

**Refugee Advisory Board Meeting**  
**Refugee Education & Training Center**

**September 26th, 2019**

**Board Member Attendees**- Jon Pierpont (Chair), (Representative of Amelia Self), (Representative of Brian Redd), Fatima Dirie, Kelli Meranda, Natalie El-Deiry, Rick Bouillon, (Representative of Shu Cheng), Steve Pluim, Tino Nyawelo, Ze Min Xiao

**Members Excused**- Amelia Self, Brian Redd, Aden Batar, Martin Bates, Paul Moody, Brent Platt, Janice Kimball, Bhim Sapkota, Pamela Atkinson, Shu Cheng

**Welcome and Introduction**- Jon Pierpont

- Becky Wickstrom was introduced briefly.

**Follow-up from June 27<sup>th</sup> Meeting**- Asha Parekh

- Asha introduced state code related to confidentiality as well as child abuse and domestic violence reporting.

**Housing Core Committee**- Alan Urie

- Asha discussed that there have been changes in the direction of the Housing Committee and introduced Alan Urie.
- Alan Urie discussed that he has identified a core group to bring the data together, and then begin to bring in stakeholders as the data is understood. The strategy of the core group includes assessing the current strategy of where things are at with housing, identifying roadblocks for refugees finding housing, and identifying and effectively engaging stakeholders. Mr. Urie talked about the first meeting of the Housing Core Subcommittee and said that the committee is going to begin by gathering data to get a better understanding of where things are at with housing for refugees. He went over some of the data points that the committee will begin to gather.
- Mr. Pluim said that it would be good to gather data about where refugees live so that it could be helpful to employers to understand how best to get refugees from their homes to their employment. Mr. Urie replied that the committee is going to create a scatter map of where refugees live and try to identify housing opportunities near employers that might reduce friction getting to work.
- Ms. El-Deiry said that access to childcare and food are also factors when it comes to housing of refugees.
- Mr. Pierpont said there is a Housing Affordability Commission and a lot of data research has been done already and suggested that Becky might be able to connect Mr. Urie with them. Mr. Urie said the Rebecca Banner and Mike Gallegos are both on the Core Committee. Mr. Pierpont also said the commission on homelessness is putting together data on where all of the affordable housing exists in the state.

### **Employer Committee Changes** – Steve Pluim

- Mr. Pluim went over the change in direction of the employer subcommittee to focus on short term trainings for refugees so that they can get into careers that will have advancement opportunity.
- Mr. Bouillon talked about the meeting that he and Asha had earlier in the week. One of the more robust programs that came out was Utah Works and a significant amount of money is there for manufacturing career opportunities. Mr. Bouillon said that he is working with 5 employers that need 645 people between them right away. In today's economy people are being hired and then sent to training. What he is working on right now is what level of English proficiency a refugee needs in order to work in manufacturing. He also talked about 3 levels of hospitality training available through SLCC.
- Ze Min Xiao said there is limited funding for English as a second language, and asked whether there is funding for ESL to go along with the trainings for manufacturing. Mr. Bouillon said Merritt Medical built that funding into their trainings. Mr. Bouillon thinks the other 4 companies will be willing to build it in as well. Ms. Xiao asked if help is needed to influence the other 4 companies to fund ESL. Mr. Bouillon said he doesn't think that will be necessary. Ms. Parekh said that she and Mr. Bouillon will reach out and speak to these employers individually.
- Mr. Bouillon said there are other trainings that are being done with federal money currently. Ms. El-Deiry said that there are a lot of short term trainings that service providers are not as knowledgeable about. She asked if there is a way to plug service providers in to available trainings. Mr. Pluim said that is why they are working on creating a menu of trainings to make available to service providers.
- Mr. Urie commented that if employers are using team communication apps, like Pronto Team Communication, it would help people who are not as proficient at speaking English to communicate to people speaking different languages.
- Mr. Pierpont said that the Chamber has an initiative that they are starting to focus on families that are dealing with intergenerational poverty. The group is in beginning stages and they might be interested in helping with training money for refugees.
- It was decided that a vote to approve committee changes as outlined would be taken electronically, as there was not a quorum present at the meeting.

### **RSO Strategic Plan**- Asha Parekh

- Asha Parekh presented the strategic plan that she and Becky Wickstrom worked on creating.
- The objectives are being aligned with the data that is already being collected. Becky Wickstrom read the objectives.
- Ms. Parekh shared what the strategies and tactics are for meeting the objectives that were listed.
- MS. El-Deiry asked what the build-out of the RETC means. Ms. Parekh said it means identifying what programming we've had here over the last few years and what programming is going to be a little more strategic in involving partners.
- Mr. Pluim asked about verbiage about living wage. It was agreed that the plan will be changed to say "average" wage.

- Ze Min Xiao asked about advocacy for federal congressional delegation. She wanted to know what the role the Advisory Board committee could have in advocating. Mr. Pierpont said that he would have to ask the Governor's Office to see if they would allow him to put together a delegate package. Ms. El-Deiry said this would fit well under number 4 in the strategic plan. Ms. Parekh made a distinction that this strategic plan is for the RSO and not the Advisory Board.
- Ms El-Deiry said it would be helpful to identify who the stakeholders are in each of the strategies and what synergies or alignment there is with other things that are happening.
- Mr. Pierpont said he would like quarterly updates on the progress in each of the areas of the strategic plan. Ms. Wickstrom said there will be a calendar to go with the strategic plan.

#### **Refugee Services Fund-** Debi Carty

- Debi Carty presented Q4 of state fiscal year 2019.
- Ze Min Xiao asked about the revenue coming in for funerals. Asha said the refugee leadership class this year picked a charitable fund to educate the community about and fundraise for and they chose the funeral fund.
- Mr. Pluim asked if WRD was upside down and Ms. Carty said that it was positive this year.
- Ms. El-Deiry said rental assistance didn't appear to be used. Ms. Parekh said that the money in the fund is a last resort after other programs have been utilized.
- Mr. Nyawelo asked who is accessing URETC funding. Ms. Carty said that it is mostly used for short term trainings.
- Ms. Parekh presented a request to use funding from the Refugees Services Fund for snacks. There was no quorum available to vote so it was decided this vote would be taken electronically.

#### **RSO Report-**

- RSO Update- Michael Pekarske
  - Mr. Pekarske presented on the data that was included with the binder. Generally the numbers are similar to last quarter. Average wage is actually up \$.30 since last quarter. He also shared some stories about specific people that benefited from trainings and referrals through the RSO.
- Utah RETC Highlights – Michael Pekarske
  - Mr. Pekarske presented on the URETC report included with the binder. He shared success stories as well.
- National Update – Gerald Brown
  - The 18,000 ceiling for refugees coming into the country in FFY2020 was announced this afternoon.
  - There is a continuing resolution going to president's desk that has been passed by both houses to continue ORR funding.
  - Mr. Pierpont asked if there is a methodology of how the 18,000 refugees will be dispersed to different states. Mr. Brown explained that an Executive Order was signed that would allow states to decide if they want to take refugees.
  - Ms. El-Deiry asked if it would be appropriate to share this updates with members of the Advisory Board that are not here. Ms. Parekh said once the year ends we can send out

how the numbers stacked up against previous years and let people know about the ceiling of 18,000 that has been announced. Mr. Nyawelo asked if it would be appropriate to include that information in the annual report to the Governor's Office. Mr. Pierpont agreed that was a good idea and Ms. Parekh said she and Ms. Wickstrom would include that.

**Closing Remarks** – Jon Pierpont

**Adjournment**

Next Meeting: December 5, 2019