

# Voices of Tomorrow 2019 Annual Report

## From the Chief Executive:

At Voices of Tomorrow, we believe that a child's experiences in the first five years lay the foundation for how well the next eighty years will go.

Today, difficulties navigating loss of common language, and cultural differences are seen in outsized numbers of East African children and youth placed into special education by schools and disproportionate numbers of them experiencing behavioral health challenges and isolation.

We created Voices of Tomorrow to fill these gaps and even the odds. In our first five years, we have forged new culturally responsive ways to prepare young children for school while retaining East African cultural identity and languages.

In our next five years, we need to build on this, so our services do even more to overcome adverse early childhood experiences and intergenerational trauma. This means educating ourselves and our communities and providing professional and peer support to reduce stresses and strengthen family bonds.

*Zam Zam Mohamed,*  
CEO

*"I have gained so much knowledge. You have made the impossible possible."*

— Aisha Artan; Seattle family child care provider

## Our Beginning

The African proverb, "We desire to bequest two things to our children—the first one is roots; the second is wings" reflects the dreams we hold for Voices of Tomorrow.

Our East African communities arrived here to seek better futures for our children and families. Each of us brings a rich heritage and languages from our homelands where the whole village raises children with love and a shared cultural identity.

As our East African communities settled in to our new homes in the U.S., we found it hard to help our children stay connected to their roots and to navigate differences in culture and child rearing.

Loss of language between generations has been particularly devastating because it is harder to parent without a shared language. This also makes it tougher to communicate with elders and maintain community ties.

Wanting to give our children the roots of community connection and shared language and the wings of a high-quality and culturally-responsive early education, Somali early learning professionals founded Voices of Tomorrow in 2012.

By helping our children grow strong roots and strong wings we help them to become thriving bicultural and bilingual adults.



**250**  
**Family**  
**child care**  
**providers served**



**12**  
**Community**  
**conversations**  
**hosted**

**200**  
**Children**  
**served**



**160**  
**Families**  
**served with**  
**parent education**



# What we do

Voices of Tomorrow works to break the cycle of educational disparity to create better futures for East African children. We weave together community voice, language, cultural heritage, and parenting practices with evidenced-based, culturally-responsive early learning for children—and the adults that make up their world. We also advocate for our communities and prepare community members to advocate for the needs of their families.



Guided by our racial equity theory of change and our experience, we help young children, their families, and caregivers come together. The rich tapestry of cultural heritages and languages helps us learn together and share resources as thriving, bicultural members of our King County community.

The sounds of Somali, Oromo, Arabic and Swahili are common in our classrooms and programs along with English, Spanish, and Mandarin. Honoring and learning together with others who cherish multiple cultures helps to prepare children to thrive in our multicultural world.

## Early learning programs

### What does it look like?

We provide home- and classroom-based services that promote bicultural & bilingual lifelong learning for children ages 2-4 and their families.



**Parent Child+ (PC+).** We match the families of two- and three-year-old children with trained mentors from their communities who engage families in educational play with

culturally responsive books and toys so that, together, parent and child develop a lifelong love of learning.

▪ Served 41 families



**English/Somali Dual Language Preschool.** We offer the nation's first Somali-English dual language preschool through state ECEAP and Seattle preschool funds. Our affordable programs are grounded in research and in Somali culture and multicultural education.

▪ Served 195 children and increased the children with access to health services by 45% (from 35% in the Fall to 75% in the Spring).



### Family Child Care (FCC) Hub.

In partnership with the Seattle Preschool Program, VOT contracts with 6 FCC's to operate a high-quality dual language multicultural preschool program for the 3- to 5-year-old children in care.

▪ Served 35 children and increased children meeting widely-held expectations for their age by 41% (from 38% in the Fall to 79% in the Spring).

*"First my VOT home visitor, then the VOT preschool teacher spoke Somali with Fatima and me. This inspired me to speak Somali with all of my children. Fatima now talks with me in Somali, counts to 20, and sings songs. It is amazing to see her teaching her older siblings. It makes us proud and stronger as a family."*

– Khadra Mohamed, parent

## Advocacy and Parent Education

### What does it look like?

For us, advocacy is a two-way street. When parents have the support they need, they can help their child start school on the path to success. That's why we work to empower and prepare East African families and communities to elevate their voices. We seek to lead by example and to represent East African communities in the places where law, policy, and resource decisions are made.



**Vision:** Our strong sustainable community is successful in defining our own liberation and narratives

### King County Parent Education and Advocacy Program.

This new partnership with public and private funders and Highline Community College helps 70 parents annually to build their skills, get college credit, and start on the path to expanding their education and career. Conducted in English and Somali, this culturally responsive program values parents' experience and guides them through the process of acquiring new knowledge and confidence.

100 parents have skills and peer support to advocate for their children in 2020

Create 10 parent support group networks

22 parents trained in 2019

#### ✓ Somali Language Acquisition Assessment.

We advocated for and began planning with UW Cultivate Learning to create a Somali language assessment for 3- to 5-year-olds.

- A Somali language-acquisition assessment for 3- to 5-year-olds is being developed.

✓ **Advocacy and Training.** This year, we held dual-language community cafés for East African child care providers to learn about the new child care regulations (WACs), and to help them with new electronic attendance requirements.

- Helped 60 early education providers learn how to implement the new regulations so that they could maintain their child care licenses.
- In partnership with DCYF, engaged and trained 200 providers in the use of the new electronic attendance requirements for child care.
- Held 12 conversations with providers which led to conducting developmental screenings and to VOT expanding its supports for family child care providers.

We come from a communal oral tradition, gathering to talk and to set goals, then working together to plan and implement programs based on this advice.



### Education and training for early learning professionals

#### What does it look like?

We bring East African communities together to identify barriers and gather advice about how VOT can work together to better support early learning professionals. This has led to establishing a community advisory board and to starting three initiatives.

✓ **Family Child Care (FCC) Hubs.** In partnership with the Tiny Tots Development Center, we support a “Hub” of six FCC’s who work together intensively to strengthen teaching practices, build upon their strengths, and continuously improve program quality.

- *Preschool FCC Hubs. All 6 providers improved their Early Achievers quality ratings. One of the FCC’s is proud to have achieved a rating of Level 4.*

✓ **Developmental Screening.** With support from King County’s Best Starts for Kids, we worked with FCC’s to learn about developmental screening tools, select the *Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE)*, and implement training and technical assistance to begin.

- *67 newly trained providers screened 45 children and referred 7 children for assessment.*
- *15 FCC’s have gone farther, becoming certified as reliable trainers themselves.*

✓ **Technical Assistance and Training.** We provided technical assistance in Somali and English to FCC providers to help them maintain licensing and continuously improve their programs.

- *200 current and new FCC’s received technical assistance, connection to resources, and help with child care licensing.*



**Mission:** We preserve immigrant & refugee children’s identity through culturally responsive child-focused programs

*“Voices of Tomorrow is one of our “go-to” resources for working with the East African community in Washington. They serve as a communication bridge with key parts of the community and offer services that work for the families in their community. I personally have learned a lot by working with their staff, and by participating in community events Voices of Tomorrow has hosted. I look forward to a long productive relationship between our agency and VOT!”*

– Ross Hunter, Secretary, Department of Children, Youth and Families

**Values:**

- Empowered community
- Nurturing educators
- Cultural responsiveness
- Health and safety
- Racial equity

	Parent Support and Training	Parent Child+	Dual Language Preschool	Technical Assistance and Training	Advocacy and Community Development
2012-13	Voices of Tomorrow incorporated				
2015-16				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Taught computer training (45 providers)</li> <li>▪ Held first East African Child Care Conference (250 providers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gathered input on WAC changes</li> </ul>
2017-18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Trained and implemented developmental screening (67 East African FCC's)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Served 40 children in 2 classrooms (Seattle Preschool Program [SPP])</li> <li>▪ Led FCC Hub</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gathered input on WAC changes</li> <li>▪ Advocated for Somali Language Acquisition Assessment</li> </ul>
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Initiated family pedagogy program (40 parents)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Served 42 families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Served 195 children (SPP and ECEAP)</li> <li>▪ Led our FCC Hub</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gathered input on WAC changes</li> <li>▪ Began work on the Somali Language Acquisition Assessment</li> </ul>
2020-2024	Represent our community, grow our services and partnerships, and reduce intergenerational trauma and language loss.		Help our community through the COVID-19 pandemic. So far, in mid-2020 we have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provided safety and hygiene supplies (775 families)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provided basic needs (579 families)</li> <li>▪ Provided homework and care packages (246 children)</li> </ul>	

**2019 Financial Summary**

**INCOME**

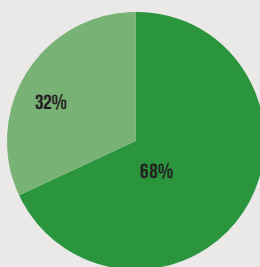
Seattle/State Government Funds	\$ 1,254,363
Foundation/Non Profit Grants	\$ 591,266
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$ 1,845,629</b>

**EXPENSES**

Program	\$ 1,261,632
Management & Operations	\$ 217,450
Communication & Fundraising	\$ 80,000
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>\$ 1,559,082</b>

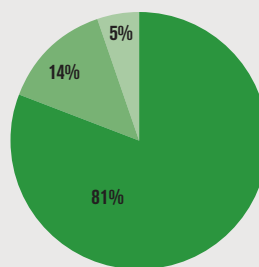
**OPERATING RESERVE** \$ 287,244

**INCOME**



Seattle/ State Government Funds 68%  
Foundation/Non Profit Grants 32%

**EXPENSE**



Program 81%  
Management & Operations 14%  
Communication & Fundraising 5%

**Board Members**

Faisal Abdulahi,  
*President*

Faraah Hassan,  
*Secretary*

Abdirizaq Mumin

Faduma Ahmed



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**Our Partners**

