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Jeff Stern comes to VDEM from leadership positions in emergency management, public safety, and homeland security, having served in local and federal government, the private sector, and academia. His career spans operational, policy-making, and advisory roles, from the neighborhood firehouse to the White House. He helped lead incident management teams to Hurricanes Charley in Florida (2004) and Katrina in New Orleans (2005) and supported medical relief efforts in Haiti and the Dominican Republic after the 2010 earthquake. After Hurricane Katrina, he was selected as a White House Fellow and was later appointed by the president as Executive Director of the Homeland Security Advisory Council at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

Jeff has a Ph.D. in Public Administration/Public Affairs from Virginia Tech's Center for Public Administration and Policy, an MPA from the American University School of Public Affairs, and a B.A. in government from the College of William & Mary. He serves in advisory roles as a non-resident Senior Fellow with the Stephenson Disaster Management Institute at Louisiana State University, as a member of the InterAgency Board, and is a lecturer at Georgetown University's graduate program in emergency and disaster management. He is the chair of the Virginia E-911 Services Board and the State Administrative Agent for all federal homeland security and emergency management grant programs in the Commonwealth of Virginia.