

Massachusetts
Promoting Engagement Acceptance and Community Empowerment Project
(MA PEACE Project)
FFY17 Q4 Report
7/1/17 to 9/30/17

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 extremism¹ in Massachusetts. The Cooperative Agreement requires quarterly reports. This report summarizes:

- Activities for this reporting period, FFY17 Quarter 4, (7/1/17- 9/30/17)
- Timeline of Prior Activities (9/30/15 - 6/30/17)

SECTION 1. ACTIVITIES FOR THIS REPORTING PERIOD, FFY17 QUARTER 4, (7/1/17- 9/30/17):

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 completed the proposed series of **Employment Workshops**:

- February 22, 2017 – American Workplace Culture
- March 1, 2017 - (Road to Economic Self-Sufficiency (RESS))
- March 28, 2017 - “Entrepreneurship”
- April 19, 2017 - “Dressing for Success”
- May 24, 2017 - “Hospitality Training (Best Corps) dissemination”
- July 5, 2017 – “Benefits of Joining an Employment Union”

A total of 60 women and 18 men have attended the meetings during the past seven months. During the employment workshop, SDC covered issues surrounding mock interview practice, discussion on how to dress for success, presented comprehensive talk on work readiness/preparedness such as improving one's ability to speak/read/write English and discussion on family collaboration in juggling household responsibilities and planning work, scheduling other errands e.g. doctor's appointments etc. As a result of these workshops and SDC's career coaching services, five participants in employment workshops have been successfully placed in a job.

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.

SDC held a SAFE community leaders forum (discussion forum) on **July 19th, 2017** on topics surrounding the issues of youth recruitment into terrorist organizations. About 12 people attended and shared thoughts about jobs, lack of skills training for the youth and the intergenerational cultural gap. Attendees talked about how Somali youth are fast becoming “Americanized” creating a cultural divide between them and their parents. The attendees further stated that situation would have been even worse if it wasn’t for the support of the professional, bi-lingual and bicultural agencies such as the SDC.

SDC held a SAFE meeting (discussion forum) on **August 9th 2017** on topics relevant to school awareness and preparedness for children’s “Back to School”. This meeting was attended by 11 women. SDC also participated in a community engagement forum supporting one of the candidates running for city counselor District 7, Ms. Deeqo Jibril. One hundred and fifty people attended the forum, (70 men and 80 women).

SDC held a SAFE meeting (discussion forum) on **September 6th 2017** surrounding the issues of Community Communication. There were a total of 18 attendees, five men and 13 women. The meeting focused on the vitality of timely information sharing amongst the Somali community and with the Somali Development Center (SDC). The President’s Executive order banning the entry into USA for people travelling from Somalia was discussed and was very disappointing for the group. Finally, the participants stated the SDC presentation gave them the extra courage to get other women and mothers in this type of community dialogue. Women and mothers are traditionally neglected when it comes to trainings and programs in the Somali community so this additional effort will make sure women and mothers participate, learn, and pass it along to the young people in their lives. Women and mothers are a huge source of moral education for young people and their involvement will help them to prepare the young people in their lives to not fall victim to extremist propaganda.

Successes:

Since the inception of the SAFE Initiative, SDC has successfully completed six employment workshops, eight (8) SAFE meetings and community forums, with an average of 37 and 13-23 attendees, respectively. SDC has been very successful reaching out to Somali women and providing them a safe environment to share thoughts, ideas, concerns and aspirations and to identify challenges and recognize successes in life. SDC has also successfully helped 38 SDC clients and community members to secure a job, which is a major step toward a stable life in a new environment and a foundation for a safe and stable family life with less stress.

During the past seven months, the project delivered the proposed outcomes:

- 23 leaders (11 females & 10 males) understood the root causes of key issues that adversely affect the Somali Community.
- Leaders reported using the information gathered in the SAFE/PEACE meetings to plan for ways to counter violent extremism (CVE) and the recruitment and radicalization efforts by organizations that promote and engage in violence.
- Leaders have identified violence prevention strategies and support resources for both men and women, including mental health support and trainings, as well as abuse hotlines and culturally-respectful advocacy resources (e.g. the YWCA’s domestic violence program and youth diversion programs).
- Five female leaders and four males were identified and will be trained in psychological first aid for men and women to identify and provide mental health support around issues of self-esteem, anger management, conflict resolution, depression and anxiety etc.

- Twenty three leaders took an active role in creating leadership roles for women in leadership roles in the community to build women’s self-esteem and integrate female leadership as a community value.
- Five participants in employment workshops were placed in a job.

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 every month for two hours. USY staff updated the parents regarding new programs and solicited input from the community regarding services and support they need, and services available in the community.
- USY created documents such as sign-in sheets for students and tutors that record the date, hours of service, classes selected and any personal or social support they may need.
- College student volunteers were recruited and trained. They wrote job descriptions and circulated via flyers, social media and contacted student centers that USY recruited.
- USY supported numerous sports activities including swimming, soccer, track & field, and basketball.
- In July and August USY went on a Boston College, Boston University, UMass Boston, Northeastern University and Harvard University tour to learn about opportunities and scholarships available for inner city youth.
- During the months of July and August USY hired 30 high school students through ABCD, MLK scholars, PIC and “Success Link.”
- In August USY held the Peace Project Essays contest. USY youth did some amazing work.
- Community Outreach:
 - USY established a strong relationship with the Boston Public Library and agreed to expand their summer program.
 - USY established a relationship with the Boys and Girls Club so that the youth have permission to use their game rooms.
 - USY continued their relationship with Boston Center for Youth & Families(BCYF) which hosts USY’s swimming, soccer and basketball programs.
 - Melnea Cass Arena hosts USY’s high school track and soccer programs on Saturday and Sunday.
 - USY had an initial meeting with the president and vice-president of Roxbury Community College to begin a conversation of how they might support each other in the future.
 - USY had an initial meeting with the Executive Director, and the Director of Operational Programs of YouthBuild Boston regarding USY’s and YouthBuild Boston’s future partnership that would provide their students with vocational certificates.
 - USY met Senator Ed Markey at his office in Washington, DC to discuss refugee and immigration issues that impact USY’s youth and their families.
 - USY successfully applied for a grant with the Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) and received two interns from March to August, 2017. These interns who were from China and Syria were so wonderful and speak several languages, including Arabic and Chinese.

- 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 USY participants with supported employment.
- USY reports the following successes:
 - 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.

OBSERVATIONS:

- USY now uses sign-in sheets and other data collection tools. Student attendance increased, volunteers/tutors are more accountable. With this data, USY has more productive conferences with parents and intervention success within the students schools. This data is helpful in their conversations with the schools that have provided the tutors.
- With PEACE Project funding, USY now has their own office space. The Executive Director of USY has more time to do more work, outreach, as well as having his staff support around him. The students demonstrate a great sense of pride as do the tutors and parents. This has given USY such a sense of authenticity. USY finally has an official address. The Executive Director felt that this gave USY a higher degree of credibility when reaching out to community groups, leaders, parents, students, and citizens.
- USY strengthened their relationship with previous community partners and USY was able to focus on developing the summer program. USY hosted meetings, engaged new partners, and through meetings, made contacts that best support the USY mission and their population.

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

- EP has been working on confirming all the speakers and confirming the speaking program
- EP is gathering the bios of all the speakers and panelists that are taking part in the program.
- EP has updated the Online4Good.org website to include speaker bios and the updated agenda for the day.
- EP went on a walk-through of the WGBH Studios to confirm the stage set-up, as well as sound and all AV that would be used.
- EP is designing the signs that will be hung above the stage at WGBH. These signs will include signs with young people using social media, social media site logos and a podium sign.
- EP is designing a program that will be handed out to all students/teachers attending the Academy.
- EP held speaker briefings in-person and over the phone with all participants.
- EP outreached to all participating schools confirming their participation.
- EP scheduled and held an informational webcast on September 14, 2017.

- EP developed a PowerPoint that was used during the webcast. The PowerPoint will be sent to all participating schools along with a link to the video on-demand.
- EP sent out an email to all participating schools with day-of logistics as well as information about what schools should consider when selecting their social media cause. The themes should focus on the areas of tolerance, acceptance, violence prevention and cross cultural learning, understanding and integration.
- EP developed an Action Plan mimeo worksheet for the schools. The students will complete the form during the Academy. They will keep one copy and we will retain a copy so that we can follow-up.
- EP is working on creating the Facebook page in which the schools can post about their social media program.
- EP had several conference calls and an in-person meeting with the Harvard School of Public Health about the surveys, control group and the methods of completing the analysis.
- EP is working with Harvard School of Public Health to refine the surveys.
- EP challenges:
 - Some of the challenges that EP faced during this timeframe has been reconnecting with teachers and confirming their participation in the program. EP has been able to connect with the teachers in the past week, confirming their participation.
 - Another challenge that EP faced is updating all the teachers about the program and what to expect. EP decided to hold a webcast that teachers would be able to log on to after the school day and listen to the 20-minute webcast. EP had 10 schools that participated on the webcast on September 14th. The webcast is being uploaded to their YouTube channel and the link is being sent out to all the teachers.
 - Schools have been slow responding with the start of the new school year but have been confirming their participation and are excited about the program.
- EP success:

On September 28, 2017, at the studios of WGBH TV in Boston, EP launched their Online4Good Academy. The Academy recruited middle and high school students and teachers from across the Commonwealth to focus on issues pertaining to tolerance and acceptance. Each team was comprised of 4 students and 1 teacher advisor. The purpose of the event was to train and engage youth for social good. Over 130 student leaders and their teachers gathered to learn about, discuss, and be inspired, on the use of social media for social good. The result was the student development of over 20 social media action plans designed to address a broad-base of social issues ranging from the promotion of cultural understanding, to combating bullying, to disaster relief for the victims of hurricane Maria.

1. d. Additional EOHHS Activities this Quarter

- July 17: *Community Awareness Briefing on Violent Extremism in the United States Train-the-Presenter (TTP) Program*. Meeting hosted by the USAO. EOHHS participated as one of the panelists
- July 24: EOHHS, Department of Mental Health, USAO meeting with Dr. Schouten related to training mental health professionals in risk assessment and response.
- August 8: EOHHS participated on a conference call to discuss CVE; a dialogue between Massachusetts Office of Grants, Corrections, USAO and national Governor's Association

- August 14: EOHHS site visit to United Somali Youth
- August 15: EOHHS site visit to United Somali Youth
- August 18: EOHHS evaluation meeting with Harvard School of Public Health regarding Somali Development Center and Empower Peace
- August 22: EOHHS site visit to United Somali Youth
- August 23: EOHHS site visit to Empower Peace
- August 24: EOHHS site visit to Somali Development Center
- August 29: EOHHS evaluation meeting with Boston College regarding United Somali Youth
- September 7: MA PEACE Project Learning Collaborative meeting hosted by EOHHS. The purpose of the meeting was to give each of the grantees the opportunity to provide a summary of their project and to share their experience throughout the process.
- September 14: EOHHS participated on a webcast hosted by Empower Peace. The purpose of the webcast was to update school teachers regarding the agenda and logistics for the Online4Good event.
- September 28: EOHHS attended the Online4Good Academy

SECTION 2. TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES FROM PRIOR QUARTERS (9/30/15 -6/30/17):

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, civil liberties issues 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 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 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

² *ibid*

- 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.

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.
- **April –June 2017:** Vendors continued the implementation of their PEACE Project activities:
 - Somali Development Center (SDC): On Saturday April 8, 2017, SDC held a Women's Safe 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. During this meeting, one attendee expressed her desire to start her own food business. 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. On Saturday, May 20, 2017, SDC held a SAFE meeting (discussion forum) surrounding the issues of Community Cohesion and Resiliency.
 - United Somali Youth: USY continued outreach to youth, met with the USY Parent Advisory Committee on the first Saturday of the month for two hours and recruited and trained college student volunteers. USY supported numerous sports activities, including swimming, soccer, track & field and basketball. 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. USY had a community celebration post their Memorial Day Soccer Tournament. USY continues to work with organizations including but not limited to, Boston Public Library, Boys and Girls Club, Melnea Cass Arena, YouthBuild Boston, The Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA).
 - Empower Peace: EP created an Online4Good logo, drafted copy for the Online4Good website, www.online4good.org <<http://www.online4good.org>> ; the website went live on May 10, 2017. EP also 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. In addition, EP developed an online registration mechanism and recruited schools for participation in the Online4Good Academy.