



BORAQO HALAL MARKET Lewiston, Maine

Hussein Ahmed arrived in the U.S. from Kenya in 2001. A father of five children, he brought his mother and four siblings to this country and started, succeeded in, and integrated four businesses under one roof – a roof (and building) that he purchased with a CEI Sharia-compliant loan.

Hussein is 37 years old and about to graduate from the University of Southern Maine with a double major: leadership and organizational studies, and social and behavioral sciences. He owns a retail store that carries Halal meats, other foodstuffs and equipment, and clothing that his fellow Somalis seek out. His store, on a corner of busy Lisbon Street in Lewiston, is bright and clean and provides free parking. Hussein is also a landlord, owns an interpreter service, prepares tax

returns, facilitates money remittances to relatives in Kenya, and accepts local utility payments.

What drives this man? The understanding of the common struggle to adjust to life in America and the desire to succeed in business and become a good citizen, a legal status which he is diligently pursuing. Since starting his business life in Maine, he has relied heavily on the services of StartSmart, which helps New Americans wanting to start and grow businesses. Hussein says that he uses the StartSmart counselor to “advocate, navigate, architect and advise” on the challenges of running a profitable business.

In 2001, Hussein Ahmed got a job after one week in the U.S. Ever since then, he’s been giving back.

- LOCATION:** **LEWISTON, ME**
- NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES:** **2**
- CEI CONNECTION:** **STARTSMART, INDEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT ACCOUNT AND LOAN DEPARTMENT**
- PARTNERS:** **CITY OF LEWISTON, AVCOG**

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ALIYOWS STORE Lewiston, Maine

It's a long journey from a refugee camp in Nairobi, Kenya to freedom. Undaunted by the persecution that was rife in his Somali homeland, Mohamed Dekow – at 30 years old – started his 4th successful business, this one in Lewiston, Maine, USA. Among the native food products, Halal meats, colorful garments and cleaning supplies are the sounds of a community's camaraderie and laughter. The store and Mohamed are trusted resources. Entrepreneurs like Mohamed balance the scale between old and new cultures, and ethnic and personal opportunities. Aliyows Store is the sole Somali Bantu grocery in Maine, one of only a few in the U.S. It provides a familiar shopping and meeting place for the Bantu community, who have historically been underdogs in their homeland.

When Mohamed needed funds to expand, he was helped by a Sharia-compliant loan, developed by StartSmart, to meet the strict borrowing requirements of the Muslim faith. StartSmart, CEI's business assistance program for New Americans, was there "to provide advice on everything," says Mohamed. The counsel he received from CEI included business planning and coaching, navigating various regulatory requirements, and learning ways of doing business in this country. This savvy proprietor acquired two loans from CEI, the first to help with start-up costs and the second to support a move to a larger location where he could offer a wider assortment of products. With five children under the age of 8, Mohamed Dekow navigates life with an engaging smile and the confidence that sequential success has provided.

community

CEI meets refugees "where they are," providing culturally-sensitive technical assistance, lending and support services that lead to sustainable businesses for new residents.



Aliyows Store

Founded:	2007
Location:	Lewiston, ME
Employees:	2
Sales:	\$150,000
CEI connections:	StartSmart, Loan Department