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News Release: University of Washington to Help DHS Develop COVID-19 Digital Contact Tracing App Testing Criteria

03/22/2021

Science and Technology

[News Release: University of Washington to Help Develop COVID-19 Digital Contact Tracing App Testing Criteria](#)

WASHINGTON – During the current COVID-19 pandemic there are many efforts to apply smartphone-base automate the contact tracing and exposure notification process. However, the technical approaches have many implications. Through its [Silicon Valley Innovation Program](#) (SVIP), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) [Technology Directorate](#) (S&T) awarded \$959,305 to the Applied Physics Laboratory at the University of Washington to bring together a group of experts and trusted entities to develop digital contact tracing (DCT) application testing criteria, as well as explore and develop policy considerations for the use of this technology to ensure privacy and civil liberties now and in the future.

“With DCT apps we recognized that there’s a need for a clear, consistent, and common set of privacy and security test criteria that are publicly accepted, trusted and utilized.” said Melissa Oh, SVIP managing director. “By bringing together a diverse, inclusive group of experts, our goal is to develop test criteria that are publicly accepted, trusted and utilized.”

This work is happening in conjunction with the recent [SVIP Phase 1 award to AppCensus](#) under the *Emergency Response & Future Mitigation* solicitation. While the AppCensus project is focused on adapting their infrastructure for app testing, the focus of this expert group is to determine what needs to be tested in DCT apps and to explore the implications of the use of DCT technologies.

“Acceptance of DCT app testing results is entirely predicated on the confidence the public has in the testing process and the people involved in its development,” said Anil John, SVIP technical director. “University of Washington will convene expert and publicly trusted individuals and entities that bring expertise, rigor, and credibility to the process, as well as the diversity of the people and viewpoints that are critically needed in such an undertaking.”

The UW-APL will leverage its national and international networks, partnerships, and relationships to manage the testing process, which needs to be broadly inclusive and in the public interest. It will assist DHS as a secretariat in an inclusive process that brings together domain experts and publicly trusted entities to rapidly develop a clear set of efficacy, security, privacy and usability criteria. DCT app testing capability providers can utilize the criteria to test their exposure notification apps as well as explore and develop current and future policy considerations for the use of this technology.

About SVIP

SVIP is one of S&T’s programs and tools to fund innovation and work with private sector partners to advance solutions. Companies participating in SVIP are eligible for up to \$800,000 of non-dilutive funding over four years to develop and adapt commercial technologies for homeland security use cases.

For more information on current and future SVIP solicitations, visit <https://www.dhs.gov/science-and-technology> or contact dhs-silicon-valley@hq.dhs.gov.

About S&T

To learn more about S&T response efforts to COVID-19 across the Directorate, please visit [S&T's Support to Response](#).

For more information about S&T's innovation programs and tools, visit <https://www.dhs.gov/science-and-technology>.

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Feature Article: S&T Partnership Enhances Public Safety Spectrum Efficiency, Improves Interoperability

03/23/2021



[Feature Article: S&T Partnership Enhances Public Safety Spectrum Efficiency, Improves Interoperability](#)

Major events in any community are a massive planning effort—like the Presidential Inauguration, for instance. For public safety, they mean planning to stay connected over open airways—which is achieved over public safety spectrum bandwidth (often referred to as the 700 and 800 MHz public safety band).

Having enough bandwidth is key to effectively coordinating staffing and communications resources. However, it comes with its challenges—and that's what a grant from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) [Science and Technology Directorate](#) (S&T) is working to address with partners at the National Regional Planning Council (NRPC) and the Association of Public Safety Communication Officials International (APCO).

The grant is helping regional planning communities (RPC) secure Federal Communications Commission (FCC) licensing capabilities and public safety spectrum bandwidth, allowing agencies to better respond to major incidents or plan large public events.

[READ THE FULL STORY](#)



Readout of Secretary Mayorkas' Meeting with India's Ambassador to the United States, Taranjit Singh Sandhu

03/23/2021

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Office Public Affairs

Readout of Secretary Mayorkas' Meeting with India's Ambassador to the United States, Taranjit Singh Sandhu

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas spoke on Monday, March 22 with India's Ambassador to the United States, Taranjit Singh Sandhu. Secretary Mayorkas expressed his desire to further strengthen the partnership between the Government of India and the Department of Homeland Security. Secretary Mayorkas and Ambassador Sandhu agreed to re-establish the U.S.-India Homeland Security Dialogue and to discuss important issues such as cybersecurity, emerging technology and addressing violent extremism. During their discussion, they highlighted the positive engagement that has already taken place during the Biden Administration, including with the Quad, which addressed concrete commitments to cooperate on COVID-19, climate actions, and cybersecurity. Secretary Mayorkas and Ambassador Sandhu also recognized the important contributions of students and entrepreneurs that have made both countries stronger.

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Phyllis A. Coven Joins the Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman as the Seventh CIS Ombudsman

03/23/2021

March 23, 2021



Homeland Security

Phyllis A. Coven Joins the Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman as the Seventh CIS Ombudsman



[Phyllis A. Coven](#) officially entered on duty as the seventh Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman (CIS Ombudsman) on March 14, 2021. She brings more than two decades of experience working for both the federal government and international organizations

leading a wide range of immigration, asylum and refugee initiatives.

Previously, Ms. Coven served as District Director for the two largest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) District Offices located in New York and Los Angeles; as Acting and Deputy Director of the Office of Detention Policy and Planning within U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; and overseas as Officer in Charge of USCIS Offices in Amman, Jordan and Johannesburg, South Africa. She also served as Director of the Office of International Affairs under the former Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), where she was responsible for the operations of the INS's overseas offices and refugee and asylum divisions. Additionally, she served as Deputy Associate Attorney General and as Special Assistant to the Attorney General at the U.S. Department of Justice.

Prior to returning to the U.S. Government, Ms. Coven

Helpful Resources

[Ombudsman's Homepage](#)

[Case Assistance](#)

[Ombudsman's Annual Report to Congress](#)

[Contact the Ombudsman](#)

[Immigration Resources](#)

worked for the International Organization for Migration in Geneva, Switzerland as a Policy Liaison and Advisor on the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact on Migration. Most recently, she supported the United Nations Syria humanitarian response as Senior Coordinator of the Interagency Program on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

About the Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman

The CIS Ombudsman is dedicated to improving the quality of citizenship and immigration services delivered to the public by providing individual case assistance, identifying trends and making recommendations to USCIS to address and resolve challenges within the immigration system.

Established by the Homeland Security Act of 2002, the CIS Ombudsman is an independent, impartial and confidential office within the Department of Homeland Security. The CIS Ombudsman reports directly to the Deputy Secretary and is separate and independent of USCIS.

Readout of Secretary Mayorkas' Meeting with Australia's Minister for Home Affairs, Peter Dutton

03/24/2021

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Office of Public Affairs

Readout of Secretary Mayorkas' Meeting with Australia's Minister for Home Affairs, Peter Dutton

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas spoke by phone on Tuesday, March 23 with Australia's Minister for Home Affairs, Peter Dutton. Secretary Mayorkas and Minister Dutton discussed the continued strength of the U.S.-Australia relationship and opportunities for enhancing work between DHS and the Department of Home Affairs. During the conversation, they emphasized the threat posed by domestic violent extremism and discussed the importance of gun safety reform. The leaders also reaffirmed commitments to coordinate on cybersecurity, supply chain security, and irregular migration.

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Information on FY21 TVTP Grants Program

03/24/2021

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Office For Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention

Today, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) posted a competitive funding [opportunity](#) to assist local communities in developing sustainable capabilities to prevent targeted violence and terrorism. The FY21 Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Grant Program seeks to provide funding to implement local prevention frameworks and explore innovative approaches to preventing targeted violence and terrorism. The FY21 program establishes the following priorities:

- Preventing Domestic Violent Extremism
- Enhancing Local Threat Assessment and Management Capabilities
- Implementing Innovative Solutions for Preventing Targeted Violence and Terrorism
- Challenging Online Violence Mobilization Narratives

The TVTP Grant Program seeks to provide funding to applications that align with these objectives and that protect privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties. Applicants are required to conduct a rigorous needs assessment to outline what resources are already available in their area and what gaps need to be filled. All projects have required performance measures.

Eligibility

State, local, tribal, territorial governments; non-profits; and institutions of higher education are eligible to apply for funds to establish capabilities or fill gaps in their prevention capabilities.

Application Tracks DHS has organized the competition into three application tracks:

1. **Promising Practices: Multiple Projects Track** will fund multiple prevention projects from the eight project types in Appendix B of the NOFO to enhance or expand a local prevention framework that reaches all segments of their locality. This is the only track that allows for multiple projects types in a single application.
2. **Promising Practices: Single Project Track** will fund specific prevention programs from the eight project types in Appendix B of the NOFO locally or in other parts of the U.S. as part of a local prevention framework. It is expected that these programs will support either existing or future local prevention frameworks.
3. **Innovation Track** will fund projects that approach the broader goal of targeted violence and terrorism prevention in new or untested ways. This can include 1) a different theory of change for a "Promising Practices" project or 2) a new theory of change that has not been previously implemented.

All applicants seeking funds under this announcement should indicate clearly which one (1) track they are applying to and adhere to the requirements and other guidance provided in each track/project description.

Funding

There is \$20 million available under this announcement. Please refer to the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) (NOFO) Appendix B for information on funding levels by project type, and application track.

Funding Guidelines

The FY21 TVIP Grant Program will prioritize cost-effective programs and projects, and those which provide a detailed needs analysis and propose to collect and report on required performance measures. DHS will assess funded projects for promising practices and make them available in a replicable form for other communities or sectors. DHS is seeking to achieve diversity among geographical locations, applicant type, and project type. The period of performance is 24 months, starting October 1, 2021.

Federal employees are prohibited from serving in any capacity (paid or unpaid) on any proposal submitted under this program. Federal employees may not receive funds under this award.

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Application Process

The application period opened on March 24, 2021 and will close on May 25, 2021 at 5:00:00 PM ET. Applicants should consult the NOFO for more specific information about the process. Applying for this grant is a multi-step process and it is recommended that applicants begin that process early in order to allow sufficient time to complete the interim steps. Applicants can register early with the [Non-Disaster Grants Management System](#) (ND Grants) and are encouraged to begin their ND Grants registration at the time of this announcement. Early registration will allow applicants to have adequate time to start and complete their application.

For more information, please see the relevant NOFO posting on Grants.gov and the TVIP Grant Program site on DHS.gov <https://www.dhs.gov/tvtprgrants>

Webinar Opportunity

DHS will host informational webinars to discuss the main elements of the NOFO and will take general questions from interested applicants. Please use the following links to join the webinars:

2/24 2:00PM EDT Wednesday: https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_OGQ4MWYzZmZAtYjhmZi00OGVklThmYzAtMDAwMGM3Y2ZjNGQw%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%223ccde76c-946d-4a12-bb7a-fc9d0842354a%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22457865b1-9b5a-4ad9-a2e6-20b7586be3d3%22%2c%22IsBroadcastMeeting%22%3a%7d

2/26 2:00PM EDT Friday: https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_OWU0YTEzZmUtMGi0NS00Y2Q0LWFiODAtY2EyY2QyZmZmM2Ey%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%223ccde76c-946d-4a12-bb7a-fc9d0842354a%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22457865b1-9b5a-4ad9-a2e6-20b7586be3d3%22%2c%22IsBroadcastMeeting%22%3a%7d

3/30 2:00PM EDT Tuesday: <https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup->

[join/19%3ameeting_YzkxMDNmZjgtYWY3Mi00MDNkLWJhMmYtNTBmMmM1YjZiNWVj%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%223ccde76c-946d-4a12-bb7a-fc9d0842354a%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22457865b1-9b5a-4ad9-a2e6-20b7586be3d3%22%2c%22IsBroadcastMeeting%22%3atrue%7d](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_YzkxMDNmZjgtYWY3Mi00MDNkLWJhMmYtNTBmMmM1YjZiNWVj%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%223ccde76c-946d-4a12-bb7a-fc9d0842354a%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22457865b1-9b5a-4ad9-a2e6-20b7586be3d3%22%2c%22IsBroadcastMeeting%22%3atrue%7d)

4/1 2:00PM EDT Thursday: https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_MWRkYjY2MjQtNGI2My00M2VjLTg0MjMtZjgwZDYyMmZiZGE1%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%223ccde76c-946d-4a12-bb7a-fc9d0842354a%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22457865b1-9b5a-4ad9-a2e6-20b7586be3d3%22%2c%22IsBroadcastMeeting%22%3atrue%7d

Additional Questions

For questions about the TVTP Grant Program, please contact the Office for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention at TerrorismPrevention@hq.dhs.gov

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DHS Makes \$20 Million in Funding Available for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grants

03/24/2021

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Office of Public Affairs

DHS Makes \$20 Million in Funding Available for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grants

WASHINGTON – Today the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is making \$20 million available through the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Grant Program to help communities across our country develop innovative capabilities to combat terrorism and targeted violence.

“Domestic violent extremism and targeted violence are two of the gravest threats facing our homeland today,” said Secretary Mayorkas. “Over the past few years, the United States has experienced an increasing number of targeted attacks by disaffected individuals motivated by a combination of extremist ideologies and personal grievances. This investment in local communities will help our partners develop sustainable capabilities to address an evolving threat environment, including by preventing attacks and online radicalization.”

Secretary Mayorkas established the following four priorities for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 TVTP Grant Program: (1) preventing domestic violent extremism; (2) enhancing local threat assessment and management capabilities; (3) implementing innovative solutions for preventing targeted violence and terrorism; and (4) challenging online violence mobilization narratives for the first time through this program.

For FY 2021, Congress supported the Department’s request to double the investment in sustainable prevention programming from \$10 million to \$20 million. In December 2020, DHS finalized plans to better monitor and evaluate the success of the awards and share results to ensure other jurisdictions can replicate best practices.

Today’s announcement builds upon DHS’s increased efforts to combat domestic violence extremism. In February 2021, Secretary Mayorkas [designated](#) for the first time combating domestic violent extremism as a ‘National Priority Area’ for the FY 2021 State Homeland Security Program (SHSP) and Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant programs. As a result, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments are required to spend 7.5 percent of their DHS grant awards combating this threat. Further, since Inauguration Day, DHS has increased the development, production, and sharing of intelligence and other information central to countering domestic violent extremism. The Department is also increasing training opportunities for law enforcement partners, including through threat assessment and management programs related to domestic violence extremism.

The TVTP Grant Program application period will close on May 25, 2021. State, local, tribal, territorial governments; non-profit organizations; and institutions of higher education are eligible to apply for funds to establish capabilities or fill gaps in their prevention capabilities. Applying for this grant is a multi-step process and it is recommended that applicants begin that process early to allow sufficient time to complete interim steps. Applicants should consult the [Notice of Funding Opportunity](#) for more specific information.

###

CIS Ombudsman's Webinar Series: USCIS' Online Filing and Customer Service Tools

03/24/2021

[View it as a Web page](#)



**Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman's Webinar Series:
USCIS' Online Filing and Customer Service Tools
March 31, 2021, 3:30 - 5:00pm Eastern Time**

The Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) [Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman \(CIS Ombudsman\)](#) invites stakeholders to participate in a webinar to discuss USCIS' Online Filing (E-Filing) and Customer Service Tools on **March 31, 2021 from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. ET.**

USCIS offers a variety of [online tools and resources](#) for applicants and petitioners to find information without having to call or visit a USCIS field office. For example, the public can securely file for certain immigration benefits, get case status updates, check case processing times, receive electronic notification of application/petition acceptance, and much more.

During this session, [Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman Phyllis A. Coven](#) and staff will engage with USCIS subject matter experts (SMEs) to provide an overview of USCIS' online tools with a particular focus on the features and benefits of E-Filing. USCIS will elaborate on current and future operational enhancement plans for its online resources, outline what to expect when using its customer service tools, and provide tips for filing forms electronically.

This webinar will serve as an information sharing and gathering session. Participants may electronically submit questions and comments during the engagement. Where practical, the CIS Ombudsman will share submitted questions (without attribution) with USCIS for awareness and, if appropriate, to assist the agency in the development of its training and outreach materials.

For more information about our office, visit the [CIS Ombudsman's website](#).

We look forward to hearing from you on these issues and invite you to register for this webinar using the link below.

RSVP

Wait There's More...

Find out the many ways on how the CIS Ombudsman works for you.

CIS Ombudsman's Annual Reports: By statute, the Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman submits an Annual Report to Congress by June 30 of each year. The CIS Ombudsman's Annual Report must provide a summary of the most pervasive and serious problems encountered by individuals and employers applying for immigration benefits with USCIS. The Annual Report also reviews past recommendations to improve USCIS programs and services. [Click here](#) to view current and past Annual Reports.

Asking the CIS Ombudsman for Help: The CIS Ombudsman provides an impartial and independent perspective to USCIS in an attempt to resolve problems with pending cases. The CIS Ombudsman does not have the authority to make or change USCIS decisions. Before contacting the CIS Ombudsman, you must first try to resolve your problem through USCIS customer service avenues. Learn more on how the CIS Ombudsman can help [here](#).

Recommendations: The CIS Ombudsman identifies systemic problems that individuals and employers face when seeking services from USCIS and makes recommendations with the goal of influencing change and improving the services at USCIS for both those who apply for and those who administer immigration benefits. In addition to the formal reviews and recommendations that the CIS Ombudsman issues to USCIS, we also work in less formal ways to identify emerging issues and begin discussions with USCIS about how problems can be addressed. [Find out more information about recommendations by the CIS Ombudsman.](#)

Public Engagement: The CIS Ombudsman meets with stakeholders across the country to learn how the delivery of immigration benefits and services impacts communities and to share information about how our office can help. If you are interested in meeting with the CIS Ombudsman and sharing information about your experience with USCIS, please [email](#) us.

Contacting the CIS Ombudsman: Have questions regarding case assistance inquiries and stakeholder engagements? [Contact the CIS Ombudsman.](#)

Stay Connected: [Sign up](#) to receive updates on events hosted by the CIS Ombudsman.

Readout of Secretary Mayorkas' Meeting with Israel's Ambassador to the United States and the United Nations, Gilad Erdan

03/24/2021

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Office of Public Affairs

Readout of Secretary Mayorkas' Meeting with Israel's Ambassador to the United States and the United Nations, Gilad Erdan

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas spoke by phone on Tuesday, March 23 with Israel's Ambassador to the United States and the United Nations, Gilad Erdan. Secretary Mayorkas and Ambassador Erdan agreed on the importance of our bilateral relationship and committed to strengthening it wherever possible. They committed to even closer consultation on the full range of homeland security issues and exchanged views on steps Israel is taking to meet the eligibility requirements of the U.S. Visa Waiver Program. They also pledged to work closely together to meet shared objectives.

###

Readout of Secretary Mayorkas' Participation in the G6+1 Ministerial

03/25/2021

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Office of Public Affairs

Readout of Secretary Mayorkas' Participation in the G6+1 Ministerial

On March 24, 2021, DHS Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas and Attorney General Merrick N. Garland participated in the G6+1 Ministerial hosted by the United Kingdom. At this important multilateral forum, G6+1 members discussed a range of security-related priorities, including law enforcement cooperation, online harms, and irregular migration. Secretary Mayorkas reaffirmed DHS's commitment to collaborating with our international partners to address shared threats to transatlantic security and enhance transatlantic cooperation.

###

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03/25/2021



Thank you for keeping up to date with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate. We aim to bring you press releases, feature articles and blog posts about the latest scientific and technological developments to our homeland. We value your interest and want to provide you with the content that matters most!

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- Do Business with DHS
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- Emergency Communications
- First Responders
- Homeland Security Enterprise
- Intelligence and Analysis
- International Engagement
- Law Enforcement Partnerships
- Preventing Terrorism
- S&T Commercialization Office
- S&T Feature Articles
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Statement by Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas on DACA

03/26/2021

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Office of Public Affairs

Statement by Homeland Security Secretary Mayorkas on DACA

Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas released the following statement announcing that DHS will issue a notice of proposed rulemaking to preserve and fortify DACA:

"We are taking action to preserve and fortify DACA. This is in keeping with the President's memorandum. It is an important step, but only the passage of legislation can give full protection and a path to citizenship to the Dreamers who know the U.S. as their home."

###

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