



October 11, 2018

The Agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships  
Office of Immigrants & Refugee Affairs  
Webb Municipal Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
201 W. Colfax Avenue, Dept. 1102  
Denver, CO 80202

Custodian of Public Records:

Muslim Advocates submits this request to the Denver Agency for Human Rights and Community Partnerships, Office of Immigrants & Refugee Affairs (“DOIRA”) under the Colorado Open Records Act (“CORA”), Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-72-201 *et seq.* Muslim Advocates seeks records pertaining to DOIRA’s role in developing and implementing the Denver Police Department’s (“DPD”) efforts directed at Countering Violent Extremism (“CVE”).

We seek a fee waiver for this request pursuant to Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-72-205(4). Please also refer the requests contained in this letter to any other agency or component agency as appropriate.

## **I. Background**

Muslim Advocates seeks records<sup>1</sup> pertaining to DOIRA’s involvement with the DPD’s CVE efforts. This request covers information about DPD’s collaboration with local organizations, such as DOIRA and Denver Public Schools (“DPS”), in the design and implementation of their CVE program.

This request concerns the CVE grant of \$481,313 awarded to DPD by the Department of Homeland Security (“DHS”) in January 2017.<sup>2</sup> The grant, awarded as part of the DHS FY 2016

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<sup>1</sup> The terms “records” is intended in the broadest possible sense and includes without limitation all records or communications preserved in electronic or written form, including but not limited to correspondence, regulations, directives, documents, data, videotapes, audiotapes, e-mails, faxes, files, guidance, guidelines, standards, evaluations, instructions, analyses, legal and policy memoranda, minutes or notes of meetings and phone calls, memoranda, agreements, notes, orders, policies, procedures, protocols, reports, rules, manuals, technical specifications, text communications between phones or other electronic devices (including, but not limited to, communications sent via SMS or other text, Blackberry Messenger, iMessage, WhatsApp, Signal, Gchat, or Twitter direct message), training materials or studies, including records kept in written form, or electronic format on computers and/or other electronic storage devices, electronic communications and/or videotapes, as well as any reproductions thereof that differ in any way from any other reproduction, such as copies containing marginal notations. No category of material should be omitted from search, collection, and production.

<sup>2</sup> FY 2016 Countering Violent Extremism Grants Funding Opportunity Number: DHS-16-OCP-132-00-01, Denver Police Department Application EMW-2016-CA-APP-00381, available at <https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/EMW-2016-CA-APP-00381%20Full%20Application.pdf>; Noelle Philips, *Denver police land \$240K grant to counter violent extremism*, THE DENVER POST (Jan. 13, 2017, 2:42 PM), <https://www.denverpost.com/2017/01/13/denver-police-240k-grant-violent-extremism/>.

Countering Violent Extremism Grant Program, aims to address populations DPD deems “at-risk,” including Muslim and minority communities, through “officer training, school-based mentoring, and refugee/immigrant outreach.”<sup>3</sup> The grant application discusses DPD’s intended collaboration with DOIRA to develop an officer training curriculum focused on community-based strategies that “engage at-risk youth and their families, integrating them into their new environment. . .”<sup>4</sup> The application explicitly mentions combating ISIS and Al Qaeda and specifically references Somali and Sudanese children, evincing DPD’s intention to target not just refugee and religious communities generally, but Muslim communities specifically.<sup>5</sup>

## II. Description of Records

Muslim Advocates requests the following records:

1. Procedures, policies, guidelines, or memoranda regarding the development of a CVE program in conjunction with DPD;
2. Records or communications involving DPD and DOIRA discussing the development of a curriculum for immigrants and refugees, including work with city agencies to develop curriculum around Human/Social Services; Housing, International Committee; Law Enforcement/Safety/Courts – Police, Sheriff, Fire, Courts, District Attorney; Youth/Education; Technology; Economic Development; Human Rights and Immigrant Affairs; and recognizing the signs and tactics of radicalization;
3. Records or communications involving DOIRA personnel concerning CVE training attended or offered by Colorado state and local law enforcement officers, investigators, and any other law enforcement. The records requested include training curricula developed around Homegrown Violent Extremism, CVE as a response, refugee culture, and cultural competency;
4. Records or communications between DOIRA and the Colorado Muslim Connection, United States Attorney’s Office, DHS, the National Counterterrorism Center, and other Department of Justice affiliates concerning CVE officer education, training, and partnering with community groups on intervention in instances of potential violent extremism;
5. Records concerning any events, meetings, conferences, briefings, workshops, and/or trainings about CVE attended or provided by DOIRA personnel;
6. Records and communications between DPD and DOIRA discussing the development of a CVE-related academy, including officer training and academy curriculum;
7. Records of any policies, guidelines, or procedures used in the design of DPD officer training related to CVE, including metrics, standards, assessments, and questions used

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<sup>3</sup> FY 2016 Grant, *supra* note 2 at 2, 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

in pre- and post-course evaluations to measure officer understanding of course implementation and concepts; and

8. Records describing the processing of this request, including but not limited to records sufficient to identify the search terms used and the search queries conducted; records sufficient to identify the locations and custodians searched; any tracking sheets used to track the processing of this request; and any FOIA questionnaires or certifications completed by individual custodians or components used to determine whether they possess responsive materials or to describe how they conducted searches.

### **III. Description of Processing**

The Requestor requests disclosure of the following records that were prepared, received, transmitted, collected and/or maintained by the Recipients and any other agency components thereof.

**Please search all records regarding agency business.** Please do perform custodian-driven searches but do not rely solely on custodian-driven searches; the Office may not have direct access to files stored in .PST files, outside of network drives, in paper format, or in personal email accounts. Please do not exclude searches of files or emails in the personal custody of department officials, such as personal email accounts. Please use the most up-to-date technologies to search for responsive information and take steps to ensure that the most complete repositories of information are searched. Muslim Advocates is available to work with you to craft appropriate search terms, if necessary.

**Please produce records in electronic form.** Where possible, please provide responsive material in electronic format by email to [nimra@muslimadvocates.org](mailto:nimra@muslimadvocates.org). Please furnish any responsive material being sent by mail to:

Muslim Advocates  
P.O. Box 34440  
Washington, D.C. 20043

**Please produce electronic records in their native format.** With respect to the form of production, Muslim Advocates requests that responsive electronic records be provided electronically in their native file format, if possible. In particular, please produce electronic files in a format that contains the original metadata of the files.<sup>6</sup> If the records cannot be produced in their native format, please (1) provide an explanation why the records cannot be so produced; and (2) please produce records electronically in a text-searchable, static-image format (PDF), in the best image quality in the agency's possession.

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<sup>6</sup> As a non-exhaustive list of examples: Microsoft Excel spreadsheets are to be produced as files that open in Excel, with all original data and formulas intact; Microsoft Word documents are to be produced in the same file format they are stored in, such that they contain all tracked changes and comments present in the documents; and emails are to be produced with all metadata fields intact, including but not limited to the date and time the email was sent, the full names and email addresses of all recipients, any data contained in the bcc: field, and all attachments.

**Please produce documents as they become available.** Muslim Advocates would prefer a rolling production. We would be happy to discuss a search priority and schedule for production.

**If you withhold records or parts of records, please provide the justification for the withholding.** If it is your position that any portion of the requested records is exempt from disclosure, please provide an index of those records.

**If you withhold portions of a record, please produce all segregable portions.** CORA does not exempt from inspection records that contain both exempt and nonexempt information, nor does it prohibit inspection of public information in a record otherwise subject to inspection merely because the record also contains exempt information. Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-72-201 *et seq.* In the event some portions of the requested records are properly exempt from disclosure, please disclose any reasonably segregable non-exempt portions of the requested records. If it is your position that a document contains non-exempt segments, but that those non-exempt segments are so dispersed throughout the document as to make segregation impossible, please state what portion of the document is non-exempt, and how the material is dispersed throughout the document. If a request is denied in whole, please state specifically that it is not reasonable to segregate portions of the record for release.

## V. Application for Waiver or Limitation of Fees

Muslim Advocates is a non-profit civil rights and advocacy organization; it focuses on issues of particular relevance to the American Muslim community.<sup>7</sup> We request a waiver of fees for document search, review, and duplication on the grounds that disclosure of the requested records is in the public interest and because such fees may be reduced or waived by the custodian if they are to be used for a public purpose, including nonprofit activities and journalism. Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-72-205(4).

These records will shed light on current government practices. The stated goals of the grant include designing programs that instruct hundreds of police officers on preventing and combating violent extremism as well as programs where police officers mentor students designated troubled or at-risk within Denver Public Schools facilitated in part through DOIRA.<sup>8</sup> The grant application also includes a community outreach component targeted at immigrant and refugee populations throughout the city. This information directly impacts the lives of Denverites, especially those who are immigrants, refugees, religious minorities, parents, and schoolchildren.

Funding for CVE programs is particularly controversial because it prejudicially targets Muslim communities, casting them under suspicion and labeling them as inherently susceptible to terrorism – even as numerous crime statistics and surveys indicates that American Muslims have no greater predilection for violence than any other American religious group.<sup>9</sup> Muslim Advocates

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<sup>7</sup> *About*, MUSLIM ADVOCATES, <https://www.muslimadvocates.org/about/>.

<sup>8</sup> FY 2016 Grant, *supra* note 4.

<sup>9</sup> *See, e.g., Group Efforts Aimed at ‘Countering Violent Extremism’ Spread*, DENVER POST (Jul 5, 2016), <https://www.denverpost.com/2016/07/05/group-efforts-aimed-at-countering-violent-extremism-spread/>; Julia Edwards Ainsley, Dustin Volz, & Kristina Cooke, *Exclusive: Trump to Focus Counter-Extremism Program Solely on*

serves these communities through legal advocacy and educational outreach and it is imperative we understand how CVE-related funding is dedicated in each city with a program.

Further, the information in these documents has the potential to either reveal or confirm the absence of government misconduct, which is inherently in the public interest. *See Electrical Workers v. Denver Metropolitan Major League Baseball Stadium District*, 880 P.2d 160 (Colo. App. 1994) (“[B]y providing access to public records, the workings of government are not unduly shielded from the public eye.”). News accounts<sup>10</sup> underscore the substantial public interest in the records sought through this request. Given the ongoing and widespread media attention and the heavy impact CVE programs have on targeted communities, the records sought will significantly contribute to public understanding of an issue of profound public importance.

The Requestor is not filing this Request to further its commercial interest. Requestor Muslim Advocates is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Any information disclosed by the Requestor as a result of this CORA request will be made available to the public at no cost through a combination of outreach to media outlets and the Requestor’s website (available at [www.muslimadvocates.org](http://www.muslimadvocates.org)).

Because these factors weigh in favor of a fee waiver, fees associated with responding to CORA requests should be waived for Muslim Advocates due to their intended use toward nonprofit activities and journalism.

## **VI. Response Requested in Three Days**

Your attention to this request is appreciated, and we anticipate your determination of our request within three (3) business days, unless extenuating circumstances exist, in which case the custodian may take up to seven (7) business days to copy the records or make them available for inspection pursuant to Colo. Rev. Stat. § 24-72-203(3)(b). To the extent that our request encompasses records, whether responsive or potentially responsive, that have been destroyed, our request should be interpreted to include, but is not limited to, any and all records relating or referring to the destruction of those records.

If the request is denied in whole or in part, we ask that you justify all withholdings by reference to specific exemptions to the CORA. We expect the release of all segregable portions of otherwise exempt material. If you deny the request for waiver, please notify us before compiling records for which the copying charge will exceed \$50.00 so that we can discuss narrowing the request to cover only the information we seek. We reserve the right to appeal a decision to withhold any information or to deny a waiver of fees.

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*Islam – Sources*, REUTERS (Feb. 1, 2017), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-extremists-program-exclusiv-idUSKBN15G5VO>.

<sup>10</sup> *See, e.g.*, Elizabeth Hernandez, *Denver Police Department Uses \$240K Grant to Battle Violent Extremism*, DENVER POST (Jun. 7, 2018), <https://www.denverpost.com/2018/06/07/denver-police-grant-violent-extremism/>; Waqas Mirza, *Denver’s Counterterrorism Program Sets Sights on Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ Groups, and Refugees*, MUCKROCK (Mar. 9, 2017), <https://www.muckrock.com/news/archives/2017/mar/09/denvers-counterterrorism-BLM/>.

With respect to the form of production, we request that responsive electronic records be provided electronically in their native file format, if possible. Alternatively, we request that the records be provided electronically in a text-searchable, static-image format (e.g., PDF), in the best image quality in the agency's possession, if possible.

## **VII. Conclusion**

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. We would welcome the chance to discuss this matter with you. If you would like to discuss any part of this Request, please contact Nimra Azmi at [nimra@muslimadvocates.org](mailto:nimra@muslimadvocates.org).

Very truly yours,

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(202) 897-2564  
[nimra@muslimadvocates.org](mailto:nimra@muslimadvocates.org)