grants; research and evaluation teams; and staff support.
4. FRAMEWORK DESIGN	**5. IMPLEMENTATION**	**6. EVALUATION**
- Outline the specific roles, inputs, activities, and desired outcomes for all implementation partners. - Develop metrics to assess outcomes and specific measureable goals. - Create a timeline for development of framework, with information on meetings and the process for review and feedback as framework develops. - Include mechanisms that allow implementation partners to hold each other accountable. - Convene a working group or series of working groups to develop a local framework for prevention, intervention, and communications. - Set priorities, short to long term.	- Implement a proactive local communications framework with considerations for when and how engagement will be publicized. - Regularly convene implementing partners to strategize about both opportunities and challenges. - Pursue necessary funding and develop an inclusive process for allocating resources among implementing partners. - Include feedback mechanisms to address evolving threats and community dynamics as well as to allow for course correction. - Align budget and performance measures to framework.	- Implement assessment processes of short and long term goals (e.g. track feedback from stakeholders). - Systemically and periodically review local dynamics and framework systematically and periodically. - Be prepared to adapt the framework in response to changes in local dynamics and create an environment for frank and honest evaluation. - Monitor programs during implementation and evaluate results based on established metrics.

ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

CVE Frameworks can include different types of programs and initiatives. Some local partners have identified several issues that arise when developing and implementing CVE programs and initiatives or when attempting to integrate CVE into existing prevention programs. The following list outlines several common concerns and provides examples of how some partners have addressed these concerns.

POTENTIAL CONCERN	POTENTIAL RESPONSE
Groups feel stigmatized or unfairly targeted by CVE efforts.	Ensure CVE efforts considers all communities and addresses all forms of violent extremism. If you elect to narrowly focus your CVE efforts to address a particular community or type of perceived threat, you need to be transparent as to why you have done so. Invest in efforts to build trust, increase engagement, and seek regular input from diverse stakeholders.
Violent extremism may not be a top priority locally, especially in light of budgetary constraints.	Acknowledge that acts of violent extremism are infrequent, when compared to other forms of violence. Look for ways to integrate CVE programs into existing prevention and safety programs.
Community members will lose credibility if they participate in CVE initiatives.	Build coalitions of organizations working together to demystify the program and to increase local awareness. Some partners may choose not to brand their programs as CVE, but they will work in coordination toward broader objectives of youth leadership development, civic engagement, or violence prevention.
Media misrepresent CVE efforts.	Make a plan for press engagement in beginning phases of program development to address misperceptions and communicate goals.
Certain community groups voice opposition about CVE.	Engage critics with transparency and openness; invite partners to help address concerns.

COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM TASK FORCE

The interagency Task Force can provide support to communities in their CVE framework development efforts such as:

- **Training and Education** resources and information about awareness briefings and other educational opportunities on CVE issues.
- **Framework Development Assistance** to help local partners maneuver through the CVE framework development processes.
- **Connections to Experts** to provide information on topics such as terrorism, violent extremism, violence prevention as well as CVE program evaluation.
- **Awareness about Federal Grant Funding**, including up-to-date federal grant program solicitations related to CVE initiatives.
- **International Collaboration** through connections with international partners who can to share best practices and connections to CVE practitioners worldwide, such as the RESOLVE research network.