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### The Massachusetts Community Mediation Centers Program

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# The Massachusetts Community Mediation Centers Program

The Massachusetts Office of Public Collaboration, UMASS Boston

The Community Mediation Coalition of Massachusetts

## Summary/Abstract

As part of the **public service mission** of UMASS Boston, the MA Office of Public Collaboration (MOPC) partnered with the Community Mediation Coalition of Massachusetts in compiling a research study and design for a **Community Mediation Centers Grant Program** to increase sustainability, scope and quality of Massachusetts community dispute resolution as a mechanism for increasing access to justice for all Massachusetts communities.

## Goals and Objectives

Promote Community Mediation as a **cost-effective public service program within higher education** through a partnership with the **Community Mediation Coalition of Massachusetts** by establishing a state-wide grant-making program for mediation center sustainability and independence; legislation; community mediator excellence; and *partnerships between UMASS students and community mediation centers*, the Massachusetts Trial Court and others.

## Results/Impacts

Anticipated Results Include:

1. **\$1.25 million annually** for state-funded operating grants to 20 community mediation centers across the state.
2. **6126 annual mediations** for primarily low income residents of Massachusetts.
3. **4430 resolved conflicts annually** for state and local government, courts, schools, police departments, businesses and communities.
4. **The cost-savings and resources leveraged** would amount to \$6 million annually.
5. **UMass Boston Students** will be involved in providing community dispute resolution services at community mediation centers state-wide.
6. **UMass Boston will become a national leader** in community dispute resolution programming and research.

## Approaches and Methods

**Alignment** of community mediation centers, MOPC and UMASS Boston as effective deployment of public resources.

**Building on existing state-wide conflict resolution infrastructure** eliminates duplication of efforts.

**A university-based framework institutionalizes partnerships** and through centralization, **leverages the benefits of scale.**

## Conclusion/Next Steps

**Securing Funding** for the grant program.

**Enacting Legislation** demonstrating commitment to the public service mission of UMASS Boston.

**Building Infrastructure** for program administration through MOPC.

**Administration** of grant-program.

## References and Resources

**Legislative Study Report:**

*A Framework to Strengthen Massachusetts Community Mediation as a Cost-Effective Public Service* compiled by MOPC.

National Association for Community Mediation:  
<http://www.nafcm.org>

## Additional Partnerships, Interests, Information and/or Contacts

Please contact Madhawa “Mads” Palihapitiya for more details: [Madhawa.Palihapitiya@umb.edu](mailto:Madhawa.Palihapitiya@umb.edu)