MWCOG and InfraGardNCR Key to Government Engagement with Private Sector Critical Infrastructure Stakeholders

Posted: March 22, 2016 at 4:08 pm, Last Updated: March 23, 2016 at 9:09 am

By Christopher Ryan, University of Maryland Center for Health and Homeland Security

Understanding the priorities and concerns of all critical infrastructure (CI) stakeholders is an essential step toward crafting homeland security strategic plans that reflect the whole community. For state and local governments, collecting information from government partners is generally straightforward; planners often already have established relationships with agencies and representatives. It is often a much greater challenge to collect feedback from representatives of the 85 percent of CI that is privately-owned.

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) recently faced the challenge of incorporating private-sector CI representation into efforts to revise the National Capital Region's (NCR's) homeland security strategic plan. Including parts of Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia, the NCR is home to over 5 million people and thousands of privately-owned CI facilities. As an advisory body to the COG Board of Directors, the NCR's Emergency Preparedness Council (EPC) is the custodian of the NCR's Homeland Security Strategic Plan and authorized COG's Program Management Office to revise the plan as part of its normal process of evolving to account for changing conditions and emerging threats.

To engage private-sector CI representatives, COG's strategic planning team partnered with the University of Maryland's Center for Health and Homeland Security and the NCR chapter of InfraGard (InfraGardNCR), a non-profit organization that includes the private sector and the FBI and is "dedicated to sharing information and intelligence to prevent hostile acts against the

U.S."[1] Through constant communication and monthly meetings, InfraGardNCR strengthens resilience by supporting collaboration among all 16 critical infrastructure sectors identified in Presidential Policy Directive 21.[2] InfraGardNCR played a critical role in fully incorporating private-sector CI owners in the strategic planning process by distributing a basic survey to their approximately 2,000 members on COG's behalf. The survey aimed to identify regional priorities and pinpoint ways that state and local government can do more to help address private-sector homeland security concerns.

The partnership was a rousing success. Over a two-week response period in November 2015, 140 InfraGardNCR members responded to the brief survey, including responses from 58 private-sector representatives and 35 government contractors. COG received at least five responses from representatives of all 16 CI sectors, including 76 Information Technology responses and 46 Defense Industrial Base responses.[3] Respondents also identified their state(s) of origin, allowing COG's planning team to identify differences in responses between sectors, states of origin, or public/private status. InfraGardNCR's members thus served as a highly useful proxy, helping COG's planning team develop a clear picture of the needs and interests of the region's CI stakeholders.

The responses emphasized the importance of cybersecurity and intelligence and information sharing. Cybersecurity is NCR CI stakeholders' greatest concern, and in their opinion is the most urgent CI capability gap for the region as a whole. Stakeholders also indicated that improvements in intelligence and real-time information sharing would be the region's best collaborative approach to addressing their most urgent critical infrastructure concerns, and constitute the second most urgent gap in regional CIP efforts.

Though the final NCR Strategic Plan is still under development, the resulting data will play an important role in developing a truly holistic picture of the NCR's strategic homeland security priorities.

Christopher Ryan is a Senior Policy Analyst with the University of Maryland's Center for Health and Homeland Security. He provides homeland security staff support for the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and is an InfraGardNCR member. Mr. Ryan previously worked as a Homeland Security StateStat Analyst in the Office of Governor Martin O'Malley. He holds a Master's degree in History and Public Policy from The George Washington University.

http://cip.gmu.edu/2016/03/22/mwcog-infragardncr-key-government-engagement-private-sector-critical-infrastructure-stakeholders/

[1] "InfraGard: Partnership for Protection," *InfraGard*, accessed March 2, 2016, https://www.infragard.org/.

[2] The White House, *Presidential Policy Directive—Critical Infrastructure Security and Resilience*, accessed March 14, 2016, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/12/presidential-policy-directive-critical-infrastructure-security-and-resil.

[3] Rather than completing the survey more than once, survey respondents identified all CI sectors and states of origin that they represented. 65 respondents identified themselves as representing more than one sector, and 48 respondents represented more than one state. All respondents chose a single public/private sector classification that best described them.