

Collaborative Analysis of Competing Hypotheses (C-ACH)

Setting the Stage

Analysts have found the Analysis of Competing Hypothesis (ACH) software useful for in a variety of settings at several agencies. A major complaint, however, is that they can't engage their colleagues at other agencies in using the tool unless they gather at a single location to load the software. This new application of the ACH software allows them to use the tool in a web-based environment working from multiple locations. It provides an overarching framework that can capture all possible hypotheses as well as the robust flow of data they must absorb and analyze as a team. The C-ACH software tool allows analysts to collaborate either synchronously or asynchronously as inter-agency teams working from multiple geographic locations.

The Process

- Each analyst (or group of analysts) completes an ACH matrix working from an agreed list of evidence. For a description of the basic ACH tool functionalities visit www.pherson.org.
- Analysts then can call up a new matrix that allows them to compare and contrast how each member of the interagency team assessed each item of evidence for each hypothesis (i.e., they can review how each person rated each cell in the ACH matrix). The software provides them with an opportunity to discover where there are significant differences of opinion and, more important, whether such differences exist regarding the most discriminating items of evidence.
- Analysts can discuss their differences either synchronously or asynchronously through the software's chat function.

The Output

- The software analyzes the diagnosticity of the evidence and the arguments to identify which points are most influential in judging the relative likelihood of each hypothesis.
- It measures the degree of agreement among analysts in their assessment of the evidence for each hypothesis.
- The software also provides transparency in determining agreement or disagreement among analysts.
- Analysts can save and print copies of the ACH matrix showing how they loaded the data, how any other member of the team loaded the data, and the group consensus rating as well as where differences of opinion arose.