

**Massachusetts**  
**Promoting Engagement Acceptance and Community Empowerment Project**  
**(MA PEACE Project)**  
**FFY17 Q3 Report**  
**4/1/17 to 6/30/17**

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 extremism<sup>1</sup> in Massachusetts. The Cooperative Agreement requires quarterly reports. This report summarizes:

- Activities for this reporting period, FFY17 Quarter 3, (4/1/17- 6/30/17)
- Timeline of Prior Activities (9/30/15 - 3/30/17):

**SECTION 1. ACTIVITIES FOR THIS REPORTING PERIOD, FFY17 QUARTER 2, (4/1/17- 6/30/17):**

Summary: This quarter the PEACE Project vendors continue to make progress on their programs. Each vendor worked with evaluators to develop outcomes, outputs and a calendar of activities. EOHHS conducted site visits to each program. Each vendor continued activities and services related to their grant.

***1. a. Somali Development Center (SDC) Activities Reported this Quarter:***

- SDC held a Women's Safe Meeting (Discussion Forum) on **Saturday April 8, 2017**. Six women attended the meeting. The meeting's discussion revolved around "Traditional Roles (for Somali Women)". Somali women discussed the way they were raised in Somalia, the way they are raising their children (especially daughters) in America, as well as their struggles. A main topic of concern was responsibility for young Somali boys; the women described how they don't trust their boys to cook, clean, etc. and they delegate these responsibilities on their daughters who end up having resentment. Some women also talked about who they were outside of the role of being a mother and wife as well as their desire to learn English and get an education. They described the clash between the desire to fulfill their own dreams (i.e. start a business) versus their husbands desire to keep having children which overwhelms them, (i.e. family planning and spacing).

During this meeting, one attendee expressed her desire to start her own food business. The other attendees encouraged her and proposed that she make some dishes and have

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

a taste test. One woman offered to make flyers. She now makes and sells dishes at the mosque during the month of Ramadan (she recently sold 80 samosas to mosque attendees).

- On **Friday April 28, 2017**, SDC held a Somali Advocacy for Family Empowerment (SAFE) Program meeting (Discussion Forum). About 13 people attended; thoughts were shared about family planning, religion, female genital mutilation (FGM), authority figures, parenting styles. One attendee talked about conflicts between siblings and how she's raised her children, and fear of authority figures (i.e. social workers are "supposed to take away your kids") and a lack of understanding in regards to the roles of police officers, social workers, and the court system. The discussion reflected a lack of understanding in regards to the systems in place in the United States meant to protect people (i.e. court system, child protective services).
- On **Saturday May 20<sup>th</sup> 2017**, SDC held a SAFE meeting (discussion forum) surrounding the issues of Community Cohesion and Resiliency. This meeting included nine men and eleven women. The purpose of this meeting was to encourage families to talk to SDC and share with SDC any concerns that they may have around safety. Participants also discussed the role SDC could play in connecting families to the appropriate resources to intervene and prevent any potential acts of violence. The goal of these discussions is for families to be more proactive and less reactive when dealing with crisis situations.

**1. b. United Somali Youth (USY) Activities Reported this Quarter:**

- USY continued outreach to youth, using weekly flyers and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Meetings were held with the USY Parent Advisory Committee on the first Saturday of the month for two hours: USY staff updated parents regarding new programs and solicited input from parents regarding support they need, and services available in the community.
- College student volunteers were recruited and trained. During April students and tutors went on tours of Harvard University, Boston College, and Northeastern University. In May, students accompanied their tutors to their individual graduation events. A celebration was held for volunteers who had graduated from Northeastern University, Harvard and Boston College. Networking was initiated between graduates and future perspective volunteers.
- USY supported numerous sports activities, including swimming, soccer, track & field, basketball.
- Planning for Summer Program: In April and May, USY helped over 100 USY participants complete summer employment applications; including applications related to : "Success Link", Action for Boston Community Development, the Private Industry Council, and Martin Luther King (MLK) Scholar, etc.
- Twelve boys and girls participated in USY's 12-week creative writing program focused on the Peace Project Essays. All completed final drafts of their essays. Creative writing

classes for high school students were held on Tuesday and Thursdays 3-6pm; classes for middle school girls were held Wednesday.

- Family Focus Event: They had a community celebration post their Memorial Day Soccer Tournament. All 6 New England states participated and 16 teams participated. The celebration included live entertainment as they also commemorated the beginning of Ramadan.
- On May 26-28, USY supported participation of Somali youth in a Memorial Day Soccer Tournament. The Tournament involved a total of sixteen teams from all the New England states. A total of over 400 athletes and their families were involved. USY reports that this was the largest sport event of the Somali community in Boston.
- Community Outreach:
  - Boston Public Library is hosting a summer program for USY on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
  - Boys and Girls Club and USY are planning to apply for grants together, and to work with students who are taking gap years or seeking alternative non-university paths.
  - Boston Center Youth and Family (BCYF) continued their relationship with USY regarding swimming, soccer and basketball programs. USDY and BCYF also applied for grants together.
  - Melnea Cass Arena hosts USY's high school track and soccer programs on Saturday and Sunday.
  - YouthBuild Boston is working together with USY this summer to provide USY students with vocational classes.
  - The Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) are working together regarding an internship program; candidates for full-time interns for next year and have already been interviewed.
  - USY has applied to the Boston College School of Social Work Field Placement program. USY met with the Assistant Director and came to an agreement that he would provide two graduate students to intern with USY for the full year.
  - USY is establishing a relationship with the MA Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), and attended a productive meeting to brainstorm what EEC services could support USY.
  - Somali Development Center (SDC) and USY will co-host the 2017 Somali student graduation ceremony.
- USY reports the following challenges:
  - Summer Jobs: As there are limited jobs and resources, it was frustrating to not be able to easily accommodate all their participants.
  - Tutors: College graduation did not coincide with the end of the school year for their participants. USY had a skeleton crew of tutors, and had to double up their work, which "stretched us thin."
- USY successes:
  - Jobs: For the first time, USY was able to create over 100 resumes. Thirty slots were allocated to support the USY summer program.
  - USY has an office and a working staff.

- USY has improved attendance data, and has developed pre and post evaluations for their summer program.
- Community Outreach and Partnerships: USY established relationships with numerous groups, and participated in the largest celebration in Boston for the Somali community. Fifty USY students graduated from college and high school and all received certificates of recognition by parents and USY board members.
- USY observations
  - Sign-in sheets/ Data collection: They can see trends among the students who elect certain classes over others. Those students struggling with English tended to select math groups, for example. As a result they are increasing their art program.
  - Office space: Students and staff feel a greater sense of identity and pride that they have an office space. They have space to have focus groups, and large group celebrations and group activities, such as watching the NBA finals. Students were very motivated to work on their school projects with USY's technology, specifically USY's color printer. Seeing students so motivated and proud of their work was amazing.
  - Tutors: Students missed the direct attention and support they had with the tutors once the tutors had graduated.
  - Community Partners: USY strengthened their relationship with previous partners and they were able to focus on developing the summer program. USY was able to host meetings at their office. They were able to engage new partners, and through meetings, make contacts that best support the USY mission and our population.

**1. c. Empower Peace (EP) Activities Reported this Quarter:**

- EP created an Online4Good logo.
- EP drafted copy for the Online4Good website, [www.online4good.org](http://www.online4good.org) <<http://www.online4good.org>> ; the website went live on May 10, 2017
- Drafted copy for Online4Good recruitment e-card
- EP confirmed a date for the Online4Good Academy: Thursday, September 28, 2017 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM at WGBH Studios in Boston MA (One Guest Street, Boston, MA)
- EP reached out and met with potential Advisory Committee members; members were confirmed. Current membership includes representation from:
  - Phil Fogelman, The Anti-Defamation League
  - Robert Duffy, The Massachusetts Teachers Association
  - Tom Scott and Christine McGrath, Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents
  - Peter Smith, Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA)
  - Diane Caldwell, the Medford School system
  - the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center at Bridgewater State University (MARC)
  - Haverhill Public Schools

- o Madison Park Technical Vocational High School
- o Bridgewater Middle School
- o other schools throughout Massachusetts.
- In preparation for the Online4Good Academy, EP: developed online registration mechanism, is reaching out and confirming speakers for Academy, and is gathering bios and photos of all speakers for the website.
- EP met with Leesa Lin from the Harvard School of Public Health to review the program and materials needed for the evaluation of the program.
- EP is recruiting schools for participation in the Online4Good Academy.
- EP is researching local social media campaigns in Massachusetts to outreach to as potential speakers.
- EP Challenges:
  - o In the prior quarter, EP reached out to potential Advisory Committee members and asked them about the May 2017 event timeframe that was originally suggested in the grant proposal. The Advisory Board suggested changing the date to the fall of 2017. By starting next fall, students could continue with their social media campaign throughout the entire school year. EP and their advisors also said that trying to recruit schools for a May event would be difficult with school events such as proms, graduation and testing.
  - o Finding a location that would work well for schools to attend along with a September date was difficult. EP's first two choices, the Edward M. Kennedy Institute and the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library were not available in late September. The WGBH Studios were available; the site has the sufficient audio-visual capability and meeting space required for the event.
  - o EP reached out to over 35 people for the Advisory Committee. Several potential committee members needed to get approval to be listed as an Advisory Committee member. One organization was not able to be part of the Committee because of the origin of the funding.
- EP successes:
  - o Over 30 schools are involved, exceeding EP's original target of 25 schools.
  - o A new location for the event was secured.
  - o The program was expanded to include high school seniors and middle school students

**1. d. Additional Activities this Quarter**

- EOHHS Evaluation meeting with BU regarding United Somali Youth (April 5<sup>th</sup>): The purpose of this meeting was to go over performance goals and evaluation metrics related to United Somali Youth.
- EOHHS, DMH, USAO meeting (April 14<sup>th</sup>): Discussion regarding challenges and opportunities related to training mental health professionals in risk assessment and response.
- PEACE Project Grantee Meeting hosted by EOHHS (April 27): The purpose of this meeting was to allow grantees the opportunity to update EOHHS and fellow grantees regarding progress made on their programs.

## **SECTION 2. TIMELINE OF PRIOR ACTIVITIES (9/30/15 - 3/30/17):**

**9/30/15:** EOHHS signs Cooperative Agreement with the US Attorney's Office. The USAO provides \$216,667 in grant funds to EOHHS.

**Fall 2015:** EOHHS initiates and participates in several meetings and forums with members of the Greater Boston Collaborative (the Collaborative).

**3/11/16:** EOHHS issues a Request for Information (RFI) to collect written information from the public regarding proposed grant activities.

**4/5/16:** RFI responses are due. EOHHS receives twelve RFI responses from a range of organizations. The responses provide feedback related to: program design, eligible applicants, recommended violence prevention and intervention strategies, and resource requirements.

**8/8/16:** EOHHS issues a 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. EOHHS seeks to support Projects that help to prevent violence<sup>2</sup>, (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 seeks 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

**9/12/16.** Grant Application responses are due. EOHHS receives a total of \$431,580 in funding requests from four respondents.

**Fall 2016:** Responses are 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.

**September 2016:** The USAO approves a no-cost extension to extend funding for the PEACE Project through the end of FFY17.

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

**November 2016:** Following a comprehensive review of the respondents' proposals, the Committee recommends 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

**December 2016:** Contract negotiations meetings are held with each vendor.

**1/18/17:** Contracts between EOHHS and each vendor are signed.

**1/25/17:** EOHHS hosts a PEACE Project Kick-off meeting.

**January- March 2017:**

- Each PEACE Project grantee works with non-profit universities to define and measure outputs and outcomes.
- Vendors begin implementation of PEACE Project activities:
  - *The Somali Development Center (SDC):* hires a new staff member as a Prevention & Employment Specialist. On March 1, 2017, SDC holds their first employment workshop. SDC also disseminates information about the existence and the scope of the Peace Project, via the Somali Advocacy for Family Empowerment (SAFE) Program. SDC holds a community forum where the SAFE initiative and program goals were discussed. SDC is part of the planning committee for the annual Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) Nation of Immigrants Seder held on Sunday March 5th.

SDC reports they are able to reach out to additional participants (more than expected) for the community discussions. On February 23rd, SDC Executive Director Abdi Yusuf is appointed to the Governor's Black Advisory Commission.

- *United Somali Youth (USY)* successfully hires two positions: a Case Manager/Director of Operations and a Sports Assistant. USY sends out weekly flyers, posted on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), and held meetings with youth every other Sunday. Meetings are held with the USY's Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). USY conducts sports activities for February and March 2017. USY recruits student volunteers from local colleges. USY assists students on their applications for jobs with "Success Link". USY holds two family focused events:

The USY community celebrates the election of Somalia's new president. Additionally, community members come together to paint, clean, and set up the new office space; USY hosts the first meeting in the new office and celebrates the new community space together.

- *Empower Peace* (EP) initiates work on the Online4Good campaign. They establish an Advisory Committee and work to secure participation from representatives of various successful student-driven anti-hate social media campaigns for "best practices" presentations. EP secures commitments from six schools to participate in the initiative and works to secure participation from Facebook & Google as keynotes. EP begins development of a website to support the Online4Good campaign. The date for the Online4Good Academy is changed from May 2017 to September 2017.