

AFRICANS IN BOSTON

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Road map for the creation of an African diaspora credit union



1. Background:

Recognizing that financial institutions are one of the most heavily regulated institutions in the United States, Africans in Boston has taken a leap of faith and committed to steering the process for the creation of the first African Diaspora Credit Union in New England.

This began when African Union Ambassador to the United States, Dr. Arikana Chihombori-Quao, reached out to Africans in Boston, in August 2018, and requested the organization to mobilize and convene Africans in the New England area, for the creation of an African diaspora credit union, which would be a significant contribution to the United States economy, and at the same time serve specific financial needs of the African diaspora in the region.

This process for creating the credit union was launched at a public meeting with the H.E Dr. Arikana Chihombori-Quao, held on September 6, 2018 at Boston University. In that meeting, she urged the African Diaspora to leverage their numbers to create a financial entity that would cater to the needs of the African Diaspora, and at the same time become a platform for investment on the continent of Africa. This meeting was attended by over 50 African diaspora, who expressed eagerness and enthusiasm to be a part of this project.

Following the launch, Africans in Boston held consultative meetings with H.E Amb Chihombori-Quao, Financial and banking experts, and groups of African Diaspora who have been mobilizing funds for the creation of different financial initiatives, both formal and informal (social support). These meetings were aimed at understanding the banking sector, financial regulations, and identifying ways to integrate existing financial initiatives into one process for creating a single African Diaspora Credit Union. The AiB team also embarked on a grassroots campaign to raise awareness of the process in the community. This consultative process increased enthusiasm and questions among Africans in the diaspora and was the foundation for the public Conference call held on October 10, 2018.

2. Africans in Boston Conference Call, October 10, 2018 at 7:30am-10:30am

This call was advertised on the various social media that AiB uses for most of its communication, including the AiB website, facebook, What'sApp groups, to provide an opportunity for African diaspora members to participate in this grassroots initiative. It was moderated by Voury Ignegongba (AiB President) and Vivian Birchall (Executive Director). Other people in attendance included Jeff Siaw, former

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AiB Executive Director, Mountaga Sar (President, Senegalese Organization of Massachusetts); Kobena Bonney (President, Ghana Association of Greater Boston), Dapo Olagbaju, Caroline Okello (CEO-Alpha Gold Africa- Digital Financial Management Services), David Mwai Ndegwa (Sahara Group and ADG), Fatmata Jah, Ciro Njinyah, Alex Inyagwa, Salma Semakula, Honorable Will Mbah, City of Somerville Councilor, Aliya Seck (VP Senegalese Organization of Massachusetts), Libeyo Futila Matita David Nnyanzi, Mthambuza (South Africa), Ulrich Dossou and a few others whose names we did not capture.

All African diaspora were urged to send their company and organizational details, profiles and events to the AiB team, to be uploaded on the Africans in Boston website, to create a data base, book of list, and central location for broadcasting African programs, initiatives and businesses.

3. Proposed Diaspora Credit Union road map by Voury Ignegongba

The goal for the credit union project is to start in New England and replicate the model in other states in the USA and the rest of the World. A similar process is starting the United Kingdom and Africans in Boston is having conversations with partners in South Africa who have expressed interest in starting one in their community.

Phase 1: Mobilization and awareness

Phase 2: Contributions and board creation

Phase 3: Research

Phase 4: Diaspora credit union implementation or Bank acquisition

4. Options for creating accounts- proposed and discussed

- PayPal account through AiB
- Diaspora Savings & Investments Account with One United Bank (pending negotiation). With this option, a project manager would be assigned by the Bank, to meet and answer questions that the public might have. The goal is for diaspora members to open sub-accounts under this account with a code

5. Concerns and Way Forward

- It was unanimously agreed that the legality of the process should take precedence over all other things, to protect all involved from getting in trouble with the law, in this heavily regulated sector
- It was unanimously agreed that the benefits of a credit union outweigh any possible negatives and all meeting participants expressed willingness to work with AiB to realize the dream for an African diaspora credit union.
- It was discussed and agreed that AiB needs to provide a clear structure and communication that will be used in the grass root campaign for getting African diaspora involved

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- It was discussed and agreed to establish a Board of qualified and vetted individuals to provide oversight of the process for creating the credit union
- It was discussed and agreed that this process would need critical mass to create the new financial entity, and all community leaders and individuals were requested to use their platforms to mobilize the African Diaspora.
- Africans in Boston will continue working with Mr. David Ndegwa, whose group has already carried out research on the legal structure for creating a financial entity in the USA, to integrate that process into the main framework.
- Some expressed concern about using the AiB's Paypal account to collect individual contributions, and favored using an established financial entity/bank for that process. However, some also pointed out the possible inconvenience of opening accounts that did not have adequate branches through out New England. AiB will report on the next course of Action, after consultation with relevant people.
- Participants were invited to join the AiB team as volunteers to work toward improving the AiB platform.
- Mr. Jeff Siaw and Mr. Ciro Njinyah volunteered to help with the Credit Union initiative as needed.

Vivian Birchall and Voury Ignegongba

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