

**Massachusetts Promoting Engagement Acceptance and Community
Empowerment (PEACE) Project
Final Report 11/30/17**

INTRODUCTION

On September 30, 2015, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) signed a Cooperative Agreement to explore ways to address violent extremism in Massachusetts utilizing a public health approach. EOHHS was granted \$216,667 and over a two year period, has used the funding to implement the Massachusetts Promoting Engagement, Acceptance and Community Empowerment (PEACE) Project. This document constitutes the final report for the PEACE Project and includes the following:

- Overview and Background
- EOHHS Activities
- PEACE Project Grantee Activities, and
- Results

SECTION 1. OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2014, the White House National Security Council designated the Boston, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis regions to pilot the development of a locally-driven comprehensive framework that promotes multidisciplinary solutions to Countering Violent Extremism (CVE).

Since the fall of 2014, stakeholders in the Greater Boston area (known as “the Collaborative”) began to develop a locally-driven “*Framework for Prevention and Intervention Strategies*,” (the Framework). The Collaborative consisted of over 50 non-governmental, governmental and academic stakeholders from the Greater Boston region. The Collaborative was supported by the United States Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the District of Massachusetts, Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security and National Counterterrorism Center. The Framework identified key problem areas and proposed goals and activities to address problems. At the invitation of the USAO, EOHHS first met with members of the Collaborative on September 1, 2015.

On September 30, 2015, EOHHS and the USAO signed a Cooperative Agreement in order to explore ways to help prevent violent extremism in Massachusetts by using a public health approach. Through the Cooperative Agreement, EOHHS was awarded \$216,667 to support violence prevention and intervention efforts.

SECTION 2. EOHHS ACTIVITIES

Information Gathering

In the initial months of the project, EOHHS initiated and participated in several one-to-one and group meetings with stakeholders affiliated with the Collaborative. The meetings allowed EOHHS to gain a deeper understanding of the activities that occurred prior to EOHHS involvement. The meetings also helped EOHHS and the Collaborative stakeholders to develop new ideas for moving forward.

During these meetings, EOHHS provided an overview of its role as part of the executive branch and the work of its agencies. EOHHS discussed the goals and objectives of the Cooperative Agreement, EOHHS' role as the project/fiscal administrator of the grant funds and EOHHS' anticipated procurement timeline. EOHHS received feedback from stakeholders regarding past and current efforts related to CVE and ideas around how to best utilize (or not utilize) the grant funds.

On September 30, 2015, EOHHS participated in a CVE stakeholder meeting that included the USAO, MA Department of Public Health, MA Department of Mental Health, MA Department of Early Education and Care, Boston Public Schools, Boston Children's Hospital. On October 23, 2015, EOHHS obtained youth input by attending a USAO sponsored meeting with youth who had recently participated in the Global Youth Summit Against Violent Extremism in New York. On November 1, 2015, EOHHS attended the workshop: "Resilience to Violent Extremism: Effective Intervention Approaches" at Suffolk Law School.

In November 2015, the USAO sent out an email introduction to members of the Collaborative, and other stakeholders, introducing these stakeholders to EOHHS. The introductions were followed by several additional meetings, including:

- 11/16/15: Islamic Society of Greater Lowell
- 11/23/15: Islamic Society of Boston in Cambridge
- 12/2/15: Twelfth Baptist Church
- 12/7/15: Congregation Kehillath Israel
- 12/10/15: Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center
- 12/14/15: Stakeholders from the Somali community
- 12/15/15: Muslim Justice League, Council on American-Islamic Relations-MA Chapter and American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts
- 12/16/15: Mass 211
- 12/23/15: Department of Public Health, Department of Secondary and Elementary Education and Department of Mental Health
- 01/05/16: Conference call with Office of the Deputy Attorney General, US Department of Justice.
- 01/20/16: Region One Office of the US Department of Health and Human Services, (participants included senior US DHHS staff, and staff from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
- 01/26/16: Federal Bureau of Investigation

- 02/01/16: Cambridge Police Department and Cambridge Children and Family Services
- 02/10/16: Islamic Society of Western Massachusetts and Critical Connection
- 02/12/16: Boston Police Department

Request for Information Process

To gain additional input, EOHHS developed a *Request for Information* (RFI). The purpose of the RFI was to collect written information from the public, (both individuals and organizations), regarding the development of a collaborative program to help prevent violent extremism by using a public health approach. EOHHS solicited input on how to best spend the limited resources provided by the USAO. Specifically, EOHHS sought community feedback related to: program design, eligible applicants, recommended violence prevention and intervention strategies, and resource requirements. The RFI was released to the public on March 11, 2016. Respondents were asked to provide responses to questions in the following four areas:

- Primary Prevention (community collaborations, cross cultural activities, youth leadership programs)
- Secondary and Tertiary Prevention (Multi-Disciplinary Teams)
- Counter-Messaging (challenging messaging to violent extremist propaganda)
- Other Ideas

The RFI responses were due on April 5, 2016. Twelve respondents provided written comments. Approximately half of the respondents were supportive of moving forward with the grant, while the other half expressed significant concerns related to civil liberties- primarily based on prior CVE efforts in other jurisdictions. Some of the respondents suggested returning the funds, while others offered a range of concrete suggestions for services.

Additional meetings:

Concurrent with the RFI process, EOHHS engaged in the following additional meetings related to the PEACE Project:

- 04/01/16, EOHHS participated on a webinar, “Building Knowledge about Preventing Domestic radicalization and Violent Extremism in the U.S.”
- 05/19/16, EOHHS participated in a Harvard T.H. School of Public Health, Stakeholders Meeting-“Ideologically Motivated Violence (IMV) in the Greater Boston Area.”
- 05/19/16, EOHHS attended presentation by the Department of Homeland Security Science and Technology Directorate.
- 05/20/16, EOHHS met with the Muslim Justice League, Council on American-Islamic Relations - Massachusetts Chapter, the American Civil Liberties Union of

Massachusetts, and the Brennan Center for Justice.

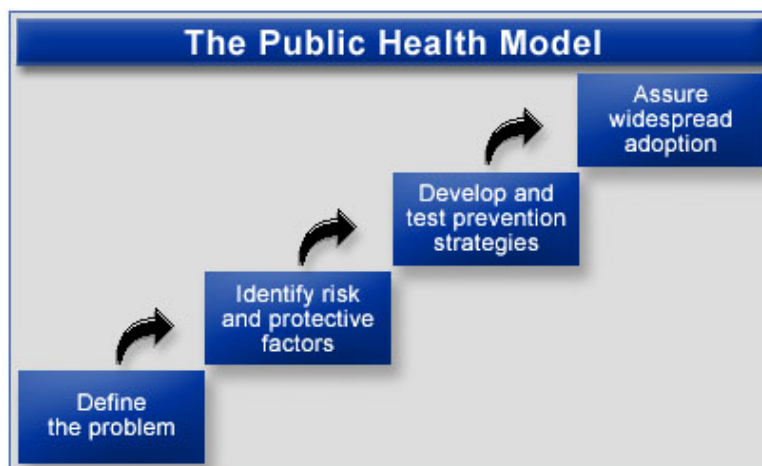
- 05/25/16, EOHHS attended the Western New England University Social Work conference on violent extremism.

Grant Application Process

EOHHS reviewed the RFI responses and then used the information collected through the RFI to develop an open, competitive procurement, known as a “*Grant Application.*”

From April 2016 through August 2016, EOHHS drafted the language related to the Grant Application. EOHHS named the initiative the “Massachusetts Promoting Engagement, Acceptance and Community Empowerment (PEACE) Project,” as this title more accurately reflected the focus and scope of efforts in Massachusetts. The PEACE Project was informed, but not bound by prior CVE efforts.

Also during this time, EOHHS reviewed and adopted a modified version the “Public Health Model” approach to violence prevention that was developed by the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This Model outlined four steps for implementation of a public health approach, specifically: Step 1: Define and Monitor the Problem, Step 2: Identify Risk and Protective Factors, Step 3: Develop and Test Prevention Strategies, Step 4: Assure Widespread Adoption.



<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/overview/publichealthapproach.html>

The overall goal of the PEACE Project was to prevent violence. The term “violence,” for the purposes of the PEACE Project, was defined specifically as an 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 utilized the Massachusetts hate crimes statute (M.G.L c. 265, § 39), and the federal statute related to terrorism (18 USC Ch. 113B) in developing this definition. The terms “violence” and “violent extremism” were used interchangeably in the Grant Application. From the public health perspective, this definition served, in part, to “define the problem” we were working to address.

Through the PEACE Project Grant Application, EOHHS sought to support Projects that help to prevent violence, and help to prevent people from joining organizations that promote, plan or engage in violence. EOHHS was not able to identify reliable predictive data regarding individual risk factors related to violence. EOHHS did find evidence of community-level protective factors related to violence prevention. Based on this research, EOHHS, through the Grant Application, sought to promote resilience by strengthening protective factors, including:

- **Social capital, and trust in Institutions:** Promoting the dissemination and adoption of healthy behaviors, promoting greater access to health services, raising awareness of human rights and promoting self-esteem and mutual respect¹
- **Social cohesion:** The ability of a society to be inclusive of all cultural and social groups, so that they work co-operatively²
- **Social support:** The perception and actuality that one is cared for, has assistance available from other people, and that one is part of a supportive social network. These supportive resources can be tangible (e.g., financial assistance) and intangible (e.g. personal advice), emotional (e.g., nurturance), informational (e.g., advice), or companionship (e.g., sense of belonging)³
- Integrated **cultural identity**
- **Employment** success, and
- Access to **democratic means** for negotiating needs and opinions.

The “Focus Areas” of the PEACE Project Grant Application were primarily derived from the work done by the Collaborative, and included development of:

1. **Primary prevention strategies**, collaborations, meetings and trainings that foster: prosocial behavior, acceptance, tolerance, effective self-advocacy skills and peer

¹ Berkman LF, Kawachi I. Social epidemiology. New York: Oxford University Press; 2000

² Bhui KS, Hicks MH, Lashley M, Jones E. A public health approach to understanding and preventing violent radicalization. BMC Medicine. 2012;10:16. doi:10.1186/1741-7015-10-16.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_support#cite_note-Wills91-2

leadership skills, critical thinking and conflict resolution skills, generalized programs of education against violence, informed and inclusive communities, cross-cultural learning, empowerment, and/or resilience across broad populations

2. Opportunities for **positive communication and engagement** between government and non-government members of the community
3. **Counter-messaging** strategies to challenge the messaging of organizations that promote, plan or engage in violence, and
4. **Information and referrals** for spouses, parents, guardians or caretakers who are concerned that a child in their care or custody, or adult, may be recruited by organizations that promote, plan or engage in violence.

Informed by the concerns of civil liberties groups, the Grant Application specifically stated that PEACE Project funds were not allowed to be used for: a.) prohibiting protected speech, b.) suppression of political dissent, c.) profiling based on race, national origin, religious affiliation, ethnicity, and/or Ideology or d.) eroding confidentiality protections established by law.

Additionally, current state or federal laws notwithstanding, PEACE Project funds could not be used to support law enforcement activities related to the detection or investigation of a crime, apprehension of criminals, development of “watch lists,” surveillance, use of informants, or suppression.

On August 8, 2016 EOHHS issued the Grant Application to solicit responses from non-profit or for-profit organizations, school districts, academic institutions, or municipalities to operate the PEACE Project. August 26, 2016, EOHHS submitted a no-cost extension to extend funding for the PEACE Project through the end of FFY17. The no-cost extension was subsequently approved by the USAO.

Grant Awards

Responses to the grant Application were due on September 12, 2016. Four organizations responded to the Grant Application on the due date. Following a comprehensive review of the respondents’ proposals, including proposed budgets, in November 2016 the Committee recommended grant allocations to the following three vendors:

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

Contracts were executed on January 18, 2017. EOHHS hosted a PEACE Project Kick-off meeting on January 25, 2017. The goal of the meeting was to build a “learning collaborative” among all

of the PEACE Project grantees. Each grantee provided an overview and answered questions related to their respective project. EOHHS also provided information related to reporting and grants management.

Following the kick-off, EOHHS conducted several site visits to PEACE Project grantees. At these site visits, EOHHS reviewed progress to date, clarified outcomes, outputs and activity calendars, and met with program staff and clients.

Concurrently, PEACE Project grantees voluntarily worked with non-profit universities to define and measure initial outputs and outcomes. United Somali Youth chose to work with Boston College; the Somali Development Center and Empower Peace chose 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. Although these evaluations were not being conducted by or for EOHHS, EOHHS worked with the evaluators and PEACE Project Grantees with the goal of ensuring the evaluations accurately reflected Massachusetts PEACE Project work.

In addition to several site visits and evaluation meetings, EOHHS participated in the following PEACE Project related workshops and meetings:

- 4/14/17, EOHHS, DMH, USAO met to discuss challenges and opportunities related to training mental health professionals in risk assessment and response.
- 7/17/17 EOHHS attended a *Community Awareness Briefing on Violent Extremism in the United States Train-the Presenter (TTP) Program*. The meeting was hosted by the USAO. EOHHS participated as one of the panelists.
- 7/24/17, EOHHS, Department of Mental Health, USAO met with a national expert related to training mental health professionals in risk assessment and response.
- 8/8/17, EOHHS participated on a conference call to discuss a recent federal grant related to CVE with the Office of Grants Management and Research, the Department of Corrections, USAO and National Governor's Association.
- 9/7/17, EOHHS hosted the final MA PEACE Project Learning Collaborative meeting. Grantees provided each other with a summary of their project, and their experiences and learning from project activities.

SECTION 3. PEACE PROJECT GRANTEE ACTIVITIES

The following is an overview of each PEACE Project Grantee, including a summary of their original proposal and program activities, as reported by the Grantee.

United Somali Youth (USY)

USY Proposal

USY is a non-profit organization that provides educational and social skills development and support for Somali and other African youth. USY defined its service population as refugees, asylum seekers or recent immigrants who have been impacted by war, trauma, social isolation, acculturation challenges and discrimination. Their proposal described the economic and cultural challenges faced by Somali and African youth. The proposal also described the USY's experience working with youth in the community and their parents, and noted current needs. USY sought to help these youth gain the confidence, knowledge and skills needed to be successful in school and access future opportunity.

USY proposed they would 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. USY stated they would offer opportunities for participation in afterschool programs, counseling, college readiness assistance, extracurricular activities and community events. USY services were to be coordinated by a case manager of the same cultural background as the service population. USY proposed training for parents, and also proposed a comprehensive approach to community outreach which involved efforts through the Islamic Society of Boston Cultural Center (ISBCC), Boston Public Schools and other service providers.

USY Activities

In the initial phase of the Grant, USY sent out weekly flyers to recruit youth into their program, posted recruitment information 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.

USY successfully hired two positions: a Case Manager/Director of Operations, and a Sports Assistant (who served as a part-time coach). Each of these staff was able to help with translation needs. To supplement staff, USY engaged college student volunteers. They developed a job description for the position, and displayed this on flyers, social media, and in student centers. As a result, USY successfully obtained the assistance of 20 students: 12 Northeastern students, three Harvard students, three Boston College students, and two individuals from AmeriCorps.

In February 2017, UHY held two family focused events. 1.) 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. 2.) USY secured a new program location, moving their

primary location from the ISBCC to an office building near Dudley Square. 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.

In February and March 2017, USY sponsored sports activities that involved approximately 20 youth swimmers, 30 youth soccer players, 25 youth track & field participants, and 50 youth basketball players. The soccer and basketball teams were provided with official United Somali Youth uniforms.

Meetings were held regularly with the USY's Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), which included approximately 30 parents. The Parent Advisory Committee was open to all parents, meetings were held every first Saturday of the month for to inform the parents about new programs, and to solicit input from community members about services and support they need.

USY students were supported by college tutors who helped them with homework and other academic issues. USY students and their tutors went on tours of Harvard University, Boston College, and Northeastern University. In May, students accompanied their tutors to the tutor's graduation events. A celebration was held for graduates from Northeastern University, Harvard and Boston College. Networking was initiated between graduates and future perspective volunteers.

In April/May 2017, USY assisted 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. Following these applications, the City of Boston allocated 30 subsidized job slots to support the USY summer program.

Over the summer, 12 boys and girls participated in USY's 12-week creative writing program focused on essay writing. Creative writing classes for high school students were held on Tuesday and Thursdays; classes for middle school girls were held Wednesday. All completed final drafts of their essays.

In May 2017, USY supported participation of Somali youth in a Memorial Day Soccer Tournament. The Tournament involved over 400 athletes and their families across a total of 16 teams from all the New England states. The tournament included a celebration with live entertainment as they also commemorated the beginning of Ramadan. USY reported that this was the largest sporting event involving the Somali community in Boston.

During the summer of 2017, USY participated in a variety of community outreach activities which included a summer program hosted by the Boston Public Library, working with the Boys and Girls Club to apply for grants regarding students who are taking gap years or seeking alternative non-university paths, hosting swimming, soccer and basketball programs with the Boston Center for Youth and Families (BCYF), and applying for grants with BCYF.

Other summer activities included:

- USY's high school track and soccer programs were hosted by the Melnea Cass Arena on Saturdays and Sundays.
- YouthBuild Boston worked together with USY to provide USY students with vocational classes.
- The Massachusetts Immigration and Refugee Advocacy Coalition (MIRA) supported an internship program that provided two interns from March 2017 – August 2017. These interns were from China and Syria and spoke several languages, including Arabic and Chinese.
- USY applied to the Boston College School of Social Work Field Placement program, and was able to secure two graduate students to intern with USY for the full year.
- USY met with the MA Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) to brainstorm what EEC services could support USY families.
- USY and the Somali Development Center (SDC) planned to co-host the 2017 Somali student graduation ceremony.

During the summer, USY used their new office space to hold focus groups, large group celebrations and other group activities. The program reported students were motivated to work on their school projects with USY's technology and color printer. The program reported that seeing students motivated and proud of their work "was amazing." Additional successes included that 50 USY students graduated from college and high school and all received certificates of recognition by parents and USY board members.

At the end of the summer program, USY stated they were frustrated that, due to the lack of summer job slots in Boston, they could not accommodate all their participants with subsidized employment. Also, the volunteer college tutors graduated from college before the end of the school year for USY students. USY then had a skeleton crew of tutors, and had to double up their work, which the program reported, "stretched us thin." This experience has informed future efforts related to scheduling.

In the last three months of the grant (July 2017 through September 2017), USY continued to support numerous sports activities including swimming, soccer, track & field, and basketball.

In August 2017 USY held an essay contest, where students read their essays aloud and offered feedback to each other.

Additional activities included:

- USY established a strong relationship with the Boston Public Library and the library agreed to expand USY's summer program to include more activities with the library.
- USY established a relationship with the Boys and Girls Club which now allows the youth to use their game rooms.
- USY's had an initial meeting with the president and vice-president of Roxbury Community College 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 future partnership that would provide their students with vocational certificates.
- The USY Director 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 reports they are currently using data from sign in sheets and other collection methods to inform their parent conferences and intervention strategies with the schools; and they are seeing increased student attendance, and better accountability with the volunteer tutors.

As a result of the PEACE Project funding, the USY Executive Director reported he had more staff support and more time to do USY work and outreach. USY reported that staff, students, tutors and parents demonstrated a "great sense of pride" in having their own location/office. The Executive Director felt that PEACE Project funding gave USY such a sense of authenticity; USY "finally had an official address." The Executive Director felt that having their own space gave USY a higher degree of credibility when reaching out to community groups, leaders, parents, students, and citizens in order to sustain the program operations.

Somali Development Center (SDC)

SDC Background and Proposal

SDC is a Boston-based organization, which has served the Somali refugee and immigrant community for 20 years. Founded by Somali immigrants, SDC provides social and educational services aimed to help Somalis and other Africans to obtain basic resources, services, information and skills.

SDC proposed they would convene local Somali leaders to promote economic development, community engagement, and social adaptation and cohesion. SDC sought to focus on the prevention of harmful cultural practices, the development of women and girls, and opportunities for immigrant and refugee youth.

In their proposal, SDC provided a clear and comprehensive explanation of the demographic, historical and other forces that shape the behaviors of some Somali-American youth. They described individual family dynamics and risk factors, and discussed the challenges facing Somali youth and women. SDC stated a goal of decreasing isolation of the Somali community and helping Somalis to feel part of the larger American community.

SDC proposed an initiative entitled: Somali Advocacy for Family Empowerment (SAFE). SAFE proposed convening Somali leaders to address social issues such as harmful cultural practices, the development of women and girls, and opportunities for immigrant and refugee youth.

SDC Activities

In January 2017, SDC hired one new staff member as a Prevention & Employment Specialist. Volunteers were recruited to support the project. SDC also assigned existing staff to their respective roles for the duration of the project.

From January 4, 2017 through February 28, 2017, SDC communicated information about the existence and the scope of the PEACE Project, specifically the Somali Advocacy for Family Empowerment (SAFE) Program, to the community.

On March 18, 2017, SDC held a meeting attended by approximately 30 mothers where the SAFE initiative program goals were introduced and discussed. SDC reported that attendees had lots of questions and appreciated the fact that the SDC in conjunction with the community members was making efforts to prevent their children from getting involved with organizations that promote, plan or engage in violence. SDC reported that the employment service component for the youth was very appealing 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.

SDC SAFE Discussion Forums

From April 2017 through September 2017, SDC held a series of discussion forums related to their SAFE initiative:

- 4/8/17, SDC held a discussion forum regarding “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 to 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 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 entrepreneurial attendee expressed her desire to start her own food business. The other attendees encouraged her and proposed that she make some dishes and have a taste test. One woman offered to make flyers. The entrepreneur then sold dishes at the mosque during the month of Ramadan.

- 4/28/17, SDC held a discussion forum regarding family planning, religion, female genital mutilation (FGM), authority figures, and parenting styles. One attendee talked about conflicts between siblings and how she's raised her children, 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. SDC reported that the discussion reflected a lack of understanding in regards to the systems in place in the United States that are intended to protect people (i.e. court system, child protective services).
- 5/20/17, SDC held a discussion forum regarding "Community Cohesion and Resiliency." This meeting included nine men and eleven women. The purpose of the 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 was for families to be more proactive and less reactive when dealing with crisis situations.
- 7/19/17, SDC held a community leaders forum 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. SDC reported that attendees shared that the 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.
- 9/6/17 SDC held a discussion forum surrounding the issues of "Community Communication." There were a total of 18 attendees, five men and 13 women. The program reported that 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. The program also reported that participants stated SDC's presentation gave them "the extra courage" to get other women from the Somali community involved in this type of community dialogue. SDC noted that women and mothers are traditionally neglected when it comes to trainings and programs in the Somali community; so SDC's efforts supported making sure that they participate, learn, and pass knowledge along to the young people in their lives. The program reported that women and mothers are a huge source of moral

education for young people, and their involvement helps prepare young people to not fall victim to extremist propaganda.

- 9/9/17, SDC held a discussion forum on topics relevant to school awareness and preparedness for children going “Back to School.” This meeting included 11 women.

SDC SAFE Employment Workshops

From February 2017 through July 2017, SDC held six employment workshops. These workshops included the following:

- 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 attended the employment workshops. During these workshops, SDC provided participants with the opportunity to do mock interviews, and to learn how to dress appropriately for work. SDC presented comprehensive talks on work readiness/preparedness such as: improving one’s ability to speak/read/write English, family collaboration in juggling household responsibilities and scheduling other errands e.g. doctor’s appointments etc.

SDC Other Activities

In addition to the SAFE discussion forums and employment workshops, SDC also engaged in the following activities:

- 2/23/17, the SDC Executive Director was appointed to the Governor’s Black Advisory Commission, which SDC reported, highlights the recognition of the role and work of SDC in the community.
- 3/5/17 SDC participated in the planning committee for the annual Anti-Defamation League’s (ADL) Nation of Immigrants Seder. ADL is at the forefront of Boston-based organizations that monitor hate crimes. The SDC Executive Director shared his immigrant story (haggadah) with 300 attendees at the event. The event was covered by the Boston Globe.

- 9/9/17, SDC participated in a community engagement forum related to one of the candidates running for city counselor District 7. Approximately 150 people attended the forum, (70 men and 80 women).

Empower Peace (EP)

EP Background and Proposal

EP is an organization founded by The Rendon Group, a Boston-based communications firm that specializes in public affairs campaigns. The organization's focus is on bridging cultural and communication divides among young people worldwide. Programming falls within three core areas - Women's Leadership Program (aimed at elevating the status of women through leadership training); Virtual Connections (use of interactive technology to connect youth and foster dialogue); and the Global Village (identifying and promoting service learning opportunities for youth). Through its work, EP has reached 70,000 young people in 39 countries around the world. EP's mission, and extensive history conducting youth-focused campaigns, as well as its involvement in projects related to the prevention of hate crimes, was determined by EOHHS to be appropriate and relevant experience.

EP proposed a pilot project, the "Online4Good Academy." The one-day Academy would recruit high school student leaders to develop online strategies, tactics and campaigns using social media to promote tolerance and acceptance. An outcome of the Academy would be social media campaign plans, which the students would formulate and implement at their schools.

EP Activities

As an initial step to launch the program, EP established an Advisory Committee. The committee consisted of representatives from MA Teachers Association, MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, MA Association of School Superintendents, MA Interscholastic Athletic Association, Anti-Defamation League of New England, MA Aggression Reduction Center at Bridgewater State University, East Bridgewater Schools, Haverhill High School, Madison Park Technical Vocational High School, Stoneham High School, Beaver Country Day School and Medford Public Schools. EP also reached out to representatives of various successful student-driven anti-hate social media campaigns for "best practices" presentations.

EP then developed the initial design for a website to support the Online4Good campaign. The website was intended to be the cornerstone of the campaign recruitment effort, providing information on the campaign, and serving as the mechanism where schools, educators, student leaders could 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 was to recruit 100 students and 25 teachers from 25 high schools (teams of four students and one teacher per school) from

throughout Massachusetts. After an internal review and speaking with the Harvard School of Public Health, EP felt that this timeline was too challenging. Due to the late start of the Grant and the school spring schedules (tests, proms and graduations) EP revised their Academy schedule. The proposed new timeline, which was reviewed and approved by EOHHS, was requested to allow the program's students and teachers sufficient time to implement their program during the fall of the next school year.

From March 2017 to June 2017, EP created an Online4Good logo and further developed the Online4Good website, www.online4good.org <<http://www.online4good.org>>. The website went live on May 10, 2017. EP also drafted copy for Online4Good recruitment e-card. EP confirmed a new date and location for the Online4Good Academy (Thursday, 9/28/17 from 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM at WGBH Studios in Boston). The program was expanded to include high school seniors and middle school students. Over 30 schools expressed interest in being involved, exceeding EP's original target of 25 schools.

In preparation for the Online4Good Academy, EP developed an online registration system, reached out and confirmed speakers for Academy, and gathered bios and photos of all speakers. EP also researched local social media campaigns in Massachusetts and continued outreach to potential speakers. EP also continued to reach out to recruit participation on the Advisory Committee; over 35 people were contacted. 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.

From July 2017 through September 2017, EP finalized all the speakers for the Online4Good Academy. EP updated the Online4Good.org website to include speaker bios and the updated agenda. EP confirmed the stage set-up, as well as sound and all AV that would be used. They designed the signs that were hung above the stage at WGBH, (signs with young people using social media, social media site logos and a podium sign). They also designed the program that was handed out to all students and teachers attending the Academy.

In September 2017, EP outreached to all participating schools confirming their participation, and held briefings with speakers in-person and over the phone. On September 14, 2017, EP held an informational webcast that teachers would be able to log on to after the school day and listen to the 20-minute webcast. Ten schools participated on the webcast. EP developed a PowerPoint that was used during the webcast. The PowerPoint was sent to all participating schools along with a link to the video on-demand. The webcast was uploaded to their YouTube channel and the link was sent out to all the teachers.

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 focused on tolerance, acceptance, violence prevention, and, cross-cultural learning, understanding and integration. EP developed an Action Plan mimeo worksheet for the schools which the students completed the form during the Academy. One copy of the form was

retained by the school, EP retained a copy for follow-up. EP also worked on creating the Facebook page in which the schools could post about their social media program.

Throughout the calendar year, EP held several conference calls and an in-person meeting with the Harvard School of Public Health regarding evaluation.

Some of the challenges EP faced in the last quarter of the grant included reconnecting with teachers due the date change, and confirming their participation in the program. EP also faced challenges updating all the teachers about the program and what to expect.

On September 28, 2017 EP launched the Online4Good Academy at the studios of WGBH TV in Boston. The Academy recruited middle and high school students and teachers from across the Commonwealth to focus on issues pertaining to tolerance, acceptance, violence prevention, and cross-cultural learning, understanding and integration. Each team was comprised of four students and one teacher advisor. 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, support for racial and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ support, disaster relief for the victims of hurricane Maria and combating bullying.

SECTION 4. RESULTS

As referenced, Grantees were not required to evaluate PEACE Project activities. However, all Grantees voluntarily chose to work with evaluators to identify outputs and outcomes, and to measure results. Somali Development Center and Empower Peace worked with evaluators from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health; United Somali youth worked with an evaluator from Boston College.

The evaluator from Boston College (BC) completed an evaluation of USY, (see excerpted below). The evaluation results from Harvard are not yet available as of the writing of this report. SDC and EP provided information in their quarterly reports that summarized results, (see below).

United Somali Youth (USY) Results

USY worked with Somali and other African and Middle Eastern youth in the Greater Boston area, and provided individual services that built academic, social, athletic and critical life skills. Through the PEACE Project, the program moved from its previous location within the Islamic Society of Greater Boston Cultural Center and secured a new independent location in the Dudley Square area. This allowed the program to provide more hours, and a wider variety of programs for youth. The services provided include an afterschool program, tutoring, essay writing, sports, extracurricular activities and community events. Parents from the Somali community are now providing donations to cover about 1/3 of the programs operating costs.

The BC evaluation (excerpted/summarized below) identified USY Peace Project objectives and analyzed the extents to which four specific objectives were met:

- *Objective 1: Youth who received after-school and homework help will have improved performance in school, gains in confidence, and a better sense of belonging.*
- *Objective 2: Sports program activities will develop not only athletic skills, but stronger community building and team building skills.*
- *Objective 3: Summer program participants (high school students) completing this program will return to high school with more confidence, clearer goals for the future, and new relationships and networks.*
- *Objective 4: Families that may often feel isolated or marginalized from the mainstream will be strengthened; services provided will lead to a better future for the young people helped.*

Additionally, the evaluator analyzed essays from youth involved with the USY program.

The following (excerpted/edited from the evaluation) is an overview of results related each USY objective, and a summary of content analysis related to the youth essays:

Objective 1: Youth who received after-school and homework help will have improved performance in school, gains in confidence, and a better sense of belonging.

Youth who received after-school and homework help reported in focus groups that they have improved grades, strengthened confidence in public speaking, improved social connections, more confidence in homework, and more confidence and security around future goals since completing the program. There seemed to be a connection between gains in confidence around school and social connections, as they depend on each other for support and motivation. Most students expressed that their favorite part of the program was hanging out with friends and making social connections, and most expressed how USY helped them to do so. In addition, mentorship played a strong role in motivation in school performance, as they continually push them to succeed and strive for better grades.

Objective 2: Sports program activities will develop not only athletic skills, but stronger community building and team building skills.

Youth involved in sports activities reported an increase in athletic skills through coaching and attending the gym daily, and playing basketball every day, but the main themes were around stronger community building and team building skills. Team building skills were expressed both by their knowledge of the importance of interpersonal skills in team building, but also by recognizing the lack of team efforts amongst other teams. Many students expressed that they did not have the competitive advantage before attending USY, but did play basketball for fun before the program. The fact that the students play against other teams and are involved in

competitions through USY provides them an outlet to practice and strengthen their team building skills.

Stronger community building was also reported by these students as they found community in USY and understood the roles in the communities outside of USY. They mentioned that their connections to the outside community were through USY, as they met people that were not part of USY. Some students stated that they did not have friends when coming to the U.S. but since they were able to play on the basketball court in the USY program, they were able to meet new people and find a community.

Objective 3: Summer program participants (high school students) completing this program will return to high school with more confidence, clearer goals for the future, and new relationships and networks.

Summer program participants expressed how the USY summer program provided them with a space to meet other people and develop deeper connections. They reported that they have clearer goals for the future due to the leadership opportunities that were provided to them, in addition to the mentors that guide them toward their goals. Some students stated that they already had career goals, but the USY program provided them opportunities to seek various career and college opportunities. Most participants commented on their increase in confidence around public speaking since the start of the program since USY provides them a platform to practice and mentors push them to do so.

According to the pre/post survey data [n=8 program participants], 92% students reported that after the summer program, they had a high level of confidence, in comparison to the pre-test of 39% of participants that reported that they were neutral in their level of confidence. In addition, 67% of participants reported that after the summer program, they strongly agree that they know what is needed to accomplish their goals, in comparison to the pre-test that displayed only 19% strongly agreed that they know what is needed to accomplish their goals. Furthermore, 61% of participants reported in the post-test that they agree that they have a plan for obtaining the type of career that they want, in comparison to only 19% that reported in the pre-test that they agreed that they have a plan for obtaining the type of career they want.

Objective 4: Families that may often feel isolated or marginalized from the mainstream will be strengthened; services provided will lead to a better future for the young people helped.

Thirty parents consistently attended nine Parent Advisory Committee meetings. Starting in October, 2017, each parent has committed to providing \$20 each month, totaling \$600 per month to go toward USY programs and services. So far, \$600 has been collected to extend the services originally offered with grant funding. As a result, parents are more active and directly connected to their children's educational and career development. The program reports that the money they will provide each month displays their dedication toward their children's future.

Student Perspectives

Essays [written by USY youth program participants] provided student insight around the challenges that refugee youth face in the U.S., and more locally, Boston. These perspectives included a strong desire for equality, and show how this inequality makes it more challenging for them to succeed in life. At the same time, these refugee youth show determination and perseverance toward attaining equality for themselves by working hard, and overcoming the social challenges that they face as a Muslim person of color. The essays also provided insight around feeling misunderstood as a Muslim person, and the fear that they have as a result of this misunderstanding from other people. Again, they show their determination and wit around wanting to change other people's opinions of Muslim people by showing them otherwise. These essays not only provide insight, but they also tie into this research evaluation since these students display qualities of a leader through their insight, determination to change other's opinions through positive action, and determination to succeed despite their setbacks. Their views of the American dream were not completely tainted by the negative attitudes and actions of others, but by the hope that they can achieve equality, equal opportunity, and persist despite the setbacks.

Somali Development Center (SDC) Results

In their final report to EOHHS, SDC highlighted the following accomplishments:

SDC implemented a new Somali Advocacy for Family Empowerment (SAFE) initiative. SDC held community discussions and small groups related to family planning, religion, community cohesion and resiliency. The sessions focused primarily on women's empowerment, but also focused on helping parents who are concerned about children being recruited by organizations that promote, plan or engage in violence. Additionally, SDC held employment and economic self-sufficiency workshops and one-on-one counseling sessions. Staff and participants developed increased awareness of, and ability to, address challenges faced by Somali families. The program empowered participants to take specific steps towards self-sufficiency and cross-cultural integration.

Since the inception of the SAFE Initiative, SDC successfully completed: a.) eight SAFE community discussion forums with an average of 13-23 attendees each, and b.) six employment workshops with approximately 38 attendees overall. SDC reports being very successful in 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 also reported successfully helping 38 SDC clients and community members to learn skills that will help them secure a job, which they further reported 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."

SDC's activities tied to specific protective factors for the Somali community that SDC had identified in their original proposal:

- social support (case management, expanding referrals from schools, media, community partners and word of mouth, and cultural events)
- social cohesion (implementation of the SAFE initiative to bring in expertise in religion, economic development, social services and community engagement)
- integrated cultural identity (discussions, as part of the SAFE initiative, focused on tradition, resettlement, adaptation, progression and balance), and
- employment success (pre-employment training, work readiness and placement assistance).

SDC reported delivering the following outcomes related to the above referenced protective factors:

Outcomes	Related Protective Factors
Twenty-one leaders (11 females & 10 males) reported that they understood root causes of key issues that adversely affect the Somali Community	Integrated cultural identity
Leaders reported using the information gathered in the SAFE/PEACE meetings to plan for ways to counter violent extremism (CVE) and the recruitment by organizations that promote, plan or engage in violence.	Social support Social cohesion
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.	Integrated cultural identity Social support Social cohesion
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.	Integrated cultural identity Social support Social cohesion
Five females and four males were identified and will be subsequently trained in psychological first aid for men and women. These trainees will identify and provide mental health support around issues of self-esteem, anger management, conflict resolution, depression and anxiety etc.	Social support Social cohesion
Twenty three leaders took an active role in creating leadership roles for women in the community to build women’s self-esteem and integrate female leadership as a community value.	Integrated cultural identity Social support Social cohesion
Five participants in the employment workshops were successfully placed in a job.	Integrated cultural identity Employment success

Empower Peace (EP) Results

In their last report to EOHHS, EP reported over 130 student leaders and their teachers attended the Online4Good Academy on September 28, 2017 to learn about, discuss, and be inspired by the use of social media for social good. During the event, each team developed an initial social media plan that included the following components:

- Issue/cause/focus-area the team will address
- Geographic area targeted by campaign: school, community, state, region
- Message to deliver
- Goal of action plan
- Social media activities plan
- Duration of plan

Schools were required to focus their campaigns on 1.) tolerance, 2.) acceptance, 3) violence prevention, or 4.) cross-cultural learning, understanding and integration. This resulted in 20 schools making a commitment to focus on the following 19 issues/causes/focus-areas:

1. Acknowledging and accepting differences
2. Decreasing cyberbullying
3. Diversity and bullying
4. Promoting prosocial behaviors
5. Community action and support
6. Shedding light on current social justice issues; providing a safe space for different views.
7. Communicating to peers about online fake accounts, bullying, protecting privacy
8. Spreading kindness and positivity
9. Creation of a more inclusive environment for autistic/special education population
10. Social harm of negatively joining in
11. Equality
12. School spirit/lack of involvement
13. Sports bullying
14. Acceptance of everyone
15. Overall bullying
16. Hurricane in Puerto Rico
17. Police officer appreciation
18. LGBTQ (anti-bullying)
19. Raising awareness of social problems in school, (bringing attention to positive change)