

Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
FY2021 Targeted Violence and Terrorism
Prevention (TVTP) Grantee Evaluation

Site Profile

Case Western Reserve University



Developed for:



Science and
Technology

Developed by RTI International
August 2024

List of Abbreviations

AOR	Area of Responsibility
CP3	Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships
CWRU	Case Western Reserve University
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
DRIVERS	Detection, Reporting, & Intervention of Violent Extremism in Rural and Suburban Communities
FTAMM	Flexible Threat Assessment and Management Model
FY	Fiscal Year
IA	Intelligence Analyst
IMP	Implementation and Measurement Plan
IO	Intelligence Officer
NEORFC	Northeast Ohio Regional Fusion Center
OPOTA	Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy
RVES	Regional Violent Extremism Specialist
TAMT	Threat Assessment and Management Teams
TVTP	Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention

Executive Summary


The Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate contracted RTI International to conduct research and evaluation of Case Western Reserve University's (CWRU's) Fiscal Year 2021 (FY2021) Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) grant, aimed at increasing the capacity of both Northeast Ohio law enforcement and the general public to identify, report, and respond to violent extremist threats. The evaluation team conducted a process evaluation of all components of the grant project and an outcome evaluation of CWRU's online training program.

In its FY2021 TVTP grant, CWRU expanded upon an online violent extremism training program it developed under its FY2020 TVTP grant. After piloting the training program with three agencies in the FY2020 grant, CWRU began promoting the training to all public safety agencies in the Northeast Ohio Regional Fusion Center's (NEORFC) Area of Responsibility under the FY2021 grant. As a result, nearly half of all agencies (48%) had one or more officers engage in the training. CWRU also adapted the training for community partners in the area. Participants in both the public safety and community versions of the training demonstrated statistically significant knowledge gain. Though the TVTP grant has ended, CWRU continues to engage with the NEORFC to promote the training program and analyze continuously incoming data.

CWRU additionally collected survey and interview data from law enforcement officers to better understand regional practices around suspicious activity reporting and threat assessment. These data were used to develop a Flexible Threat Assessment

and Management Model (FTAMM) to assist agencies in prioritizing detection and referral of violent extremism precursor behaviors. The FTAMM provides information on how to identify behaviors that may precede a terrorist attack and options for prioritizing the reporting and investigation of those behaviors. This model was paired with a training manual to allow for continued engagement after the end of the grant period.

Table ES-A. Summary of Findings

 <p>Objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train public safety personnel and community partners in Northeast Ohio to identify and report violent extremist threats. • Establish suspicious activity reporting mechanisms for first responders and community partners. • Assess agency capacity to implement community-based threat assessment and management teams.
 <p>Outputs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged Northeast Ohio law enforcement in an online violent extremism training, resulting in participation from 58 agencies. • Engaged an additional 21 public safety agencies in the online violent extremism training. • Public safety modules were accessed more than 970 times. • 89% of public safety respondents expected to use what they learned in the training at least once a year. • Adapted the public safety violent extremism training for the general public, resulting in 271 engagements. • Conducted semistructured interviews with 15 individuals representing 12 public safety agencies to learn about existing and potential threat assessment practices. • Developed and disseminated a training manual and flexible threat assessment tool for law enforcement.
 <p>Outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First responders demonstrated a statistically significant average change in knowledge of 12.8% across all violent extremism training modules. • Participating community members demonstrated a statistically significant average change in knowledge of 22% across Modules 1, 2, and 3A of the violent extremism training.
 <p>Challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CWRU faced difficulty in obtaining participation from rural law enforcement agencies and, as a result, spent significant additional resources on recruitment. • CWRU's inability to recruit a Regional Violent Extremism Specialist delayed grant activities. • In the absence of U.S. Department of Homeland Security communications regarding its grant project management, CWRU completed project activities without official guidance.
 <p>Recommendations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess capacity of and relationships with low-resource or hard-to-reach audiences early, and incorporate time and resources into project design to overcome barriers to participation. • Include buffer periods in project timelines to account for unexpected challenges. • Develop contingency plans when hiring grant-funded project staff.

Site Profile: Case Western Reserve University, Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education

Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education was awarded a 2-year grant by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) in 2021 and was selected to undergo an independent evaluation by RTI International. This site profile reviews CWRU's grant design,¹ implementation, accomplishments, challenges, and relevant recommendations for future programming in Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP). After completing an evaluability assessment, a process and outcome evaluation was conducted on CWRU's Fiscal Year 2021 (FY2021) TVTP grant, the findings of which are detailed in this report. The evaluation team examined the processes CWRU followed when implementing this grant to learn what mechanisms may contribute to a project's effectiveness and to detail project accomplishments at the output level. Evaluators also conducted an outcome evaluation of their grant component focused on public safety stakeholder training & engagement. This report examines the evaluation findings, challenges encountered, and recommendations for the TVTP grant program.

Case Western Reserve University

CWRU is a private university located in Cleveland, Ohio. In addition to providing undergraduate and graduate education, CWRU is home to the Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education, an interdisciplinary research center. Through the Begun Center, university faculty, researchers, and students conduct applied research on causes and consequences of violence and evaluate programs dedicated to their eradication. Additionally, the Begun Center offers training and technical assistance for public health, social work, and law enforcement professionals on best practices in violence prevention and intervention.

In 2020, CWRU was awarded a TVTP grant to develop and implement training for law enforcement agencies in rural Ohio. The Begun Center successfully developed five web-based training modules that provided police departments and sheriff's offices in three Ohio counties with information about targeted violence and terrorism, suspicious activities, threat assessments, and the Northeast Ohio Regional Fusion Center's (NEORFC's) capabilities. To extend the reach of its training and begin engaging organizations that might serve as partners in the threat detection and reporting process, CWRU applied for and received FY2021 TVTP grant funding.

Grant Summary

CWRU's FY2021 TVTP grant consisted of two components aimed at increasing the capacity of small and midsize communities in Northeast Ohio to detect, report, and intervene in cases of potential extremism and targeted violence. As noted by CWRU in its FY2021 grant application narrative, first responder agencies and community safety partners in rural and suburban jurisdictions typically do not have the same access to TVTP resources and training opportunities as urban jurisdictions. In addition, rural and suburban agencies may not consider extremism to be a relevant threat in their communities. CWRU's project sought to leverage its past experience working with rural and suburban agencies, in addition to its relationship with the NEORFC, to enhance the region's capacity to prevent extremist violence. The project began in October 2021 and ended in March 2024, including a two-quarter no-cost extension. This delay was largely due to the fact that CWRU had initially planned to hire a Regional Violent Extremism Specialist (RVES) to lead several project activities. Ultimately, CWRU was unable to find a qualified individual to take the position and instead chose to delegate the activities designated for the RVES to existing staff.

¹ For CWRU's full Implementation and Measurement Plan—which outlines its goals, target audiences, objectives, activities, inputs, time frame, anticipated outputs, performance measures, and data collection plan—contact DHS.



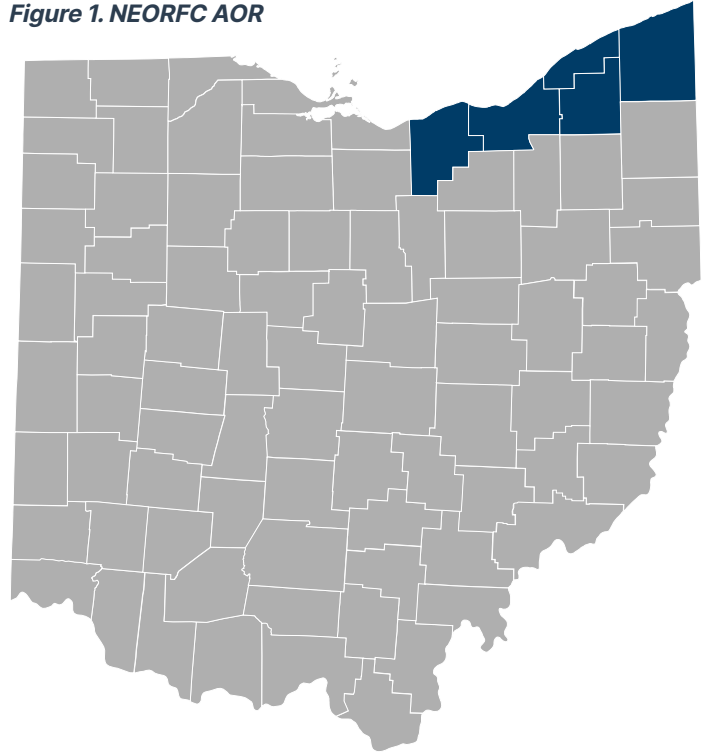
Violent Extremism Training. As previously mentioned, CWRU expanded an online violent extremism training program developed under an FY2020 grant, promoting it to all law enforcement agencies in the NEORFC Area of Responsibility (AOR) (Figure 1). In addition, the training was modified and disseminated to community safety partners with whom the NEORFC had previously been in contact.



Enhancing Community Reporting & Response. Using survey data collected from the training program and a series of interviews, CWRU

examined law enforcement processes for suspicious activity reporting and threat assessment. CWRU then developed a Flexible Threat Assessment and Management Model (FTAMM) and training manual to assist law enforcement in prioritizing detection and reporting of suspicious activities. CWRU also integrated a newly hired DHS Intelligence Officer (IO) and NEORFC Intelligence Analyst (IA) into the project to ensure these materials continued to be disseminated after the end of the grant.

Figure 1. NEORFC AOR



Process and Outcome Evaluation Design and Methods

Evaluators conducted a process evaluation of CWRU’s grant project to examine how it was implemented and how it achieved identified outputs. Beginning in March 2023, the evaluation team held regular meetings with the CWRU grant team to track progress toward project objectives. Evaluators analyzed project documentation and data collected by CWRU, in addition to reviewing CWRU’s online training program. Evaluators also conducted interviews with and surveyed project staff.

In addition to the process evaluation for the full project, RTI conducted an outcome evaluation of CWRU’s violent extremism training. Beginning in May 2023, knowledge-based pre- and posttests were administered as part of CWRU’s online training program. The evaluation team analyzed the data produced from these tests to examine the change in knowledge among training participants.



Findings

Violent Extremism Training

This section examines process evaluation findings regarding CWRU's violent extremism training, which corresponds with Goal 1 in CWRU's Implementation and Measurement Plan (IMP).

Goal 1: Training and Awareness

Increase the ability of rural and suburban communities to identify, mitigate, and report violent extremism threats within their communities.

CWRU Utilizes DRIVERS Training Developed Under FY2020 Grant

Under its FY2020 TVTP grant, Case Western developed an online, asynchronous violent extremism training titled "Detection, Reporting, & Intervention of Violent Extremism in Rural and Suburban Communities" (DRIVERS).² Comprised of an introduction and four modules (see Figure 2 for module topics), this training aims to equip law enforcement, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, and other first responders with critical knowledge to prevent extremist violence in rural and suburban communities. Each module is less than 20 minutes long and can be viewed in any order.

Referencing foundational research on past violent extremist attacks, Module 1 outlines the activities that extremist groups and individuals have typically performed leading up to an attack, focusing predominantly on right- and left-wing domestic terrorism.³ The training advises that awareness of these precursor activities can enable law enforcement and other first responders to identify attack planning prior to any violence.

Module 2 describes the purpose of and steps for conducting a threat assessment. Trainees are advised to employ resources already established in their department or to work with federal law enforcement partners to develop these. In addition, they are provided with an overview of immediate, short-term, and longer-term actions that they can take as part of any threat assessment. Crucial to the process, Module 2 also describes behaviors associated

Figure 2. DRIVERS Training Modules

Module 1: Events Leading to an Attack

Module 2: Threat Assessment

Module 3A: Threat Groups (Sovereign Citizens, Anti-fascists, Anarchists, Animal Rights Extremists, Environmental Extremists)

Module 3B: Threat Groups (White Supremacists, Violent Extremist Militias)

Module 4: Fusion Centers & Suspicious Activity Reporting

with radicalization to violent extremism. These include warning signs that law enforcement may observe in school and non-school environments, acknowledging that, while behavioral indicators may overlap across these settings, their presentation and reporting requirements vary. The training emphasizes that there is no single pathway to violent extremism and advises trainees to treat each case in its own individual context.

Module 3 is split into two parts and describes active domestic violent extremist groups. Part A focuses on sovereign citizens, anti-fascists, anarchists, and animal rights and environmental extremists. Part B focuses on white supremacists and violent extremist militias. Both parts describe the identified groups' ideological underpinnings, the prevalence and recency of their activities, and the groups' tactics and intended targets. Against this backdrop, the module reviews the purpose, components, and general procedures of threat assessment and management in a law enforcement context. Finally, it discusses the importance of sharing information with and

² The FY2020 training was piloted with law enforcement in three rural counties. The FY2021 grant extended the training to all law enforcement in the NEORFC AOR.

³ Smith, Brent et al, "Sequencing Terrorists' Precursor Behaviors: A Crime Specific Analysis", January 2021, Available through U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs' National Criminal Justice Reference Service. Document #256017, Award Number 2013-ZA-BX-0001.



between law enforcement and community partners to support threat assessment and management. By providing an overview of these topics, Module 3 is intended to enable trainees to identify individuals who might be engaging with violent extremist groups.

The final module, Module 4, relays the importance of suspicious activity reporting and the role of fusion centers in reviewing those reports. It further advises law enforcement to reach out to their local fusion center and other police jurisdictions to collaborate in identifying and addressing threats.⁴

DRIVERS Home Resources

About this training. The modules included in this training are an initial step to raise awareness regarding activities potentially associated with violent extremism. Observation of these various activities may be used to form a foundation for referral and reporting processes and to support community intervention and prevention strategies. The information provided in these modules is for **awareness and training purposes only** and should not be viewed as a substitute for departmental policies, procedures, and legal considerations.

*Please consider filling out your contact information at the bottom of this page! But it's not required to view the training.

Categorizing Threat Groups

- Federal agencies utilize a range violent extremism types
- Extremism categorized into general systems
- Majority of extremist groups fall into one threat category...
 - ... some groups' ideological themes found in other threat categories

Course Introduction

8 minutes. Click the video or the link to start the training

Preparatory Activities (Average # of days to incident)

Group	Exposure / Initial Contact	Acquisition of Expertise	Operational Acquisition / Storage	Planning / Acquisition / Storage	Recruitment / Recruitment	Threat / Loss / Escalation	Material Acquisition / Storage	Total Time
Right-Wing Groups	133	53	46	37	27			6 months
Left-Wing Groups	424	378	351	307	276	270		14 months

Module 1

Events Leading to an Attack

11 minutes. Click the video or the link to start the training

Source: DRIVERS Training Website

Violent Extremism Training is Distributed to Public Safety Personnel

CWRU published the DRIVERS training online in February 2023. CWRU and the NEORFC then took several steps to market the training program and encourage first responder participation. First, the NEORFC disseminated the training link to the 121 local law enforcement agencies in Lorain, Cuyahoga, Lake, Ashtabula, and Geauga Counties, which constitute the NEORFC AOR. Additionally, CWRU conducted informational presentations for law enforcement leaders and directly emailed and/or called each agency to establish a direct point of contact. CWRU engaged in outreach throughout the grant project to increase agency

participation in the training, documenting approximately 600 attempts to contact agency chiefs and other executives across the 121 jurisdictions.⁵

During the course of the project, staff from 58 of the 121 total law enforcement agencies in the AOR engaged with at least one training module. The training was also made available to fire departments and some law enforcement agencies outside the AOR, resulting in an additional 21 engaged entities. CWRU's training did not collect identifying information (e.g., names) from participants and therefore could not count the number of discrete individuals who engaged with the training. Instead, engagement metrics tracked the number of times each module was accessed. By the end of the project,

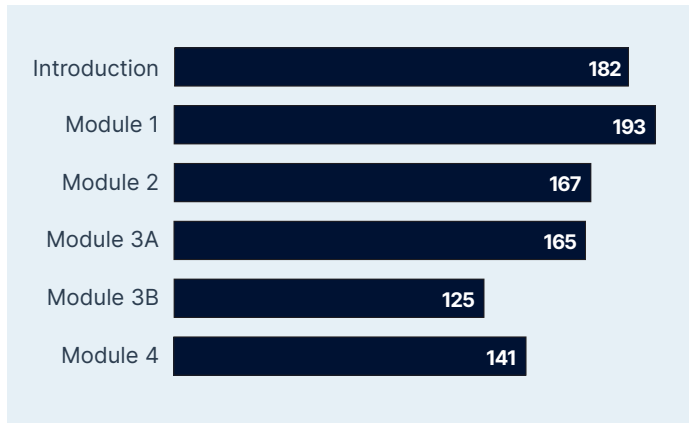
⁴ The DRIVERS training can be viewed at: <https://sites.google.com/case.edu/driversxviolentextremism/home>

⁵ CWRU's contacts included those made by phone, email, or during meetings. To encourage training participation, CWRU frequently contacted individuals more than once. The evaluation team was unable to confirm how many individuals were contacted, as CWRU tracked its outreach by agency.



the modules had been viewed more than 970 times, for an average of 162 engagements per module. Engagement ranged from a low of 125 views in Module 3B to a high of 193 views in Module 1 (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Law Enforcement Training: Number of Engagements per Module



CWRU experienced variation in the uptake of the training by various departments. For example, one-third of all identified engagements⁶ were from staff at two large suburban agencies. In contrast, 37 agencies had fewer than five engagements. CWRU attributed this variation to differences in departmental resources and how organizations prioritize violent extremism among other types of criminal activity. Throughout the project period, CWRU sought to increase training buy-in by distributing an intelligence bulletin that served to introduce law enforcement agencies within the NEORFC's AOR to CWRU's project, share insights regarding responses to its training, and encourage other agencies to participate in the training. CWRU conducted individualized outreach among agencies with whom it had established direct points of contact. Additionally, CWRU sought Ohio Peace Officer Training Academy (OPOTA) certification for the training. Once certified, OPOTA would list the training in a statewide catalog of continuing professional training, allowing law enforcement officers to receive credit for completing it. CWRU developed its OPOTA application during the grant period and intends to submit it through the CWRU Police Department after the end of the project.

Pre- and Posttests Indicate Increase in Participant Knowledge Following DRIVERS Training

Individuals who accessed the training were prompted to complete a voluntary survey before and after each module. CWRU collected 1,464 surveys during the course of the project. As each module was designed to be stand-alone and completed in any order, pre- and post-survey questions were module specific. The pre-module survey asked for professional information about the survey-taker, including their agency and role, and a series of empirical knowledge-testing (i.e., pretest) questions.⁷ The post-module survey asked those same knowledge-testing (i.e., posttest) questions, a series of self-assessed knowledge questions, and for the trainee to rank how often they believed they would encounter various precursor behaviors in the course of their job.

94% of respondents who completed a pre- and posttest were from a law enforcement agency—CWRU's primary target population.

Across Modules 1–4, 468 respondents completed the knowledge-testing pre- and posttest questions, allowing for analysis of 936 surveys. Of these respondents, 94% were from a law enforcement agency; 76% of those were coded as working in a suburban area, and 24% as working in a rural area.⁸ Participants showed a statistically significant increase in knowledge before and after each module, as demonstrated in Figure 4.⁹ CWRU noted that participants had the highest pre- and posttest scores on Module 4, which focused on suspicious activity reporting and the role of fusion centers. This suggests that agencies in the area were familiar with the NEORFC and its mission. In contrast, Module 2 had the lowest pre- and posttest scores, suggesting that local law enforcement needed additional information about threat assessment and its application to violent extremism. Module 1 scores had the largest average increase between pretest and posttest, with a 21% increase in knowledge. In addition to these scores, approximately 89% of all respondents who completed a module expected to use the information learned at least once a year.

⁶ Participants self-identified their role and agency in a survey at the start of each module. 5.6% (N=55) of all surveys were left completely blank, meaning that not all participants' agencies could be identified.

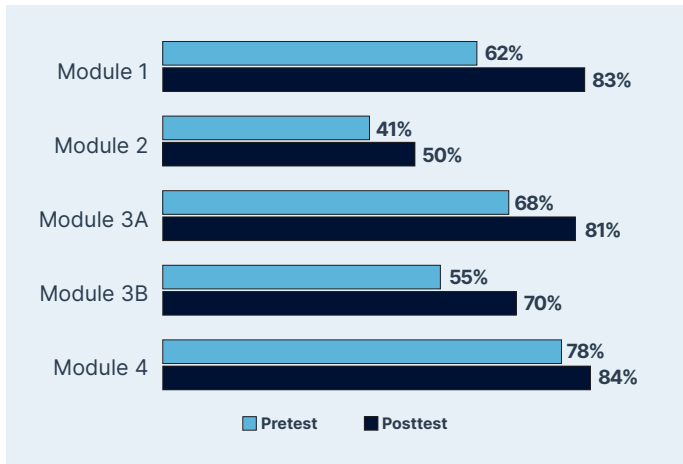
⁷ Knowledge-based test questions were added to the survey in May 2023 at the request of the evaluation team.

⁸ CWRU coded survey responses from Cuyahoga County as suburban and the other four counties as rural.

⁹ These differences were statistically significant using paired, two-tailed t-tests ($\alpha < 0.005$). This means that there is less than 0.05% likelihood that a difference of this much or greater would occur due to chance.



Figure 4. Law Enforcement Training: Average Pre- and Posttest Scores



CWRU Adapts DRIVERS Training for Community Members

CWRU began adapting its violent extremism training for a community audience in the fall of 2023. While no substantive content was changed, CWRU adapted the language in the modules to make it applicable for non-law enforcement audiences. For example, the script originally said “Refer this information to your federal partner,” but it was changed to “Refer this information to local law enforcement.” This training was first disseminated in December 2023 by the NEORFC and CWRU. During the course of the project, these community-focused modules were viewed more than 270 times, for an average of 54.2 engagements per module. Engagement ranged from a low of 31 in Module 3B to a high of 73 in Module 1 (see Figure 5). Most respondents (90%) reported viewing the modules because they were relevant to the respondents’ job or organization (e.g., government or commercial security), and 10% of respondents reported being general community members with an interest in bystander prevention.

The same pre- and posttests were used to measure knowledge change among the community members who completed the adapted training. More than 150 pre- and posttests were completed across Modules 1–4. Participants showed a statistically significant increase in knowledge before and after Modules 1 through 3A, as demonstrated in Figure 6.¹⁰ The differences in mean scores for Modules 3B and 4 were not statistically significant. Pretest scores

¹⁰ These differences were statistically significant using paired, two-tailed t-tests ($\alpha < 0.005$). This means that there is less than 0.005% likelihood that a difference of this much or greater would occur due to chance.

among community members were similar or higher than law enforcement pretest scores in three out of five modules (Modules 1, 2, and 4). There are at least two explanations for the difference in pretest results. First, because community members were recruited through preexisting NEORFC contact lists, it is likely that these trainees completed the pretest with some awareness of the fusion center (the focus of Module 4). Second, relative to the law enforcement trainees, it is possible that the community member trainees had a greater interest in the training topics, suggesting a potential selection effect. As such, the community members who chose to complete the training may not represent the average community member or be comparable to the law enforcement trainees.

Figure 5. Community Training: Number of Engagements per Module

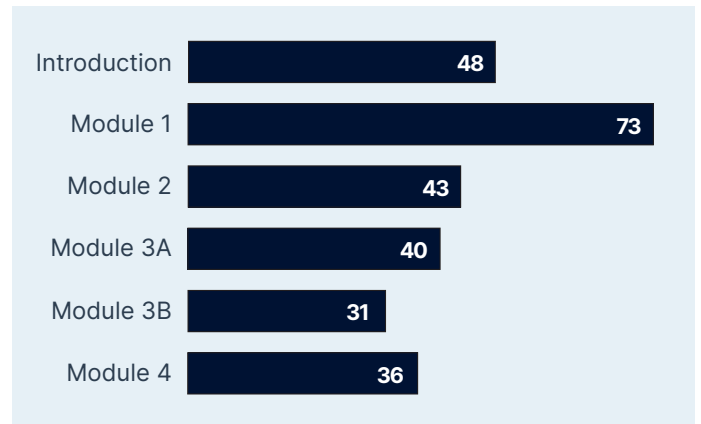
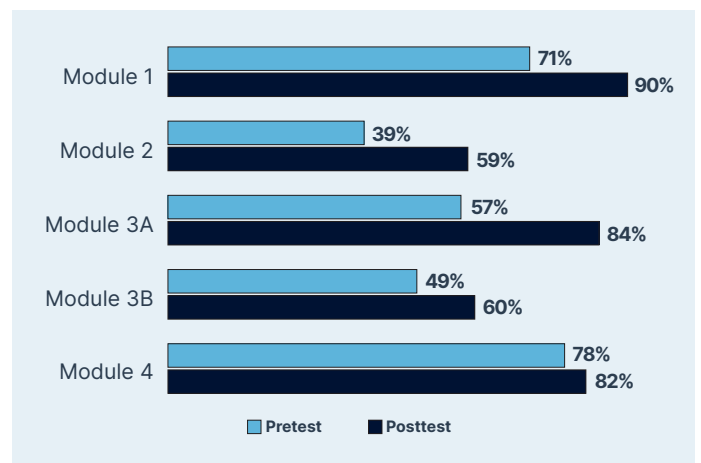


Figure 6. Community Training: Average Pre- and Posttest Scores





Enhancing Community Reporting & Response

This section examines process evaluation findings regarding CWRU's component focused on enhancing community reporting and response to suspicious activity, which corresponds with Goals 2 and 3 in CWRU's IMP.

Goal 2: Detection, Reporting, and Assessment

Develop and establish central reporting mechanisms based on identified behaviors and activity sequencing of concern, including assessment and feedback to first responders and community stakeholders.

Goal 3: Threat Assessment and Management Teams

Resource Assessments: Assess community intervention capabilities and resources to assess potential implementation models for threat assessment and management services based on geographic and demographic factors.

CWRU Develops a Threat Assessment Tool for Violent Extremism

CWRU conducted semistructured interviews with law enforcement and other first responders to learn about the use of Threat Assessment and Management Teams (TAMTs), current reporting processes, and violent extremism in the community. A total of 15 individuals representing 12 agencies participated in interviews. CWRU found that each participating agency had a different process for identifying and reporting suspicious activity, dependent on their resources. Additionally, while many of the participating agencies had Crisis Intervention Team-trained officers, they did not have TAMTs specifically for violent extremism.

In response to this variation, CWRU sought to develop an FTAMM that could accommodate varying agency resources and priorities. The project team began this process by reviewing all the survey data collected from the DRIVERS training modules, focusing on questions that asked participants to rate how often they believed they would encounter behaviors that may preclude violent extremist attacks. A list of these precursor behaviors can be found in Figure 7.

Based on these data, CWRU developed five threat assessment options that agencies can use to prioritize detection and reporting practices (Figure 8). In addition, the FTAMM provides example indicators and threat assessment partners for each of the eight precursor behaviors. Agencies can use the

Figure 7. Violent Extremist Attack Precursor Behaviors



prioritization options, example indicators, and example partners to develop a threat assessment plan suited to their priorities and resources. The FTAMM was paired with a training manual to guide model use, educate agencies about the DRIVERS training, and enable agencies to deliver in-person training sessions. CWRU also created a list of community resources in each county that could be utilized in the threat assessment process, which it shared this list with relevant agencies.¹¹ CWRU planned to design the FTAMM based on the survey data it received from the DRIVERS training participants. Because it took time for CWRU to receive enough survey responses, and because analysis of this large quantity of data took significant time and staff resources, CWRU did not finalize the FTAMM until the final quarter of its grant project. Once finalized, CWRU provided the FTAMM to agencies who had engaged with the DRIVERS training.

¹¹ The FTAMM was developed and released at the end of the grant project. As such, CWRU was unable to collect data indicating if and how agencies are using these materials.



Figure 8. FTAMM Prioritization Options

Flexible Threat Assessment and Management Model Potential Response Priorities and Strategies				
Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D	Option E
Prioritizing Agency Detection and Reporting Based on <u>Events Most Likely to be Encountered</u> (Regardless of Ideology and Timeline)	Prioritizing Agency Detection and Reporting Based on <u>Events With the Least Amount of Time Before Incident</u> (Regardless of Ideology)	Prioritizing Agency Detection and Reporting Based on <u>Ideology and Potentially Likelihood of Engagement</u>	Prioritizing Agency Detection and Reporting Based on <u>Ideology and Least Amount of Time Before Incident</u>	<u>Prioritizing Community Engagement with Stakeholders</u> who May be Most Likely to Encounter Events that First Responders are Least Likely to Encounter Regardless of Sequence or Ideology

CWRU Adapts to Implementation Challenges

CWRU's grant project, as originally designed, delegated most of its project implementation tasks to an RVES. This was to be a grant-funded position hired by CWRU but located within the NEORFC. The RVES would have been responsible for conducting outreach with law enforcement and community members to promote the training, advising departments on suspicious activity reporting, and assessing the feasibility of implementing TAMTs in the area. CWRU conducted a recruitment process to hire an individual for this role; however, it was ultimately unable to hire a candidate that met the position requirements.¹² CWRU chose not to engage in another search process, as it had already experienced significant delays to its timeline. Instead, CWRU chose to move these responsibilities from the dedicated RVES position to preexisting CWRU staff.

In 2023, DHS hired an IO to work within the NEORFC, and the NEORFC hired its own Violent Extremism IA. CWRU began integrating these individuals into the project toward the end of

the grant period. The IO and IA were provided with information about the DRIVERS training and given access to CWRU's law enforcement contact list. To increase participation during the final months of the project, the IO and IA began reaching out to agencies that had not yet engaged with the training.

In addition to the RVES, CWRU originally designed its FY2021 project on the basis that it would be supported by an advisory board comprising local law enforcement, which CWRU had created under its FY2020 TVTP grant project. However, once the FY2021 grant began, CWRU found that the existing advisory board members were not available to continue volunteering their time. While CWRU was unable to recruit new members during the grant period of performance, it generated a list of 20–30 alternative senior points of contact and was working with the NEORFC at the end of the project to identify individuals who could participate in the advisory board moving forward.

¹² CWRU posted the job announcement for the RVES position in April 2022 and ended recruitment activities by June 2023.

Challenges

Securing Law Enforcement Participation. CWRU experienced challenges generating widespread interest and buy-in among its targeted law enforcement agencies for its DRIVERS training, despite expending significant resources on recruitment. To engage agencies across the NEORFC's AOR, CWRU conducted approximately 600 individual outreach efforts, and the NEORFC conducted its own outreach. Based upon the pre- and post-module survey results, uptake among agencies varied significantly. First responders from rural agencies—comprising 80% of the AOR—represented only 30% of the trainees. While 58 out of 121 total law enforcement agencies in the NEORFC's AOR had at least one individual engage with at least one module, many law enforcement agencies had only one officer participating. In contrast, participation among the first responders from suburban agencies appeared to correspond with agency affiliation: two suburban agencies had more than 300 engagements with at least one module. CWRU attributed this to differences in agency resources, varying assessments about the threat level of violent extremism in the region, and agencies' need to prioritize staff time given other training requirements.

Difficulty Hiring Key Project Staff. The majority of CWRU's planned activities were designed to be completed by a new grant-funded position. The recruitment process for this position took a significant amount of time and was ultimately unsuccessful, which caused CWRU to request and receive a no-cost extension and to redistribute responsibilities among its existing staff. As a result, CWRU had to prioritize its grant activities, limiting the activities it was able to undertake across its project. Specifically, project staff chose to focus on promoting the DRIVERS trainings among law enforcement and community members.

Change in DHS Grant Managers. CWRU's assigned DHS CP3 Grants Manager left that position in the summer of 2023. CWRU was provided with a general email address to contact CP3 but was not notified about a new Grants Manager during the period of performance. While CWRU provided updates to CP3 using this general email address, it did not receive responses to its messages. As a result, project staff were unsure how to receive feedback or report changes to their IMP to DHS.

Discussion

IMP Accomplishments

The objectives listed in CWRU's IMP largely constitute titles or descriptors of project activities (e.g., Objective 1.6 reads "Civic Engagement") and are thus unevaluable. Therefore, the evaluation team focused on CWRU's stated goals and performance measures when considering its accomplishments in relation to its IMP.

CWRU achieved Goal 1 of its IMP, which was to train public safety personnel and community partners in the NEORFC AOR. Forty-eight percent of law enforcement agencies in the area had at least one officer engage with CWRU's DRIVERS training, though CWRU originally aimed to have 75% of agencies participate. CWRU did not compare engagement strategies as originally planned (Activity 1.7.1). Additionally, because no department expressed interest in delivering the DRIVERS training themselves, CWRU did not ultimately hold a train-the-trainer program (Activity 1.7.2). Instead, CWRU adapted by developing a train-the-trainer guide, which it incorporated into the FTAMM under Goal 3.

In addition, CWRU modified the DRIVERS training program and administered it to community partners with a cumulative total of 270 views across all six parts of the training. CWRU aimed to deliver the training to community members in 75% of the small and midsize law enforcement jurisdictions in the NEORFC AOR. As CWRU did not collect individual participant data through the DRIVERS training survey, it is unknown whether CWRU reached its desired proportion of participants among this target audience.

CWRU partially achieved Goal 2. The unsuccessful search for the RVES position (Activity 2.1.1) caused CWRU to significantly adjust its plans for project implementation under these two goals. This inhibited CWRU in identifying potential participants for future trainings on detection, reporting, and assessment (Activity 2.2.2). It also precluded the NEORFC from engaging directly with small and midsize law enforcement agencies to formalize suspicious activity reporting expectations and assess their operability (Activities

2.2.1, 2.3.1, and 2.4.1). As CWRU reported, it experienced significant difficulty in engaging with its rural and suburban law enforcement target population. The CWRU project team was mindful of this challenge, based on their prior experience working with the target population, and therefore focused project resources on promoting the DRIVERS training. While this meant that CWRU had fewer resources to spend on collecting data, it still collected data to understand the suspicious activity reporting processes of agencies in the area and provided recommendations in the form of the FTAMM (Activity 2.2.1).

Finally, CWRU partially achieved Goal 3. It was unable to expand the advisory board during the grant period (Activity 3.1) due to previous board members being unavailable. Instead, CWRU developed a list of potential new members to add to the board in the future. CWRU achieved its plan to document potential community resources to incorporate into TAMTs (Activities 3.2.1 and 3.2.2). Relatedly, it shared the DRIVERS training with individuals whom CWRU determined could contribute to a TAMT (Activity 3.3.1). CWRU discussed the general viability of community-based TAMTs with these individuals and shared the FTAMM with them (Activity 3.4.1). CWRU did not have sufficient time to observe or evaluate implementation of the FTAMM, as intended.

Sustainability

CWRU developed several resources that will continue to be accessible to public safety officials in Northeast Ohio beyond the grant period. These include the online DRIVERS training program—which will remain accessible—the FTAMMs and accompanying training manual, and an intelligence bulletin written during the grant.¹³ CWRU also shared its law enforcement contact lists with the NEORFC IA so it could continue engaging with departments after the grant period to promote the DRIVERS training among law enforcement agencies and community members in the NEORFC AOR. CWRU intends to continue analyzing the collected data and assisting the NEORFC with expanding the advisory board beyond the end of the grant period.

¹³ To access any of these items, contact CWRU's Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education.

Recommendations for the TVTP Grant Program

✓ Assess capacity of and relationships with low-resource or hard-to-reach audiences early, and incorporate necessary time and resources into project design.

As evidenced by the risk management plan in its grant application, CWRU had anticipated that small and midsize agencies in the NEORFC's AOR would lack the interest and/or resources to participate in non-mandated training. To mitigate this issue, CWRU expended significant staff time on direct outreach to agencies to encourage participation. Prospective grantees who seek to work with audiences who are low-resourced or otherwise hard to reach (e.g., rural law enforcement) should consider these audiences' resources, needs, and priorities and their existing relationships with those audiences. This will allow prospective grantees to gauge interest in the project, design their project activities and materials more effectively, and determine potential barriers to participation among interested agencies. Based on this initial assessment, or if buy-in among the intended audience is expected to be weak, prospective grantees should budget the time and resources necessary to overcome these barriers. This might include deepening their knowledge of the audience and building and investing in their relationships with the audience. Although these practices may require shifting activity timelines backward, they can mitigate roadblocks to engagement, ensure that activities are responsive to the intended audience, and improve sustainability.

✓ Include buffer time when developing a project timeline to accommodate challenges.

CWRU faced several challenges to its anticipated project timelines, including its unsuccessful search for the new RVES position and the unexpectedly large amount of time needed to collect and analyze its DRIVERS training data to inform the FTAMM. The project team suggested that future TVTP grantees increase their time estimates for developing, designing, and analyzing data in order to ensure a realistic schedule, account for unexpected challenges, and allow for adaptations in the scope of certain activities.

✓ Develop flexible staffing plans.

When CWRU was unable to hire a new staff member to fill the RVES position, it reallocated project activities to available CWRU staff and ultimately incorporated the DHS-hired IO and NEORFC-hired IA to support project activities. Grantees who include grant-funded staff in their project should consider developing contingency plans for how project activities will be accomplished if new staff cannot be hired or retained.

Developed for:

The U.S. Department of Homeland
Security (DHS) Science and
Technology Directorate (S&T)



**Science and
Technology**

Developed by RTI International:

Sarah Cook*
Meagan Abel
Noel Corder
Ariane Noar

*Corresponding author: scook@rti.org