

## **Project Outcomes and Summary Report**

### **Project Description**

The Russian and Farsi speaking Mental Health Theatrical Performances Project was developed by the Eastern European/Middle Eastern (EE/ME) Underserved Cultural Communities (USCC) subcommittee (under the Mental Health Services Act) for the purpose of increasing mental health access and reducing disparities for the Russian and Farsi speaking communities that reside in the County of Los Angeles. Cross Cultural Expressions was hired for the purpose of developing and implementing this project. Due to COVID-19 pandemic, the theatrical performances were replaced by theatrical films or virtual plays, in order to adhere to social distancing measures. This project targeted the Russian and Farsi speaking communities of Los Angeles County at large by promoting mental health services, increasing mental health awareness and education, and reducing stigma. Through these theatrical films/virtual plays, Russian and Farsi speaking community members were educated on how to access mental health services and understand some of the cultural biases associated with mental health conditions and stigmatized societal issues that often lead to mental health conditions for the individual as well as within the family system.

This Project was implemented in four (4) phases starting August 26, 2019 to December 30, 2020. Below is a description of each phase:

#### **Phase One:**

During phase one of this project, the project coordinator set out to get feedback from both Russian and Farsi speaking community members as to what the social, emotional and mental health needs of each of their communities are that should be addressed in the script. After multiple in-depth interviews it was decided that the script writer would consult with a mythologist in order to tell the story using the framework of an old mythological story that is relevant and familiar to both the Russian and Iranian cultures. At that point it was decided that the mythological story of Sleeping Beauty is very fitting in that it incorporates many of the themes that was originally outlined. Themes that revolve around stigmatized and taboo issues that these immigrant communities often keep hidden, not only from others but are in a matter of speaking asleep to themselves.

Through a modern day retelling of this old mythical story, we were able to delve into mental health issues within Iranian and Russian communities such as post traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, and social issues that are often the foundation of many mental health issues, such as domestic violence, LGBTQ+ issues, multiple losses suffered by immigrants, grief, generational trauma, and the judgements and criticisms that are frequently based in our unresolved fears and insecurities about ourselves, our

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families, and the world around us. With all of these themes in mind, the script for the theatrical play of “Wake Up Sleeping Beauty” was written.

The script was then sent to LADMH for approval. Once approval was received, the script was given to one expert from the Russian community and another expert from the Iranian community for translation and adaptation in to Russian and Farsi. After the translations were completed. The scripts were given to 10 community members (the Russian script to 5 members of the Russian community and the Farsi script to 5 members of the Iranian community) for review as to context, language, and cultural relevance. Each of those reviewers signed a Reviewer Verification Form that was then turned into LADMH for approval.

Once it was established who would fulfill the role of the producer on this project, the producer then set out to recruit 2 directors, one for the Russian theatrical play and the other for the Farsi theatrical play. After the directors were hired, the producer/writer and Iranian and Russian cultural consultants had numerous meetings to discuss the script, the recruitment and auditioning of the actors, the locations, the rehearsal times, the sets and costumes, and other technical aspects of the production. Next, the director and producer began recruiting and auditioning actors.

During phase one, the producer and project coordinators also developed a pre/post survey questionnaire. The questionnaire included five (5) close ended questions and utilized a Likert Scale in order to conduct a matched pair analysis of the information gained by participants from the performances and the 30 minute question and answer sessions that would follow each performance of the play. The pre/post survey’s were meant to measure the degree to which the presentations may have affected the participants perception of stigma in relation to mental health issues, their understanding of certain mental health topics, and their knowledge of available mental health resources. Pre/Post survey’s were turned in to LADMH for approval and once approval was received, they were translated into Russian and Farsi. The first phase of the project was noted to have been completed on schedule.

**Phase Two:**

During the second phase of the project, the producer began working on hiring set designer, costume designer, stage manager, and determining theater locations that would be used for the 12 performances of the plays (6 performances for the Russian community and 6 for the Farsi speaking community in Los Angeles County). The producer also created contracts and releases for the cast and production members to sign. Once all of the actors where hired and all contracts and releases were signed. The directors began weekly rehearsals.

Two months into phase two of this project, the COVID-19 pandemic became an international crisis and in response lock downs were put into place. Due to the COVID-19 lockdowns and social distancing protocols, LADMH made a decision to place this project on hold until such time that the decision could be made as to whether we

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could move forward with the project in its current form or if the project would need to be modified to fit the current state of the world.

As of July 1, 2020, it was determined through mutual consent between Cross Cultural Expressions and LADMH that the Statement of Work for this project would be modified in order to reflect social distancing protocols. At this time, the theatrical project became a filmed theatrical performance or theatrical film. It was agreed that in order to protect actors and production staff, no one would be in close proximity to each other at any point during rehearsals and filming. It was also determined that the filmed performances would be viewed by a live audience via zoom webinars. This way, we could still have an interactive virtual 30-minute question and answer session after each screening of the filmed performance with a live audience. Through survey monkey and zoom webinar technology, we would also still be able to collect demographic data from participants and implement the pre/post survey's as required by LADMH. Thus, on July 1, 2020, the producer/project coordinator began the process of re-engaging the directors as well as the actors and the production team in order to once again begin rehearsals and discuss the changes that needed to be made in order to take this project from a staged theatrical performance to a filmed theatrical performance.

The two directors had very different and unique visions on how the filmed project would be implemented. The Russian director decided to incorporate the current social distancing circumstance into the scenario and placed the characters in the setting of a zoom call with each other. He used very simple but effective costuming, sets, and make-up. A professional cinematographer and editor were hired in order to capture the visuals in a high quality manner. There were a total of 10 camera's set up (2 in each room where the actors were) and professional lighting equipment in order to further guarantee a quality product.

The Iranian director went a very different route as she decided to use much more elaborate costumes, make-up, sets, and original music score and film each actor individually using a green screen. She also worked with a professional editor and cinematographer and through the use of special effects and CGI, created a theatrical film that looked as if the actors were in the same room when in actuality they were not. Additionally, the Iranian director was able to place English sub-titles on the film, which proved to be very engaging for audiences and made the film more accessible to a broader group of people.

Both directors went above and beyond what the statement of work had asked for and took on the challenges that COVID-19 social distancing restrictions had placed on them and with a creative eye delivered extremely professional and high quality productions.

During phase two the producer continued to work closely with the directors during the rehearsal, filming and editing process in order to make sure that progress was being made in a timely fashion and to ensure that the theatrical films were following the scripts as approved by LADMH and were continuing to be cultural appropriate while

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fulfilling the main goals of the project. The producer worked closely with the set directors in order to insure that all props and costumes were purchased and set up. Additionally, the producer worked with the director in finding locations for filming, hiring an IT person who would host the zoom webinars, and on finalizing presentation dates and times. The producer also worked closely with the cultural consultants in order to develop a promotional plan and promotional materials for the purpose of outreach and the promotion of the screening dates.

Three theatrical posters were created (one in Russian for the Russian theatrical film and two {one in English and one in Farsi} for the Iranian theatrical film). The posters were accompanied with a promotional paragraph that included the tag line for the films and also described how to register for the screenings and question and answer sessions. The paragraph also included the dates and zoom registration links. We also provided the Cross Cultural Expressions email address and telephone number for those individual who preferred to have us register them for the zoom presentations. All promotional materials were submitted to LADMH for approval prior to distribution.

The series of zoom presentations (that included the screening of the theatrical film and the 30 minute question and answer sessions) were promoted to the public through social media (facebook, telegram, instagram, linkedin and twitter); on-line magazines such as Iranianhotline.com; through email lists of cast and crew members as well as other organizations including Raha International, JQ International, PARS Equality Center and City of West Hollywood; radio announcements and interviews via KIRN 670am and VOA Russia; and posters that were distributed at local Iranian and Russian grocery stores.

Below is a list of the 12 zoom presentation dates and times for Russian and Farsi theatrical film screenings and question and answer sessions:

Date	Time	Language/Community
November 9, 2020	7pm to 9:30pm pacific time	Russian
November 20, 2020	10am to 12:30pm pacific time	Russian
November 24, 2020	7pm to 9:30pm pacific time	Russian
November 27, 2020	7pm to 9:30pm pacific time	Russian
November 29, 2020	12pm to 2:30pm pacific time	Russian
December 3, 2020	7pm to 9:30pm pacific time	Farsi
December 6, 2020	12pm 2:30pm pacific time	Farsi
December 6, 2020	5pm to 7:30pm pacific time	Russian
December 7, 2020	7pm to 9:30pm pacific time	Farsi

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December 8, 2020	7pm to 9:30pm pacific time	Farsi
December 13, 2020	12pm to 2:30pm pacific time	Farsi
December 13, 2020	7pm to 9:30pm pacific time	Farsi

**Phase Three:**

During the third phase of the project, the producer and cultural consultants continued to work diligently on outreach and promotions of the screenings and the director and editors worked on finalizing and turning in the theatrical films. Producer and cultural consultants also worked with the IT person to set up the registration links in a manner where the demographic information of the participants would be gathered per the LADMH guidelines and best ways of making sure that pre/post surveys were distributed before and after each presentation in order for us to be able to gather that information.

The producer also finalized the list of individuals who would be in the panel during each question and answer session. It was decided that a licensed mental health professional, the director, and at least 3 of the actors/actresses would be present for each question and answer panel discussion. The producer also made an outline of the specific talking points that were to be addressed during the Q and A panel discussion in order to ensure that certain educational information about mental health issues and the telephone number for the LADMH Access Line would be shared with all participants. Also during phase 3, the producer was able to both initiate and finish the task of presenting the completed theatrical films and the Q and A sessions 12 times in a period of 6 weeks.

**Phase Four:**

The fourth phase of the project consisted of the collection of all presentation dates registration information (i.e. the demographic information of all participants that was collected) and pre/post survey results. All documentation was reviewed and demographic information was tallied. All comments and questions that were made during the Q and A discussions as well as all community feedback communicated to us via social media, emails, texts and telephone calls was also recorded in order to gather qualitative information about the effects the theatrical films and overall presentations had on participants and on the targeted communities at large. All quantitative and qualitative data that was gathered was written up and included in the Project Outcomes and Summary Report that was completed during this phase.

**Project Results**

This project began as a massive undertaking and was further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Just the initial idea of writing a feature length (90 minute) script that would, in an entertaining and engaging manner, address the stigmatized mental health and social issues of the Russian and Farsi speaking communities of Los Angeles County was in itself a lengthy and complicated notion. Then to have that script translated and adapted to the languages of these two communities and to undergo the

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complicated tasks of hiring a director, production team, and actors in a relatively short amount of time, was itself a challenging journey.

With the onset of COVID-19 and the added challenge of actually adapting the work from being a staged production to a filmed production, while maintaining social distancing protocols so that no one was ever allowed to occupy the same space for rehearsals and filming and only having a little over 4 months to complete these tasks, made this project one for the history books. We at Cross Cultural Expressions are absolutely overjoyed by the end results of this multifaceted very complex project. In consideration of our time constraints, limited budget, and social distancing requirements, we feel that this project delivered above and beyond expectation both in the final quality of the script and films, but also in the enthusiasm that community members showed in their reception of the films and overall presentations.

A total of 225 individuals registered to view the Russian version of the theatrical film. The demographic information that was collected is as follows:

<b>Gender</b>	<b># Registered</b>
Male	60
Female	162
Other	3
No Answer	0

<b>Age</b>	<b># Registered</b>
0 to 15 years	0
16 to 25 years	0
25 to 59 years	130
60+ years	95
No Answer	0

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<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b># Registered</b>
Russia	93
USA	46
Ukraine	36
Armenia	43
Georgia	1
Germany	3
Iran	3

<b>Primary Language</b>	<b># Registered</b>
Russian	222
Farsi/Persian	3

Following each of the screenings of the Russian version of the theatrical film we received many comments and much feedback. The majority of the comments were focused on thanking us for creating such an educational and informative film for the Russian speaking community. Some of the comments we received included:

“This was a hard film for me to watch because it reminded me of people in my life that I am trying to stay away from. I think this subject is so important and I want to thank you for making this film.”

“I think this film gives a very important message that it’s okay if you have mental health issue and struggles in your life and that you are not a crazy or bad person. It also shows how important it is to not ignore those issues and go and get help.”

“Thank you so much for this film. It was very interesting and very real. It made me feel like I am not the only one who has these problems.”

“I learned so much from this movie. I didn’t think I could watch the whole thing, but I was so interested in what was going on. I thought it was really well written and I loved the actors and also how the director set it all up. It was interesting to see how they made a film without actors being together.”

“Aside from the message of this movie that I thought was very important for our community to see, I was also amazed by the technical aspect of this movie and how

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good it looked and how many camera's they needed to set up to capture everything. I thought the whole thing was really well made."

"It was interesting that this movie was written in English. I thought the translation in Russian was excellent. I really liked the story and the subject. It is a very important film."

We also received a number of questions that were discussed during the Q and A portion of the zoom presentations. Some of the questions from Russian community members included:

"This story felt very real to me. Was it taken from real life of a Russian family?"

"This film made me really think about why is therapy so stigmatized in the Russian community?"

"I have many of the same issues that I saw in the film. Can therapy really help me with these problems?"

"How do I know if I need therapy?"

"For someone with these similar problems that were in the movie, like depression, how long on average does it take for therapy to work?"

"Can you discuss how therapy will help this family resolve their problems?"

"My worry is always that therapy won't be confidential. Is it really confidential?"

"I see a lot of myself and my family in this movie. But how can I force my family to go to therapy? What is the best way to get a family member or friend to go to therapy?"

"There was a lot of symbolism in this film and in the script that I found very interesting. I was wondering what the objects that were in each of the characters rooms means to their character and why you choose those objects?"

"Some of the parts of the film were difficult for me to watch. It makes me think I need to see someone for help. Where can I find free therapist?"

"How much does therapy cost and where can I go for help?"

"During these times its hard to go see a therapist in person. Does therapy have to be in person or does it work just as well if its over internet or telephone?"

It seemed that amongst the Russian community, there were many questions regarding the effectiveness of therapy when dealing with mental health issues and also the cost of therapy as well as wanting information as to where they can go for help. During each Q



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and A session, as well as with the phone calls, emails and texts that followed, all of these questions were addressed by a Russian speaking mental health professional and the phone number to the LADMH Access line was given to all participants.

The Russian production became so relevant for the Russian speaking community that the director of the theatrical film was contacted by a journalist from the very popular radio station, Voice of America Russia and this journalist did a whole segment about the film and the message of the film for the Russian community. The journalists own review of the film stated, “Acting and directing-delightful! Very well received and believable!”

A total of 1,086 individuals registered to view the Farsi version of the theatrical film. The demographic information that was collected is as follows:

<b>Gender</b>	<b># Registered</b>
Male	283
Female	762
Other	14
No Answer	27

<b>Age</b>	<b># Registered</b>
0 to 15 years	0
16 to 25 years	20
25 to 59 years	637
60+ years	406
No Answer	23

<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b># Registered</b>
Iran	547
USA	430
Canada	18
UK	13
Australia	12

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Israel	9
Russia	6
Turkey	2
India	2
Rowanda	1

<b>Primary Language</b>	<b># Registered</b>
Farsi/Persian	934
English	111
Armenian	27
Hebrew	7
Russian	6
Arabic	1

After each zoom screening of the Farsi version of the film, we received a great amount of feedback from community members, not only during the Q and A sessions but also via social media, text messages and phone calls. The majority of participants commented on how educational and engaging they felt the script was and how much they appreciated the quality of the film and the performances of the actors. Many people also commented on how they felt like they could see themselves in this film and they really connected to the characters and the mental and emotional challenges that they were facing.

One participant commented, “Just brilliant. Amazing. Everyone in the community must see this. You hit the nail on the head in capturing every aspect of our daily life.” Another community member stated, “Great subject concerning the Iranian way of life. I enjoyed this movie and felt it was very constructive.” Another comment stated, “I just want to thank each and everyone of you for delivering your message in such a beautiful and meaningful way.” Another person stated, “Absolutely amazing. Very well written and well cast. Our community really needed this so that we can talk more openly about these issues. I hope to see more programs like this. It was very educational.”

Other comments included:

“Thank you so much! So interesting that none of the actors were together at the same time - I defiantly couldn't tell. I hope this helps raise the issues around getting help for mental health issues, especially right now in our current culture.”

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“I have watched this movie twice already and I’m still interested in watching it again. I learned so much about myself and our culture. I learned how important it is to be more honest with ourselves so that we can be more honest with others. I learned that its possible to work through our traumas and live more comfortable lives.”

“This was a deep insightful study of our inner voices. Congratulations in relaying issues of judgment and implicit biases of our generational misunderstandings. When can I see this again and how can I pass it along to others? This movie MUST be shown and accessible to all of us Iranians living abroad as well as to those in Iran. It is very important and educational.”

“You guys pointed out all the different kinds of Iranian taboos and stigmatized issues in less then two hours. Exceptional, outstanding and informative.”

“Thank you all for your hard work and making this move in such difficult circumstances with so many COVID restrictions. It was so educational and so necessary for our community.”

“Thank you all for bringing this important awareness to our community. Great job everyone. I will watch it again.”

“This was AMAZING! Thank you so much for making me feel seen and heard.”

“I was so touched by the truth and reality behind this film. It was moving for me and my daughter both. I thank you for your efforts in creating awareness through this film in our community. I look forward to discussing it more and watching it again.”

“Bravo. I really resonated with this film on so many levels. From first hand experience I can say this is a huge step in acknowledging and addressing the issues of our culture. Thank you all for this important work.”

“Seems that as a culture we have such need for affirmation and to be “liked” that we forget that it is important to actually like ourselves and value ourselves. That honesty and vulnerability is what makes the film impactful. Well done!”

“Admitting when we have a problem and seeking professional help with our mental health issues has always been a taboo within most of the Iranian community. Imagine how life would have been if this wasn’t the case. Thank you for raising awareness and for sharing your incredible work. It was inspiring and very educational.”

“I just wanted you to know how moved I was by this film. I was entertained and at the same time I found more than a few thoughts that I will be reflecting on in the days to come. You tackled a host of beasts and issues that we all face in our world and in our

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culture with deep roots and somehow managed to make it palatable so that one can sit through it and feel good at the end.”

We literally got hundreds and hundreds of messages such as these during the two weeks that we screened this film and we continue to get messages daily. Some of the questions that were asked during the Q and A sessions included:

“There seems to be a high level of depression and anxiety in the Iranian community that doesn’t often get discussed. Is there any data available as to the numbers suffering from mental illness in this community? How can we start the process of getting help?”

“Do you think the revolution and the upheaval it caused by uprooting people played a role in the notion of “Aberu” (saving face) among Iranians living in the diaspora?”

“Do you have other productions like this in mind that you will be doing? I would love to see a sequel to this or other mythical stories that discuss the psychological aspects of our community today.”

“Where do we go from here? Where can we get help? How do we convince our family and friends to discuss these issues and get help?”

“Therapy is so expensive. Where can someone who has a limited budget go to get therapy?”

“How did the actors grow and change as a result of playing these roles in their personal lives?”

“How can we develop and maintain a strong sense of self and still be a part of a community that doesn’t necessarily think that is a good thing?”

“How do we get over the fear and shame of being judged by family members about the issues we have?”

“How do overprotective parents affect their children’s lives?”

All of these questions were addressed by a Farsi speaking mental health professional and the phone number to the LADMH Access line was given to all participants.

Community members also gave positive feedback in regards to the Pre/Post surveys. They felt that the questions were good indicators of where community members beliefs and understanding lied in relation to the Russian and Farsi speaking communities. They stated that the results of the pre/post surveys confirmed for them how much these communities needed the information that was presented to them.

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For the Russian speaking community, the pre-tests indicated that only 27% of participants either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “Therapy can be as beneficial for healthy, emotionally stable, successful people, as much as it is for people suffering from serious mental illness.” The post tests indicate that there was a 46% increase in the number of participants who “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with this statement, indicating that the majority (73%) had developed a better understanding about the fact that therapy is not only meant for people with serious mental illness but can be beneficial for anyone who is experiencing distress.

The pre-tests also indicated that only 26% of participants either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “Fear of social stigma is one of the main reasons why individuals who suffer from mental health issues don’t seek help.” In contrast, the post-tests showed that 72% of participants were in agreement with this statement, indicating that there was a 46% increase in participants who had gained an understanding that in fact social stigma’s is a main reason why individuals choose to live with mental health issues rather than get help.

In regards to the statement, “Accessing mental health services is not a sign of weakness.” again, the pre-tests indicated that 18%% of participants either “agreed” or “strongly agreed,” with this statement; while the post-tests indicated that opinions had shifted by 49% with the majority (67%) agreeing with this statement. Thus confirming the fact that the theatrical presentation had helped participants understand that utilizing mental health services is not a weakness but actually a beneficial way to deal with life’s challenges.

Participants again indicated that the presentations helped them gain awareness of where they can go to access culturally competent and affordable mental health services, when the majority (85%) of them “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “I know of two places I can call to find affordable mental health services, with professionals who speak my language and know about my culture,” on the post-tests. In contrast, a mere 4% of participants initially “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with this statement on the pre-tests. That was an 81% increase in awareness that the participants gained.

Finally, the pre-tests indicated that only 24% of participants either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with the statement that “Mental health problems like depression and anxiety, can get better if a person goes to therapy.” While the vast majority (74%), indicated in post-tests that they “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with this statement. Again indicating a shift of 50% that participants had attained as a result of being exposed to the theatrical presentations.

For the Farsi speaking community the pre-tests indicated that only 31% of participants either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “Therapy can be as beneficial for healthy, emotionally stable, successful people, as much as it is for people suffering from serious mental illness.” The post tests indicate that there was a 38% increase in

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the number of participants who “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with this statement, indicating that the majority (85%) had developed a better understanding about the fact that therapy is not only meant for people with serious mental illness but can be beneficial for anyone who is experiencing distress.

The pre-tests also indicated that only 34% of participants either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “Fear of social stigma is one of the main reasons why individuals who suffer from mental health issues don’t seek help.” In contrast, the post-tests showed that 90% of participants were in agreement with this statement, indicating that there was a 24% increase in participants who had gained an understanding that in fact social stigma’s is a main reason why individuals choose to live with mental health issues rather than get help.

In regards to the statement, “Accessing mental health services is not a sign of weakness.” again, the pre-tests indicated that 51% of participants either “agreed” or “strongly agreed,” with this statement; while the post-tests indicating that opinions had shifted by 41% with the majority (92%) agreeing with this statement. Thus confirming the fact that the theatrical presentation had helped participants understand that utilizing mental health services is not a weakness but actually a beneficial way to deal with life’s challenges.

Participants again indicated that the presentations helped them gain awareness of where they can go to access culturally competent and affordable mental health services, when the majority (67%) of them “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement, “I know of two places I can call to find affordable mental health services, with professionals who speak my language and know about my culture,” on the post-tests. In contrast, a mere 17% of participants who initially “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with this statement on the pre-tests. That was a 50% increase in awareness that the participants gained.

Finally, the pre-tests indicated that only 31% of participants either “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with the statement that “Mental health problems like depression and anxiety, can get better if a person goes to therapy.” While the vast majority (92%), indicated in post-tests that they “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with this statement. Again indicating a shift of 61% that participants had attained as a result of being exposed to the theatrical presentation.

Therefore, the results of the pre tests are in alignment with our hypothesis that the majority of Russian and Farsi speakers have limited awareness about the social stigma’s that exist around mental health issues and to what extent these false beliefs and perceptions keeps them from accessing appropriate mental health services that can improve their everyday lives. The results of the post-tests then indicated that after participation in the theatrical presentations, the majority of participants had a better understanding and awareness in regards to how therapeutic interventions can benefit their lives and how and where to access such services.

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Furthermore, the verbal feedback that was collected was in alignment with the pre and post survey findings, as evidenced by the statement's presented above. The verbal feedback, even more than the pre/post survey's appeared to indicate how important these theatrical presentations were to community members and how influential they were in creating open discussion around subjects that are rarely discussed in our targeted communities.

A total of 257 Pre and Post tests were collected from the Farsi speaking community. Below is a detailed breakdown of participant's responses to each question:

**FARSI PRE-TEST OUTCOMES: N = 257**

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	No opinion (0)
	N - %	N - %	N - %	N - %	N - %	N - %
Therapy can be as beneficial for healthy, emotionally stable, successful people, as much as it is for people suffering from serious mental illness.	24 - 9%	56 - 22%	43 - 17%	47 - 18%	10 - 4%	77 - 30%
Fear of social stigma is one of the main reasons why individuals who suffer from mental health issues don't seek help.	27 - 10%	61 - 24%	44 - 17%	39 - 15%	13 - 5%	73 - 28%
Accessing mental health services is not a sign of weakness.	59 - 23%	72 - 28%	52 - 20%	21 - 8%	9 - 3%	44 - 17%
I know of two places I can call to find affordable mental health services, with professionals who speak my language and know about my culture.	15 - 6%	28 - 11%	7 - 3%	63 - 24%	84 - 33%	60 - 23%

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Mental health problems like depression and anxiety, can get better if a person goes to therapy.	31 - 12%	49 - 19%	46 - 18%	48 - 19%	22 - 8%	61 - 24%
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**FARSI POST-TEST OUTCOMES: N = 257**

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	No opinion (0)
	N - %	N - %	N - %	N - %	N - %	N - %
Therapy can be as beneficial for healthy, emotionally stable, successful people, as much as it is for people suffering from serious mental illness.	95 - 37%	124 - 48%	24 - 9%	3 - 1%	0	12 - 5%
Fear of social stigma is one of the main reasons why individuals who suffer from mental health issues don't seek help.	146 - 57%	86 - 33%	13 - 5%	1 - 0.3%	1 - 0.3%	10 - 4%
Accessing mental health services is not a sign of weakness.	176 - 68%	61 - 24%	7 - 3%	18 - 7%	0	9 - 3%



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I know of two places I can call to find affordable mental health services, with professionals who speak my language and know about my culture.	94 - 36%	79 - 31%	32 - 12%	16 - 6%	16 - 6%	46 - 18%
Mental health problems like depression and anxiety, can get better if a person goes to therapy.	163 - 63%	74 - 29%	10 - 4%	0	0	9 - 3%

A total of 78 Pre and Post tests were collected from the Russian speaking community. Below is a detailed breakdown of participant's responses to each question:

**RUSSIAN PRE-TEST OUTCOMES: N = 78**

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	No opinion (0)
	N - %	N - %	N - %	N - %	N - %	N - %
Therapy can be as beneficial for healthy, emotionally stable, successful people, as much as it is for people suffering from serious mental illness.	10 - 13%	11 - 14%	18 - 23%	16 - 20%	7 - 9%	16 - 20%
Fear of social stigma is one of the main reasons why individuals who suffer from mental health issues don't seek help.	9 - 11%	11 - 14%	17 - 22%	14 - 18%	6 - 8%	21 - 27%

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Accessing mental health services is not a sign of weakness.	3 - 4%	11 - 14%	7 - 9%	19 - 24%	9 - 11%	29 - 37%
I know of two places I can call to find affordable mental health services, with professionals who speak my language and know about my culture.	2 - 2%	1 - 1%	2 - 2%	45 - 58%	6 - 8%	22 - 28%
Mental health problems like depression and anxiety, can get better if a person goes to therapy.	8 - 10%	11 - 14%	42 - 54%	4 - 5%	7 - 9%	6 - 8%

**RUSSIAN POST-TEST OUTCOMES: N = 78**

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree (4)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly Disagree (1)	No opinion (0)
	N - %	N - %	N - %	N - %	N - %	N - %
Therapy can be as beneficial for healthy, emotionally stable, successful people, as much as it is for people suffering from serious mental illness.	30 - 38%	27 - 35%	4 - 5%	3 - 4%	0	14 - 18%
Fear of social stigma is one of the main reasons why individuals who suffer from mental health issues don't seek help.	33 - 42%	23 - 29%	4 - 5%	2 - 2%	2 - 2%	14 - 18%

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Accessing mental health services is not a sign of weakness.	28 - 36%	24 - 31%	6 - 8%	3 - 4%	2 - 2%	15 - 19%
I know of two places I can call to find affordable mental health services, with professionals who speak my language and know about my culture.	45 - 58%	21 - 27%	2 - 2%	3 - 4%	0	7 - 9%
Mental health problems like depression and anxiety, can get better if a person goes to therapy.	36 - 46%	22 - 28%	3 - 4%	5 - 6%	2 - 2%	10 - 13%

**Project Costs**

For the services described in the Statement of Work’s Deliverables, the Department of Mental Health originally agreed to pay Consultants (Cross Cultural Expressions) a total of \$99,500 for services rendered. However, after the revision of the SOW due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the amount was renegotiated and reduced to a total of \$91,500.

**Lessons Learned**

The really big challenge of this project was one that we never could have anticipated and that was the multiple issues that occurred with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The fact that the whole production got placed on an extended hold from March to July was of course very difficult and really affected the mood and motivation of the cast and crew. Once it was decided that we could only move forward with the production if we changed the project from staged theatrical productions to filmed theatrical productions and that the presentations would move from a live audience to virtual audience via zoom, the challenges began to multiply.

Of course the added challenge of never having the cast and crew physically be in the same space during rehearsals and filming in order to adhere to social distancing protocols continued to add to the difficulties of the task at hand. Additionally, doing all of this in a 4 month period with a limited budget made it even more difficult.

It was really a testament to the cast and crews dedication and belief in the project and the positive effect they believed it would have on their respective communities that we were able to work through all of the challenges mentioned above. The two directors

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exhibited great creativity and dedicated a tremendous number of hours to making sure that the filmed productions would be visually and technically interesting and of very high quality. The actors also exhibited a lot of dedication and put in a lot of long hours to make sure that they were well rehearsed and available for all filming dates.

The big lesson learned was that sometimes things will happen that are well beyond our control and that we have to be flexible and use creativity to work through them. Also, having a project that one really believes in and stands behind creates a drive that makes individuals work harder to make sure that the project gets done.

One of the major challenges that we ran into was that the zoom platform proved to be a difficult platform for many of the participants to navigate. Many of the Russian and Farsi speaking adults and older adults complained that they had a very hard time registering and that it was difficult for them to manage logging into the webinar.

One way we worked to resolve this issue was to have community members call us and we would register them over the phone. We also made ourselves available during the presentations in order to take participants calls and over the telephone we would try and walk them through how to access zoom webinars. We learned that in order to engage the most number of participants it will serve us better in the future to utilize a platform such as YouTube live, which is far easier to navigate.

Additionally, we also ran into many challenges in collecting the pre/post surveys. We first decided to administer the survey's using survey monkey and we quickly learned that this route would get us very, very few responses. Therefore, we decided to distribute the pre tests via zoom webinars immediately before the screening of the film and then distribute the post tests via zoom webinars immediately after the Q and A sessions. This route appeared to work better for the Farsi speaking community, however, we continued to struggle with responses from the Russian speaking community.

We also realized that we were getting significantly less numbers of registrants with the Russian Zoom presentations. In order to understand why this was happening the producer, the director, the Russian consultant and the cast began to do some random interviews with Russian community members and we found out that in addition to the Russian community having a very difficult time accessing the zoom webinars platform, they were also very reluctant to give the demographic information that we requested of them at registration and they also did not feel comfortable with filling out the survey questions. We did reach out to LADMH with a request to change the platform for the Russian presentations to Youtube live and do away with the information that we would have gathered via the pre/post tests and instead concentrate on getting qualitative information through verbal feedback and comments. However, because of the incredible time constraints, LADMH was not able to respond to our request in the time frame that we needed them to in order to make this shift. Therefore, we ended up sticking to the original plan outlined in the SOW.

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Two things that we did in order to work through these issues was first, since we had access to many community members emails, we reached out to them individually and asked if they would be willing to fill out the pre/post surveys. By having the Russian cultural consultant reach out to them directly and provide them with assurance that their answers and demographic information would be confidential, we were able to secure around 50 additional pre/post surveys.

Second, we decided to do a seventh screening of the Russian theatrical production (including a Q and A) utilizing the Youtube live platform in order to see if in fact it was the zoom platform and the request for demographic information and pre/post survey's that were getting in the way of us getting the numbers we had anticipated with the Russian community. We found this to be absolutely the case because our 7th Youtube live presentation of the Russian production (which took place on December 19, 2020) received 529 views and we got 513 "Likes." We were also able to collect some limited demographic information from those viewers. The data that Youtube live collected showed that 73% of the 529 individuals who viewed the presentation were female and 27% were male. The data also showed that 100% of the viewers were between the ages of 26 to 59 years old. We did not include this data in our official numbers since it was not collected in the agreed upon manner, but we thought it was important to include this information in this report.

As engagement through on-line virtual events is more and more widely used in our world today, I think this is valuable information to have collected. Knowing what virtual platforms are most utilized and what community members reactions are to the collection of demographic information and pre/post surveys will allow us to better serve our communities for future outreach and engagement events.

### **Recommendations**

The idea of creating awareness and educating the Russian and Farsi speaking communities of Los Angeles County around mental health issues and linkage to culturally appropriate mental health services through the creation of mental health theatrical productions, was very well conceived and proved to be a successful way to tackle these stigmatized issues within these respective communities. However, it is clear to us that this is only another step in what needs to be on-going programming that will help educate and normalize this concept to these communities. Due to the fact that we now have in our possession two 90-minute theatrical films that address these issues specifically for the Russian and Farsi speaking communities, it is our recommendation that continued funding is granted in order for us to not only continue to promote these films to their respective communities on social media (i.e. via Youtube, facebook, instagram, etc.), but to also create additional theatrical productions that continue to provide education and engagement about mental health issues through story telling. This will help get the information that we have gathered through this project to a greater number of people and will continue to allow for learning and growth within the targeted communities.

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**Conclusion**

Overall, the data collected indicates that a significant number of Russian and Farsi speaking community members attended the theatrical productions, even though it was changed from a staged production to an on-line platform. And by engaging the community's in this way, it is clear that this project was able to shift the targeted communities thinking around mental health issues, provide them with correct information and with referrals to much needed mental health services.

The pre/post survey's that were collected show that there was a significant shift in participant beliefs and knowledge about mental health issues. And verbal and written feedback that we received from community members confirmed that this project has created a substantial transformation in the perceptions that participants have in regards to mental health issues and has increased the dialogue that community members are having about this subject. The information that we have collected supports and validates our conclusion that despite its great challenges, this program was a resounding and overwhelming success in accomplishing the goals and objectives that we set out to achieve.