

Developing the effective information sharing framework critical to national security demands fundamental change in the culture of information sharing.

MEETING THE THREAT OF TERRORISM:

## New Thinking on Information Sharing Critical to Strengthening National Security

Across the government, information sharing practices are uneven and unreliable because too much discretion has been left to each agency. Outdated practices and the stovepiping of information persist. Government agencies have been required since 2006 to develop training programs and incentives to adopt an information sharing system and hold people accountable. Yet by June 2008, fewer than 50 percent of agencies had adopted training programs and personnel incentives, and there has been little assessment of the quality of programs agencies have adopted.

The President and the Congress must:

- Focus on people and policies, not just technology, because the fundamental hurdles to information sharing are not technical—they are cultural and well-established in how people think and work.
- Change thinking from “need to know” to “need to share” to drive a virtual reengineering of how government works, increasing collaboration and allowing communities of interest to form across parts of the government while protecting privacy and civil liberties and preventing misuse and abuse.
- Recognize the risk of not sharing information while being sensitive to the risks of inappropriate disclosure. Information sharing works well in Iraq and Afghanistan because the sense of shared mission is great. These lessons, learned in the field, can work back home.
- Address the needs of information consumers while addressing the security concerns of information collectors. Those who depend on information to make decisions and accomplish their mission must be empowered to drive information sharing to ensure they get the best possible data.

## Action

### Presidential Leadership, Government-Wide Incentives, and Metrics

The Obama Administration and Congress must reaffirm information sharing as a top priority and overcome bureaucratic resistance to change. It is not enough to generally set out the basic policy structure for an information sharing framework. Agencies need more, including clear policy guidance on key issues and incentives to change behavior.

- Metrics and incentives can transform the information sharing culture by providing the means to evaluate and measure progress toward meeting essential information sharing objectives. For example, given the importance of enabling information consumers to find information, an early metric for discoverability would measure what percentage of an agency's data holdings are registered in a directory of data indices.
- Enhanced metrics improve agency and individual accountability for meeting certain benchmarks or milestones and significantly reduce the voluntary aspect of exposing select data with data indices. Penalties would be widely known, applied consistently, and proportionate to the misuse or failure.
- Incentives to improve performance would link program funding or individual promotion with an agency's performance mobilizing information. For example:
  - Integrating information sharing into performance reviews and budget and personnel resource allocation for all agencies with a national security mission so that agencies failing to act to mobilize information would get less funding. Combining the discoverability metric in the example above with program funding is logical because data that is not discoverable is less valuable.
  - Creating an information sharing award for the agency or unit within an agency most successful at making data discoverable, highlighting the value of information sharing to national security.
  - Increasing joint duty in the intelligence community to build a sense of trust and community, with promotion to senior levels requiring a tour of duty at another agency.

## Results

A change in culture and thinking will encourage a collaborative environment with a clear purpose: ensuring that those who need it have access to the best information in a timely manner and under the appropriate conditions to enable the most informed decision. A network environment that truly facilitates information sharing is a combination of people, processes, policies and cultures that leverages advances in information technology and the best thinking about how to mobilize information to improve decision-making and policy implementation across the government. ■

### About the Markle Task Force

The Markle Task Force on National Security in the Information Age has been a diverse and bipartisan group of former policy makers from the past six presidential administrations, senior information technology executives, and privacy advocates from both the public and private sectors. The Markle Task Force has recommended ways of improving national security decisions by transforming business processes and how information is shared. Its recommendations informed the 9/11 Commission Report and were subsequently included in two federal laws.

Learn more about the Markle Task Force at [www.markle.org/national-security](http://www.markle.org/national-security).