CHALLENGE

The Intelligence Community is currently increasing the size and scope of its cyber workforce. To meet this need, the government must find a way to select those candidates who will best contribute to the mission.

CASL has partnered with the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) and U.S. government researchers to design a test that will augment the current selection procedure by assessing individual attributes that influence performance in cyber jobs.

APPROACH

The current Intelligence Community workforce selection system includes assessments of knowledge and skills. CASL is working to develop additional segments that will also assess cognitive abilities, motivation, and personality factors.

CASL researchers began with a literature review of cognitive and noncognitive factors that influence analytic job performance, such as spatial reasoning ability or a prioritization of long-term learning over short-term performance. Researchers then reviewed specific cyber jobs and facilitated conversations with instructors and other experts on cyber-related activities. This allowed CASL to identify unique cognitive abilities required to successfully perform these jobs.

In partnership with Georgia Tech’s Attention and Working Memory Lab and other government researchers, CASL is now developing and validating a number of tests that will assess applicants’ aptitude for cyber analysis. These tests will be ready for operational validation in fall 2013.

A CYBER WORKFORCE

“The Pentagon has approved a major expansion of its cybersecurity force over the next several years, increasing its size more than five-fold to bolster the nation’s ability to defend critical computer systems and conduct offensive computer operations against foreign adversaries, according to U.S. officials.” Washington Post, Jan. 27, 2013.

“The Pentagon’s Cyber Command will create 13 offensive teams by the fall of 2015 to help defend the nation against major computer attacks from abroad, Gen. Keith Alexander testified to Congress on Tuesday, a rare acknowledgment of the military’s ability to use cyberweapons.” Washington Post, March 12, 2013.