NIAC Future Focus Study: Draft Project Plan

Overview

Since 2001, the National Infrastructure Advisory Council (NIAC) has completed 27 studies that have provided insights into the challenges and risks facing the Nation's critical infrastructure. Each study has included recommendations for changing Federal policies, programs, and actions to strengthen critical infrastructure security and resilience. Yet some recommendations have received more traction than others. Understanding the characteristics and processes of past recommendations that have been successfully adopted will help improve the impact of future studies.

The Nation's critical infrastructure sectors have undergone significant changes during the Council's tenure. Looking ahead, the Council needs to identify study topics that are highly relevant to today's risk landscape and can produce recommendations that have major impact and add value. For example, physical and cyber systems are becoming more integrated as many sectors increasingly rely on industrial control systems to monitor and control physical processes.

The study will provide an overview of past studies and recommendations over the past 15 years, while also identifying ways to improve the process. It will provide a well-researched list of potential study topics to be considered by the NIAC in 2017—2018, including the scoping of a cyber study.

At the end of the study, the NIAC will be able to provide the new administration—the third since its creation—with an overview of NIAC, its importance, and a path forward for 2017.

Study Outcomes

1. **Study Process Improvements:** Identify ways to make future study recommendations more impactful.

   o **Framing Question:** *How can we improve the structure of the study process to result in better adoption and implementation of recommendations?*

2. **Potential New Study Topics**: Generate a list of recommended study topics based on analysis of previously covered topics, and insights from Federal Government leaders, private sector partners, and NIAC members.

   o **Framing Question**: *What topics should the NIAC evaluate in 2017 that are relevant, have impact, and add value?*

3. **Summary of Past Studies and Recommendations**: Review and analyze previous studies to identify the needs being addressed, and the resulting findings and recommendations. Part of this review will identify what happens once a recommendation is made (e.g., the path the recommendation takes through the Federal Government and the decision process for implementing it), keeping in mind the sensitivities surrounding implementation.

   o **Framing Question**: *What does the NIAC need to know to make sure a recommendation is most useful and actionable given budget and authorities available to partner agencies?*

4. **Scope for Cyber Study**: Develop the scope for a cyber study to be conducted in 2017. The scope should build on the NIAC's 2007 *Convergence of Physical and Cyber Technologies and Related Security Management Challenges* report, acknowledge the ongoing work of other stakeholder agencies and councils, and coordinate with these stakeholders to avoid duplicative efforts.

   o **Framing Question**: *Which cybersecurity challenges of critical infrastructure should NIAC address that will complement but not duplicate the work of other agencies?*

Work Streams

- **Work Stream 1**: **Evaluation and Path Forward for NIAC Studies** (Co-Chair Joan McDonald leading)
  - Includes Study Outcomes 1, 2, and 3 (from above list)
- **Work Stream 2**: **Cyber Study Scope** (Co-Chair Mike Wallace leading)
  - Includes Study Outcomes 4 (from above list)

During a pre-QBM call, the NIAC Working Group Co-Chairs decided that they would each lead one of the work streams. They will both participate in all calls, meetings, and work sessions (as schedules allow), but the division allows them to focus on one piece of the effort.

Proposed Study Process

To be most efficient, the two work streams will be conducted concurrently rather than sequentially. For example, interviews and briefings will include questions and topics on both work streams. There will also be topic-specific interviews and work as needed. Below is an overview of the study process, which applies to both work streams.

- Threat briefings (specifically for cyber study scope)
- Research and literature review focused on each topic
- Interviews and briefings with various agencies, councils, and the infrastructure community who have been affected by the NIAC's recommendations. Interviews should be held in the following order:
  1. Senior leaders within the Federal Government
  2. Private Sector CEOs
  3. Past and Present NIAC members
  4. Critical infrastructure subject matter experts, including those from the lifeline sectors

Draft Study Project Plan and Schedule

Below is an overview of how the two work streams could work in parallel to deliver a final Future Focus Study report by the end of April or early May.

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