

Massachusetts
Promoting Engagement Acceptance and Community Empowerment Project
(MA PEACE Project)
FFY17 Q2 Report
1/1/17 to 3/31/17

On 9/30/15, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and the U.S. Attorney's Office (USAO) signed a Cooperative Agreement in order to explore ways to address violent extremism¹ in Massachusetts. The Cooperative Agreement requires quarterly reports. This report summarizes:

- Prior activities conducted in FFY16 (9/30/15 to 9/30/16)
- Efforts undertaken by EOHHS in the second quarter of FFY17, (1/1/17 to 3/31/17).

1. Summary of Prior Activities (9/30/15 - 9/30/16):

In the first two quarters of FFY16, EOHHS initiated and participated in several meetings and forums related to the Greater Boston Collaborative (the Collaborative). These meetings served as a way to increase dialogue and transparency among EOHHS, members of the Collaborative, and other stakeholders. The meetings allowed EOHHS the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the Collaborative's activities occurring prior to EOHHS' involvement, and develop ideas for collaboratively moving forward.

During the third quarter of Federal Fiscal Year 2016 (FFY16) EOHHS issued a Request for Information (RFI) on 03/11/16 in order to collect written information from the public regarding the development of a program to help prevent violent extremism by using a public health approach. The RFI responses were due on 4/5/16. EOHHS received twelve RFI responses from a range of organizations. The responses provided feedback related to: program design, eligible applicants, recommended violence prevention and intervention strategies, and resource requirements.

EOHHS reviewed the RFI responses and used the information collected through the RFI to develop an open competitive procurement, also known as a "Grant Application." On 8/8/16, EOHHS issued the Grant Application to solicit responses from registered non-profit or for-profit organizations, school districts, academic institutions, or municipalities to operate the Massachusetts Promoting Engagement, Acceptance and Community Empowerment Project ("PEACE Project" or "Project") within the community.

¹ In the Grant Application issued 8/8/16, EOHHS defines the terms "violence" and "violent extremism" as an illegal act that violates state or federal law and causes physical harm to a person, or property; and is motivated, at least in part, by prejudice related to race, religion, ethnicity, handicap, gender, gender identity or sexual orientation; and/or appears to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population, influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion, or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination or kidnapping.

EOHHS sought to support Projects that help to prevent violence², (as defined by the Grant Application) and help to prevent people from joining organizations that promote, plan or engage in violence. Through the Grant Application, EOHHS sought to promote community resilience by strengthening community protective factors including:

- Social Support
- Social Cohesion
- Social Capital and trust in institutions
- Integrated cultural identity
- Employment success, and
- Access to democratic means for negotiating needs and opinions

Responses to the Grant Application were due on September 12, 2016. EOHHS received a total of \$431,580 in funding requests from four respondents. The responses were then evaluated by an Evaluation Committee (Committee) appointed by EOHHS, consisting of staff from EOHHS, the MA Department of Public Health and the MA Department of Mental Health.

In September 2016, the USAO approved a no-cost extension to extend funding for this initiative through the end of FFY17.

In November 2016, following a comprehensive review of the respondents' proposals, including proposed budgets, the Committee recommended entering into contract negotiations with three out of the four vendors, awards ranging from \$42,000 to \$105,000 as follows:

- Empower Peace: \$42,000
- Somali Development Center: \$63,000
- United Somali Youth Project: \$105,000

Contract negotiations meetings were held with each vendor during the month of December 2016, specifically: Empower Peace meeting on 12/16/17, Somali Development Center meeting on 12/19/16 and United Somali Youth on 12/21/17.

2. Activities for this reporting period, (1/1/17- 3/31/17):

Summary: This quarter we made significant progress. All contracts with PEACE Project vendors were signed on 1/18/17. Each vendor worked with evaluators to develop outcomes, outputs and a calendar of activities, which are now being finalized. EOHHS conducted site visits to each program. Each vendor initiated activities and services related to their grant.

2.a: Kick-off Meeting:

Following the contract executions, EOHHS hosted a PEACE Project Kick-off meeting on 1/25/17. The goal of the meeting was to build a "learning collaborative" among all of the grantees. Each grantee provided an overview and answered questions related to their respective project. EOHHS also provided information related to reporting and grants management.

² *ibid*

2.b: PEACE Project Site Visits:

EOHHS visited each PEACE Project site in the month of March 2017. EOHHS reviewed progress to date, clarified outcomes, outputs and activity calendars and toured the program sites.

2.c: Sub-Grantee Reported Activities:

2.c.1: Somali Development Center (SDC)

Proposed Program Summary: SDC will convene local Somali leaders to promote economic development, community engagement, and social adaptation and cohesion. The Center will focus on the prevention of harmful cultural practices, the development of women and girls, and opportunities for immigrant and refugee youth.

Activities reported for this quarter:

- SDC hired one new staff member as a Prevention & Employment Specialist, and assigned staff to their respective roles for the duration of the project. Volunteers are also supporting the project.
- A RESS (Road to Economic Self-Sufficiency) employment workshop was conducted on March 1, 2017. Ten women and one male attended. The workshop was on Mock Interview practice, Dressing for Success, and general work readiness/preparedness.
- SDC disseminated information about the existence and the scope of the Peace Project, via the Somali Advocacy for Family Empowerment (SAFE) Program, to the community by word of mouth. SDC met with and informed many different adults and youth, at the Somali restaurants and mosques. These activities were conducted from January 4th to February 28th.
- On Saturday, 3/18/17, SDC held a community forum attended by approximately 30 mothers where the SAFE initiative and program goals were discussed. SDC reports that attendees had lots of questions and appreciated the fact that the SDC in conjunction with the community members is making efforts to prevent their children from getting involved with violent organizations and ideologies. SDC reports that the employment service component for the youth was very attractive to parents. During the meeting, mothers expressed that they needed additional information around health issues, substance abuse/addictions and immigration/legal status issues and policy, especially the federal government policy regarding immigrants and refugees. SDC promised attendees that they would have regular meetings to address the issues raised as well as the SAFE goals.
- SDC was part of the planning committee for the annual Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) Nation of Immigrants Seder held on Sunday March 5th. ADL is at the forefront of Boston-based organizations that monitor hate crimes. Abdi Yusuf was one of the people who shared his immigrant story (haggadah) with 300 attendees at the event. The event was covered by the Boston Globe, (please see attached).

- SDC reports they were unable to conduct as many activities for the month of February as planned, but they caught up during the month of March.
- SDC Successes:
 - SDC reports they were able to reach out to additional participants (more than expected) for the community discussions.
 - On February 23rd, SDC Executive Director Abdi Yusuf was appointed to the Governor's Black Advisory Commission, which SDC reports highlights the recognition of the role and work of SDC in the community.

2.c.2: United Somali Youth (USY)

Proposed Program Summary: United Somali Youth will work with Somali and other African and Middle Eastern youth in the Greater Boston area to help build academic, social, athletic and critical life skills. The organization offers afterschool programs, counseling, college readiness assistance, extracurricular activities and community events

Activities reported for this quarter:

- As part of the program's outreach efforts, United Somali Youth (USY) sent out weekly flyers, posted on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), and held meetings with youth every other Sunday. This resulted in the recruitment of approximately 15 new students into the program.
- Meetings were held with the USY's Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), which includes approximately 30 parents. The Parent Advisory Committee is open to all parents when and if they like to join, meetings are held every first Saturday of each month for two hours to:
 - Inform the parents about new programs
 - Solicit input from community members about services and support they need.

One suggestion from the PAC was to provide an office as a safe space for youth.

- Sports Activities for February and March involved approximately 20 swimming members, 30 soccer members, 25 track & field members, and 50 basketball members. The soccer and basketball teams were provided with official United Somali Youth uniforms.
- To recruit student volunteers, USY developed a job description for the position, and displayed this on flyers, social media, and in student centers. As a result USY successfully recruited: 12 Northeastern students, 3 Harvard students, 3 Boston College students, and 2 individuals from AmeriCorps.
- Youth joined their USY tutors on a tour of Harvard University.

- USY successfully hired two positions, a Case Manager/Director of Operations (who can also help with any translation needs), and a Sports Assistant who serves as a part-time coach.
- USY is assisting the older group of students on their applications for jobs with “Success Link”. The City of Boston requires that youth enroll on “Success Link” before they can access a summer job.
- In this reporting period, UHY held two family focused events:
 - The community celebrated together the election of Somalia’s new president. The celebration was recorded and shared with the new President and on social media outlets.
 - Additionally, community members came together to paint, clean, and set up the new office space; USY then hosted the first meeting in the new office and celebrated the new community space together.

2.c3: Empower Peace (EP)

Proposed Program Summary: Empower Peace will outreach to high schools and work with students to develop social media strategies and campaigns to promote tolerance and acceptance, and will offer a one day academy on social media and messaging related to violence prevention.

Activities reported for this quarter:

- Empower Peace (EP) has established an ADVISORY COMMITTEE, presently consisting of representatives from:
 - Massachusetts Teachers Association
 - Massachusetts Association of Secondary School Superintendents
 - Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association
 - Anti-Defamation League of New England
 - Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center at Bridgewater State University
 - East Bridgewater Schools
 - Haverhill High School
 - Madison Park Technical Vocational High School
 - Medford Schools Administrator, Diane Caldwell
- EP is securing participation from representatives of various successful student-driven anti-hate social media campaigns for "best practices" presentations; and is recruiting Coalition members or presenting partners, including representatives from the Massachusetts Teachers Association, Massachusetts Association of Secondary School Superintendents, Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association, (MIAA), and Office

of the Massachusetts Commissioner of Education.

- To date, EP has secured the following six schools to participate in this initiative: Haverhill High School; Stoneham High School, Chelsea High School; Dennis Yarmouth High School; East Bridgewater Middle School; and Beaver Country Day in Newton. is working to secure participation from Facebook & Google as keynotes.
- A website is under development to support the Online4Godd campaign. The website will serve as the cornerstone of the campaign recruitment effort, providing information on the campaign, and serving as the mechanism where schools, educators, student leaders can be enrolled into the effort.
- The Academy was originally scheduled to be conducted during the month of May 2017 at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate located at Columbia Point in Dorchester, Massachusetts. The goal for the pilot Academy is to recruit 100 students and 25 teachers from 25 high schools (teams of 4 students and 1 teachers per school) from throughout Massachusetts. Due to the late start of the Grant and the school spring schedules (tests, proms and graduations) EP would like to revise their Academy schedule. After an internal review and speaking with the Harvard School of Public Health, EP felt that this timeline was too challenging. The proposed new timeline, which is being reviewed by EOHHS, is being requested to allow the program's students and teachers time to implement their program during the fall of the next school year.

3. Other

PEACE Project grantees are working with non-profit universities to define and measure outputs and outcomes. United Somali Youth has chosen to work with Boston College; the Somali Development Center and Empower Peace have chosen to work with Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. Independent of the Massachusetts PEACE Project, Harvard received a grant from the Science & Technology Directorate, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office for Public Safety Research to conduct an evaluation of the Greater Boston Countering Violent Extremism Pilot Program. While these evaluations are not being conducted by or for EOHHS, EOHHS is working to ensure that the evaluation accurately reflects Massachusetts PEACE Project work.

4. Change in Primary Contact

In September 2015, Robyn Kennedy was identified as the EOHHS Project Manager in the Article V of the Cooperative Agreement. Robyn left state service in January 2017. EOHHS is requesting that the USAO approve Glenn Daly as EOHHS Project Manager, Glenn's Contact information:

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5. Conclusion

EOHHS is pleased to be moving into the service delivery phase of this grant. We look forward to supporting each grantee as they implement their respective programs.