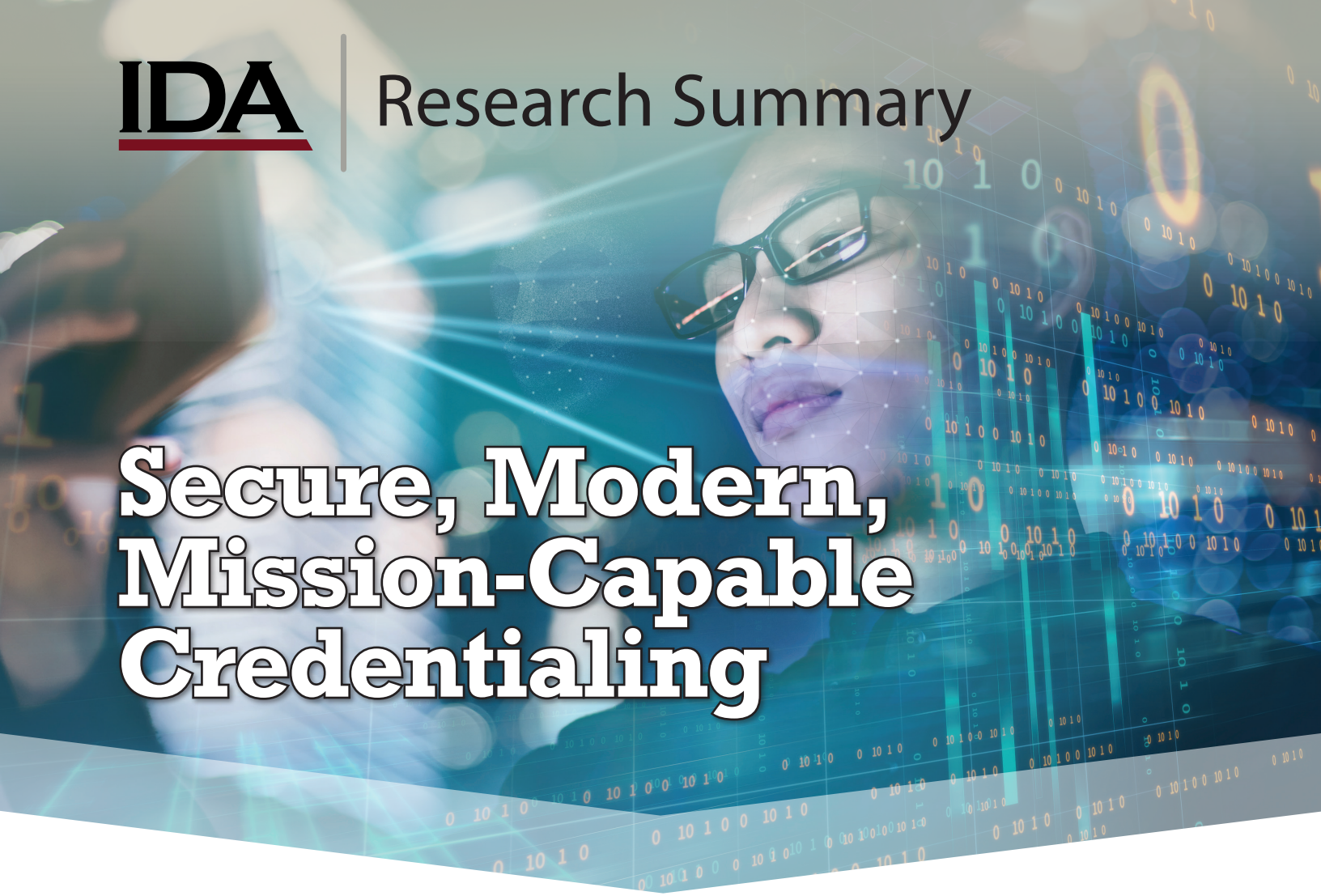
IDA | Research Summary



Secure, Modern, Mission-Capable Credentialing

The Federal Government, the public sector, and the private sector jointly face challenges with rapidly vetting security clearances, ascertaining suitability, and collecting and validating credentials for individuals applying for employment or volunteering for emergencies. In 2017, for instance, federal agencies inadvertently issued interim clearances to individuals with criminal records while credentialing gaps delayed employees and volunteers from contributing much-needed skills in disaster areas during one of the worst hurricane and wildfire seasons on record.

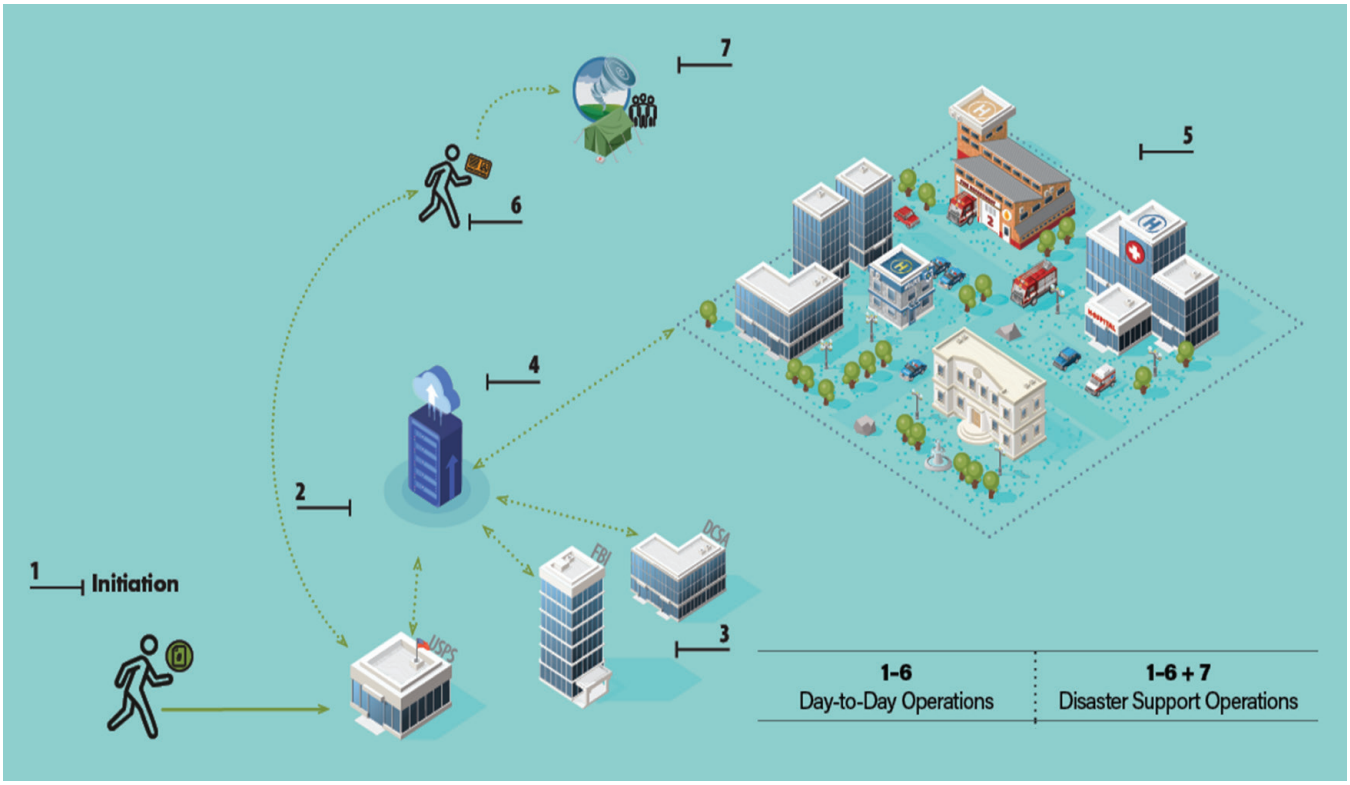
IDA proposes a secure, modern, mission-capable information technology solution to these clearance, suitability, and credentialing (CSC) challenges. The United States Postal Service (USPS) would host this innovative new streamlined CSC process by serving as the hub for collection, validation, and transfer of pertinent data. The solution would introduce access points in over 5,000 communities for citizens requiring background checks and digital identification, features that not only address the government's desire to streamline background investigations, but also leverage ongoing Postmaster General's Digital Initiatives. IDA's solution would connect individuals, organizations, and the Federal Government in ways that facilitate the required CSC activities for two principal use cases: day-to-day operations (D2D) and disaster support operations (DS), as illustrated on the next page.

The proposed solution responds to several recent government calls to action regarding CSC. In March 2018, the *President's Management Agenda* recognized the need to address CSC issues, and in May 2019,

(continued)

October 2019
NS D-10890

the Government Accountability Office recommended that government agencies adopt more secure identity proofing practices after finding that use of personally identifiable information (PII) questions for online identity proofing were subject to data theft–related fraud.



D2D has 6 steps. ***(1) Initiation*** occurs when a new hire takes an employer-issued QR code to any local USPS post office for ***(2) identity proofing, document validation, and background check initiation.*** A USPS clerk checks the new hire's identification, scans and electronically marks documents as validated and scans and uploads the new hire's fingerprints to the cloud. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or Defense Counterintelligence and Security Agency (DCSA) retrieves the fingerprints and conducts ***(3) background check/investigation. (4) CSC data transfer*** sends the collected data and completed background check/investigation to an address specified by the new hire's QR code. The hiring organization conducts ***(5) CSC data retrieval.*** The USPS clerk then completes ***(6) CSC data card creation*** and provides the new hire with a digitized data card containing copies of the information collected. DS adds one additional step—***(7) rapid creditial check***—for new hires or volunteers whose hiring organization is a volunteer organization active in disaster (VOAD); when the new hire is deployed to a disaster site by the hiring organization, he or she brings the CSC data card to a USPS clerk working at the Incident Command Admin Section for rapid credential check and assignment to support disaster operations.

Building a solution to these challenges requires federal coordination among agencies with responsibilities for CSC, as well as buy-in from State, local, tribal, and territorial government(s); nongovernment organizations; and individual volunteers. IDA researchers stand ready to leverage their expertise and networks in a pilot study that brings together expert partners and stakeholders and ensures a feasible, successful demonstration of the utility of the solution in both D2D and DS use cases.

Research staff members **Deena S. Disraelly** (ddisrael@ida.org) of the Strategy, Forces and Resources Division of IDA's Systems and Analyses Center (SAC) and **Laura J. Itle** (litle@ida.org) of the Operational Evaluation Division of SAC led a diverse team of researchers and managers for this project.

Research was supported by IDA's Independent Research Program.