

The National Academies of
SCIENCES • ENGINEERING • MEDICINE

**Committee on Assessing the Minerva Research Initiative and the Contribution of
Social Science to Addressing Security Concerns**

Statement of Task

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine will conduct a program evaluation of the Minerva Research Initiative (MRI) that resides within the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The committee will be tasked to address: (1) quality and impact of the program, (2) processes and procedures that may affect the success of the program, and (3) direction and vision based on the challenges of the world today. This will be an unclassified study.

Study Part I. - Quality and Impact

The first part of the program review will look at the historical context of the program, specifically at the quality of the research it has supported and the impact of funding such research, based on the outputs the program has facilitated. Questions include:

1. What has been accomplished after eight years of the program in terms of (a) basic science advances and (b) policy-relevant insights or tools for the security community?
2. What is the quality of research funded and its impact on the social science knowledge base, as well as on public understandings of the problems addressed by the researchers?
3. What challenges has MRI confronted in generating interest in participation in the program among basic social scientists and how has it addressed those challenges?
4. Has MRI effectively fostered the development of communities working on social science issues around security and the creation of organizational structures and processes to advance this research?
5. What communities have benefited from MRI-supported research, and how would those benefits be characterized?
6. Is MRI unique as a funding source, or are there other agencies/organizations funding similar research at similar levels?
7. What is the relationship between basic research and applied insights of the research that MRI seeks to generate?

Study Part II. - Program and Function

The second part of the study will look at program-related process issues that impact the success of the program and will consider questions such as:

1. How does the proposal review process compare to similar programs at NSF, DHS, and processes that the service branch research agencies use?
2. How does the project implementation and management process compare to similar programs at NSF, DHS, and the service branch research agencies?
3. Are the right projects being prioritized for (a) national security needs, generally speaking and (b) the particular missions of the service branch research agencies?
4. Is the program successful in connecting researchers to policymakers?
5. How might the program improve outreach and integration of basic research insights into DoD?

Study Part III. - Direction and Vision

The third part of the study will look at how the initial charge of the program reflects the challenges of our world today, looking specifically at how Parts I and II of the study can best address the contemporary issues faced by DoD.

1. Has the vision that initiated MRI evolved, or are there ways in which it needs to evolve to better address contemporary security concerns?
2. How can MRI shape the future of basic research in social science around the issues of security?
3. How is MRI influencing academic disciplines in their engagement with security and facilitating interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary research and are there opportunities for improving in these efforts?
4. How might MRI cultivate the interests of young scholars in working with DoD on social science security issues?