

# Fusion Center Guidelines

## Developing and Sharing Information and Intelligence in a New World

Guidelines for Establishing and Operating Fusion Centers at the Local, State, and Federal Level

Law Enforcement Intelligence Component

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The need to develop and share information and intelligence across all levels of government has significantly changed over the last few years. The long-standing barriers that built roadblocks among law enforcement agencies, public safety, and the private sector are slowly crumbling. Yet, the need to identify, prevent, monitor, and respond to terrorist and criminal activities remains a significant battle for the law enforcement, intelligence, and public safety communities.

Through the support, expertise, and knowledge of leaders from all components, the fusion center concept can become a reality. Each official has a stake in the development and exchange of information and intelligence and should act as an ambassador to support and further this initiative. It is the responsibility of leadership to implement and adhere to the fusion center guidelines.

The development and exchange of intelligence is not easy. Sharing this data not only requires strong leadership, it also requires the commitment, dedication, and trust of a diverse group of men and women who believe in the power of collaboration.

*The National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, January 2005 survey reveals that states ranked the development of state intelligence fusion centers as their second highest priority.*

**How can law enforcement, public safety, and private sector entities embrace a collaborative process to improve intelligence sharing and, ultimately, increase the ability to detect, prevent, and solve crimes while safeguarding our homeland?** Recently, an initiative has emerged that incorporates the elements of an ideal information and intelligence sharing project—fusion centers (“center”). This initiative offers guidelines and tools to assist in the establishment and operation of fusion centers.

*The development of guidelines for fusion centers has been separated into three phases—law enforcement intelligence, public safety, and private sector. Fusion center guidelines for the first phase—law enforcement intelligence—are complete. These guidelines may be used for homeland security efforts, as well as all crimes. Guideline development for the second phase—public safety—is currently under way, with plans to incorporate the private sector phase.*

These guidelines are a milestone in achieving a unified force among all levels of law enforcement agencies; public safety agencies, such as fire, health, and transportation; and the private sector. Fusion centers bring all the relevant parties together to maximize the ability to prevent and respond to terrorist and criminal acts. By embracing this concept, these entities will be able to effectively and efficiently safeguard our homeland and maximize anticrime efforts.

#### WHAT IS THE FUSION CENTER GUIDELINES INITIATIVE?

As part of the U.S. Department of Justice’s (DOJ) Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative (Global), the Criminal Intelligence Coordinating Council (CICC), in support of the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), DOJ’s efforts to develop fusion center guidelines, recommended the creation of the Intelligence Fusion Center Focus Group. Participants of the focus group included experts and practitioners from local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, as well as representatives from DOJ, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). In addition, members from national law enforcement organizations and currently operating fusion centers participated in the focus group’s efforts. This focus group was tasked with recommending guidelines specifically for the law enforcement intelligence component of fusion centers.

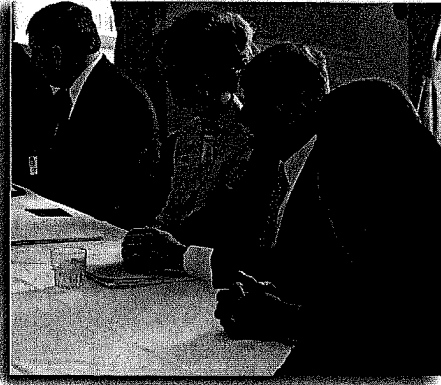


**BJA** Bureau of Justice Assistance



United States Department of Justice

In addition, the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC or Council) Intelligence and Information Sharing Working Group has focused on prevention and information sharing by developing guidelines for local and state agencies in relation



to the collection, analysis, and dissemination of terrorism-related intelligence in the context of fusion centers. The recommendations resulting from the DOJ initiative and HSAC's efforts lay the foundation for the development of fusion center

guidelines for law enforcement intelligence, public safety, and private sector entities.

Through this landmark initiative, it is anticipated that these guidelines will be utilized to ensure fusion centers are established and operated consistently, resulting in enhanced coordination efforts, strengthened partnerships, and improved crime-fighting and antiterrorism capabilities. These guidelines and related materials will provide assistance to centers as they prioritize and address threats posed in their specific jurisdictions for all crime types. In addition, these guidelines will help guide administrators in developing policies, managing resources, and evaluating services.

### WHAT IS THE FUSION PROCESS?

The concept of fusion has emerged as the fundamental process to facilitate the sharing of homeland security-related and crime-related information and intelligence. For purposes of this initiative, fusion refers to the overarching process of managing the flow of information and intelligence across levels and sectors of government. It goes beyond establishing an intelligence center or creating a computer network. The fusion process supports the implementation of risk-based, information-driven prevention, response, and consequence management programs. At the same time, it supports efforts to address immediate and/or emerging threat-related circumstances and events. Data fusion blends data from different sources, including law enforcement, public safety, and the private sector, resulting in meaningful and actionable intelligence and information. The fusion process also allows for relentless reevaluation of existing data in context with new data in order to provide constant updates.

*The fusion process turns information and intelligence into actionable knowledge.*

### WHAT IS A FUSION CENTER?

A fusion center is an effective and efficient mechanism to exchange information and intelligence, maximize resources, streamline operations, and improve the ability to fight crime and terrorism by merging data from a variety of sources. In addition, fusion centers are a conduit for implementing portions of the *National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan* (NCISP or Plan). The NCISP is regarded as the blueprint for law enforcement administrators to follow when enhancing or building an intelligence function. The Plan contains over 25 recommendations that were vetted by law enforcement officials and experts from local, state, tribal, and federal agencies. The Plan embraces intelligence-led policing, community policing, and collaboration, and it serves as the foundation for the fusion center guidelines.

For the purposes of this initiative, a fusion center is defined as a collaborative effort of two or more agencies who provide resources, expertise, and/or information to the center with the goal of maximizing the ability to detect, prevent, apprehend, and respond to criminal and terrorist activity. The intelligence component of a fusion center focuses on the intelligence process, where information is collected, integrated, evaluated, analyzed, and disseminated. Nontraditional collectors of intelligence, such as public safety entities and private sector organizations, possess important information that can be "fused" with law enforcement data to provide meaningful information and intelligence about threats and criminal activity.

The principal role of the fusion center is to compile, blend, analyze, and disseminate criminal intelligence and other information (including but not limited to threat assessment, public safety, law enforcement, public health, social service, and public works) to support efforts to anticipate, identify, prevent, and/or monitor criminal activity.

The fusion process involves every level and sector (discipline) of government, private sector entities, and the public—though the level of involvement of some of these participants will vary based on specific circumstances. For purposes of this initiative, the fusion process should be organized and coordinated on a statewide level, and each state should establish and maintain a center to facilitate the fusion process.

### WHY SHOULD FUSION CENTERS BE ESTABLISHED?

The ultimate goal is to provide a mechanism where law enforcement, public safety, and private sector partners can come together with a common purpose and improve the ability to safeguard our homeland and prevent criminal activity. As funds continue to be stretched to support numerous initiatives, it will be critical for government to accomplish more with less. Fusion centers embody the core of collaboration, and as demands increase and resources decrease, fusion centers will become an effective tool to maximize available resources and build trusted relationships.

It is recommended that fusion centers adhere to these guidelines and integrate the key elements of each guideline to the fullest extent.

# SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES AND KEY ELEMENTS

1. **Adhere to the tenets contained in the National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan, and perform all steps of the intelligence process.**
  - Consult the tenets of the Plan, and utilize model standards and policies as a blueprint for establishing or enhancing the intelligence function within the center.
2. **Collaboratively develop and embrace a mission statement, and identify goals for the fusion center.**
  - Develop the center's mission statement and goals collaboratively with participating entities.
  - Identify customer needs, define tasks, and prioritize functions.
  - Ensure the mission statement is clear and concise and conveys the purpose, priority, and role of the center.
  - Include the name and type of the center, what the center does, and whom the center serves in the mission statement.
3. **Create a representative governance structure.**
  - Ensure all participating agencies have a voice in the establishment and operation of the fusion center.
  - Ensure participating entities are adequately represented within the governance structure.
  - Compose the governing body with officials who have authority to commit resources and make decisions.
4. **Create a collaborative environment for the sharing of intelligence and information among local, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement agencies.**
  - Maintain a diverse membership to include representatives from local, state, tribal, and federal law enforcement.
  - Conduct regular meetings with center personnel, and participate in networking groups and organizations.
  - Educate and liaise with elected officials and community leadership to promote awareness of center operations.
  - Integrate public and private sector entities into the intelligence function, as appropriate.
5. **Utilize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other types of agency agreements, as appropriate.**
  - Educate and consult legal advisors early in the fusion center development process.
  - Use an MOU to lay the foundation for a collaborative initiative, founded on trust, with the intent to share and exchange information.
  - At a minimum, consider including the following elements in fusion center MOUs:

• Involved parties	• Terms
• Mission	• Integrity control
• Governance	• Dispute resolution process
• Authority	• Points of contact
• Security	• Effective date/duration/ modification/termination
• Assignment of personnel (removal/rotation)	• Services
• Funding/costs	• Deconfliction procedure
• Civil liability/indemnification issues	• Code of conduct for contractors
• Policies and procedures	• Special conditions
• Privacy	• Protocols for communication and information exchange
6. **Leverage the databases and systems available via participating entities to maximize information sharing.**
  - Obtain access to an array of databases and systems. At a minimum, consider obtaining access to driver's license information, motor vehicle registration data, location information, law enforcement and criminal justice systems or networks, and correctional data.
  - Become a member of a regional or state secure law enforcement network, such as the Regional Information Sharing Systems® (RISS)/Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Law Enforcement Online (LEO) system, the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN), or the FBI's Law Enforcement Regional Data Exchange (R-DEX) and National Data Exchange (N-DEX) Programs.
7. **Create an environment in which participants seamlessly communicate by leveraging existing systems and those currently under development, and allow for future connectivity to other local, state, tribal, and federal systems. Use the Global Justice Extensible Markup Language (XML) standard for future database and network development.**
  - Establish formal communications protocols, and ensure effective and efficient information exchange.
  - Develop and implement a communications plan, and ensure secure and redundant communications.
  - Ensure communications and systems access policies including consequences for noncompliance.
  - Consider utilizing the Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS)-ratified Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) to enable the exchange of emergency alert and public warning information over data networks and computer-controlled warning systems.
8. **Develop, publish, and adhere to a privacy and civil rights policy.**
  - Develop, display, adhere to, and train personnel on the center's privacy policy.
  - Consult the Fair Information Practices when developing a privacy policy.
  - Incorporate applicable local, state, and federal privacy laws into the center's privacy policy.
  - Ensure all other policies and internal controls are consistent with the center's privacy policy.
  - Establish a process for tracking and handling privacy complaints or concerns.
9. **Ensure appropriate security measures are in place for the facility, data, and personnel.**
  - Develop, publish, and adhere to a security plan, and ensure proper safeguards are in place.
  - Ensure security plans are marked, handled, and controlled as sensitive but unclassified (SBU) information.
  - Obtain appropriate security clearances for personnel within the center and key decision makers who need access.
  - Conduct background checks on personnel.
  - Train personnel on the center's security protocols.
  - Consult Global's *Applying Security Practices* document and resource materials when developing a security plan.

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### **10. Integrate technology, systems, and people.**

- Colocate personnel and/or utilize virtual integration to bring technology, systems, and people together.
- Base the selection of a site on the functional needs of the center.
- Plan, identify, design, train, implement, and adhere to a physical security plan and a contingency plan.

### **11. Achieve a diversified representation of personnel based on the needs and functions of the center.**

- Maintain a 24-hour-a-day/7-day-a-week operation when feasible.
- Require a minimum term commitment for full-time center personnel.
- Consult the *Law Enforcement Analytic Standards* booklet and other relevant analytic publications available through the International Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Analysts (IALEIA) when hiring personnel to perform the analytic function.

### **12. Ensure personnel are properly trained.**

- Adhere to the training objectives outlined in the *National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan*.
- Ensure center personnel meet the minimum training standards outlined in the report "Minimum Criminal Intelligence Training Standards for United States Law Enforcement and Other Criminal Justice Agencies."
- Ensure center personnel receive training on facility and information security, operations, policies, and procedures.

### **13. Provide a multitiered awareness and educational program to implement intelligence-led policing and the development and sharing of information.**

- Ensure appropriate noncenter personnel involved in the intelligence process are aware of the center's functions.
- Develop and disseminate outreach and educational materials to officers, analysts, policymakers, and others.

### **14. Offer a variety of intelligence services and products to customers.**

- Produce strategic and tactical products to support the mission and priorities of the center.
- Consult the *Law Enforcement Analytic Standards* booklet to ensure the development of professional quality analytic products.

### **15. Develop, publish, and adhere to a policies and procedures manual.**

- Use a standardized format to allow for easy reading, filing, retrieving, and correcting.
- Implement an annual review of center directives, and purge or revise outdated policies and procedures.
- Ensure personnel have access to the latest policies and procedures manual.

### **16. Define expectations, measure performance, and determine effectiveness.**

- Design performance measures based on the center's core mission, goals, and objectives.
- Ensure performance measures are valid, reliable, measurable, and quantifiable.
- Develop an evaluation process to gauge the adequacy, appropriateness, and success of center services.
- Use performance measures and an evaluation process to make decisions and allocate resources.
- Utilize performance measures to track progress and ensure accountability.
- Inform center personnel of performance and progress on a regular basis.

### **17. Establish and maintain the center based on funding availability and sustainability.**

- Identify center needs and available funding sources, to include local, state, federal, and nongovernmental sources.
- Establish an operational budget, and adhere to reporting requirements.

**BJA**

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