FY 2021 Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP)

Grant Program Close-Out Report (EMW-2021-GR-00083)

Bay Area Urban Areas Security Initiative

Introduction

The Bay Area Urban Areas Security Initiative (Bay Area UASI) assists high threat urban areas to prevent terrorism and build community resilience. The Bay Area UASI includes 12 counties, over 100 incorporated cities, 2,000 schools, 250 school districts, and a population of 8.2 million people. The area includes critical infrastructures, international airports, high profile landmarks, refineries, Silicon Valley, large stadiums, national labs, military installations, and top-tier universities and colleges. During this grant performance period, the Bay Area UASI expanded our TVTP efforts to additional schools, counties and whole of community by broadening our terrorism prevention framework and adding new and innovative programs.

During the FY 2021 TVTP period of performance, the Bay Area UASI implemented the following four projects:

- **Project 1**: Cross-Sector Threat Assessment Training and Best Practices Guidebook
- **Project 2**: Terrorist Use of Online Platforms and How to Mitigate the Threat
- **Project 3**: Media Literacy and Online Critical Thinking Curriculum
- **Project 4:** Mental Health Awareness Student Film Creation

These projects offer a blend of in-person and online trainings and leverage technology and the whole of community approach to help implement targeted violence and terrorism prevention strategies. These projects strive to raise awareness of threats and prevention strategies, provide lines of communication to report what is observed, help communities and threat assessment teams effectively assess information received, and connect those at risk with resources to mitigate their current situation.

To follow is a summary of each project including goals, objectives, activities, key outcomes, participant testimonials, and a list of deliverables.

Project 1: Cross-Sector Threat Assessment Training and Best Practices Guidebook

Project Overview

Goal:
- Enhance the capabilities for the whole-of-society to assess and prevent emerging threats of persons mobilizing and/or radicalizing to violence.

Objectives:
- Create and conduct customized sector and/or target specific training and toolkits.
- Deliver eight training seminars.

- Deliver two train-the-trainer seminars.
- Create and distribute a threat assessment guidebook.

Activities:

The target population for this training is the San Francisco Bay Area Region's whole of community. This includes local government, law enforcement/public safety, fire service, emergency management, public health, and private sector community preparedness and advocacy groups.

Key Accomplishments and Outcomes

The Cross-Sector Threat Assessment Training and Best Practices Guidebook project provided customized training from nationally renowned experts on how to conduct threat assessments for various diverse targets of violence and terrorism such as schools, faith-based organizations, high rise buildings, public transit, and large public gatherings. Participants in this training included members from the private, non-profit, and public sector entities. The cross-sector threat assessment guide contains best practices, sector specific templates, forms, and reporting instructions.

The key accomplishments and outcomes of this project are:

- Delivered eight training sessions including two train-the-trainer seminars to a total of 168 participants.
- Average breakdown of partnership/sector types attending:
    - Schools– 41%
    - Houses of Faith – 6%
    - Government Facilities – 21%
    - Law Enforcement/Public Safety – 32%
- Developed and created the threat assessment guide and disseminated it to 225 people Aside from providing the cross-sector threat assessment guide to the training participants, the guide was requested by nearly 60 different partners outside of the training class.

Project Participant Testimonials

- Pre-training average score was 78% while the post training average score was 94%.
- 78% of attendees rated the course as "excellent".
- 97% answered "Yes" to the question on the course evaluation survey asking if they are more aware of the threat of targeted violence and prevention strategies as a result of this training.
- 99% answered "Yes" to the question on the course evaluation survey asking if their confidence has increased in being able to investigate concerning behavior or threatening behavior, screen and assess cases, and implement a plan when needed as a result of this training.
- 96% answered "Yes" to the question on the course evaluation survey asking if they know how and where to report suspicious activity.
- 73% of attendees answered "Very Likely" to the question of what degree they will incorporate what they learned back on the job.

Deliverables

Behavioral Threat Assessment & Management: A Cross Sector Guide for Communities Assessing & Managing Threats and Other Troubling Behavior (see attachment)

Project 2: Terrorist Use of Online Platforms and How to Mitigate the Threat

Project Overview

Goal:
- To increase awareness of how terrorists use the internet and online platforms to disseminate propaganda, recruit, radicalize, plan attacks, fundraise and provide mitigation strategies for the technology, law enforcement, academic and whole community partners.

Objectives:
- Terrorist Use of the Internet training for 200 cross-sector attendees,
- Six training seminars of which two will be train the trainer sessions to whole of community.

Activities:
The target population for this project is the San Francisco Bay Area Region's whole of community including connecting with the region's influential technology sector and academic institutes and to bridge the gap between actors within tech, law enforcement, civil society, and academia on the issue of tackling terrorist use of the internet.

Key Accomplishments and Outcomes

The Mitigation of Terrorist use of the Internet and Online Platforms training provided insight on how terrorist organizations exploit the internet and online platforms to disseminate propaganda, recruit, radicalize, plan attacks, and fundraise. This training included instruction on mitigation and neutralization techniques, and how to report suspicious online activity.

The key accomplishments and outcomes of this project are:

- Developed and delivered six sessions of Terrorist Use of the Internet trainings and received over 300 sign-ups for the course.
- Average Breakdown of Sector Types Attending:
  - Academia – 10%
  - Civil Society – 25%
  - Law Enforcement – 51%
  - Technology – 14%

Project Participant Testimonials

- The pre-training average score was 54% while the post-training average score was 62%.

- 100% answered "Yes" to the question on the course evaluation survey asking if they feel they have an improved understanding of terrorist use of the internet as a result of this training.
- 92% answered "Yes" to the question on the course evaluation survey asking if they feel the course material presented will be useful in guiding future mitigation strategies they may undertake.
- 62% answered "Very Likely" to the question on how likely they are to recommend the course to a colleague.
- When asked what they found most helpful about the course, attendees made the following selections:
  - Learning about how terrorist exploit the internet for different purposes (60%)
  - Learning about different mitigation strategies (20%)
  - Learning about the regulatory landscape and different human rights considerations (20%)

Deliverables

Participant Manual: Terrorist and Violent Extremist Use of the Internet & Mitigation Strategies (see attachment)

Project 3: Media Literacy and Online Critical Thinking Curriculum

Project Overview

Goal:
- To increase media literacy and on-line critical thinking skills in the Bay Area.
- Provide training to middle/high school students and faculty to enhance media literacy and online critical thinking within the Bay Area.

Objectives:
- Media Literacy and Online Critical Thinking training for 17,000 students from 55 middle and high schools,
- 10 media literacy and critical thinking training and eLearning solution.

Activities:
The target population for this project is middle and high school students in the San Francisco Bay Area Region. Through an offering of a standalone eLearning course and an interactive blended learning unit (incorporating face-to-face and online learning) on media literacy and online critical thinking, this project will reach over 420 middle school and high school students at 10-12 Bay Area schools across three counties.

Key Accomplishments and Outcomes

The Media Literacy and Online Critical Thinking Curriculum focused on providing in person and online awareness level training on media literacy and online critical thinking to students in the Bay Area. These classes included topics such as bias in communication, recognizing and verifying sources of information, and how communications attempt to target or persuade individuals and groups.

The key accomplishments and outcomes of this project are:

- Developed and deployed an eLearning Media Literacy and Online Critical Thinking Course platform for 17,000 students from 55 middle and high schools.
- At the end of this performance period, 394 students had taken this course. This course continues to be available to all middle/high school students in the Bay Area UASI region.

Project Participant Testimonials

- The pre-training average score was 76% while the post-training average score was 83%.
- 81% of students report that they feel confident and capable of assessing and identifying disinformation or misinformation.
- 83% of students report that they feel confident and capable of identifying valid information sources.
- 100% of teachers reported that they are confident about teaching media literacy to their students at the conclusion of the course.

Deliverables

Media Literacy & Online Critical Thinking Curriculum Flyer (see attachment)
Media Literacy & Online Critical Thinking Teacher Handbook (see attachment)
Media Literacy & Online Critical Thinking Student Handbook (see attachment)

Project 4: Mental Health Awareness Student Film Creation

Project Overview

Goal:
- To build youth resilience and mental health promotion skills by empowering high school students to create short films on mental health awareness and implement high school mental health awareness events.
- Reduce targeted violence in high schools by building student mental health promotion skills and increasing early intervention.

Objectives:
- Provide mental health awareness and student film creation services to 12 high schools (360 students).
- Produce peer-to-peer films.

Activities:

The target population for this project is12 high schools in the 12 County Bay Area UASI Region. All high schools located within the 12 Bay Area counties are eligible to apply to be an implementation site, with 6 selected in school year 2021-22 and 6 additional selected in school year 2022-23. Films created by student teams will be submitted to an annual contest, with opportunities to win stipends and recognition for their schools. Student teams will also receive special recognition for their contributions.

Key Accomplishments and Outcomes

The local community has gained awareness of both the risk factors for, and the protective factors against, radicalizing to violence. The aftermath of the COVID-19 Pandemic created a new lens on the importance of mental health for students. Through this project, high school students received mental health awareness training and support, technical film direction and production support to create films designed to promote mental health, respond to at-risk peers, and connect to mental health resources. These films increased knowledge about warning signs, developed skills in talking about mental health challenges, and encouraged youth to seek help. School-wide activities further increased mental health awareness. Students coordinated and held film festivals and invited other students, faculty, and parents to film screenings to view their work.

The key accomplishments and outcomes of this project are:

- 84 films were submitted.
- 465 youth received a lesson on suicide prevention and/or mental health.
- 282 youth were actively involved in creating films for submission.
- 6,171 people were reached from awareness events.
- Over 6,700 total people were reached through this project, including awareness events, lessons, and filmmaking.

This project centered around positive action-oriented messaging and provided a platform for school-wide dissemination of prevention strategies to over 6,700 peers. Students not only learned about filmmaking but also increased their knowledge about warning signs and gained the confidence to comfortably discuss youth mental health.

Project Participant Testimonials

- 94.2% of student respondents agreed that they learned a lot about what to do if a friend shows warning signs of suicide by participating in the program.
- 94.2% of students reported that they learned a lot about helping a friend with mental health challenges through participation in the program.
- 100% of teachers agreed that the program increased their students' understanding of the warning signs for suicide.
- 100% of teachers surveyed said they were likely to participate again in the program.

> *"Making this video helped me to start thinking about new*
> *perspectives. Trying to imagine how other people think and feel, but*

also how my actions could affect that; how they're feeling. It's just been a really fun project and made me more aware of others and myself. I learned more about the warning signs that I can see with family and friends. It makes me more able to help them if needed."
- Student

"Many of them learned more things about Mental Health and confirmed some of their ideas about how to help and support others in times of need. I have even seen them advocate for others when issues arise and be there to support." - Teacher

"It had a pretty big impact on me while making the film because it made me realize that a lot of people are going through a sad moment and no one realizes it. It basically sent me a message saying to always check up on your loved ones frequently." – Student

"The film screening has brought new perspectives to the school when dealing with many pressing issues. I learned just how prevalent these issues are, yet how little as a society we discuss them and so I'm hopeful that with the screenings that we can become more cognizant." – Student

"In making my film, I learned more about the experiences of others. This impacted me because I got to talk to my friends and family and got to know them better than I already had. It also gave me an insight into how other people felt in certain situations. This opportunity even gave me room to learn more about myself and how I personally cope with things." – Student

"I enjoyed the freedom to freely create what I envisioned." – Student

Deliverables

Films that placed 1st- 5th and honorable mention at the regional or statewide level can be found here: www.directingchangeca.org/films. Many of the student films were also posted to the school's website, social media, and/or district webpages.

Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Sustainability

Challenges

- In order to capture intermediate and long-term outcomes and accomplishments, grantor may want to consider expanding the period of performance to three years, especially

when considering timelines for local government administrative processes once the grant is awarded.

- Data on hate crimes, gun violence, school shootings, mass shootings, extremism and what is being done is not readily accessible or communicated to the public. Evolving threats and the motives behind incidents are not shared with the whole community.
- Virtual training reaches great numbers of people but continues to be a barrier and a challenge for the most vulnerable populations who are our target audience.
- Completion rates of post training skill tests were low despite repeat follow up requests.
- Need to alleviate no show rates for free trainings, perhaps a strategy for incentivizing people to attend is needed.
- The grant application and reporting processes can be cumbersome. Grantor may want to consider streamlining some of these processes.
- There is no clear threat picture and the community needs more intelligence and information sharing. Without a local threat picture, a whole community approach is difficult to obtain.

Lessons Learned

- Communities expect trainings to be localized, personalized, and culturally competent. Off the shelf solutions are not always the answer. Need to customize and incorporate feedback from community leaders and experts before rolling out trainings.
- Bring in trusted community leaders to introduce the class and discuss how the training benefits the attendees.
- Collaborate and leverage the support of community-based organizations, school districts, academia, law enforcement, local, state, and federal partners.
- There is a need for more threat assessment and management teams to combat the rise in targeted hate fueled violence.
- Major gaps exist in schools and the threat of targeted school violence continues to grow.
- There is an immediate need for uniformity in data elements, data collection, definition of terms across disparate databases to truly understand the targeted violence threat picture.
- Using a public health/social services informed approach to TVTP expanded our stakeholder base and changed the types of projects we fund under our UASI grant.

Sustainability

- When developing Domestic Violent Extremism (DVE) projects, the UASI will continue to leverage the whole community partnerships and stakeholders established under the TVTP program.
- The Cross-Sector Threat Assessment and Management training and the Terrorist Use of the Internet training will be sustained through the train-the-trainer model that will build a cadre of local instructors who will maintain and expand the training programs.

- The Media Literacy and Online Critical Thinking project will be sustained by the online training platform and eLearning course that will be publicly available 24/7 to the entire Bay Area.
- Under the Mental Health Film Creation project, student films are posted to websites, shared and replayed on social media, and freely viewed whenever needed.
- The Threat Assessment Guidebook is published on our UASI website, and we will continue to share the resource with any and all who ask for it.
- Due to the continued surge in threats and the high demand for the Threat Assessment and Management training, we immediately offered two more sessions using UASI grant funds.
- We will continue to offer more Cross-Sector Threat Assessment trainings and Terrorist Use of the Internet trainings as part of our regular DVE training portfolio.
- We will take the Media Literacy platform to the next level by translating the training into different languages and expanding the training to parents, guardians, and caregivers.
- We will capitalize on the success of the Mental Health Film Creation project by expanding our reach to more schools in the region.
- The TVTP grant has left a lasting impact on our UASI DVE efforts moving forward. The TVTP experience has inspired our DVE efforts to take on a whole community approach to addressing targeted violence including organizing violence prevention summits, school safety symposiums, implementing restorative justice practices, and providing social and emotional learning skills for justice involved youth.