

Crisis Intervention of Houston, Inc.



This section focuses on the work of Crisis Intervention of Houston, Inc., completed under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grant award for its project Community Collaborative to Counter Violent Extremism in Houston, TX. To understand the Crisis Intervention organization and the Community Collaborative project, one must first look more broadly at the national climate and the local community.

Houston: A Core Part of the American Infrastructure

Houston, with a population of 2,325,502 as of 2018, is the fourth largest city in the United States. It is also one of the country's economic hubs, with major centers for oil, chemical, and aerospace production. According to the Rice University Kinder Institute for Urban Research, Houston is one of the most ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse cities in the country. Because of its strong labor market, relatively low cost of living, and proximity to Latin America, Houston has become a hub for refugee resettlement for Latin and other migrant populations. Houston's size, in combination with its economic infrastructure and substantial diversity, makes it a target for terrorism as well as for extremist recruitment

and propaganda. This characteristic is evidenced by the case of Houston-born Asher Khan, who was convicted of providing material support to the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) after he and a friend devised plans to travel to Turkey and then Syria to fight on behalf of the terrorist group. The friend went on to Syria, where he later died, but Khan returned from Turkey after his family feigned his mother's severe illness in an attempt to save their son. Khan's recruitment and radicalization generated national headlines, but his is only one of many cases and these processes are not exclusive to any one type of extremist ideology. The Anti-Defamation League has documented that Houston is a hotbed of anti-Semitic and white

supremacist extremist activities as well, especially in the rural regions surrounding Houston. White supremacist activities include the distribution of hate-filled propaganda; harassment; vandalism; and various types of violent attacks, such as shooting rampages. In response to the threat of youth radicalization, Crisis Intervention of Houston has emphasized a behavioral health approach to intervene with adolescents who may be at risk for harming themselves or others as well as to support those who have concerns about friends or family members who may be susceptible to the recruitment efforts of extremist groups.

Crisis Intervention of Houston, TX: Reaching out to the Most Vulnerable

Crisis Intervention of Houston, founded in 1971, is a crisis hotline call center that serves Houston and the immediate surrounding counties. The nonprofit organization provides around-the-clock, free, anonymous crisis intervention and suicide prevention counseling and exists with one concise mission: To help people in crisis. The center represents a public health approach to prevention and intervention of harm to self and others. In 2017, Crisis Intervention was awarded a 2-year DHS CVE grant to develop a new crisis intervention hotline aimed at Muslim youth (known as the ACT: NOW Hotline), develop a new CVE training module for call counselors, and conduct outreach into the Muslim community to raise awareness about the new hotline. The purpose of the ACT: NOW Hotline is to provide culturally competent crisis prevention and intervention to Muslim youth who have concerns related to violent extremism. These concerns may come in a number of forms and include one or more of the following:

1. personal susceptibility to involvement, at some level, in violent extremism;
2. concerns regarding a relative's or friend's susceptibility to involvement in violent extremism; or
3. concerns related to past or future victimization stemming from violent extremism.

The CVE training module for call counselors, which has been incorporated into the standard call counselor training, provides additional information about the process of recruitment and radicalization and the vulnerabilities (i.e., risk factors) for youth radicalization. In many ways, the CVE training components mirror the standard crisis intervention training that call counselors undergo, but with violent extremism framed as a crisis situation, instead of

suicide or another form of self-harm. The outreach to the Muslim community was conducted by a local, nonprofit organization, the Alliance for Compassion and Tolerance (ACT), because of its strong ties to the Muslim and refugee communities within the region.

Community Collaborative to Counter Violent Extremism Project Focus Areas

Expand existing crisis hotline services to include specific training for crisis counselors regarding violent extremism

Expand hotline services to include a Muslim youth-oriented hotline (ACT: NOW Hotline) to combat "ISIS recruitment"

Develop a parent and youth training curriculum regarding extremism online and a series of "anti-bullying" and "online safety" training workshops

The Community Collaborative to Counter Violent Extremism in Houston, TX

In 2014 Mustafa Tameez, the Managing Director for Outreach Strategists, and Wardah Khalid, also of Outreach Strategists, were asked by the Harris County Sheriff's Office to facilitate focus groups of concerned citizens, synthesize the findings, and make recommendations for local efforts to build community resilience to violent extremism. From these recommendations, Mustafa approached Naomi Madrid, the Executive Director of Crisis Intervention of Houston, in 2016 about a DHS funding opportunity. Mustafa suggested that Crisis Intervention partner with Outreach Strategists and the ACT to submit a DHS proposal to incorporate a crisis intervention approach to counter violent extremism. Each of these partners brought a unique skill set that would work in tandem to form a whole-of-community approach. Crisis Intervention had extensive experience operating a crisis intervention hotline (primarily focused on suicide prevention), but none of its personnel had experience in CVE.

Outreach Strategists had extensive experience working in the CVE space, including Mustafa's consultant work for the DHS in the mid-2000s, but did not have expertise in crisis intervention or mental health intervention. On the basis of its local reputation, ACT was selected to serve as a liaison between Crisis Intervention's efforts and the Muslim community in the greater Houston area and, through the support of the grant award, Baber Mohammed was hired to serve as the ACT Executive Director.

Resistance to the CVE Grant Award

Like many communities across the United States, some communities of Houston were concerned about receiving a grant award from DHS as part of the CVE program. The concerns stem from the perception that CVE is essentially a Muslim-focused program that involves surveillance and leads to further stigmatization of the Muslim community by branding individuals (youth in particular) as "at risk" for terrorism.

To address some of these concerns, ACT, one of the key partners, held public and private meetings that provided opportunities for community members to express these concerns and for representatives of the Community Collaborative to emphasize their programmatic focus on addressing vulnerabilities by providing outreach services and using training workshops to raise awareness about violent extremism.

The concerns that emerged in Houston appeared less extensive than those in several of the other evaluation sites. However, these concerns highlight an important limitation of programs funded by the DHS CVE program and the scope of the ACT: NOW Hotline: the focus remains on Islamist extremism. This parochial approach to CVE leaves serious gaps in prevention, intervention, research, and evaluation of other forms of violent extremism. Crisis Intervention of Houston even fielded calls regarding concerns about violent far-right extremism—a concern that is not unfounded given the presence of white supremacist activity in the greater Houston region. The best practice would be for each site to conduct a needs assessment of its jurisdiction to understand the specific risks of violent extremism and develop a data-driven program that targets the greatest need or a comprehensive approach that can meaningfully address various forms of violent extremism.

Key Partners Connecting With the Community

Crisis Intervention of Houston's two key partners are described below. Beyond these two organizations, Crisis Intervention also partnered with Thrive Productions for assistance with marketing materials related to the new crisis hotline.

Outreach Strategists – A global communications and public affairs firm. Its diverse team of experts has extensive backgrounds in government, politics, and media. They specialize in public relations, business development, campaigns, and communications. Outreach Strategists advises clients on the most effective ways to navigate in the public and political arenas.

Alliance for Compassion and Tolerance (ACT) – A forum organized to focus on our shared humanity; foster harmony, trust, and understanding among people of all faith traditions; and undertake initiatives that promote compassion, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence. ACT condemns violence against individuals or groups based on race, religion, or ethnicity.

Other Partners: The Houston Independent School District and Harris County Sheriff's Office

During the award period, the Community Collaborative informally partnered with the Houston Independent School District, gaining access to several school sites. The school access was used to develop dialogues with students about the issues of violent extremism and bullying behavior. The Community Collaborative also established

a relationship with the Harris County Sheriff's Office to provide constables with crisis intervention training (primarily in suicide prevention). As part of the grant award, the Community Collaborative developed a section of the training related specifically to CVE, and Naomi Madrid began offering the constables the new curriculum in January 2019.

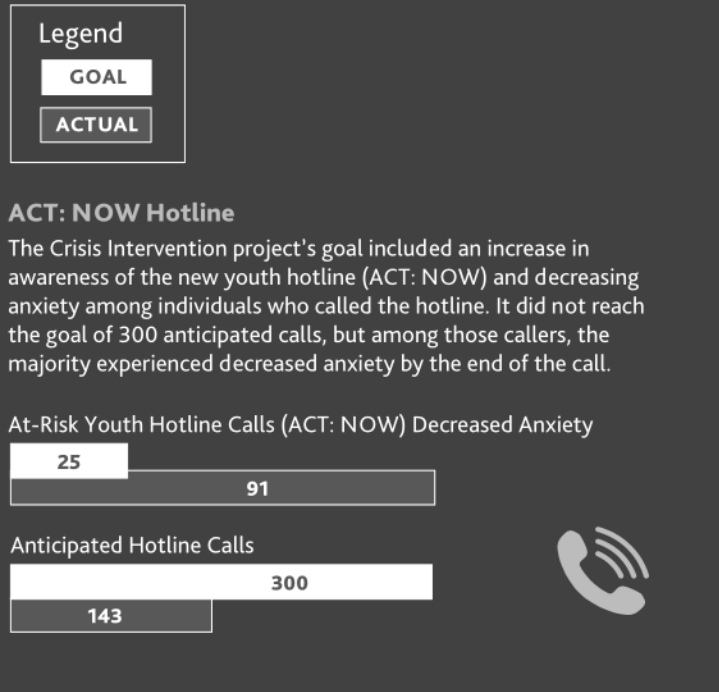
Timeline



Performance and Outcome Indicators

As part of the evaluation, performance and outcome indicators were reviewed using quarterly Project Implementation & Evaluation Plan (PIEP) data.

Accomplishments Visualized Through PIEP Output Data



Outcome 1: Individuals who may be on a path of radicalization to violence or violent extremism receive support through the ACT: NOW Hotline that redirects them away from the use of violence to harm themselves or others.

Outcome indicators

Five additional hotline call counselors have acquired increased understanding of signs and signals of potential extremist recruitment concerns of callers. To date, 52 call counselors have been trained.

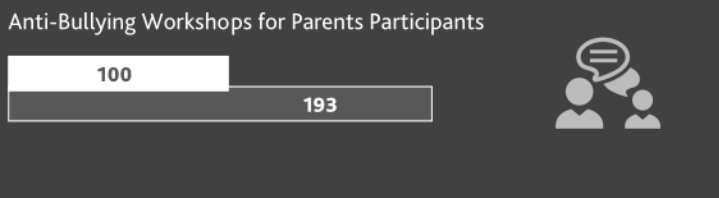
Results

No additional information was provided regarding the number of people on the path to violent extremism who were redirected.¹

¹This was all the information provided on this outcome.

Engagement Activities Outputs

The Executive Director of ACT conducted outreach activities to the Muslim community in Houston; Baber facilitated dialogue about CVE, online safety, and youth bullying (a potential risk factor for crisis or recruitment) with parents and community leaders.



Outcome 2: Youth have increased sense of belonging and self-worth.

Outcome indicators

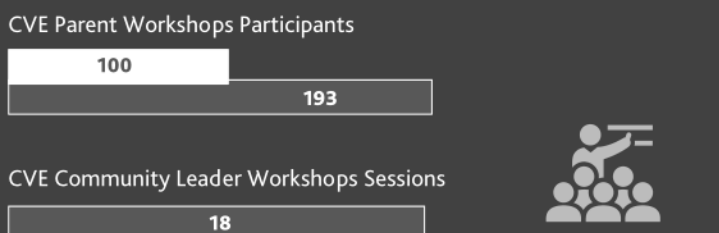
Of the 85 youth trained, 100% determined they were able to counter bullying and see the signs of bullying against others.

Results

No information was provided regarding any increase related to identifying signs of bullying.²

²This was all the information provided on this outcome.

Engagement Activities Outputs



Outcome 3: Bystanders and gatekeepers have increased likelihood of recognizing warning signs and referring young people who may be radicalizing to community-based support options.

Outcome indicators

To date, 193 parents participated in safety workshops and seminars and 18 community leader workshops were completed.

Results From Partner Surveys About the Collaboration Project

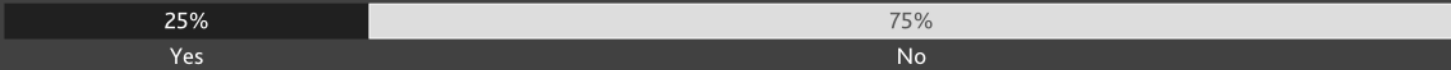
To help supplement the monthly calls and site visits, the evaluation team also conducted a comprehensive survey.³ Partner surveys were sent to contacts identified by the prime grantee. The purpose was to obtain feedback on partner interactions with the prime and each other in regard to the grant. Four people from Houston completed the partner survey. For identification purposes, the Community Collaborative was referred to as the Crisis Intervention Program. In the tables below, we provide a selection of the survey items. The first item addresses perception of community experiences with violent extremism. The second item gauges whether partners felt valued and utilized by Crisis Intervention of Houston. The third and fourth items address the local and national political climate and how it may affect CVE-related work. It is also worth noting that Crisis Intervention identified few key partners, and it is difficult to make determinations about partner-prime working relationships with such a small sample size.

³ These survey results are a summation of received partner responses; most grantees had a small number of partners. These responses are representative of partner perspectives; they are not intended to be generalized to the broader population.

Perception of Community Experiences With Violent Extremism

In terms of history of violent extremism incidents, one of the respondents referenced the arson of several local mosques and threats of violence as incidents of violent extremism in the Houston area. Alternatively, the other three respondents said that no incidents of violent extremism had occurred in the area. The inconsistency may reflect the larger confusion about how to define "violent extremism." While the survey provided a specific definition, the determination of when an incident is motivated by religious or political ideology is fraught with subjective perceptual issues, and an overall uncertainty about interpreting a perpetrator's motivation is difficult to overcome.

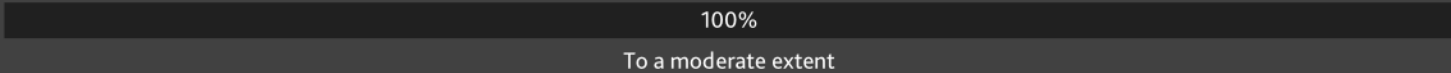
In the last ten years, has your community experienced an incident of violent extremism?



Whether Partners Felt Valued and Utilized by Crisis Intervention of Houston

The responses to the survey item addressing whether partners' contributions were valued and utilized were unanimous. Each partner expressed feeling moderately valued and utilized. During the site visits, respondents expressed feeling disconnected from and underutilized by the project, suggesting that, in general, the grant program was not especially cohesive and additional team building at the outset of the project would have been beneficial.

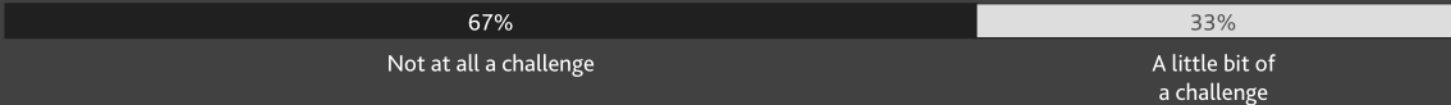
Throughout the grant period, how much do you feel that your contributions to the Crisis Intervention Program were valued and utilized?



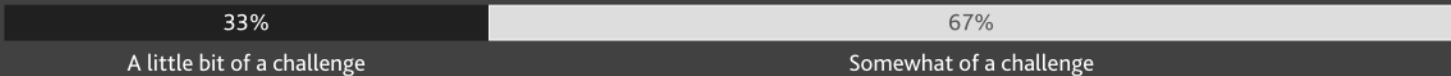
Local and National Political Climate and How It May Affect CVE-related Work

Last, two survey items were selected that measured perceived challenges related to local and national political climate. The results were similar in terms of both the local and national items and, overall, suggest that respondents perceived relatively few local or national challenges. In light of other responses, these responses may reflect the sense that most of the challenges to this particular grant project were internal.

Please indicate how much of a challenge the *local political climate* has been to the successful implementation of the Crisis Intervention Program in your jurisdiction? (Not at all a challenge, A little bit of a challenge, Somewhat of a challenge, A substantial challenge)*



Please indicate how much of a challenge the *national political climate* has been to the successful implementation of the Crisis Intervention Program in your jurisdiction? (Not at all a challenge, A little bit of a challenge, Somewhat of a challenge, A substantial challenge)*



*These totals omit the 25% of respondents who chose "Not applicable."

Heartland Democracy Center



This section focuses on the work that Heartland Democracy Center completed under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grant award for its project, also called Heartland Democracy Center. To understand the Heartland organization and project, one must first look more broadly at the national climate and the local community.

Minneapolis: A Somali Refuge

Minneapolis and neighboring St. Paul, Minnesota, are known as the Twin Cities. More than 3 million people reside in the metropolitan area. Consistent with trends nationwide, the demographic composition of Minneapolis—the third largest economic center in the Midwest, behind Chicago and Detroit—is increasingly diverse. Minneapolis is home to the largest Somali population in the world outside of Mogadishu, Somalia. According to recent U.S. Census Bureau estimates, nearly 74,000 Minnesotans speak Somali, making Somalis the second largest minority after Hispanics.

The Heartland Democracy Center: Building Engagement and Resilience

Heartland, founded by Tom Vellanga in 2005, is the prime grant recipient. Mary McKinley was appointed Executive Director in 2014. Mary previously worked in philanthropy and nonprofit management and uses this experience to guide Heartland's focus on building engagement and resilience in the Minneapolis community. Mary is the sole fulltime employee; to carry out its work, Heartland relies on numerous subcontractors and community actors, including educators, interpreters, and leaders of existing cultural groups. A volunteer board of directors is also integral to Heartland's operation.

"Countering Violent Extremism" has proven to be a controversial term in Minneapolis, stemming in part from two separate terrorism-related federal criminal cases and broader concerns related to the War on Terror.

Heartland Democracy Center: Project Development

In 2016, Heartland submitted a proposal requesting grant funding from DHS to prevent violent extremism among youth in Minnesota. Mary had recently worked with Abdullahi Yusuf, a young Somali immigrant who was arrested while attempting to join the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Mary's innovative work with Abdullahi included recognizing that he was in crisis, providing him with education, and promoting his resilience and eventual engagement in the community; she also engaged with his parents and others in the local Somali population. Having successfully helped to deradicalize Abdullahi through these efforts, Mary centered her CVE proposal along the same concepts of preemptive engagement and resilience-building in her community, especially among recent refugees and immigrant youth.

Resistance to the CVE Grant Award

Heartland has struggled before and throughout its period of performance with public concerns related to the CVE language and its association with law enforcement surveillance and other suppression efforts. To provide some important local background information, it is necessary to briefly describe the two major terrorism-related trials that stemmed from two multiyear criminal investigations in the Minneapolis area. They took place during the decade preceding Heartland's receipt of the DHS CVE grant.

In both cases, the arrests primarily involved terrorist organization recruitment within the local Somali community. The first concerned a group of 20 young Somali men who were recruited by al-Shabab, an affiliate of al-Qaeda, from 2007 through 2009. Over the course of a 4-year investigation, 18 men were charged in federal court for terrorism-related crimes. Although 10 of those 18 are thought to have died in Somalia while fighting for al-Shabab, the remaining 8 were convicted.

Heartland Focus Areas

Heartland curriculum – Curriculum presented and formalized in local middle schools, with the aim of increasing resilience, promoting a cohesive community, and ultimately preventing disenfranchisement among youth.

Facilitated community groups – Several parental groups at local middle schools; several cultural groups (including Latin, Somali, and Bhutanese communities); a group focused on the role of white women aimed at the reduction of white extremist violence; and a summer camp for middle-school children, among others.

Anti-violence presentations – Former extremists and extremism experts invited for panel discussions at local universities.

Shared experiences (Kid Connect) – Focus groups with children to discuss and compile feelings and experiences, and art created and presented to the community based on these compilations.

In 2016, a similar trial involved multiple young Somali men charged with attempting to join the terrorist group ISIL. Nine were convicted in November 2016. The perceived leader of the group received a 35-year sentence in federal prison, and two others received 30-year sentences. Four others received either 10 or 15 years; one served only 30 months. The final individual, Abdullahi—a man who was later considered deradicalized—served 2 years in jail awaiting his trial. During this time, he worked with a team comprising several Heartland partners, who developed and implemented a mentoring and civic education-related program with the goal of promoting disengagement and

deradicalization. At the time of Abdullahi's trial, Judge Michael Davis, who authorized the deradicalization effort, agreed that Abdullahi had made significant changes and ultimately sentenced him to time served and 20 years of probation.

Both investigations and prosecutions helped further a sense among some segments of Somali and other residents in Minneapolis that counterterrorism efforts unfairly target Muslim communities and people of color while neglecting other types of violent extremist threats. This point is relevant for understanding some of the anti-CVE sentiment in Minneapolis and nationwide.

The CVE grant solicitation was released soon after the second federal trial, and multiple local communities—especially the Somali community—were wary of federal funding associated with DHS. In fact, even Mary was initially reluctant to apply for CVE funding. She and other Heartland

associates had worked to establish trust with the Somali community, and they did not want to jeopardize those relationships. After outreach from a DHS representative encouraging Heartland to submit a proposal, Mary reconsidered and eventually applied for the grant funds.

"Heartland Democracy has been engaged in very meaningful and important work. I cannot praise enough the education that the grant has offered both K–12 students and community members. This is challenging work with a goal that cannot be easily measured. [Heartland] has been successful in varying their efforts so that many different communities benefit."

Activities Supported by Heartland



Cultural Groups



Women's Groups



Literacy Classes



Summer Camp



Theater Classes and Performances



Presentations by Former Extremists

Areas Where Heartland Acted



Middle School



Neighborhoods and Community Centers



Local Universities

Key Partners Connecting With the Community

Under the CVE grant, Heartland continued its work with multiple nonprofit partners. Roles of these partners included assisting Mary in building and managing the grant itself; creating and maintaining groups promoting resilience and education in children; and expanding outreach to different adult communities in the area, with a focus on refugees and immigrants.

Minneapolis Public Schools – Ahmed Amin, the assistant principal at Sanford Middle School, is also the creator and leader of Heartland's resilience-building school curriculum. Ahmed implemented the curriculum at Sanford Middle School for the past 2 years and will be presenting segments at several upcoming educational conferences.

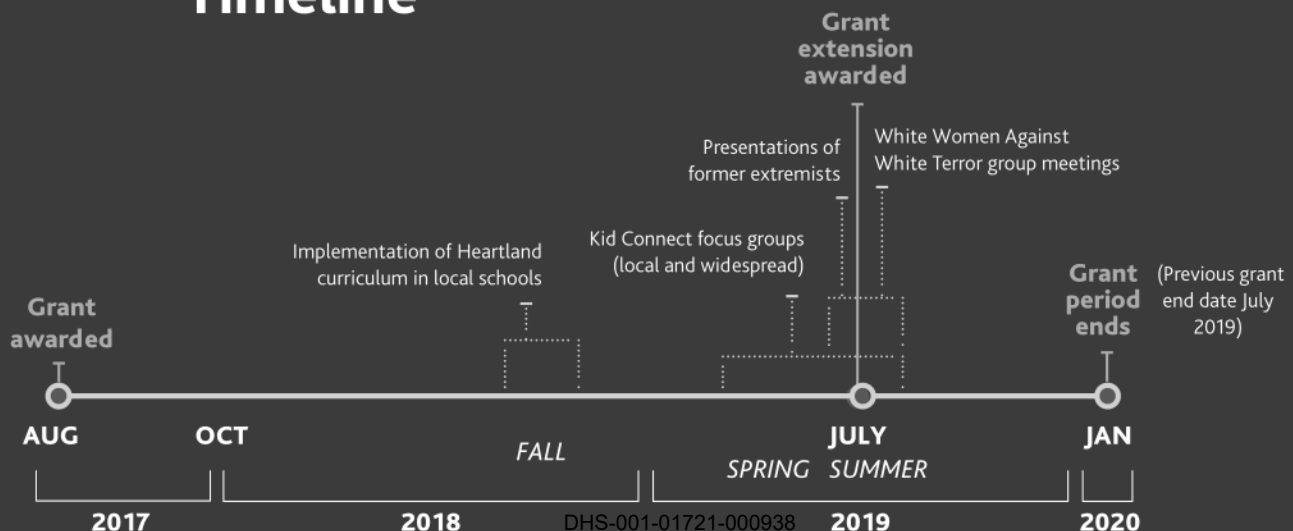
Mangala Sharma – Mangala works with Heartland as the co-facilitator of several community groups funded through the grant. She leads a support group for parents at the Justice Page Middle School, a Somali women's group, and a Bhutanese women's group. Mangala has extensive experience working with refugee and immigrant women.

Hennepin County – Vinodh (Vinnie) Kutty works for Hennepin County as a philanthropic liaison. His work with Heartland has involved helping develop grant proposals, direct and coordinate county resources toward Heartland, and engage in other community efforts to assist local immigrant/refugee populations in their career and life trajectories.

Kid Connect – Kathy Anlauf, Chris Fisher, and Rick Thompson work together as Kid Connect. They create and share theater productions and other forms of art, based on the children's own experiences, with Minnesota children. By presenting the stories of students, the program intends to inspire empathy and resilience in the audiences for which they perform as well as provide the children creating the art with a potentially transformative form of self-expression.

Betsy Sitkoff – Betsy is an independent consultant who specializes in addressing restorative justice and the prevention of violence within the Minneapolis community. Betsy is the outreach lead for Heartland and operates several community groups. She co-facilitates a Bhutanese women's group, along with Mangala Sharma; she also leads several groups for adult refugee/immigrant women and is involved in the Heartland-funded group White Women Against White Terror.

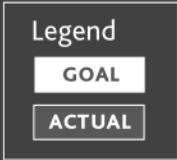
Timeline



Performance and Outcome Indicators

Throughout Heartland's period of performance, several challenges emerged related to submitting data through DHS's Project Implementation & Evaluation Plan (PIEP) system. According to Mary, while the anonymity of the system provides a useful protection for confidential information, these safeguards also make it difficult to determine whether data have been previously submitted. Mary and Ahmed, who collaborated on the Heartland curriculum, have also faced difficulties creating a generalizable curriculum that can be used more broadly.

Although most of the program implemented in the Minneapolis schools focuses on empowering middle school students by building their resilience, each program is tailored to the specific location, which the team fears make it difficult to implement elsewhere. Ahmed spends much of his free time at the middle school to implement and manage the program. A review of the PIEP data yielded quantitative outcome data regarding the amount of work that was completed on the grant. These tables relate these data to outcomes developed by the site.



Building Student Relationships

Outcome indicators for Heartland's Outcome 1 support building relationships with adults and students. Throughout the four sites that Heartland established, associates trained multiple cohorts of mentors, educators, and other adults interested in helping the youth participants. No data were available to show connectedness or self-organization of programs.

Adults Trained



Youth Participants



Outcome 1: Train and observe coaches; build mentor capacity for group and individual programs; develop relationship with diverse groups of students; educate students at pilot programs across service area.

Outcome indicators

- Participants moving in a positive direction toward more connection with their self-identified focus or interest
- Educator/mentor/coaches engaging in program, developing curriculum, establishing healthy new connections with administrators, parents, principals, building systems, working to find prevention strategies through humanities-based civic engagement curriculum
- Participation by students, staff, parents—positive movement toward self-organization of programs.

Midterm Outcome 1.1: "Students and teachers see new connections, and possibilities—with colleagues, with each other, with curriculum rubric points and with school settings."

Midterm Outcome 1.2: "Schools and partner organizations engage in new and meaningful connections with institution-building, community connections, and with Heartland, around a series of topics not addressed in traditional settings."

Results

- Heartland identified four sites (two schools and two community organizations) in which to run its curriculum, 14 mentors and educators, and seven educators for summer programs.
- Programs were launched at three of the four sites.
- Sites conducted pre- and postprogram surveys of participants and group leaders and requested observations by outside evaluators.
- Heartland edited three modules of its curriculum.

Outcome 2: Practitioners create agenda and engage in new conversation around emerging issues and vulnerabilities in community and practice. Heartland is seen as key partner with established organizations (mental health and primary care clinics, schools, county agencies, community organizations) to improve networks, communications, and training of practitioners and service providers. Parents work to empower each other and selves around community and personal issues—including youth disparities and vulnerabilities, educational attainment and engagement, and community empowerment.

Outcome indicators

- Parents committed to participation in regular, on-going cohort. Parents empowered to engage in iterative and organic process for agenda and goal setting for group.
- Partner organizations identify need and urgency around convening. MOU indicates shared contribution and commitment.
- Providers move toward self-organizing in clinical settings toward trainings, outreach, and capacity building initiatives around cultural competencies and systems-wide methods for identifying emerging trends, challenges, and issues.
- Outreach by partners and providers indicates additional potential health care provider participants (clinics and individual providers, as well as health care industry leadership).
- Clinics participate in design and implementation of pilot program to improve services and response to culturally diverse patient community.
- Parents and Youth indicate improved communication within family around issues of education, school life, communication between school and family, and addressing issues both within school and within wider community

Midterm Outcome 2.1: "Practitioners identify group participants to engage in meaningful dialogue over period of 12 months; Parents Connect groups move from expectation of government-led lecture structure toward self organizing and agenda-creating empowerment group with detailed year-long agenda of needs, information-seeking, supports."

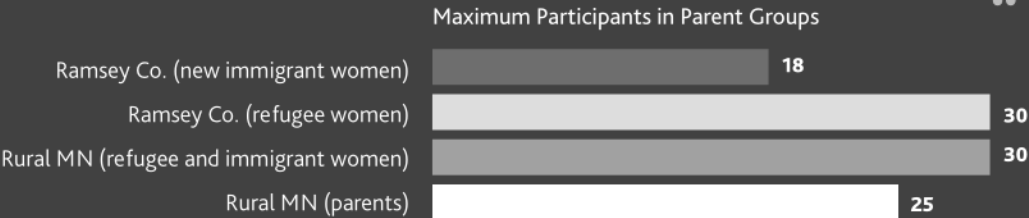
Midterm Outcome 2.2: "Practitioner network develops systems for communication around emerging threats and vulnerabilities; Parent/Kid Connect groups find meaningful communication among selves, among generations, with educators and institutions, and ways to engage more concretely in community."

Results

- Heartland identified community project leads, youth clinics, and other partner organizations.
- Heartland scheduled internal group practitioner meetings and had one-on-one meetings between practitioners and Heartland leaders to identify needs of group participants.
- Heartland began a youth engagement project, entailing the development of an artistic curriculum and presentations.
- Program dates for Site 1 students established (6-week pilot); cohort set (9–12 middle school students).
- Initial parent groups convened. Participant demographics recorded. Program dates for parents established (10 meetings in 12 months):
 - Two meetings of refugee women in Ramsey County: urban setting, 15–30 women each time, similar group, consistent participation
 - Two meetings of new immigrant women in Ramsey County: urban setting, 12–18 women each time, similar group, consistent participation
 - Two meetings of parents (refugee and new immigrant women in rural Minnesota): 15–30 women each time, similar participation
 - Three meetings of parents in rural Minnesota (20–25 participants, same participants each time)
 - Holiday celebration for Southeast Asian refugee women supported by Heartland: approximately 350 women participated in an afternoon cultural event

Parent Groups

As part of its objective for Outcome 2, Heartland created parent groups to help connect and integrate parents with educators and clinics. No data were available to show parent or partner engagement, commitment, or self-organization, though it was mentioned that mostly the same people attended the meetings for their respective groups and locations.



Outcome 3: Develop communications, new networks, and training for interventions and crisis management around youth and families in [the] community.

Outcome indicators

- Large event to be held in 2019, with general audience of community leaders, elected officials, experts and professionals with interest in violence prevention and youth and family wellness. Noticeable change in local conversation around issues of violence, youth, and emerging challenges.
- Local network of interested and committed individuals and organizations will grow to sustain work after grant period – to include future donors and funders as well.

Midterm Outcome 3.1: "Convene new network of local professionals working to increase violence prevention programming for youth and families, with a focus on one-to-one prevention services and crisis management."

Midterm Outcome 3.2: "Lead and collaborate to provide outside supports and information specific to community needs and prevalence indicated by educators, families, law enforcement, community leaders and health providers."

Midterm Outcome 3.3: "Establish national and international resources for Heartland efforts, including individuals and organizations working on violence prevention, community outreach and empowerment, youth education strategies, women's leadership, racial equity."

Results

- An initial small group of community leaders and interested partners was identified.
- Outside resources and experts were contacted to plan training sessions and information-sharing in 2018.
- Existing partnerships continued, and meetings were held to secure commitments for 2018.
- New partnerships were explored.
- Community leaders engaged in crisis management discussion.
- Heartland investigated and reached out to potential partners worldwide.
 - Site leaders traveled to New York to meet with individuals behind recently released Preventing Violent Extremism reports.

The data represented above were extracted from the PIEP system, where Heartland's leaders entered various metrics. Only two quarterly reports were obtained for review. The limited amount and type of data received makes it difficult to report on the extent to which Heartland reached its stated goals. Heartland staff and their partners acknowledge the limited quantitative data collected as part of the grant award. Heartland identified the number of programs established, the number of meetings held,

Outcome 4: Engage a diverse set of youth and professional voices around issues of violence prevention, hate, youth engagement and empowerment, [and] local and national networks.

Outcome indicators

- Regular and invested participation by groups of vulnerable refugee and immigrant women.
- Sustained movement of participants (parents) from expectation of direct service need met to self advocacy and self exploration of community and self, leading to improved problem identification and solving.
- Regular, consistent, and invested participation by students at school sites.
- Consistent and energetic participation and leadership by teachers and outside educators who provide creative and innovative direction on programs and curriculum; deliberate and productive collaboration on curriculum and vision.
- Increased partnership with Minneapolis and other public and private schools, continuation of training programs for school staff, especially culturally specific family liaisons, surveys of participants.

Midterm Outcome 4.1: "Convene youth, educators, parents, local leadership around new events and networks."

Midterm Outcome 4.2: "Establish and continue Heartland programs and curriculum among national and international network of programming to combat hate, extremism, youth violence, marginalization, discrimination and lack of civic engagement."

Results

- Heartland convened three programs for mothers, drawing 60 participants.
- Bjørn Ihler, a Norwegian peace activist who survived a mass shooting in 2011, visited for a week.
- Heartland hosted booths at two cultural festivals (FroFest and Somali Festival).
- A 2-day facilitator training attracted 15 participants.
- Heartland partnered with arts organizations like Third Place Gallery and StoryCorps for interaction with students and parent groups.

and overall progress related to each effort (e.g., success under Outcome 2 in identifying a training schedule and agendas for upcoming parent group meetings). Heartland was unable to quantify the numbers of children who spent time in a Heartland-related program or to provide metrics related to the outcomes of the Justice Page Middle School artistic expression program. The quarterly progress reports, however, clearly document a wide variety of activities that were undertaken and completed during the award period.

Results From Partner Surveys About the Heartland Project

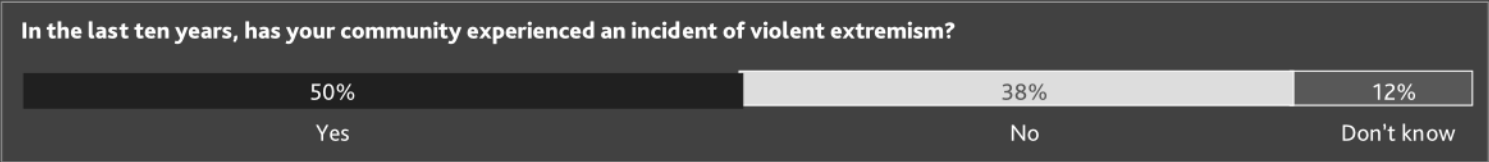
To help supplement the monthly calls and site visits, the evaluation team also conducted a comprehensive survey.¹ Partner surveys were sent to contacts identified by the prime grantee. The purpose was to obtain feedback on partner interactions with the prime and each other regarding the grant. Eight people completed the partner survey.

These tables highlight selected survey items. The first item addresses perceptions of community experiences with violent extremism. The second item gauges whether partners felt valued and utilized by Heartland. The third and fourth items address the local and national political climate and how it may affect CVE-related work.

¹ These survey results are a summation of received partner responses; most grantees had a small number of partners. These responses are representative of partner perspectives; they are not intended to be generalized to the broader population.

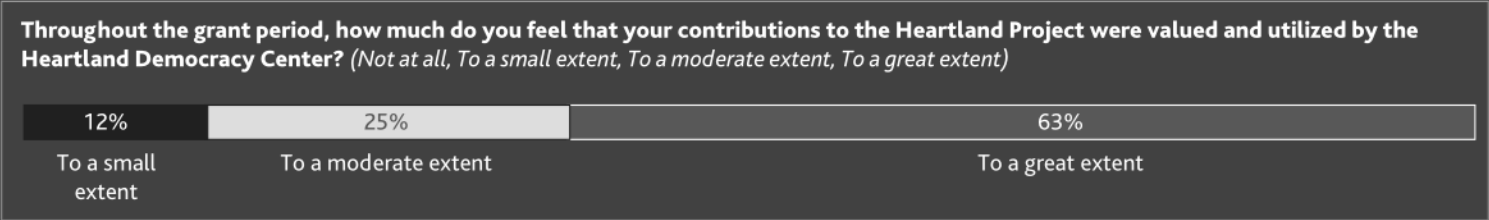
Perception of Community Experiences with Violent Extremism

When asked whether the community had experienced a recent incident of violent extremism, responses varied. One individual selected "Don't know." Three other individuals reported there had been no violent extremism in the last decade, whereas four claimed there had been. One of the individuals who responded "Yes" mentioned arrests following an attempt to join ISIS. The two other respondents who selected "Yes" also elaborated on their replies. Both noted a "mosque bombing" and one respondent also referenced "graffiti on Jewish synagogues."



Whether Partners Felt Valued and Utilized

The responses to the survey item about whether partners' contributions were valued and utilized reflected a generally high level of satisfaction. Within the grant program team, most felt that their contributions were valued and used to either a moderate or great extent.



Local and National Political Climate and How It May Affect Related Work

Last, two survey items were selected that measured perceived challenges related to local and national political climate. Overall, respondents perceived more political challenges at the national level than at the local level. This result may reflect growing polarization at the national level. Six of seven respondents thought the national political climate was at least "somewhat of a challenge"; of these, two-thirds thought it was a "substantial challenge." In terms of local political climate, four of seven thought it was at least "somewhat of a challenge," but only one respondent thought it a "substantial challenge."



Nashville International Center for Empowerment (NICE)



This section focuses on the work of the Nashville International Center for Empowerment (NICE) completed under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) grant award for its project Proactive Engagement to Achieve Community Empowerment (PEACE). To understand the NICE organization and the PEACE project, one must first look more broadly at the national climate and the local community.

Nashville: A Growing and Diverse City

The city of Nashville has experienced rapid growth with a population that reached 691,243 in 2017. It has become one of the most diverse cities in the country. In fact, Nashville is home to the largest Kurdish immigrant population in the United States, a growing Latin population, and increasing numbers of immigrants from various African and Middle Eastern countries. The rapid economic and demographic changes offer substantial opportunities for Nashville in terms of cultural enrichment and economic diversification but can also result in divisiveness and social conflict. New immigrants face substantial obstacles in terms of language barriers, complications with legal status, and hostility

directed from individuals who perceive them as “outsiders.” In this type of environment, there is a substantial need for both governmental and nongovernmental entities to develop programming that fosters integration and helps develop community resilience.

“New American” is a term used by NICE and other local agencies to describe immigrants who currently live in America but were born in another country.

The Nashville International Center for Empowerment: Strengthening Communities

NICE, which was founded in 2007, works toward building community resilience and integrating New Americans. NICE is a nonprofit organization that focuses on empowering refugees and immigrants and strengthening communities. Programs are organized into six broad areas: Adult Education, Resettlement, Employment, Health, Immigration, and Community Empowerment. The 2-year DHS CVE grant awarded in 2017 funded the development of the Community Empowerment Program. A few of the services provided by NICE are English language learner classes at six different levels, citizenship classes, translation services, and naturalization services.

"Violence ensues from being oppressed and beat down. When you provide [New Americans] resources and treat them like human beings, they feel less oppression."

– A representative from an organization that works with NICE.

The Proactive Engagement to Achieve Community Empowerment Project

The initial DHS CVE grant proposal for the PEACE project was submitted by NICE's Executive Director with the intention of organizing a community lecture series related to violent extremism. As part of the grant proposal, NICE partnered with Peace Ambassadors USA (PA), another Nashville-based nonprofit founded in 2012 as an initiative for Islamic American outreach and to fight bigotry, bias, and racism through education and interfaith dialogue. Shortly after the award start date, on August 28, 2017, Logan Ebel was hired as the Community Empowerment Program Manager to coordinate the DHS grant. As part of Logan's review of the grant proposal, he determined that the focus for the project needed adjustment. Under Logan's direction, NICE changed the scope of the award to a much broader, more interactive set of community-based activities such as summer camps, a youth curriculum, and story exchanges. They used what they referred to as "leadership dialogues" to assess the needs of New Americans and respond to them accordingly.

With the support of the grant award, NICE and PA led a multifaceted community outreach approach. The PEACE project focused on empowering youth and adults through

PEACE Project Focus Areas

YEA! Curriculum (NICE) – Curriculum previously developed but refined under the PEACE grant to address social and emotional vulnerabilities among New American youth.

Cultural Exchange (Narrative 4) – A method of increasing empathy by sharing stories.

Community Outreach (NICE, Peace Ambassadors) – Addressing needs in the New American community.

a range of community engagement activities meant to enhance unity and solidarity. The PEACE project relied on what it describes as a "relationship rich model" designed to address communities experiencing trauma as well as language and cultural barriers. More specifically, the PEACE project focused on community leadership and dialogue, resource development, and youth engagement.

Resistance to the CVE Grant Award

Like many communities across the United States, segments of Nashville were concerned about receiving a grant award from the DHS as part of the CVE program. The concerns stemmed from the perception that CVE is essentially a Muslim-focused program that involves surveillance and leads to further stigmatization of the Muslim community by branding individuals (youth in particular) as "at risk" for terrorism.

To address some of these concerns, NICE held public and private meetings that provided opportunities for community members to express these concerns and for NICE to emphasize its programmatic focus on building community resilience by addressing various social and emotional needs among New Americans. Despite its efforts, NICE did encounter groups that would not work with it on this grant for political reasons.

Program Activities Completed During the PEACE Project

To address these issues, the PEACE project initiated collaborative relationships with a variety of local community organizations including the Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS) and the Boys & Girls Club. At the core of this effort is a youth-based curriculum developed by NICE, Youth Empowerment to Achieve! (YEA!). The curriculum includes a wide variety of emphases such as healthy lifestyles, communication skills, and emotional maturity. The purpose of this program is to promote English language learning and other academic skills. The program

seeks to provide a safe space for immigrant and refugee youth to develop and refine positive and pro-social skills consistent with a range of healthy outcomes. The PEACE project emphasizes that its approach is not focused on identifying at-risk youth susceptible to radicalization and violent extremism. Instead, the program is meant to be a more general approach to proactively reducing trauma and building resilience among New Americans.

The section below highlights the extensive types of activities the PEACE project initiated as part of the grant award.

Activities Supported by the PEACE Project

More details on these activities can be found in the Performance and Outcome Indicators section.



Leadership Dialogues



Sewing Classes



Driving Classes



Mentoring



NICE Camp



Peace Ambassadors Camp



YEA! Curriculum Revision and Implementation

Middle School
High School
Boys & Girls Club
Summer Camp

N4

Narrative 4 Sessions



OneVoice Nashville



New American Resource Guide Translation

Key Partners Connecting With the Community

Peace Ambassadors, USA – Community-based Islamic outreach center that provides a variety of family, educational, and other services to help integrate New Americans into the larger society. Peace Ambassadors, USA collaborated with NICE on the original proposal and received 40% of grant funds.

Narrative 4 – An organization that uses story exchanges to increase empathy and improve communities. It was brought into the PEACE project after the grant was awarded and entered into a contract with NICE for its services.

The PEACE project reflected a collaborative effort between NICE and PA, with grant funds relatively evenly allocated between the two organizations (60% NICE/40% PA). In addition, the PEACE project involved a key partnership with Narrative 4, a private, nonprofit organization with a mission to build empathy, disrupt stereotypes, and reduce various types of sociocultural barriers. The PEACE project incorporated Narrative 4 by arranging a memorandum of understanding and executing a subcontract that involved Narrative 4's organization of "story exchanges." This is a term Narrative 4 uses to refer to sessions in which groups of individuals learn to listen to another person's life story one on one and then recount their partner's story orally to the larger group.

Other Partners Opening Doors to the YEA! Curriculum

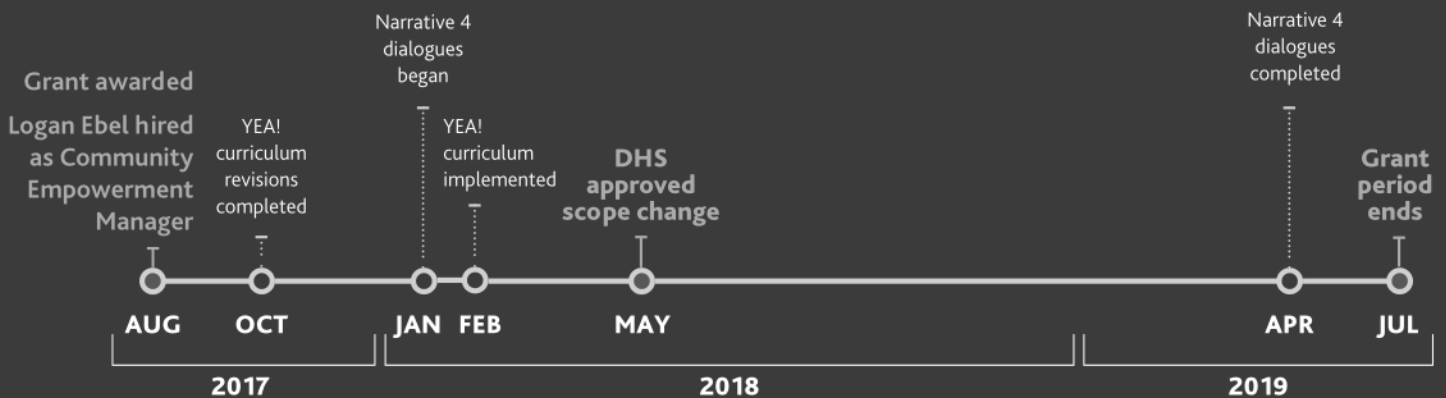
The PEACE project also included partnerships with the Boys & Girls Club and the MNPS. Both of these organizations

provided spaces and opportunities for NICE to implement the YEA! curriculum. The YEA! curriculum was implemented in three different Boys & Girls Clubs located in the Nashville metro area. In terms of public schools, NICE collaborated with two metro schools in Nashville to implement the YEA! curriculum. In the first instance, a local high school used its Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) program to host the NICE intervention. The SIFE program was designed to help New American students transition into public education, with an emphasis on overcoming language barriers. This particular high school is considered one of the most diverse schools in Nashville, with 30 different languages spoken among students. The second school involved in the grant program included a middle school where the YEA! curriculum was presented to a broader selection of students as part of an after-school program.

Building Empathy Through Story Exchange

During a site visit, two members of the evaluation team were able to observe and participate in a story exchange. Participants were a fair mix of Americans and New Americans. One of the participants of the group was a survivor of the genocide in Rwanda and shared that experience for the first time. No one had ever asked them their story before. Another participant shared their child's experiences as an immigrant in an American culture with xenophobia. These stories underscored the pain and frustration that result from this type of rejection and hostility. Group participants of all backgrounds responded tearfully to these stories and shared their emotional responses at the end of the session.

Timeline



Performance and Outcome Indicators

As part of the evaluation, performance and outcome indicators were reviewed using quarterly Project Implementation & Evaluation Plan (PIEP) data. In its proposal, NICE lays out a plan to use the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Quality Standards to evaluate

CVE program effects, as well as the Youth Program Quality Assessment (PQA) to assess the quality of youth programs. However, because of participant confidentiality, we were unable to receive any DAC or PQA data.

Accomplishments Visualized Through PIEP
Output Data

The PEACE project provided expected outcomes in its proposal once the final focus areas were determined. This section lists the outcomes, outcome indicators, and quantitative outputs provided as measures.

Legend

GOAL

*Participation number does not represent unique participation

ACTUAL

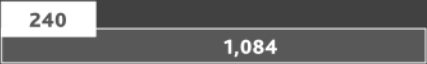
Youth Engagement Activities Outputs

The PEACE project’s goal was to conduct 12 YEA! sessions with 240 participants total over 2 years. It ended up exceeding those goals with 21 total YEA! sessions and 1,084 non-unique participants.

YEA! Sessions



YEA! Participants*



Cultural Exchange

The PEACE project’s goal was to conduct 12 cultural exchange activities with 120 participants total over 2 years. It completed a total of 10 cultural exchange activities with 94 non-unique participants.

Cultural Exchange Sessions



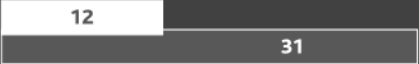
Cultural Exchange Participants*



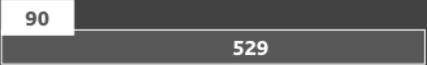
Leadership Dialogues

As part of the PEACE project, community dialogues were conducted between organizational and community leaders. The goal was to have 12 leadership dialogues with 90 participants total over 2 years. It completed a total of 31 community dialogues with 529 non-unique participants.

Leadership Dialogues



Leadership Dialogue Participants*



Because of its format for tracking attendance, NICE recognizes it is unable to distinguish unique participants or visits/involvement among participants. An example to help understand these data is that if 20 students are enrolled in a YEA! session that is 6 weeks long and everyone attended every session, that would count as 120 attendees, even though it was the same 20 students attending all 6 weeks of a single program. An asterisk (*) is used to denote these instances when participation numbers do not represent unique participation.

Outcome 1: New American youth feel safe and secure.

Short-term outcomes

Youth Empowered to Achieve (YEA!) – Increase sense of self-worth and empathy

Youth Mentorship¹ – Mentees feel listened to by their mentors.

Outcome indicators

75% of mentees will report an increase in self-worth and connectedness with other youth and community members.

Results

Those who responded to surveys showed an increase in self-worth.²

¹Mentoring data and tables will be provided in the final report. NICE is providing corrected Mentoring Program data in Q8, as previously reported data are inaccurate.
²This was all the information provided on this outcome.

Outcome 2: New Americans increase sense of belonging and feel more integrated in their communities.

Short-term outcomes

Cultural Exchange Activities – Increased respect and understanding for people of different faiths and cultures and religions

Leadership Dialogues – Increased understanding of community needs, organizations, and access to available resources

Outcome indicators

70% of participants will show increased respect for their community.

Results

100% who responded agreed in Q6.³

Leadership Dialogues will create new cultural events, program development, and collaborations.

As a result of dialogues, a new driving school program and an additional swimming program were created.

³This was all the information provided on this outcome.

Accomplishments Visualized Through PIEP Output Data
(continued)

Legend

GOAL

ACTUAL

*Participation number does not represent unique participation

Expand Referral Services/Printed Materials and Update New American Resource Guide

During the course of the grant, the New American Resource Guide was completed in English, printed and posted online, and translated into Spanish. Almost 40 flyers were created or translated as a result of the PEACE grant efforts. Translations were made to Spanish, Arabic, and Kurdish. The PEACE project's anticipated quantitative outputs for this goal were 20,000 printed and 5,000 digital touches over the 2-year grant period.

Printed Impacts



Digital Impacts⁵



⁵The PIEP said electronic touches would be counted in Q5, but there was no report of these. We will look again when we receive Q8 data.

Connect Organizations/Community Members for Interpretation Services

The anticipated outcome was to develop a process for connecting people and organizations with translation services. Though no quantitative goal was established, it appears to have been successful as, over the life of the grant, at least 250 connections were made for translation services.



Community Outreach

In an effort to expand knowledge, programs, and resources, the PEACE project anticipated hosting 16 cultural events during the 2-year grant period. In total, it reported hosting 18 events, including things such as sewing, driving, and yoga classes.

Cultural Events



Outcome 3: Increased awareness of and access to resources and programs offered by organizations and institutions among New American populations.

Short-term outcomes

Expand Referral Services/Printed Materials and Update New American Resource Guide – Network of referral services to include organizations in Middle Tennessee. Increase awareness of and access to service among New Americans.

Connect Organizations/Community Members for Interpretation Services – Increase availability of interpreters to access services.

Community Outreach – Community members will learn new skills that have been identified by community members and leaders. They will also be connected with existing resources from resource expansion.

Outcome indicators

Number of New Americans using local resources and accessing translation services, and number of organizations requesting translation services.

Results

NICE saw an increase in community groups seeking help with translation services⁴ and identified a new partner who helped host a large cultural fair with 10 organizations and over 450 community members.

⁴This was all the information provided on this outcome.

Results From Partner Surveys About the PEACE Project

To help supplement the monthly calls and site visits, the evaluation team also conducted a comprehensive survey.⁶ Partner surveys were sent to contacts identified by the prime grantee. The purpose was to obtain feedback on partner interactions with the prime and each other in regard to the grant. Nine people from Nashville completed the partner survey. For identification purposes, the PEACE project was referred to as the Community Empowerment Program. The tables below highlight selected survey items.

⁶These survey results are a summation of received partner responses; most grantees had a small number of partners. These responses are representative of partner perspectives; they are not intended to be generalized to the broader population.

Perception of Community Experiences With Violent Extremism

In terms of history of violent extremism incidents, respondents named the shooting at the Burnette Chapel Church of Christ in Antioch and the Waffle House shooting as examples of violent extremism in Nashville. In the case of the Burnette Chapel Church of Christ shooting, the gunman was reported as having ties to the New Black Panther Party and Nation of Islam and shared an intent to “kill white people.” The Waffle House shooting was perpetrated by someone who allegedly identified as a sovereign citizen and the incident is believed to have occurred as an anti-government protest. Nearly half of respondents responded, “Don’t know,” likely reflecting the larger confusion about how to define “violent extremism.”



Whether Partners Felt Valued and Utilized by NICE

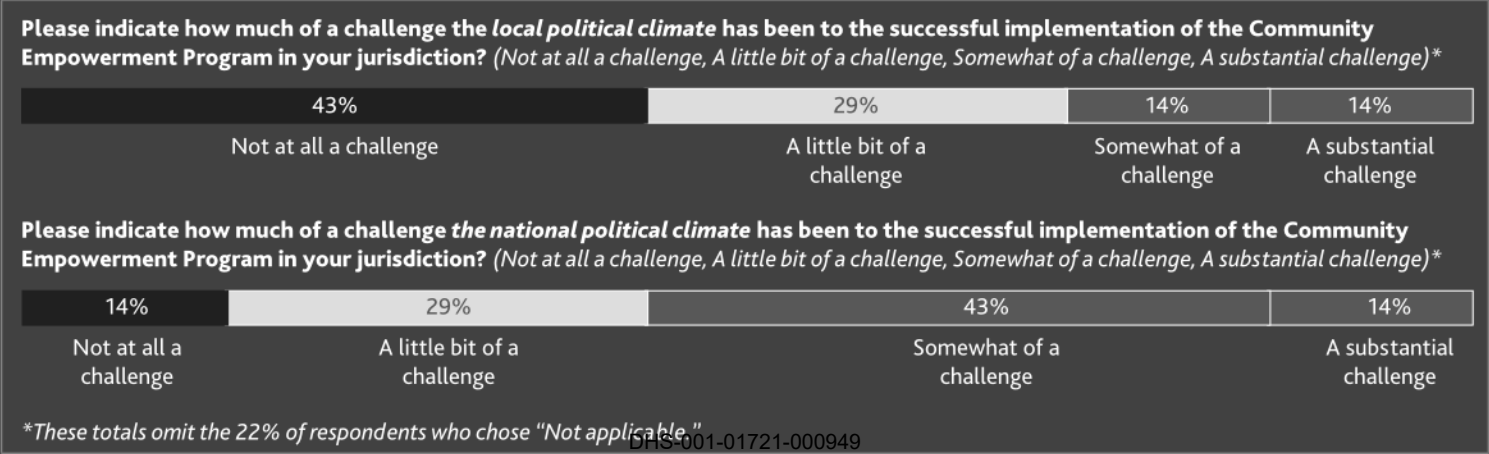
The responses to the survey item about whether partners' contributions were valued and utilized reflected a generally high level of satisfaction. Within the grant program team, the majority felt their contributions were valued and utilized to either a moderate or great extent. We believe these sentiments reflect the partners' general feelings toward NICE, not specifically to the DHS CVE grant. During site visits, almost all partners expressed positive sentiments about their work with NICE and particularly the Community Empowerment Program, even if they were unaware of the grant.

“NICE is an excellent organization with which to work.”
– A survey respondent



Local and National Political Climate and How It May Affect CVE-related Work

Last, two survey items were selected that measured perceived challenges related to local and national political climate. The results were mixed for both items, but, overall, respondents perceived more political challenges at the national level than at the local level. This result may reflect growing polarization at the national level. It is notable that one-third of respondents did not see the local political climate as a challenge.



Alameda County Sheriff's Office (ACSO)



This section focuses on the work the Alameda County Sheriff's Office (ACSO) completed under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate grant award for its project, Operation E Pluribus Unum (OEPUs). To understand the OEPUs project, one must first look more broadly at the national climate and the local community.

Alameda County: Reducing Jail Populations

Alameda County is the seventh most populous county in California, with a population of around 1.7 million individuals living in just over 800 square miles. The county borders San Francisco and includes the cities of Oakland (430,000 population) and Berkeley (120,000 population). As of 2018, the county had a higher percentage of Latin individuals than the nation at large (22% and 18%, respectively) and nearly the same percentage of Black/African American individuals (11% and 13%, respectively). However, it had more than twice the national percentage of foreign-born individuals.

Alameda County experienced a significant decrease in its jail populations over the past several years because of statewide initiatives (Propositions 47 and 57) that changed some felonies to misdemeanors and released nonviolent offenders. From 2013 to 2017, the number of jailed individuals per 100,000 population fell by nearly one-third in Alameda County. Although the jailed population in Alameda County has included a smaller percentage of Latin inmates than the rest of the state or country did, since the 1990s, the percentage of Black/African American inmates has been greater than that in the state and country.

"Countering violent extremism" has proven to be a controversial term in Alameda County, stemming in part from concerns regarding racial/religious profiling that occurred during the War on Terror and a broader history of federal surveillance aimed at various political movements.

Alameda County Sheriff's Office and Santa Rita Jail

The ACSO, established in 1853, has a budget of about \$186 million and more than 1,500 staff members. The ACSO is responsible for both enforcing the law and operating the county jail, Alameda County Santa Rita Jail. The ACSO previously had two jails. The second and smaller of the two, Glenn E. Dyer Detention Facility, closed in 2019, but its detainees participated in the Mind Body Awareness Project [MBA] program before it closed. The Santa Rita Jail opened in 1989 and houses 4,000 inmates in 18 housing units. It is the fifth largest facility in the country and is accredited by the American Correctional Association.¹

Operation E Pluribus Unum: Project Development

In 2016, the ACSO submitted a proposal requesting grant funding from DHS to prevent violent extremism among Muslim inmates in county correctional facilities. The original program design involved a collaboration between the ACSO and Ta'leef Collective, a community-based private, nonprofit organization that, among other programs, offers support for the formerly incarcerated. Captain Martin Neideffer from the ACSO directed the project and initiated the partnership with Ta'leef with the idea that the grant award would be used to help the organization expand its support to include currently incarcerated inmates in Alameda County.

Ultimately, for reasons explored below, Ta'leef did not participate in the grant award and Captain Neideffer identified another partner, MBA, a longstanding community-based, private nonprofit focused on providing mindfulness programs to at-risk youth. It was determined that MBA's focus on at-risk youth translated to the incarcerated population. As a result of the new partnership, the focus on Muslim inmates was omitted with the idea that all inmates determined to be at risk for violent extremism would be the target population. After consultation

ACSO Focus Areas

MBA cohorts are curriculum-based modules formalized and implemented in county jail facilities, with the aim of introducing inmates to the mindfulness approach to cope with stress, resolve conflicts in a nonviolent manner, and reduce trauma.

The Dig Deep Farms co-op farming program offers job training for recently released inmates with the goal of developing life skills for employability and specific skills related to food co-ops and "urban farming."

Parents and Children Together (PACT), a program of the Oakland Housing Authority, provided recently incarcerated parents (mostly mothers) and their children with housing and various treatment services, including the MBA program added to complement PACT's existing services.

with CVE practitioners, Captain Neideffer learned that validated instruments to determine whether an inmate is at risk for violent extremism are underdeveloped. He thus expanded the project focus to include any inmates currently incarcerated in the county jail system without determining "at-risk" status. In this respect, the project became a more "upstream" approach to identifying broad-based and more generic risk factors (e.g., "criminal thinking"; histories of personal and collective trauma) and incorporating an approach (i.e., mindfulness) meant to mitigate these issues by offering individuals new ways of coping with trauma by reframing personal narratives.

¹ <https://www.alamedacountysheriff.org/about.php>

Before the DHS CVE award, ACSO leadership had several other grant-funded efforts to develop a new model of community-engaged policing (Community Capitals Policing [CCP]) focused on developing the kind of social and economic infrastructure needed to establish and sustain healthy communities. The CVE award was intended to add to this existing and ongoing effort, with MBA and other community partners adding distinct but complementary pieces to the CCP model. Overall, the ACSO began viewing the problem of violent extremism as a public health issue. This approach is similar to the Center for Disease Control's framework for approaching violence prevention and intervention. The efforts described below reflect the ACSO's attempt to develop and implement a collective action that incorporated mental health, substance abuse prevention, psychological, and law enforcement practitioners to approach CVE in a nondiscriminatory and holistic manner.

Resistance to the CVE Grant Award

Opposition to CVE programs exists across the country; however, certain locales have experienced more resistance than others. In the California Bay area, where Alameda County is located, opposition to CVE is particularly strong in terms of concerns regarding federal government surveillance and distrust of local law enforcement. As such, the substantial CVE opposition culminated when the ACSO's original partner, Ta'leef, declined to participate after the grant was awarded.

Additional confusion regarding the CVE award arose from the fact that Alameda was not one of the initial sites selected. Alameda received the award after other organizations originally selected decided to decline their awards because of concerns about the new presidential administration that began in 2016 and opposition to CVE more broadly.

Activities Supported by the ACSO



**OEPU
steering
committee**



**MBA
inmate
cohorts**



**Dig Deep
Farms
internships**



**MBA cohorts at
residential treatment
program (Parents and
Children Together
[PACT])**



**MBA training
workshops for law
enforcement and
clinicians**



**Action Resources
International
(ARI) evaluation**

Areas Where the ACSO Acted



Local jails



**Residential
treatment
program**



**Deputy Sheriff's
Activities League's
(DSAL) Dig Deep Farms**

Key Partners Connecting with the Community

Under the CVE grant, the ACSO continued its work with multiple nonprofit partners. Roles of these partners included assisting the ACSO to build and manage the grant through the development of a steering committee; use of the DSAL Dig Deep Farms program; and the PACT residential treatment program. MBA, however, was the partner with the largest grant activities providing their curriculum to multiple inmate cohorts at both Glenn Dyer and Santa Rita jails and PACT residents, as well as offering MBA training workshops to various ACSO practitioners.

Dig Deep Farms, operated by the Deputy Sheriff's Activities League, is a community-based urban farm and food hub intended to provide reentry services for individuals recently released from local jails. Dig Deep provides paid transitional employment and internships as part of its reentry program.

ARI creates collaborative pathway models (CPM), a detailed logic model that depicts a visual network of how actions are connected to outcomes. ARI is led by Monica Hargrave and Gayle Woodsum. They supervised a local evaluator who helped facilitate the OEPU steering committee meetings and data collection and generally acted as a point of contact between the partners.

MBA is an Oakland-based nonprofit behavioral health provider that offers mindfulness and emotional resilience workshops and one-on-one coaching. MBA's curriculum draws on best practices in psychosocial education and helps participants identify and transform violent mindsets and behaviors and replace them with resilience and a more compassionate understanding of the world.

Parents and Children Together (PACT) is a residential reentry program. Kelly Glossup, LCSW, manages the Youth & Family Services Bureau's (YFSB) Behavioral Health Unit, which includes PACT. PACT is designed for parents and their children to receive a variety of services while living at the residential program in an apartment complex.

Mind Body Awareness and Inmate Mindfulness

The typical MBA curriculum is considered a cognitive behavioral intervention and has been identified as an evidence-based practice for effective reentry and recidivism reduction. It includes a 10-week series of modules with both group and individual sessions led by the MBA clinicians. The weekly 3-hour group sessions focus on transforming violent mindsets and behaviors and replacing those with a different approach to understanding the world. Sessions also include emotional awareness and literacy and involve a meditative practice component. The MBA clinicians describe the program as "demanding" and "difficult"; participation requires deep reflection and introspection. This kind of programming can be uncomfortable, and some retention issues are common. Approximately one-quarter of inmates who signed up did not complete the program.

The participants for the inmate cohorts varied based on location and decisions made by the jail's Inmate Services Unit. When developing a cohort, MBA staff were told which housing units were eligible to participate in the program and would be escorted to these housing units to give a presentation about the program. Inmates were given the option to participate or decline participation. The MBA team held cohorts in housing units designated to specific gangs as well as the protective custody (PC) units. The PC units were made up of inmates with various charges and criminal histories and often included former gang members or inmates accused of crimes that made them a target in the general population. When possible, MBA staff would enlist the help of a program graduate who would not only recruit people to participate but also attend the sessions along with members of the unit and act as a mentor.

Using Mindfulness to Change Views and Behaviors

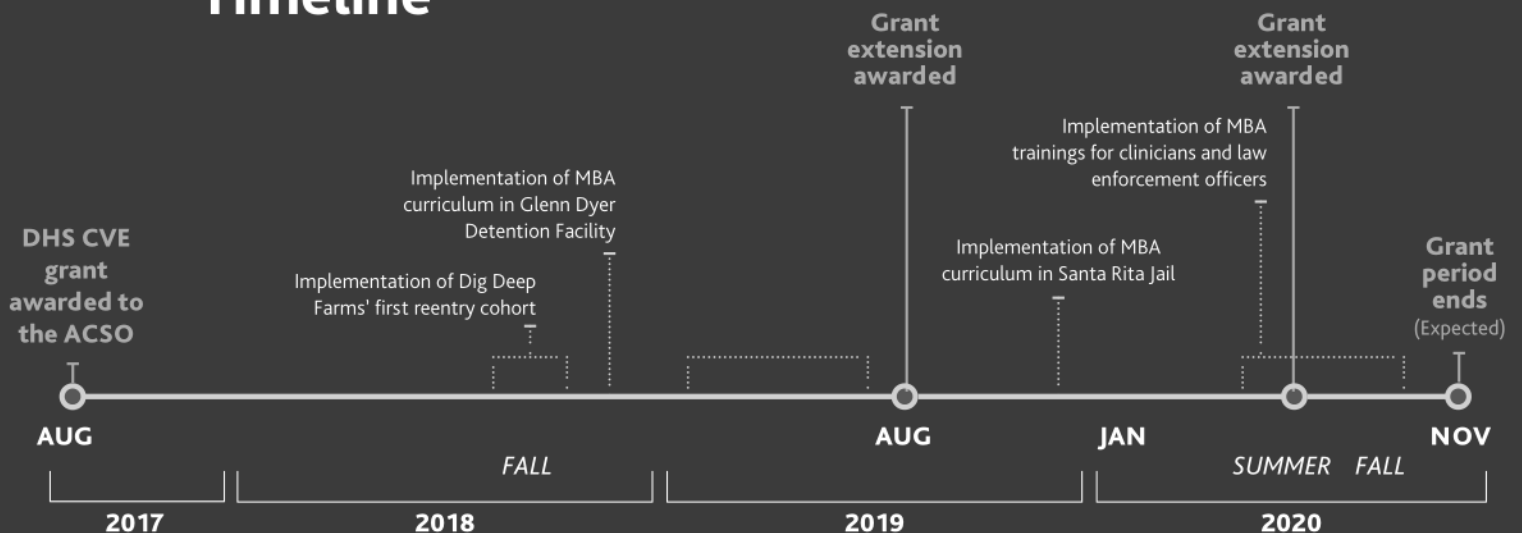
The following excerpt from a quarterly report (Quarter 9 Performance Report) provides descriptive information and related details regarding MBA's impact.

"MBA staff conducted video interviews with consenting inmate graduates about their experience in the program. These videos offered powerful affirmation that the sense of group connection, belonging, and group empathy offered through the MBA workshops has had a strong effect on participants' view of themselves, their view of others, and on their ability to express emotions and explore traumas in ways that they had not been able to before. Participants expressed surprise and deep gratitude that they were creating a 'sacred space' for connection and healing within the generally unwelcoming environment of a county jail.

"One inmate whose brother had been shot and killed the previous week shared that he felt the MBA workshops had changed his perspective so profoundly that he was contemplating how to manage and express his emotions and those of his family and friends to heal the effects of the violence, rather than planning revenge as his 'old self' would have done."

The descriptions provided in the quarterly reports involving MBA's programming with incarcerated individuals are consistent with the RTI evaluation team's observation of an MBA session at Santa Rita Jail. During the third site visit, the RTI evaluation team observed a portion of an MBA group session and were impressed by the depth of introspection demonstrated by the participants. It was also clear that the MBA practitioners had established substantial rapport with participants and were able to communicate effectively with individuals in an open and constructive manner. Feedback (both solicited and unsolicited) from ACSO deputies further enforced this observation of trust and rapport with MBA practitioners.

Timeline



Performance and Outcome Indicators

Circumstances Affecting OEPU

Throughout the ACSO's period of performance, the team experienced several external barriers and uncontrollable circumstances that disrupted or otherwise delayed progress toward meeting program objectives and goals. First, there were a series of challenges related to conducting a community-based treatment program in a correctional facility—for example, which, if any, individual inmates would agree to participate (the program is entirely voluntary); how long inmates were in the facility (which affected whether the inmate was able to complete all of the curriculum modules); or whether the inmate was transferred to the federal system (in those cases there was no capacity to provide any after-care services or other follow-up).

Second, as discussed above, the beginning of the project was marred by local and national resistance to CVE programming, and this specific project was challenged by multiple organizations that were concerned about an exclusive focus on Islamic extremism and broader issues related to anti-Muslim bias. Third, the Glenn Dyer Detention Facility was unexpectedly closed, and its entire

portion of the project was forced to relocate to Santa Rita Jail. This change resulted in substantial time and resources to seek clearance for MBA's presence in the new facility, find appropriate scheduling for the MBA sessions, and introduce Santa Rita staff to the new program and the grant project more broadly. Last, in March 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, a shelter-in-place order was issued by the state of California. All inmate programming was immediately suspended. MBA has since adapted the program format to include virtual sessions.

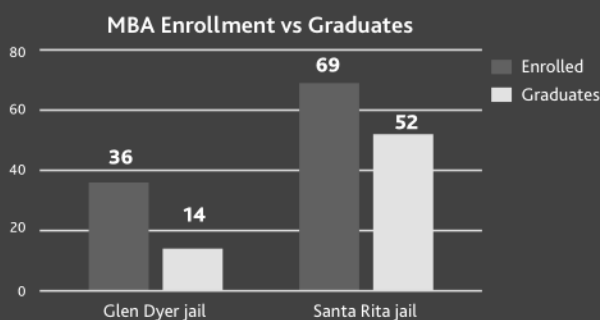
Action Resources International Collaborative Pathway Modeling

As part of OEPU, Action Resources International (ARI) was hired to create a collaborative pathway model (CPM) describing the activities of the project, as well as the breadth of outcomes resulting from these activities. The CPM is a "method of designing and tracking theories of change that reflect the voices and expertise of those most greatly impacted by challenge and oppression" (<https://www.actionresources.ngo>). ARI's CPM will be used as the OEPU's final report submitted to DHS at the end of the period of grant activity.

Maximum Participants in MBA Jail Sessions

According to outcome indicators, 63% of participants graduated from the 10-week MBA cohort. Examples of the reasons given for not graduating during the first set of cohort groups in Quarter 7 included the following:

- 9 inmates were transferred to federal prison to serve out their sentences
- 4 participants were released
- 1 participant was unable to complete the program because of court attendance
- 1 had medical reasons for not continuing
- 6 lost engagement or interest



Outcome 1.4: Support the successful reentry of Alameda County residents involved in the criminal justice system who may be susceptible to radicalization and violent extremism.

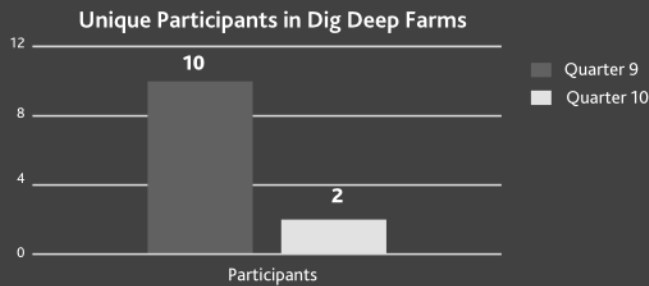
Outcome Indicators

- Glenn Dyer: 36 individuals enrolled; 14 individuals graduated across 3 cohorts who completed the 10-week program involving 20 hours of MBA proprietary curriculum; 10 participants completed 3 hours of one-to-one evidence-based coaching
- Santa Rita Jail: 69 individuals enrolled; 52 graduated across 3 cohorts who completed 10-week program involving 20 hours of MBA proprietary curriculum; 30 participants completed 3 hours of one-to-one evidence-based coaching

Results

No information was provided regarding successful reentry of criminal justice-involved individuals.²

² This was all the information provided on this outcome.



Outcome 1.5: The Deputy Sheriff's Activities League operates the Dig Deep Farms enterprise and is continuing its strategy of providing reentry clients with a 6-week paid internship at the farm.

Outcome indicators

- Across the life of the grant, a total of 12 unique interns completed the program (10 in quarter 9 and 2 in quarter 10).
- Several interns repeated the program to gain additional experience.

Result

Dig Deep Farms was able to continue providing at least 12 reentry clients with 6-week paid internships.

MBA PACT Workshops

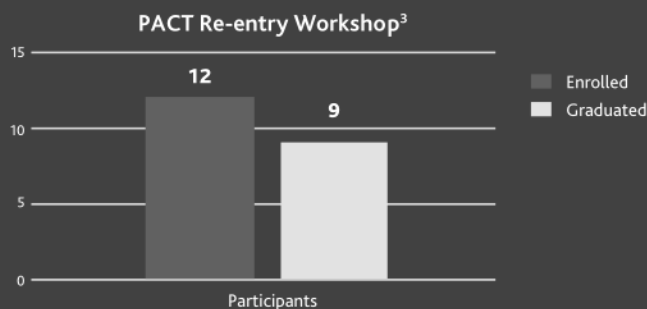
As part of the award project, MBA worked with Operation My Home Town (OMHT) clinical case managers to launch the first post-release cohort of mindfulness classes and individual sessions at the PACT housing complex in Oakland. PACT grew out of the need for parents incarcerated in Santa Rita Jail to develop positive parenting skills both while incarcerated and after being released. PACT is a partnership between the OHA, the ACSO's OMHT reentry initiative, and community-based organizations that work with formerly incarcerated parents living in an OHA complex.

The MBA workshops at PACT began in January 2020 with a 14-person cohort. MBA completed three sessions before in-person sessions were discontinued because of the statewide shelter-in-place order. After some adjustments and planning, MBA and OMHT staff coordinated to plan individual telephone sessions with PACT participants and an MBA facilitator in April 2020.

"We're working to transform jails from a human warehouse to a reentry facility."

– Capt. Martin Neideffer

MBA PACT Workshop Participants



³ Due to Covid-19, in March 2020, this was pivoted to one-on-one individualized sessions via zoom and phone

MBA training workshops for law enforcement and clinicians

Outcome 2.1 and 2.2: MBA will offer group training on mindfulness and emotional resilience as well as the basics of the CVE curriculum to ACSO sworn staff and civilian clinical staff.

Outcome indicators

- YFSB Behavioral Health Unit:
6 clinicians completed 5-week (10-hour) clinical mindfulness training
- Santa Rita Jail:
12 sworn personnel completed 5-week (10-hour) applied mindfulness training

The limited amount and type of data received makes it difficult to report on the extent to which the ACSO reached its stated goals. ACSO staff and their partners acknowledge the limited quantitative data collected as part of the grant award, which is clearly connected, in part, to the obstacles that were present from the beginning of this grant award. The ACSO's quarterly reports, however, clearly document a wide variety of activities that were undertaken and

completed during the award period, such as the number of programs established, the number of meetings held, and the number of cohorts completed, as described above. The ACSO was unable to provide any follow-up information regarding the inmates who completed the MBA modules, as collecting demographic data on these participants was not an intended goal.

Results from Partner Surveys about the ACSO Project

To help supplement the monthly calls and site visits, the evaluation team also conducted a comprehensive survey.³ Partner surveys were sent to contacts identified by the prime grantee. The purpose was to obtain feedback on partner interactions with the prime and each other in regard to the grant. Nine partners completed the survey. Some participants shared that they left a number of responses blank because they were not involved in certain areas of the project. These numbers reflect only those who answered each question.

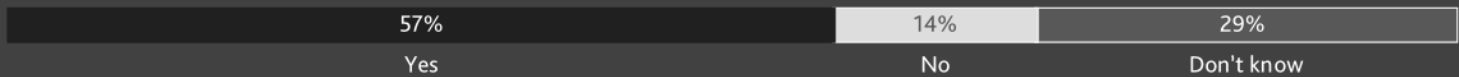
³ These survey results are a summation of received partner responses; most grantees had a small number of partners. These responses are representative of partner perspectives; they are not intended to be generalized to the broader population.

Perception of Community Experiences with Violent Extremism

When asked whether the community had experienced a recent incident of violent extremism, responses varied. Two of the "No" responses came from ARI staff who do not live in the Alameda area, so it is unclear whether their responses reflect Alameda County. Three of the four who said "Yes" referenced an incident in May 2020 when a person in a van opened fire at a federal building in Oakland, CA, during a protest, killing one federal officer and wounding another. The shooter was later discovered to be a part of the Boogaloo movement.

"This was a great experience that involved some incredible leaders and smart people working at full capacity.... However, the political climate along with [organizations] that actively created resistance created some real blocks in the delivery of the work.... That said, I feel satisfied with what was accomplished."
 – An OEPU partner

In the last ten years, has your community experienced an incident of violent extremism?

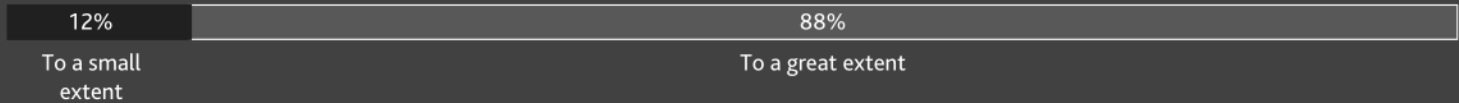


Note. This figure omits the 22% of respondents who were part of the project but did not live in the Alameda area.

Whether Partners Felt Valued and Utilized

The responses to the survey item about whether partners' contributions were valued and utilized reflected a generally positive level of satisfaction. Within the grant program team, most contributors felt that their contributions were valued and utilized to a great extent.

Throughout the grant period, how much do you feel that your contributions to OEPU were valued and utilized by the Alameda CVE Grant Program? (Not at all, To a small extent, To a moderate extent, To a great extent)

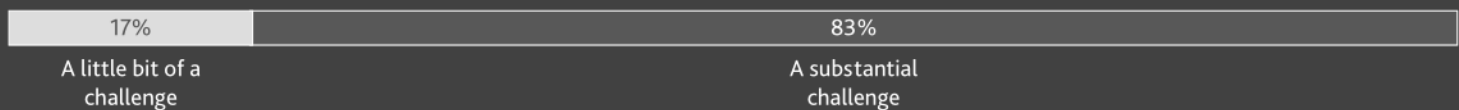


Note. This figure omits the 11% of respondents who left the question blank.

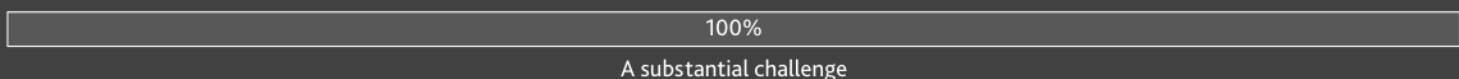
Local and National Political Climate and How It May Affect Related Work

Two survey items were selected that measured perceived challenges related to local and national political climate. Overall, respondents perceived slightly more political challenges at the national level, but the majority of respondents saw both as a substantial challenge. This is not surprising; as previously mentioned, there were several difficulties navigating the political climate in the beginning of the project. In particular, two respondents specifically mentioned "resistance against anything entitled CVE" as a major barrier to accomplishing project goals.

Please indicate how much of a challenge the *local political climate* has been to the successful implementation of Alameda's CVE Grant Program in your jurisdiction? (Not at all a challenge, A little bit of a challenge, Somewhat of a challenge, A substantial challenge)*



Please indicate how much of a challenge the *national political climate* has been to the successful implementation of Alameda's CVE Grant Program in your jurisdiction? (Not at all a challenge, A little bit of a challenge, Somewhat of a challenge, A substantial challenge)*



**Note. These figures omit the 33% of respondents who left the question blank.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

Countering Violent Extremism: Developing Community-Wide Partnerships

Studying these five programs provides RTI with a unique ability to understand the strengths and weaknesses related to addressing countering violent extremism (CVE). Clearly, none of these programs claim to or are expected to “eliminate” violent extremism in their jurisdiction. Rather, as we depicted in Figure 1, the point of these programs is to contribute to community-based solutions that foster linkages across government and nongovernmental actors to reduce potential drivers related to violent extremism (e.g., disillusionment, isolation), train community members (e.g., raise awareness regarding emotional vulnerabilities related to violent extremism), create reporting mechanisms (i.e., hotline), work with at-risk youth, and prevent violent extremism in correctional facilities. These programs are led by and create partnerships among city police departments, county sheriff's offices, educators, mental health practitioners, and nonprofit grassroots organizations.

Figure 1: Solutions That Connect Governmental and Nongovernmental Organizations

Research and Evaluation
of Five OTTP-Funded
Programs in Four States



The following provides a series of recommendations for government and nongovernmental organizations for CVE. Despite the lack of agreement regarding the causes of extremism, the most-effective responses are likely to include a multipronged approach characterized by public and private partnerships. There is a need to work with community partners to identify the local drivers of extremism and to develop solutions to address these drivers. Although community-government partnerships are needed to address extremism, there is uncertainty about what programs are effective at CVE. Therefore, these initial CVE programs funded through the FY2016 grant opportunity include programs about resilience building, training and engagement, interventions, counternarrative programs, and capacity building.

RTI's Utilization-Focused Evaluation: A Learning Opportunity

RTI conducted research of OTVTP programs to identify lessons learned and determine actionable recommendations for communities to confront violent extremism more effectively. RTI's evaluation is framed as a utilization focused evaluation (UFE) because CVE is an emerging field that lacks clear agreement on best practices. Rather, OTVTP funded an assortment of state and local agencies and nonprofit organizations to both contribute to prevention and intervention strategies and develop a body of evidence about what does and does not work to counter extremism. A UFE framework is suitable to identify recommendations because this approach is aimed at learning—not making simple statements about merit or worth. Given the complexity of violent extremism, the programs funded by DHS have the potential to experiment with creative solutions to address violent extremism using a variety of different perspectives and strategies.

Recommendations for Governmental and Nongovernmental Agencies

The following recommendations are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather to provide a foundation for communities to build trust, collaboration, and networks among key partners. The OTVTP programs are an excellent opportunity for learning about CVE as a diverse set of practices to deter violent extremism and enhance community trust and resiliency.

Structural Recommendations

Fostering Collaboration, Communication, and Compromise

A whole of community approach is paramount. Extremism is complex, and communities need to tap into all available resources. This means creating partnerships. Partnerships are difficult, and they require substantial time and effort but working in silos will prevent communities from adequately countering violent extremism.

Partnering agencies should consider representatives from the following types of agencies:

- Behavioral/mental health
- Community group (e.g., victim advocates)
- Faith-based (e.g., Imam, church council)
- Government agency (e.g., mayor's office, city council)
- Law enforcement
- Educators (e.g., administrators, teachers, and other staff)
- IT experts
- Community corrections (i.e., probation, parole)

Good Partnerships Have Strong Leadership

Fostering strong partnerships requires identifying leaders. Whole of community approaches are difficult to implement; therefore, clear lines of leadership need to be identified, agreed on, and codified. Leaderless partnerships often are unsustainable, ineffective, and disorganized. CVE is difficult, and we recommend that each community identify a person who is responsible for orchestrating a formal CVE steering committee. Ideally, the person assuming this role will be a representative of an organization with institutional authority such as the mayor's office, city or county manager, or city council. The position should also be part of a larger policy team meeting that occurs on a regular basis.

Codify Partnerships with Written Documents

We recommend that communities develop written documents to establish CVE policy teams. These documents should delineate the roles and responsibilities for each of the members, and detail things related to meeting schedules, activities, and budgets.

These written documents could include the following:

- Vision (i.e., goal) and mission (i.e., actions) statements
- Memoranda of understanding
- Charters
- Data use agreements (to facilitate any cross-agency data sharing)

Develop Approaches Suited for Your Community

We recommend that communities include local researchers to assist with their CVE strategy. Community leaders may consider developing research partnerships with local universities. These partnerships should provide clear guidelines about what can and cannot be published; establish data use agreements; and detail roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Local researchers could assist by conducting a comprehensive community assessment to understand the nature of potential threats related to violent extremism. Such an assessment should inform local leaders about any potential concerns. Each community is unique, and will need to focus on various ideologies (see Strategic Recommendations below).

Strategic Recommendations

Early Identification of Emotional Vulnerabilities and Warning Signs for Violent Extremism

Implement trainings designed to raise awareness among families, educators, mental health practitioners and others about how emotional vulnerabilities increase a person's susceptibility to involvement in violent extremism. The City of Houston's grant award is centrally focused on providing a series of trainings focused on the relationship between emotional vulnerabilities and violent extremism and discussing how the identification of these vulnerabilities provide opportunities for intervention. The City of Houston's train-the-trainers approach offers a promising strategy other communities could use to inform their own approach. It is important to note, however, that the train-the-trainers model requires a sustained investment of resources that can sometimes be neglected or overlooked. In some cases, what starts as a strong initiative may wither on the vine as the resources necessary to provide new trainings are unavailable.

Information-Sharing Capacity

We recommend that communities explore the use of crisis intervention hotlines to address the needs of vulnerable individuals. Crisis intervention hotlines can include telephone and text-based options that may reduce the barriers to reporting. Hotlines require a substantial commitment in terms of marketing and outreach to increase familiarity and development of protocols, policies, and guidelines for their use. Communities that decide to implement hotlines should consult with experts to detail specific procedural rules of operation:

- Whether the hotline will be staffed 24 hours a day
- How staff will evaluate callers for extremism
- How staff will provide support and guidance
- Whether staff will offer referrals
- How to dispatch emergency intervention to the scene

Many suicide centers connect directly with their local mobile crisis intervention teams and emergency services to provide near real-time information about callers facing immediate risks. These are some of the procedural issues to work through when developing a CVE hotline, but they may be able to be integrated with existing suicide or victimization hotlines in your community. Hotlines are promising as a means to prevent and intervene in violent extremism by linking at-risk individuals with needed social and mental health services.

Expand Early Upstream Prevention

Communities need more options to invest in efforts designed to reduce harm and build community resilience. As part of these efforts, there should be more focus on reducing barriers among different communities. One goal should be to reduce anti-immigrant hostility and resentment directed toward "New Americans" and refugee populations. The grant program, "Proactive Engagement to Achieve Community Empowerment (PEACE)" in Nashville, Tennessee, provides one potential strategy with its use of the Narrative 4 story exchange.

Understanding Online Radicalization

Further research and program development that are focused on the issue of online radicalization are needed. There is a paucity of information regarding the relative influence of online mechanisms in terms of degree and type of impact (e.g., how does consuming videos compare with text-based online discussion forums). Moreover, we need more information regarding the duration of the online radicalization process among recent rampage shooters, with specific focus on whether an increased sense of mortality salience may be shortening the time needed to radicalize.

Off-Ramping Programs

We recommend building infrastructure to support expansion of off-ramping programs to include the evaluation of relative effectiveness of off-ramping programs across the United States. Although there are relatively few active off-ramping programs in the United States, several communities (e.g., Los Angeles, Denver, New York) are using these programs. Because these efforts are extremely limited in the United States, little is known about the effectiveness of the few U.S. programs that provide this type of intervention. Clearly, resources are needed to evaluate these programs and assess the effectiveness of each effort.

Rapid-Response Teams

Violent extremist threats are dynamic and evolving far more rapidly than the systems built to respond to these problems. The difficulty keeping pace with these threats suggests there is a need to develop rapid-response teams across the country. These teams should be multidisciplinary and should include program development and evaluation. The idea would be to mirror the dynamic nature of violent extremism with an experimental approach. In particular, the recent increase of white supremacist violence over the past several years underscores the need for this type of evidence-based rapid-response effort to ensure all extremist ideologies are targeted with the appropriate CVE programs.

Focus on All Extremist Ideologies

An important limitation of most programs funded by the DHS OTVTP program is the focus on Islamist extremism. This narrow approach to CVE leaves serious gaps in prevention, intervention, research, and evaluation of other forms of violent extremism. In particular, the threat of violent right-wing extremism is well documented in terms of number of attacks, number of fatalities, and a consistent and long-term presence in the United States. In the past decade, the United States (and various parts of Europe and New Zealand) have witnessed a major resurgence of violent right-wing extremism, most notably in terms of white supremacist and neo-Nazi activity. In 2018, 98% of extremist homicides in the United States were committed by violent right-wing extremists. The relative neglect of addressing violent right-wing extremism represents a perceptual blind spot consistent with the difficulty identifying insider threats compared with threats perceived as foreign.

The best practice would be for potential award sites to conduct a needs and threat assessment of its jurisdiction to understand the specific risks of violent extremism and develop a data-driven program that targets the greatest need or a comprehensive approach that can meaningfully address a broad spectrum of violent extremism. If this approach were implemented, many jurisdictions would likely gain greater awareness of the prevalence of violent right-wing extremism in their jurisdictions and begin focusing more programming on this problem. During our research, we heard from law enforcement officials that they believe all jurisdictions should be required to focus on violent right-wing extremism because many areas across the United States are affected by this type of extremism, whereas few areas are affected by threats of Islamist extremism. Building an effective CVE infrastructure that supports resilient communities should include addressing extremism across all ideological spectrums.

Limitations

As part of our evaluation, we identified several limitations related to the OTVTP grant awards and program. *Limitations* means issues that, if ignored or unresolved, could result in negative consequences.

First, data collection and program tracking need enhancements for a clearer focus on documenting links between goals and outcomes. Grantees should establish baseline assessments as part of a comprehensive effort to identify the nature and prevalence of radicalization and violent extremism in their areas. Such an assessment would help to identify specific types of vulnerabilities and segments of the population where those vulnerabilities may be most concentrated. This approach would avoid assuming that immigrant populations, for example, are at greater risk for radicalization or violent extremism than nonimmigrants (in the United States, evidence to support such a claim is lacking). As reported by multiple governmental and nongovernmental sources, the most substantial threat in terms of violent extremism in the United States stems from white supremacist and anti-government ideologies.

Second, the focus on early "upstream" prevention is essential to any healthy community, and more resources and investments are needed to support these local initiatives. In this report, we stressed the importance of language, and here we suggest avoiding applying labels like "at-risk" and "threat assessment" that may stigmatize certain communities and individuals receiving services. Early prevention efforts should be adopted and promoted as part of building healthy communities and fostering the development of individual- and group-level assets.

Clearly, efforts should be in place to provide safeguards for children who experience high-risk living situations, such as physical or sexual abuse, but labeling children as potential violent extremists, even if done unintentionally, is counterproductive.

Third, off-ramping intervention programs are further developed than the early prevention efforts. There needs to be differentiation between off-ramping interventions and prevention efforts. Confusing the two or implying any association between them will only heighten existing concerns about the potential for stigmatizing and labeling effects of CVE efforts. Future CVE programs may consider whether their programs are more consistently emphasizing interventions aimed at current extremists, providing support to help stabilize individuals who recently disengaged from extremism, or intervening early to prevent radicalization. The complexity of preventing radicalization and violent extremism suggests that more progress could come from collaborative efforts that include agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services. Formal collaborations with such agencies could be part of a whole-of-government approach led by DHS.

CONCLUSION

In this report, we documented the evaluation of five FY2016 DHS CVE grantees. The grantees demonstrated the achievement of several goals related to their grant objectives by conducting trainings, expanding a 24-hour hotline, assisting the integration of new Americans, and engaging at-risk incarcerated individuals. Although there are many accomplishments from the CVE programs, the sites faced challenges related to political changes, community pushback on CVE, lack of clear definitions of CVE, and uncertainty about how their tasks connect to the larger goal of terrorism prevention. The programs are an initial step toward developing a CVE infrastructure in the United States. Clearly, a lot more needs to be done to develop, implement, and scale CVE programs across the country.

The UFE framework was selected for this study because we wanted to provide useful information to policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. The purpose of the report is not to fix the shortcomings of CVE development or provide definitive direction for future evaluations. As an emerging field of practice, CVE remains in a general state of development with ambiguity on definitions and a vagueness on purposes. There is a lack of clearly defined measurable goals related to preventing or intervening in violent extremism. Rather, practitioners have identified their willingness to grapple with a profound challenge of our time (e.g., radicalization, terrorism), and they are experimenting with potential solutions, reflecting on processes and outcomes, and revising programs.

CVE is a field that will never arrive at a final state in which a few programs are scaled across the country. Instead, CVE practitioners must remain flexible to continually adapt to the threats posed by terrorists. Simply, terrorists are continually assessing the security landscape to revise their plans, strategies, and actions; therefore, CVE practitioners must embrace a reality of multiple causes, varied outcomes, a multitude of programs, and interactions across the spheres they seek to change. Terrorism has emerged in the United States in many forms, including the devastation of the Oklahoma City bombing, the attacks on September 11, and numerous other attacks that demonstrate the many forms terrorism can take. CVE practitioners have the daunting task of understanding the specific threats that exist in their communities, assembling broad coalitions of individuals and organizations, and engaging in processes of ongoing learning about program impacts.

The United States faces threats from foreign and domestic terrorists across a multitude of sectors, including online radicalization, foreign fighters, cyberterrorists, and various factions of white supremacists (e.g., militias, conspiracy theorists, neo-Nazis). CVE is generally designed to steer individuals away from radicalization and potential terrorist activity through non-coercive means (Harris-Hogan, Barrelle & Zammit, 2016), but a clear definition of what success looks like for CVE programs has yet to emerge. CVE initiatives that adopt community-centered approaches recognize that the key to CVE may lie within the local dynamics of communities themselves (Cohen, 2009). The localized nature of CVE is a recurring theme we heard from practitioners in the field as they struggled with political pressures and dissatisfied community leaders. Local actors are in the best position to resolve these conflicts. By creating a CVE program at the community level, it becomes possible to incorporate the perspectives of local community members and leaders, recognize the unique contextual factors, and leverage local resources.

A key takeaway from our research is the widespread disagreement on definitions, scope, and purpose of CVE programs. Many of the practitioners did not even think so much about CVE, radicalization, or extremism. Rather, they were more focused on achieving the specific local outcomes of their programs by expanding their hotline, helping immigrant assimilation, and addressing the needs of jail inmates. This lack of clarity and purpose is a problem with CVE programs generally. As the funding agency, DHS should ensure that the program approach, goals, and deliverables contribute to moving the CVE field toward developing evidence-based strategies. These strategies are not sure fire solutions to violent extremism, but rather, they are logical, realistic, and targeted at improving communities. It would seem that CVE as a broader policy initiative would strive to (1) prevent individual terrorist behavior, (2) detect activities of individuals who may pose a terrorist threat, (3) diminish the recruitment possibilities for terrorists, and (4) provide off-ramps and exit programs to assist individuals leave extremist organizations. As part of these efforts, CVE programs would foster political tolerance, improve reporting of suspicious activity, and reduce acceptance of political violence.

CVE programming is new, and as such, it is in its infancy, with program developers borrowing insights from public health, psychology, sociology, and criminology. The FY2016 CVE grantees provide initial program examples for CVE, and more research, evaluation, and study of CVE programs are needed. The UFE framework provides a conceptual springboard to create researcher and practitioner partnerships. These partnerships should focus on improving and advancing CVE strategies by understanding the contexts in which certain types of programs are effective. Simply, to advance CVE, researchers need to expand their repertoire of evaluation tools to adapt to the evolving nature of terrorism and violent extremism.

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