

Refugee Advisory Board Meeting
Refugee Education & Training Center
August 24th,2023

Board Members Attendees – Nate McDonald (Chair), Brent Peterson, Rachel Ashby, Joseph Genda, Stephanie Patton, Mohamed Diallo, Aden Batar, Scott Cougill, Tylor Kotter, Zach J. Bale, Desange Kuenihira, Abdul Bari Ayubi, Pamela Atkinson, Danny Beus, Joshua Bell,

Member Excused—Kelli Meranda, James McConkie, Rick Bouillon, Foster Richard,

Welcome and Introduction Announcements – Nate McDonald

- Welcome Mario Kljajo, the new refugee Services Office Director. He has been working with DWS for the past 13 years and with RSO for the past 5 years. He is a refugee from Bosnia. Mario is very excited to work with refugees.
- Introduce new Board member Zack J. Bale he is the Chief Program Officer of Housing Connect and Executive Director of the Housing Connect Fund.
- **Approval of Minutes** –Nate McDonald requested the motion to approve the minutes from the August Advisory Board meeting.
- Aden Batar made the motion to approve the minutes with no corrections.
- Joseph Genda seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Refugee Landscape in Utah—Kira Delong

A refugee is a person forced to flee their home due to persecution on account of their religion, race, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

There are approximately 27 million refugees, and an additional 100 million forcibly displaced worldwide. Over two-thirds of these individuals come from Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan, and Myanmar. Most of all refugees are women and children.

Less than 1% of refugees globally will be resettled in a third country, such as the United States.

Refugee Types – Refugee, Humanitarian Parole, Asylee, Victim of Trafficking, Cuban/Haitian Entrance.

US Resettlement Overview—U. S refugee admission program receives referrals from the United Nations. There are prescreening interviews, Interviews with U.S. officials, Security checks, medical exam assurance, final security checks, and cultural orientation. At the end of this process, they are waiting on the flight to the USA. There are dedicated individuals here ready to receive them. The average wait time for US resettlement is 18 to 24 months. The annual refugee resettlement ceiling is currently 125,000. We may see more people arrive than assessment each year.

Refugee in Utah—Approximately 1,570 refugees were resettled in Utah last year. Over 65,000 refugees in total call Utah home. Most reside in the Salt Lake Valley. Moving forward people will see resettlement happening across the state of Utah.

Refugee Services Office (RSO)—Founded in 2008, the role of RSO is the Administration of State and Federal Funding. Collaboration with community partners. Serving as a resource hub for refugees via the Utah Refugee Center (URC) by providing services to them like Employment, Education and Training, Community and Family Support, and Health & Mental Health.

Local Resettlement and Placement Agencies—We have several resettlement partners. Our primary resettlement partners are Catholic Community Services (CCS), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and Cache Refugee and Immigrant Connection (CRIC) and additional partners are the Asian Association of Utah (AAU) and Utah Health and Human Rights (UHHR). These two agencies work with the unique needs of the individuals.

Major Federally Contracted Services—Other services we coordinate are Afghan legal Services, Health and Health Promotions, Refugee School Impact, services to Older Refugees, Unaccompanied Refugee Minors, and Youth Mentoring along with several non-ORR services we work with more than 100 different organizations.

Q: **Stephanie Patton**--How many unaccompanied refugee minors are here that come in under annual visas?

Ans: **Aden Batar**—In Utah every year we have over 30 minors. We have a capacity of 105 but in the U.S there are 3000 to 5000 coming in throughout the year.

Arrival Update

- **Update on Refugee Arrival Data**—Kiley Foster
 - For the federal fiscal year of 2023 till the end of July Utah saw 1444 including 60 secondary migrants.
 - The biggest population we have seen is Ukrainian, Afghans, Congolese, and Cubans.
 - Most of the arrivals were Refugees. We also seen a significant number of Ukrainian Humanitarian Parolees and Cuban Haitian Entrance. A small number of victims of trafficking moderate number of asylees and special immigrant visa holders.
- **Catholic Community Services**—Aden Batar
 - We always have a bulge of arrivals during this time of the year. We have been getting Refugees and other populations.
 - We are seeing arrivals from Syria every week we receive a lot of families arriving from Syria.
 - Ukrainians will continue to be coming.
 - Housing has always been an issue.

- We are running low on donations of household items Furnishing Cleaning supplies. Every month we averaged 80 individuals arriving from the last 3 months. we are always asking the public to help us.
- September will be a very busy month. we may slow down in October and November. Next year will also be a busy year.
- We just finished registering over 300 students in the schools.
- We also working with Afghan parolees. We didn't see a lot of approval their license is expiring. I have been told that they can get term term-limited driver's license.
- Visit our website CCSUTAH.ORG if you would like to donate.

Q: **Pamela Atkinson**--Is there any particular group that is facing a harder time settling down than others?

Ans: **Aden Batar and Mohammed Diallo**--Afghans and Congolese are having a hard time getting settled down. Also, single mothers take time to settle down due to insufficient income, high cost of rent, and fewer skills. Afghans arriving with larger families also take a longer time to adjust.

➤ **Cache Refugee and Immigrant Connection (CRIC)**—Danny Beus

- We have finished our first official year of resettlement we will not receive new arrivals until October, we hit our capacity 100%
- Everyone is in permanent housing.
- All school-age kids in school.
- With Afghans we are still seeing issues with their SIV,s statuses. employment authorization about to expire. We are working with local employers and with our national CWS office. Everyone has applied. We have not received any approvals yet. We are seeing some Afghans receiving notices from the Department of Homeland Security office asking for additional information to reapprove for re-parole which is something different than USCIS. We were wondering if in Salt Lake City Afghans also receiving notices.
- Aden Batar – We haven't seen any, but Nationally some Afghans will be getting those notices.

➤ **International Rescue Committee** -- Mohammed Diallo

- **Introducing Mr. Hans**, who is the director of the IRC Office. visited Salt Lake City for the First time and came from New York to visit IRC. He has a wider network.
- He found Utah a very welcoming state for refugees and immigrants where enough to work in with the state, private sector, communities, and government all come together to really try to do what is right. I look forward to learning more about the solutions and challenges of working in the state where we all will come together with the solutions.
- Last quarter we received a family of 14 from Congo.

- From Last year October 2022 to July 2023, we received 468 individuals. March had the highest and October had the lowest arrival numbers.
- DRC, Afghanistan, Syria, Center Africa of Republic, and Venezuela were the peak countries of arrivals including 25 other countries.
- From FY 2023 August to September, we received 53 individuals.
- 8 individuals are scheduled to arrive on 08/31/23 from DRC.
- 36 individuals are scheduled to arrive in September 2023 which ends the FY.
- Our capacity was to receive 500 so far, we have received 564 we are 10% over our capacity.
- For Matching Grant & Refugee Cash Assistance we have 300 slots allocated to the IRC SLC office for FY 2023. As of 8/15, 243 slots have been filled with 192 refugees, 47 with SIV,s (Special Immigrant Visas), and 4 Ukrainians.
- The self sufficiency rate for MG clients, as of 8/15/23 is 69.53% as compared to FY22 at 23%.
- The remaining 225 of the IRC clients are enrolled in RCA in coordination with the Refugee Services Office.
- 336 initials school intakes this FY with accompanying school tours and bus orientations.
- 75 enrollments into summer School and after-school programs.
- 21 students support volunteers paired with families with school-aged children.
- 200 clients received affordable internet applications and technical support.
- 300 computers distributed to newly arriving households.12 tech volunteers in digital literacy.
- We have an educational program at IRC with 40 digital skills training workshops. 2 caregiver training courses .24 cultural orientation classes taught.
- We have a Health Access and Health Promotions program. The IRC team helps schedule medical, dental, and vision appointments for the new arrivals.
- We have mental health and wellness, Gender Equity and Safety, Maternal and Child Health, and Women’s Health programs and resources available at IRC.
- We have a community and integration program. We completed 310 immigration applications. We have 17 interpreters. We are supporting community engagement programs by providing Citizenship preparation classes.
- Last year we developed the Entrepreneurship and Economic Wellbeing unit that supports Financial Capability, Small Businesses, and New Roots Spice Kitchen.
- IRC Community Sponsorship Program launched in spring 2022. 4 teams 2 matched with 2 families and 2 teams are under training.
- Rent and affordable housing is still a challenge. We are looking for donations.
- Caseworkers’ turnover is high due to caseloads.

- Some clients feel isolated due to secure housing being too far from their communities and halal shops which is affecting their mental health.
- APA clients are facing the expiration of EAD cards and driver's licenses in September without knowing when re-parole will be approved.

Q: **Joseph Genda**--How do you determine self-sufficiency and hope clients are not being shifted to DWS?

Ans: **Mohammed Diallo**--Self-sufficiency means they can navigate the system by themselves. It has been calculated on the number of how many clients we received and how many are employed and not coming back to IRC to ask for more help. We have software where we keep track of that. They can come to DWS for different needs like job search. They may be getting food stamps and Medicaid, but they will not be getting public cash assistance.

Q: **Nate McDonald**--Are you seeing any medical challenges or needs there?

Ans: **Rachel Ashby**—In our top medical condition Tuberculosis is up there we have a system to connect them to the follow-up treatment with local health departments. Dental is also tricky because not everything is covered under Medicaid and mental health is very common, so we made referrals for that in the initial health visit. We have contracts with different agencies. We are facing some backlogs to get hold of experienced caregivers and we are trying to expand our services.

Q: **Taylor Kotter** – Are we leveraging UVU Dental School?

Ans: **Rachel Ashby** – Yes, we do, they often have free clinics. Where we refer people. We also have opened a Newcomer Clinic where we provide mental health services. We are also in touch with IRC, CCS, and AAU providing parenting classes and roots and expanding those services for the people to get a bigger picture.

Brent Peterson—we are also seeing cultural trauma, barriers, and dysregulation in kids' behavior support and families which are our biggest challenges. We might connect them to the best services and keep an eye on that issue.

Housing Availability and Affordability – Nate McDonald

- We had a meeting last week to brainstorm on challenges in solving housing issues.
- My biggest concern is to solve housing crises. We wanted to have a discussion on this issue for a couple of reasons. As deputy of DWS, I am privileged to support RSO and the Housing and Community Development Office along with the Office of Homeless Services which gives me insight into more severe housing challenges that we are facing on a statewide level.

- Moving forward we are trying to address these housing challenges and how we will be resettling refugees in this critical situation. It's impacting our resettlement agencies that are facing housing challenges.
- June was the final month of no payment for emergency rental assistance. That was great support from the last two years for new arrivals. We are back to traditional funding. Our rental vacancy rate is at an all-time low which create a great challenge for us cause landlord can rent on market rate. Units are very restricted.
- During the ERA which was great in many ways there were downsides to it Landlords charged market rate for the population using ERA. This has contributed to the landlord raising rent and another was about security deposit.
- We are very grateful for Danny's support to have resettlement in Logan.
- In this situation moving or getting evicted can be a big challenge even for those who are already living here cause finding a new place is very challenging.
- There was a national study that was done last year on the shortage of housing. 33,000 units short. 43,000 units short of affordable housing.
- Kem C Gardner Institute we contracted to put together a database of housing. Draft estimates show that for the 221,952 households at 80% of AMI and below, there were 100 affordable units available for every 100 households at this income level. Meaning there was no deficit. However, as the income threshold decreases so does the deficit. For the 174,664 households at 60% of AMI and below, 106,650 affordable units were available, or 61 affordable units were available for every 100 households, a total cumulative deficit of 68,014 units. There were 35 units available for every 100 households for those with incomes at 50% AMI and below, creating a deficit of approximately 95,586 units for the group. This figure also includes the deficit of 77,140 estimated for those households with incomes at 30% AMI or below. In 2022, only 3 affordable units were available for every 100 households with incomes at 30% AMI and below.
- We are talking about deficiency in affordable units. The needs with resettlement. We are all competing for the same units. Housing has become the biggest challenge in refugee resettlement.
- ORR recently gave us permission to hire a housing Coordinator at the state level to help support resettlement agencies and refugees with housing needs.
- We will bring this issue forward with the advisory committee to hear, see, and create awareness for housing challenges and create some strategies.
- When we met with resettlement agencies to discuss what the potential number would be for this upcoming year at the beginning of this year when we were projecting the numbers for this year. We talked about housing being the number one challenge. If we want to resettle 1200 plus this year. We need to make sure we have housing out there.

- **Nate McDonald**--I would also like to know. What does our housing flow look like? that means are we moving people from temporary housing to permanent housing? What's the duration of moving families from hotel to permanent housing?
- **Aden Batar**—There is a lot of housing in the market. The biggest issue is finding affordable housing as we are getting more people, we do not have the ability to get housing at market rate and find resources to pay for that. If we have two or three people working in a family that is good but for single parents, it's always a challenge. People who are not able to work initially are also a challenge so far, we are finding housing and we do not have people in temporary housing. We faced these challenges when Afghans were coming in big groups. But we still need to get a landlord who is willing to lease with refugees.
- **Nate McDonald** – We would like to resettle more people to our state and always want to be a welcoming state but with our housing availability challenge we cannot afford expansion in resettlement. Almost every state is facing this problem. Mr. Hans, can you give a national perspective on this?
- **Mr. Hans** – It is absolutely a national problem we work in 18 states all are facing the same situation and crises. It's only a difference of resettling a couple or a 10-person family.
- Cause of the housing situation we have to expand four and a half thousand dollars to be able to find a house or to pay for temporary housing if needed.
- As an agency we are also trying to make a clear commitment to what we will be providing. If we cannot provide affordable housing, we are bringing people to poverty.
- We are talking to TRM about finding additional assistance with federal funding. We are talking to federal partners to start affordable housing projects in certain locations.
- We are also talking to TRM about where you can resettle people, we are trying to raise the resettlement radius so you can move to more affordable areas. We are even coming to the point where we are looking for very strict criteria of what the housing requirement for a family of four or five. We might need to look at those requirements that mean a family now can get a roof on their head.
- It's a national problem and it will challenge the feasibility of the national program if there is no solution.
- I really want to avoid the situation where we are putting people who are already here against the people that are coming, that will not be a good situation.
- **Danny Beus** – we have hired a housing coordinator who is building relationships with landlords and searching for houses. We were able to find landlords with multiple properties. We were able to have a lot of availability. We were also able to find basement duplexes and fourplexes. Cache County is not a big fan of accessory-developed units. Typically, they are more affordable than a townhouse or a condo and that also brings us a solution for our housing needs.

- **Nate McDonald** – We know that housing is the top priority. This topic has been discussed and a lot of it has been debated and worked through at a lead level with Utah Legal City with Developer Communities. Utah Opportunity of Economic Commission led by the governor. We do know housing is one of the top priorities.
- **Nate McDonald**-- Zack J. Bale I would like to know what challenges you are seeing from the housing authority standpoint any thoughts there?
- **Zack J. Bale** -- Individuals who have better resources are having success in terms of this additional staff support. Housing location, Money for a deposit, application fees, and any cost that prevents someone from renting units is the right thing to do for a housing situation. We are also facing homelessness. Salt Lake City Housing Authority, Salt Lake County, and Housing Connect serve about 10,000 households every month.
- Section 8 is currently open. It's not always open at this moment our wait list is up to Five, six thousand households so there will be a long wait.
- In terms of direct program overlap, the RESH program is currently serving four or five households. Afghan funding that we receive is currently serving 65 households.
- Due to high rental costs 60% of household income is going toward rent.
- We have enough developers who are interested but we do not have funding structured.
- **Mario Kljajo** – How did you negotiate paying rent?
- **Danny Beus** – Since refugees do not come with a background history. We were able to negotiate that instead of paying a double deposit we could pay three months' rent upfront, and they waived the deposit, and they were willing to do that So, we are not wasting money on deposit and were able to use it for extra rent. Building relationships helps us a lot.
- **Pamela Atkinson**— This was a very informative meeting. The housing crisis is bad across the country. We need to look outside the box. Maybe incorporate it with some of the village housing. Right now, it's only for homeless people. We can consider them for smaller families.
- **Nate McDonald** – We are looking to set up a meeting with the apartment association and have a conversation with them. For our next meeting I would like to know Are we seeing housing has been an issue in schools. Is that impacting health? Are there any challenges? We will provide updates on housing affordability and impacts. That is our mission.

Refugee Services Fund – Joe Edman

- This is the Refugee Services fund through the end of FY we have 155,059.27 in the funds.
- We started with 160,288.74. 5,000 decrease overall stable.
- URETC is a category that helps support our short-term training customers who don't qualify for ORR funds. We have a contract with Salt Lake Community College training. We are out of funds there.

- We have over 4,000 for funerals, we spent 2,000 last year. We help subsidize four or five funerals a year. This is often a popular category.

RSO Updates

- WRD celebration held on June 16-17, 2023, 70 plus partner organization has participated.
- 11 students graduated from IT training and 5 of them have internships with the Mayor's Office.
- RSO first time collaborating with UTA. Students receive CDL training and participate in English classes. 7 Refugees are graduating in August 2023.
- Earlier this month the Social Services Appropriations Committee hosted a meeting at RSO, we also got the opportunity to tell them what we are doing and show the office.

Adjournment

- Nate McDonald requested the motion to adjourn.
- Josua Bell made a motion to adjourn.

Next Meeting November 30th ,2023