

Refugee Advisory Board Meeting
Refugee Education & Training Center

June 27th, 2019

Board Member Attendees- Aden Batar, Rachel Ashby (Representative of Amelia Self), Bhim Sapkota, Brent Platt, Brian Redd, Fatima Dirie, Natalie El-Diery, Paul Moody, Rick Bouillon, Shu Cheng, Steve Pluim, Tino Nyawelo, Ze Min Xiao

Members Excused- Jon Pierpont, Janice Kimball, Kelli Meranda, Martin Bates, Pamela Atkinson,

Welcome and Introduction- Asha Parekh, Director of the Refugee Services Office

- Ms. Parekh asked members to consider moving the summer meeting in future to accommodate more board members, as attendance is often low in the summer months.

Approval of Minutes-

Motion to approve: Asha Parekh requested the motion to approve minutes from March Advisory Board Meeting.

- Steve Pluim made the motion to approve the minutes with no corrections.
- Rick Bouillon seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Housing Subcommittee- Asha Parekh

- Ms. Parekh informed board members that Janice Kimball had been relieved as chair of the Housing Subcommittee and that Alan Urie had been selected as chair of that committee. Ms. Parekh informed the group that Alan agrees with the vision and strategic plan of the subcommittee and wants to focus now on gathering data about where refugees are being housed.
- Ms. Parekh reports that the committee is very large but to this point attendance has not been very good at their monthly meetings. Alan will work on a different strategy for meeting after data about housing has been gathered.
- Mr. Pluim inquired if this change to the chair of the subcommittee needs board approval, and Ms. Parekh responded that because there has not been a significant change to the strategic plan of the committee, a board approval will not be necessary.

2018 RCBO Report- Michael Pekarske, Utah Refugee Education and Training Center Manager

- Mr. Pekarske explained that RCBO grants have been given as a way to fund refugees in their efforts to run and be involved in their own community capacity building.
- Mr. Pekarske went over the 2018 RCBO Report, which was provided to board members at the meeting.
- Mr. Pluim asked how much money is being given in RCBO grants and Ms. Parekh responded that RSO is funding \$200,000 while in 2018 the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints donated another \$100,000.

- Mr. Pluim asked if the Church of Jesus Christ was planning to continue funding the program. Paul Moody responded that the Church loves the program and hopefully they will continue supporting it this year.
- Ms. Parekh commented that representatives from Idaho had contacted the RSO to discuss the RCBO funding program and that RSO is sharing information with them.

Refugee Employment Conference Review- Asha Parekh

- Ms. Parekh reported that 180 people were present on the first day of the conference and over 200 on the second day.
- From the survey results provided at the meeting, it is apparent that people were generally very positive about the event.
- Ms. Parekh went over other results from the survey including suggestions for next year and favorite programs this year.
- Mr. Moody asked if the RSO will be doing another employment conference this year. Ms. Parekh responded that this is under discussion. Mr. Moody said that he would like to see the conference involve more organizations in the planning and execution of the event.
- Natalie El-Diery commented that she would like to see a larger conference, like there used to be, that doesn't just focus on employment but includes other tracks. She feels that additional tracks would allow other providers to get involved in the conference.
- Ze Min Xiao commented that next year RSO could use the Cultural Center for free. Ms. Parekh pointed out that the Sheraton was selected because of the ease for refugees to use public transportation if needed to attend the event.
- Fatima Dirie suggested that the conference be a 1-day conference next year or that if it is still 2 days that the Governor is invited when there are more refugees present. She also commented that expanding topics discussed would be great.
- Brent Platt commented that the RSO should check the timing of the event to make sure that it doesn't overlap with Ramadan. Ms. Parekh explained that the RSO was limited in timing options to the dates that the Sheraton had available.
- Ms. El-Diery suggested that the RSO should "share the load" of planning the event with other service providers.

World Refugee Day- Matt Larson, Assistant Director of the Refugee Services Office

- Mr. Larson reported that:
 - People seemed pleased with the new venue for the event and that it was more ideally located. This was reflected in the good turnout for the event.
 - Food vendors made \$900 - \$1000 per booth.
 - The Global Market made \$10,000 split over the 20 vendors that participated.
 - There were 143 volunteers this year who donated 2,574 hours of their time.
 - There were 19 performers with Big Buddha as the Master of Ceremonies.
 - The total revenue was \$32,215.
 - The event was \$10,270 under budget, which will be used for next year's event.
- Mr. Larson thanked all of the partners and sponsors of the event.

- Ms. El-Diery commented that she thought the event was very well attended and that there was a beautiful mix of mainstream event goers and refugees. She said she liked that it was held over 2 days and that she attended both.
- Aden Batar commented that he loved the park where the event was held. He suggested that next year the setup needs to change so that agency tables could be better seen.
- Ms. Dirie suggested that next year a film needs to be shown that is relevant to refugees.

Refugee Services Fund- Russell Fillmore, Financial Manager

- Mr. Fillmore went over revenues and expenditures through March 31, 2019.
- Ms. Parekh talked about the transferred amount that was voted on at the last meeting.
- Ms. El-Diery asked what Refugee Voices is. Mr. Pekarske explained that it is an opportunity for refugees who may feel marginalized to get together and talk about issues in their community.

RSO Report- Michael Pekarske

- **Employment Data**- Michael Pekarske
 - Mr. Pekarske went over the 2019 Quarter 1 report for the RSO, that was passed out at the meeting.
 - Mr. Platt asked what kind of crisis intervention is done at RSO. Mr. Pekarske said crisis intervention means connecting refugees to services that address their urgent needs (ie. housing).
 - Ms. Xiao commented that it appears from the report that the RSO is serving refugees who have been in the United States for over 5 years on average.
 - Mr. Bouillon asked what the reporting standards are for Domestic Violence or Sexual Violence reported to LCT staff of the RSO. Ms. Parekh said that reporting standards are the same as those for social workers professionally.
 - Brian Redd asked if reporting standards are different for the RSO since the RETC is on a college campus.
 - Mr. Pluim asked Mr. Pekarske to clarify that the 2, 832 services offered by the RSO in Quarter 1 of 2019 do not refer to discreet individuals helped. Mr. Pekarske confirmed that this number refers to services offered to individuals. Ms. El-Diery asked again whether the number referred to only services offered, and not individuals and Mr. Pekarske confirmed.
 - Mr. Pluim asked if there is any info on whether services offered are going up or staying the same. Mr. Pekarske said that information has not been collected, but anecdotally it seems that the number is staying the same.
 - Mr. Pluim asked what would have happened to refugees if they did not have the RSO to come to? Mr. Pekarkse said he was not sure. Mr. Pluim commented that the RSO is a wonderful resource. Ms. Parekh commented that refugees who have been in the country more than 2 years do not get lost any longer if they come to the Refugee Services Office for support.
 - Mr. Bouillon commented that he appreciated the report.
- **Utah RETC Highlights** – Michael Pekarske
 - Mr. Pekarske went over the Utah Refugee Education and Training Center update that was passed out at the meeting.

- Mr. Batar commented that refugee parents who attended the “Choose Gang Free” seminar had no idea how to identify gang signs or how to know if their kids were involved so he felt the seminar was very valuable.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn: Ms. Parekh requested the motion to adjourn.

- Mr. Platt made the motion to approve
- Mr. Pluim seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Adjourned

Next Meeting: September 26th, 2019