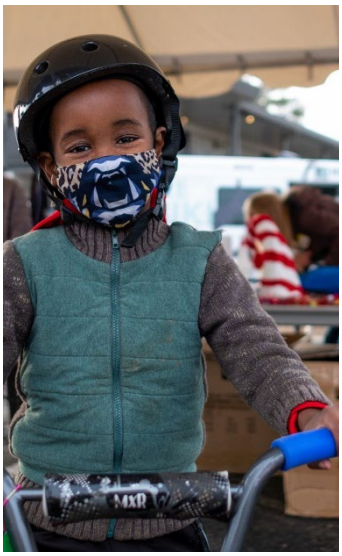
NeighborsUnited

Refugee Collaborative of Boise

2023-2026 Neighbors United Refugee Strategic Community Plan



Effective January 2025

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Refugee Strategic Community Plan Overview

The *Neighbors United Refugee Strategic Community Plan* was first developed in 2010. The idea of the plan emerged from a series of community meetings that began in 2008, in response to the national economic recession, and its local impacts. Community members came together to thoughtfully determine how Boise could "meet scarcity with an attitude of abundance," and collaboratively continue to provide services that make Boise a welcoming place. The Community Plan was seen both locally and nationally as an innovative, effective tool for coordinating and engaging a broad network of people and organizations in common support of refugees, and has set an example many other communities around the country have followed.

While the plan is kept up to date on an ongoing basis, in 2023, the Neighbors United network – now representing more than 100 organizations – embarked on a process to refresh and establish new goals, objectives, and activities aimed to address needs and evolving circumstances, to improve collaboration and knowledge sharing, and to give strategic direction for the ensuing two years.

Process

In Fall 2022, Neighbors United confirmed that the current self-sufficiency regions remained crucial for effective refugee resettlement, welcoming and belonging. Our seven self-sufficiency areas are:

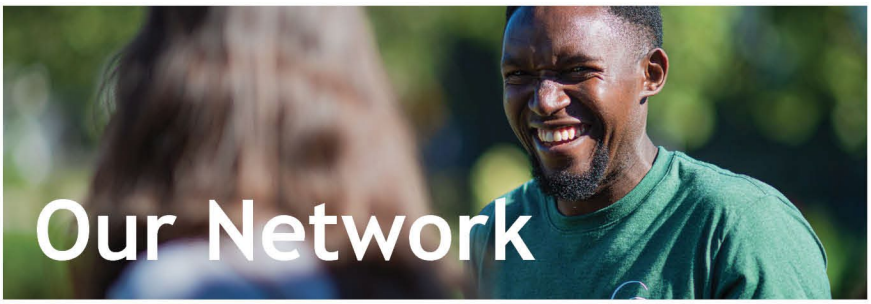
- Housing
- Health
- Employment
- Pre-K to 12th grade education
- Adult education
- Transportation
- Community connections

The network, working through committees supporting each area, met throughout Spring, 2023 to discuss and identify community needs as well as proposed solutions and activities to address those needs. These discussions are translated into this plan. Each self-sufficiency area includes a vision statement, priority focus areas, key background information and priority actions (to be initiated within 6 months).

The network reconvened in May, 2023 to review the draft strategic plan and provide feedback across all self-sufficiency areas. Throughout the summer, final refinements were made, including developing networkwide goals and actions that had been identified by committees and at the May Network Gathering.

The updated 2023 Neighbors United Refugee Strategic Community Plan is intended to guide our efforts for the next 24 months, with regular, ongoing updates to our action tables. The *Neighbors United Refugee Strategic Community Plan is the* result of our broad network's collaboration and hard work, and it illustrates our joint, ongoing commitment to remaining a community of opportunity, welcoming and belonging.

Through 2025, several key developments have impacted how we coordinate and deliver across the network. These changes required the network to reasses and adjust its collective strategies. The network held a series of gatherings to identify key needs across the network and co-crate a focused short-term strategic plan to guide the network. Please see the plan supplement at the bottom of the strategic plan starting on page 20 for full details on these updates.



Our Network

NeighborsUnited
Refugee Collaborative of Boise

We are a collaborative of individuals, community leaders, organizations and companies who strengthen refugee resettlement resources in the Treasure Valley.

Community Voices

"Diversity is a strength. Communities that are diverse are more caring and respectful."

"Without our refugee community, Boise wouldn't be as rich culturally. I appreciate my neighbors and support refugee-owned small businesses."

- Neighbors United member

- Adult Education
- Pre-K-12 Education
- Transportation
- Community Connections
- Employment
- Health
- Housing

www.neighborsunitedboise.org

2008
- Discussions and meetings begin to create a strategic plan

2010
- First meeting of reconstituted Steering Committee
- Refugee Resource Strategic Community Plan (RRSCP) is produced
- Kickoff implementation phase (ongoing) of Refugee Resource Strategic Community Plan

2012
- First revision of RRSCP, renamed Refugee Community Plan
- Established "Marketing Team," which later became the Strategic Communication (StratCom) working group

2013
- Refugee Community Plan featured on Cities of Migration webinar with Welcoming America
- Quarterly Progress Reporting implemented

2014
- Second revision of Refugee Community Plan
- Neighbors United brand, logo, and website is developed

2015
- Featured in Welcoming America's "Community Planning Process Guide for Fostering Greater Refugee Welcome"

2016
- First full network celebration is held

2019
- 10 year anniversary of Neighbors United
- Fourth Revision of Refugee Community Plan

2020
- Created task forces to respond to the health, educational, and housing needs as a result of the pandemic

2021
- Piloted and established a Leadership Council to examine our equity and inclusion practices

2022
- Launched the houseyourneighbor.org

2023
- New strategic plan update

Network is 15 years strong and still growing!

IDAHO OFFICE FOR REFUGEES by JANNUS

BOISE CITY OF TREES

Network Strategies

NeighborsUnited
Refugee Collaborative of Boise

Network Focus Areas/Priorities

Key impacts, activities, or accomplishments we are focused on, 2023-2025.

1. Continue to build and expand involvement from our refugee communities.
2. Maintain a strong, informed, communicative network that coordinates effectively across self-sufficiency and other areas to support our refugee neighbors.
3. Leverage partnerships with other jurisdictions and populations to strengthen the network.
4. Represent the importance of welcoming, belonging and inclusion, and advocate for resettlement.

Network Members and Sponsors

- Ada County
- Ada County Highway District
- Ada County Sheriff
- Afghan Cultural Center of Idaho
- African Community Development
- Agency for New Americans
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Boise Bicycle Project
- Boise City/Ada County Housing Authority
- Boise Community Schools
- Boise Housing and Community Development
- Boise Police Department
- Boise School District
- Boise State Refugee Alliance
- Boise State University
- Boise To Bakavu
- Caldwell School District
- Catholic Charities of Idaho
- Central District Health Department
- Children's Home Society of Idaho
- City of Boise
- City of Meridian
- College of Western Idaho
- Community Action Partnership of Idaho
- Create Common Good
- El Ada Community Action Partnership
- English Language Center
- Family Medicine Residency of Idaho
- Full Circle
- Gates of Hope
- Global Talent
- Glocal Community Partners
- Idaho Alliance for Ukrainian Refugees and Immigrants
- Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
- Idaho Department of Labor
- Idaho Housing and Finance Association
- Idaho Human Rights Commission
- Idaho Immunization Coalition
- Idaho Legal Aid Services
- Idaho State Independent Living Council
- Idaho Transportation Department
- Injury Care EMS
- International Rescue Committee
- Islamic Center of Boise
- Jannus, Inc.
- Jannus Economic Partnership
- Jesse Tree
- Kuna School District
- Leap Charities
- Learning Lab
- One Refugee
- Refugee Speakers Bureau
- Pacific Western Training
- Saint Alphonsus Medical Group
- Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center
- Salvation Army
- Sara Skinner Associates
- Solid Creative Media
- St. Luke's Boise Medical Center
- Stoltz Marketing Group
- TANTA, Inc.
- Terry Reilly Health Services
- Tidwell Social Work
- Treasure Valley Family YMCA
- Ukrainian Welcome Center
- United Way of Treasure Valley
- University of Idaho
- Valley Regional Transit
- Valley Ride
- Vallivue School District
- West Ada School District
- Women's and Children's Alliance

Network Action Plans

Focus Areas	Action Steps
1. Continue to build and expand involvement from our refugee communities	1. Consider establishing a Refugee Liaison program. 2. Support committee member and network recruitment that reflects Boise's refugee communities.
2. Maintain a strong, informed, communicative network that coordinates effectively across self-sufficiency and other areas to support our refugee neighbors.	3. Update network operational and orientation guide. 4. Update brand and communications guidelines, network talking points. 5. Update strategic plan action tables and report regularly on progress to the network. 6. Re-establish Co-Chair Forum.
3. Leverage partnerships with other jurisdictions and populations to strengthen our work.	7. Extend invitations to guest members from other jurisdictions to participate in committee meetings. 8. Identify and meet with other communities' representatives to discuss common issue areas and ways to support and align efforts. 9. Within Committees, discuss and identify opportunities for resource sharing across jurisdictions and organizations.
4. Represent the importance of welcoming, belonging and inclusion and advocate for resettlement.	10. Support the passing and implementation of new City of Boise Tenant Protections. 11. Support recertification of Boise as a Welcoming City by Welcoming America.

Health

NeighborsUnited
Refugee Collaborative of Boise

Vision

To collaborate with and empower New Americans by providing an open platform for discussion, acknowledging disparities in care, and promoting dignity, equitable care, and wellness.

Focus Areas/Priorities

Key impacts, activities, or accomplishments we are focused on.

1. Increase health education and accessibility
2. Leverage Community Liaisons (for all NU committees) and hold listening sessions to better understand community needs
3. Educate providers on care with refugees (supports and overlaps with Focus Area #2)

Background

- There is a strong desire to connect directly with refugee communities to truly understand their needs.
- Intentional efforts should go into building trust between refugee communities and providers.
- Transportation continues to be a major barrier for refugees accessing health care.
- Behavioral health services are especially difficult for refugees to access.

Community Voices

"I don't have a healthcare provider I see regularly because of the language barrier."

"It is hard for me to understand what the provider is saying when explaining my medical results because of how complex medical terminology is."

"With my English language skills, it is difficult for me to understand the provider unless I have a trusted peer or family member with me to interpret."

Population Definition

Individuals with refugee backgrounds and leaders from refugee communities.

Subcommittee Members

Mark Babson
Jesus Blanco
Abby Davids
Jamie Davis
Tigist Ejeta
Collin Elias
Alicia Fong
Slobodanka Hodzic
Stephanie Hudon
Rebecca Lemmons
Theresa Mcleod
Sarah Mohr
Margaret Mortimer
Sara Skinner
Alexis Jones
Jamie Strain
Christy Calhoun
Kate Macdonald
Rama Deen, Co-chair & Community Liaison
Kate, Doyon
Stacy Torfin
Kristi Lakatos
Kelsey Cooper
Christina Crow-Cruz, Co-chair
Youssef Roman

Highlights of Past Work

- Partners collaborated to host vaccine clinics
- Developed messaging and materials to educate refugee communities on COVID-19 and vaccines
- Completed an after-action report on past activities of the committee to identify successes, challenges, and areas for improvement

Health Action Plans

Focus Areas	Action Steps
1. Increase health education and accessibility	• Identify existing resource hubs • Make recommendations on existing resource hubs on improvements or gaps • Identify underserved communities based on resource map results
2. Leverage Community Liaisons (for all NU committees) and hold listening sessions to better understand community needs	• Receive regular updates from TANTA, Inc. on training CL's are receiving based on the current community needs • Make recommendations for TANTA, Inc. on how communication (questions, information) to CL's could best happen, and then solidify this process in partnership with TANTA. • Develop questions for CL's to ask their communities to learn more about the emerging needs
3. Educate providers on care with refugees (supports and overlaps with Focus Area #2)	• Develop a work group on provider education/professional development • Finalize tool and NOFO to complete trainings for medical providers • Identify potential co-facilitators and other organizations not currently involved

Transportation

NeighborsUnited
Refugee Collaborative of Boise

Vision

To prioritize refugee community feedback in the assessment and reduction of transportation barriers by connecting with individuals and service providers with resources, and working toward centralize resource and transportation hubs to meet needs.

Focus Areas/Priorities

Key impacts, activities, or accomplishments we are focused on.

1. Collect and share transportation resources
2. Identify emerging issues and discuss solutions
3. Keep committee informed on State & Local policy changes and initiatives which affect transportation options for New Americans
4. Committee recruitment and retention

Background

- There is limited access to intercity travel and travel from the city center.
- Language and confidence in riders can be barriers to transportation.
- There is a strong need and desire to hear directly from refugee communities on their barriers and experiences with transportation.

Community Voices

"Limited public transportation schedules prevent people from getting to/from school/work easily, causing added stress."

"People took the time to understand me and my culture."
- Shadi Ismael, American & Former Refugee from Syria

Population Definition

Individuals with refugee backgrounds who require modes of transportation to access various services and resources (health, education, social services, community events, etc.)

Subcommittee Members

Christi Gilchrist
Christi Rood
Elizabeth Norton, Co-chair
Gabe Finklestein
Georgette Siqueros
Hailee Lenhart-Wees
Jason Rose
Kristen Donovan
Meg McCarthy
Rocio Gil
Miranda Gold
Nina Pienaar, Co-chair
Rosette Yanda
Tessa Greegor
Nicole Stern
Chantal Masoyinyana, Community Liaison

Highlights of Past Work

- Safe Routes to School program provides lessons on safe bike-riding.
- College of Western Idaho students have discussed finding and creating user-friendly tools to reduce barriers to transportation access.
- LEAP program at South Junior High collaborates with the City of Boise who provides shuttles for students to the afterschool program.
- Valley Regional Transit launched the VRT OnDemand app that functions like an Uber app for buses, enabling users to book trips and be dropped off at recognizable landmarks.

Transportation Action Plans

Focus Areas	Action Steps
1. Collect and share transportation resources	• Identify audience(s) for the resource bundle • Share resource bundle with network partners (ongoing) • Continue to evolve resource bundle form for increased usability • Invite guest speakers who can share about their resources to the group
2. Identify emerging issues and discuss solutions	• Seek feedback on emerging issues, elevate issues and proposed group actions/solutions
3. Keep committee informed on State and Local policy changes and initiatives which affect transportation options for New Americans	• Attend greater Treasure Valley public meetings on transportation topics • Track proposed legislative policy changes and provide feedback/next steps • Outreach by tabling or attending events
4. Committee recruitment and retention	• Encourage group participation, partner initiatives and events • Welcome TANTA Community Liaison to the committee • Outreach to community advisors and other direct service providers to join • Move to hybrid meetings

Adult Education

NeighborsUnited
Refugee Collaborative of Boise

Vision

We envision a Treasure Valley in which all adults have access to educational opportunities that will help them lead successful lives and create stronger communities. We will collaborate with stakeholders to identify and close the gaps in adult education services in the Treasure Valley.

Focus Areas/Priorities

Key impacts, activities, or accomplishments we are focused on.

1. Educate sub-committees on the breadth and depth of adult education
2. Get consistent information out to the community
3. Maintain an education roadmap that can be easily accessed by target audiences (students & providers) & is kept current

Highlights of Past Work

- Adult Education Map
- 2013 - 2016 Adult Education ESL conference
- 2018 presentation at the Idaho Office for Refugees Conference
- The Road to College for New Americans (student support presentations hosted by CWI, U of I, and BSU)
- Committee members participated in Healing Encounters, a three-part training addressing Trauma Informed Care, Culturally Responsive Care, and Linguistically Appropriate Care facilitated by Center for Global Health and Healing
- Teaching Tips for the Increasingly Multilingual Classroom workshop, facilitated by BSU and CWI
- Partnership between One Refugee College Bound program and Boise State University has led to pathways to college

Population Definition

Newly arrived adult refugees and other New Americans ages 18+ who currently reside in the Treasure Valley.

Subcommittee Members

Erika Ambriz
Sajra Celovic
Erika Compton
Liz Fleshman
Joyce Gagarin
Estephany Giehm
Kayla Groat
Trevi Hardy
Casey Iezzi
Chelsea Jordan
Jeanie Levinski, Co-chair
Stephanie Marlow
Jeanne McCombs
Nicole Mercer
Heidi Nash
Andrea Orozco
Sergio Orozco
Jennifer Panitch
Sarah Ritter
Gail Shuck
Georgette Siqueiros
Sara Skinner
Ursla Ungerman
Alyssa Tolman
Valentina Vlasova, Community Liaison
Holly Kimbrell

Background

There are many barriers, such as linguistic, cultural, and systemic, to adult refugee students accessing and navigating educational systems.

There is a limited understanding by stakeholders of the community's educational resources for refugee background adults.

Refugee resettlement is expanding to the western part of the valley. Our committee needs to gain an understanding of, offer support to, and network with these educational partners.

Community Voices

"Talking with refugees and people I know helping refugees, there has been expressed a great need for language help and finding housing and jobs." - Neighbors United survey respondent

"I am the product of Idaho kindness. If it wasn't for the kind people who helped me, I never would have made it that far." - Shadi Ismael, American & Former Refugee from Syria

Adult Education Action Plans

Focus Areas	Action Steps
1. Educate sub-committees on the breadth and depth of adult education	• Create resource material outlining education landscape • Committee to align to a calendar for a “roadshow” to present overview twice per year • Identify which subcommittees to collaborate with for advocacy and resource building westward
2. Get consistent information out to the community	• Create needs analysis to identify gaps • Develop education resource lists for providers and students • Create plan for update process/cadence
3. Maintain an education roadmap that can be easily accessed by target audiences (students and providers) and is kept current	• Adjust, review and align • Obtain feedback (survey) from “users” from providers and clients outside of the committee • Adjust and compile accordingly • Align to cadence and ownership

Pre K-12 Education

NeighborsUnited
Refugee Collaborative of Boise

Vision

To interweave local educational entities and community partners who listen to refugee and educator voices for the support, growth and flourishing in education for refugees in the Treasure Valley.

Focus Areas/Priorities

Key impacts, activities, or accomplishments we are focused on.

1. Communicate and exchange ideas on how schools are engaging parents in their children's education
2. Train teachers and prepare schools to support students with refugee backgrounds
3. Enhance support for 16-24 year old population who are newly arrived students
4. Increase access to after school and summer programs

Background

- There are a significant number of refugee families in the Boise and West Ada School Districts.
  - Roughly 1,485 students are refugees.
  - 90+ languages spoken by students.
  - 6,900+ students have a non-English speaking background.
  - 30% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.
  - 6,000+ students receive Special Education services.

Community Voices

"The first day of school, I was excited and scared for my brother. He was asking, 'What should I do when I get there?' When we got to the school, there was someone waiting for him outside. She said, 'Hi Blessing! I'll be Blessing's teacher.' The teacher took him to his table and showed him around. He felt like a celebrity! He said, 'My teacher likes me.'"

- Judith Mwamba, Kindergarten teacher from DRC/Namibia, on her brother's first day of school in Idaho

Population Definition

Individuals with refugee backgrounds who are students in Pre-Kindergarten to 12th grade and young adults up to 21 years of age.

Subcommittee Members

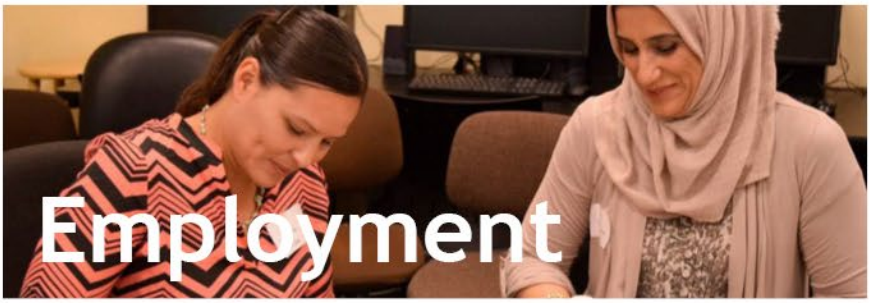
Anna Almerico
Kersey Alstrom
Laura Armstrong
Leslie Yingling
Jill Ayabei
Christina Bruce-Bennion
Shannon Carrillo
Katie Crawford
Shani Cummins
Kayla Groat
Alejandra Howell
Jolene Lincoln
Debra Line, Co-chair
Dave Morris
Beth Harju
Sara Nord
Deborah Ryman
Sara Sanjuan
Sara Skinner
Charity Strong
Luiz Novoa
Andrea May, Co-chair
Molly Loayza
Iman Natouf, Co-chair
Patricia Phines
Laylo Hamud, Community Liaison

Highlights of Past Work

- "New Americans in the Classroom" training workshops were provided for teachers across multiple school districts to better understand the experience of resettled students entering the education system and how they can be supported.
- The REACH summer program provided academic support and community connections to refugee youth through volunteer mentors.
- Sara Skinner Associates, Idaho Office for Refugees, Gates of Hope, KA Health Services, and Glocal partnered to host an interactive workshop at the 2023 Idaho Conference on Refugees to teach trauma-informed techniques that can be used with students from various backgrounds.

Pre-K to 12th Grade Action Plans

Focus Areas	Action Steps
1. Communicate and exchange ideas on how schools are engaging parents in their children's education	• Connect with families to learn what they would like to know about school in the US • Conduct a School Involvement Survey • Learn how districts and schools are educating parents on the expectations of them as parents • Identify funding for workshops • Brainstorm ways to meet families at their children's schools or as part of their intake/orientation meeting • Addressing Chronic Absenteeism • Develop a visual documents to teach parents how to use tech tools and student information systems
2. Train teachers and prepare schools to support students with refugee backgrounds	• Provide "New Americans in the Classroom" trainings to teachers in school districts • Receive ENL (English as a New Language) endorsement for "New Americans in the Classroom" training through NNU • Develop a training for parents at community schools to give parents more opportunities to learn about Newcomers
3. Enhance support for 16-24 year old population who are newly arrived students	• Develop a resource map with the NU Adult Education Committee • Identify gaps and barriers this population is experiencing to understand needs and identify solutions
4. Increase access to after school and summer programs	• Look at current afterschool programs that are being offered • Identify transportation resources for students • Leverage the "Let's Connect" event (dedicated to refugee families) to communicate programs • Identify a summer reading program



Employment

NeighborsUnited
Refugee Collaborative of Boise

Vision

To collaborate with employers and community partners to create pathways to job security, opportunities for advancement, and welcoming workplaces that empower people from refugee backgrounds to bring their skills and experience into the Idaho workforce.

Focus Areas/Priorities

Key impacts, activities, or accomplishments we are focused on.

1. Develop a resource guide to help employers hire employees with refugee backgrounds
2. Educate employers on how to help new hires be successful within the first 90 days of employment

Background

- There is an increasing need to streamline information that can be accessed by employers and job seekers.
- There are opportunities to educate employers on how to best support employees with refugee backgrounds in their career progression.
- Language barriers remain a consistent challenge between job seekers/employees and employers.

Community Voices

"We have a hard working, loyal workforce who reflect the spirit of service and helping that America must embrace." - Neighbors United survey respondent

"I learned of Idaho: If you open your heart and have a smile on your face, it can take you far." - Shadi Ismael, American & Former Refugee from Syria

Population Definition

Employers, job seekers and employees with refugee backgrounds.

Subcommittee Members

Mandy Adamson, Co-chair
Beatrice Black
Jen Dempsey
Sadi Ebadi
Ashley Hislop
Daniel Holmes
Valentina Levandovsky
Joyce Gagarin
Megan McJunkin
Amberine Mowjee
Heidi Nash
Susan Pages
Manju Rajendran
Hannah Roche, Co-chair
Dave Thorton
Heather Webster
Rosette Yanda
Alejandra Castaneda
Sarah Kelley-Chase
Greg Gardner
Jennifer Yturriondobeitia
Viktoriia Siedikova
Amanda Bamburg
Zahraa Naser
Holly Bazarski
Sherawn Reberry
Marie Ward
Wivine Bisoka
Ursala Ungermann
Susan Tirima, Community Liaison
Valerie Albicker
Jessica Hope

Highlights of Past Work

- The College of Western Idaho offers English, life, and work-focused programs that are focused on increasing workplace competency (workplace expectations, resumes, job search, digital skills).
- Global Talent hosted a career summit where local mentors facilitated interviews and gave feedback to New American job seekers.
- Global Talent provided a workshop at the 2023 Idaho Conference on Refugees which featured staff, alumni, and local employers in a discussion on ways supervisors, coworkers, and mentors can best support new American professionals who are restarting their careers in Idaho.

Employment Action Plans

Focus Areas	Action Steps
1. Develop a resource guide to help employers hire employees with refugee backgrounds	• Provide employers with information and training on how to recruit, hire, and work with New Americans in the workplace • Identify resources for translated materials • Identify organizations, individuals, and partners and how to approach these groups to broaden reach • Identify existing employment resources • Identify training resources
2. Educate employers on how to help new hires be successful within the first 90 days of employment	• Identify current resources for employers • Clarify and formalize how employees can be supported by resettlement agencies within their first 90 days of employment • Create an employer toolkit

Community Connections

NeighborsUnited
Refugee Collaborative of Boise

Vision

For all individuals with refugee backgrounds to be empowered to utilize their gifts to create and engage in welcome, safe, and thriving communities.

Focus Areas/Priorities

Key impacts, activities, or accomplishments we are focused on.

1. Develop a resource hub model, centralize community resources, and create intercultural connections
2. Capacity-building list of resources to build individual capacity, opportunities and events for successful integration
3. Meet communities where they're at, connecting the community to events and people

Background

- There are opportunities to leverage existing events, gatherings, and resources to strengthen the integration of individuals with refugee backgrounds into their communities.
- Language access remains a barrier in connecting the community.

Community Voices

"When we first arrived to Idaho seven years ago, we felt so confused and a little scared. Being connected to our new friends in Boise was so important to feeling safe and solving problems we had no idea how to solve." - Mohammed Issa, Glocal Friends

Population Definition

Individuals with refugee backgrounds and new Americans.

Subcommittee Members

Ben Brock
Laura Armstrong
Marie Hattaway
Mike Stefancic
Monique Bosse
Nick Armstrong
Sara Nord
Sarah LaCasse
Tony Fisk
Travis Buffi
Elizabeth Norton
Yasmin Aguiliar
Sajra Celovic
Sarah LaCasse
Aanish Shamim, Co-chair
Jenny Hirst
Brandee Robles
Wahida Ivey, Community Liaison
Kathy Holland
Joel Ntando

Highlights of Past Work

- Tidwell hosts regular multicultural community dinners to bring community members together.
- Glocal partnered with the Islamic Center of Boise to host a workshop on improving the understanding of current and historical expressions of social hostility toward refugees and immigrants and on growing empathy through stories from refugees reflecting these types of experiences.
- The Glocal Friend Program matches people from the Treasure Valley with New American families who connect and spend weekly time for three months doing activities such as visiting parks, spending time in each other's homes, grocery shopping, and more.

Community Connections Action Plans

Focus Areas	Action Steps
1. Develop a resource hub model, centralize community resources, and create intercultural connections	• Look for examples around the country as a model • Identify "hubs" and willing community leaders • Set metrics for success • Communicate and gain buy in from service providers • Identify communication channels that various communities are using to be connected to events, news, and other happenings • Utilize the IOR Events calendar to maximize reach of events communicated
2. Capacity-building list of resources to build individual capacity, opportunities and events for successful integration	• Interview service providers on additional service needs • Look for a similar list of resources and compare e.g. find help.org (connects people to providers, not events…can we modify the tool instead of creating a new one?), assess pertinence and accessibility • Identifying gaps in current services
3. Meet communities where they're at, connecting the community to events and people	• Gather feedback on event logistics (getting to and from events) • Gather a full list of events offered to the refugee community • Survey the refugee community on how they are connecting and how they are learning about events • Identify "Community Leaders" (what makes someone a community leader?) • Promote and enable the facilitation of community dinners and events

Housing

NeighborsUnited
Refugee Collaborative of Boise

Vision

To work collaboratively on helping New Americans secure quality affordable housing options that provide stability and dignity.

Focus Areas/Priorities

Key impacts, activities, or accomplishments we are focused on.

1. Engage with other housing partnerships and efforts
2. Identify and support existing and new programs for housing equity
3. Update and increase communication to engage more people
4. Elevate discussions and engagement with landlords and developers

Background

- Finding housing remains a challenge, particularly for larger families and with connectivity to transportation options.
- Rental requirements such as credit history and cash reserves create additional challenges for refugee families seeking housing.

Community Voices

"Stable housing means that you are not living in uncertainty about housing situation. Generally, you have a choice over when to move. Last time when I talked with some of my clients about housing, they mentioned that It may affect mental health, stress levels, relationships, and sleep." - ANA Case Manager

"Home is everything." - Jesse Tree clients

Population Definition

Newly arrived refugees and families who are seeking permanent, stable housing.

Subcommittee Members

RJ Adler
Hilina Giday
Zoey Atkins
Kodianne Burnett
Cassy Bryan
Denise Caruzzi
Sam Crawford
Brian Dale
Jennifer Dempsey
Michelle Goodale
Lia Harelson
Nicki Hellenkamp, Co-chair
Slobodanka Hodzic
Michelle Larson
Mitchell Lee
Katie Minehart
Tina Polishchuk
Megan Remaley
Cathy Sandstrom
Jamie Somma
Evan Stewart
Tara Wolfson
Angie Wood
Jennie Buley, Co-chair
Stephanie Trebesch
Lisaun Whittingham
Sara Monson
Mozhgan Asadi, Community Liaison
Anna Livarchuk

Highlights of Past Work

- In 2022, 198 families were housed through Agency for New Americans and International Rescue Committee - Boise
- Launched the HouseYourNeighbor.org website to coordinate community support for housing solutions
- Developed the HouseYourNeighbor.org toolkit to equip the community with FAQ's, social posts, email templates, and videos to inform discussions on the housing crisis and solutions
- Created a space to discuss current housing challenges and possible solutions by coordinating housing symposiums

Housing Action Plan

Focus Areas	Action Steps
1. Engage with other housing partnerships and efforts	• Research and identify relevant housing conferences/training opportunities • Compile a list of existing housing partnerships, organizations, and networks • Track and share information about housing and household outcomes
2. Identify and support existing and new programs for housing equity	• Establish a subcommittee of housing specialists and a related work plan to research, develop, and implement innovative programs and activities aimed at creating equity in housing • Initiate a pilot program to explore the feasibility and effectiveness of a co-signer initiative • Build and maintain a shared property manager contact list
3. Update and increase communication to engage more people	• Identify audiences, intent and develop tailored communication strategies to effectively share information and solicit involvement in housing initiatives • Assess House Your Neighbor website and toolkit and make necessary updates to messaging, information and ensure its functionality • Diversify and increase communication channels to effectively reach and engage a broader audience
4. Elevate discussions and engagement with landlords and developers	• Coordinate a landlord/developers advisory roundtable • Learn what other states are doing • Evaluate potential programs • Develop or join a panel where landlords share/voice their concerns and fears • Focus on local landlords

Refugee Strategic Community Plan Supplement

This document is a supplement to the current plan and reflects the network's response to the constant shifts in refugee resettlement in Idaho.

Through 2025, several key developments have impacted how we coordinate and deliver support across the network, including changes to immigration law and policy, funding, arrival numbers, and availability of services. These changes have required the network to reassess and adjust its collective strategies and pivot to a more near-term, agile approach.

Process

To understand and collaboratively respond to the changes in refugee resettlement in Idaho, the network held a series of gatherings. The first gathering in February 2025 was a space to hear and share updates on the federal changes impacting resettlement, ask and discuss questions and concerns, and to share information on how to support resettlement and our resettled neighbors. The second gathering in April 2025 was a space to hear about the latest legislative updates, including pertinent news from resettlement agencies. The network also heard from key community partners on topics that were key concerns of the community: safety and continued welcoming, employment, and filling funding and service gaps.

The final gathering was used as a collaborative work session with the Network's co-chairs, key partners, and representatives of the network's Steering Committee. The intended outcomes of this work session were the following:

- Identify key needs across the network and brainstorm actionable steps to address them
- Co-create a focused, short-term strategic plan to guide network efforts over the next 6 to 12 months
- Share and develop practices for maintaining institutional knowledge, skills, and collective capacity within the network

The key needs identified at this work session were brought back to the network's committees to provide further insights and consideration for adopting these focus areas into their strategic plans. The committees are working to cross-reference the identified needs with their current focus areas and action plans and develop a 6-month plan to address these needs (*see revised plans beginning on page 22*).

Top Identified Network Priorities

- **Pathways to Employment and Economic Mobility**
  Create clear, accessible routes for newcomers to find jobs, grow careers, and stay supported through economic transitions.
    - Job access and navigation
    - Employment stability coordination
    - Employer education and best practices
    - Advocacy to expand inclusive hiring practices

- **Visibility, Storytelling, and Advocacy**
  Keep the mission visible through lived experience storytelling, data sharing, and systems-level advocacy to ensure continued investment and support.
    - Strategic storytelling campaigns
    - Community voices and advocacy tools
    - Highlighting impact through shared narratives
- **Housing Security and Essential Needs**
  Strengthen immediate and long-term supports that prevent displacement and meet daily living needs.
    - Rental assistance and utility support
    - Access to hygiene kits and household essentials
    - Responsive funding pathways for families facing urgent needs

- **Community Leadership and Belonging**
  Elevate the role of ethnic community leaders and young adults as trusted connectors, advocates, and cultural navigators.
    - Leadership development in ethnic communities
    - Mentorship and engagement for young adults
    - Strengthening community-rooted organizations

- **Transportation Access & System Navigation**
  Break down transportation and service navigation barriers through training, mapping, and collaborative coordination.
    - Bus navigation trainings and forums
    - Mapping service eligibility and access

- **Access Through Language & Interpretation**
  Ensure everyone can access services and make informed decisions through reliable interpretation and culturally grounded communication.
    - Interpreter needs at agencies/clinics
    - Interpretation pipelines and training
    - Ongoing language access investment

Pre-K to 12th Grade Education Action Plan

Focus Areas	Action Steps
1. Communicate and exchange ideas on how schools are engaging parents in their children's education and engaging families overall	• Survey community partnerships • Share resources and ideas • Guest speaker attends committee for this topic • Create subcommittees for this topic area, if needed • Hold think tank discussions on how to build responsive systems to address harassment and safety in schools • Identify potential opportunities to collaborate with school districts, youth-serving organizations, and families to implement youth-informed responses to harassment • Identify existing and/or develop tools to equip adults and peers to identify, interrupt, and prevent harm in school and community settings
2. Train teachers and prepare schools to support students with foundational literacy	• Survey community partnerships • Share resources and ideas • Guest speaker attends committee for this topic • Create subcommittees for this topic area, if needed
3. Improve the intake process, transcript, and credit recovery support for 16-24 year-old refugees	• Survey community partnerships • Share resources and ideas • Guest speaker attends committee for this topic • Create subcommittees for this topic area, if needed
4. Increase support for career and college readiness and mentorships	• Survey community partnerships • Share resources and ideas • Guest speaker attends committee for this topic • Create subcommittees for this topic area, if needed • Develop and sustain community-based mentorship models for adolescents and young adults/ Prioritize culturally relevant mentoring structures for ages 18–24.

Adult Education Action Plan

Focus Areas	Action Steps
1. Maintain an education roadmap that can be easily accessed by target audiences (students & providers) & is kept current	• Determine if the current roadmap meets needs, adjust and align the roadmap if necessary • Develop an updated version of the roadmap that merges the resources from other roadmap versions into one living document. • Assign committee member(s) to collect new data and revise roadmap • Obtain feedback (survey) from "users" (target students and providers) outside of the committee to gain insight on whether the roadmap meets their needs • Develop a team and process to update the resource • Identify the best way to market the roadmap
2. Explore and elevate existing and/or develop culturally relevant mentorship and peer support systems for adult learners	• Identify mentorship and peer support programs that already exist, if any • Identify ways to elevate on ESL and ELL support • Boise State Career Advising Department • Collaborate to design mentorship initiatives that pair emerging adult learners (18-24 years old) with mentors from their own or similar communities
3. Leverage workforce partnerships to strengthen learning-to-employment pipelines	• Work with the Employment Committee to identify workforce skills training and job placement programs that already exist • Identify areas of opportunity within adult education programs that can provide support • What's in the "launch" list of careers to identify the subsidized

Community Connections Action Plan

Focus Areas	Action Steps
1. Deepen engagement with community hubs and trusted gathering spaces	• Finalize Hub logistics (documents/contact info/details) • Begin piloting hubs and then develop full implementation plan • Address food insecurity and how we can elevate this resource at resource hubs • Explore a Boise Public Library location as an official NU Resource Hub location (Hillcrest or Downtown)
2. Build inclusive strategies for engaging and supporting community leaders	• Address food insecurity and how we can elevate this resource at resource hubs • Explore a Boise Public Library location as an official NU Resource Hub location (Hillcrest or Downtown)
3. Foster connectedness across jurisdictions and during transitions	• Establish connections with Kuna as a growing city near the Treasure Valley

Employment Action Plan

Focus Areas	Action Steps
1. Improve job matching and employment access for English learners	• Employment Committee to meet monthly to share resources, make referrals and identify assistance areas.
2. Help employers improve their hiring, training and onboarding processes for employees from refugee backgrounds.	• Create a new FAQ Guide “First 90 Days of Employment”. Publish on NU website in October 2025.
3. Build employment retention and stability systems for refugee and immigrant workers. Document and codify as much as possible while the resettlement industry continues to face attrition.	• Evaluate and update the Employment Committee guides as needed. Share guides and other employment resources with local employers and community partners.

Health Action Plan

Focus Areas	Action Steps
Improve access to health coverage and system navigation	• Advocate for institutional changes and engage in policy work at the city/county level for improved healthcare access • Identify existing tools and/or create accessible tools and navigation supports to understand and enroll in available insurance (and other social support) programs • Partner with stakeholders (see list of stakeholders in "Partners column") for improved health navigator support and information distribution • Identify stakeholders and communication platforms • Conduct listening sessions and focus groups with refugee communities • Identify existing tools and/or create accessible tools and navigation supports for new arrivals to understand and enroll in available insurance programs • Understand the impact of the Medicaid changes and how this might affect refugee families, including ED's and CHC's, and coordinate dissemination of information to impacted groups
Healthcare systems that are more culturally responsive to diverse needs	• Explore a partnership on interpreter training on mental health interpretation (• Identify communication barriers and enhance communication platforms utilized by communities served
A more empowered refugee community with tools to navigate the health system	• Look for grant opportunities to develop and deliver training on trauma informed care, culturally responsive care, and healing practices

Housing Action Plan

Focus Areas	Action Steps
1. Build landlord relationships and increase access to diverse housing types	• Identify if there is a primary point of contact for landlord relationship management across NU - Who should landlords call when they have concerns? Technology solutions? • Assess the capacity of the housing committee: landlord outreach
2. Strengthen cross-sector coordination to increase access and track housing stability	• Invite additional partners to the housing committee • Map service eligibility and build coordinated referral systems across housing, education, and health sectors to ensure warm handoffs and consistent follow-up. • Bring in presenters to the housing committee from mainstream resources
3. Advance eviction prevention through education and early intervention	• Evaluate existing partners who would be interested • Collaborate with Jesse Tree's Tenant Resource Center? • Translate the renter education resources • Create additional educational videos with JUMP • Work with partners for outreach plan
4. Expand and stabilize rental assistance and housing navigation support	• Review existing Housing Resources (findhelpidaho.org) • Create an evergreen training for Housing Navigators that could live in the Housing Committee Google Drive

Transportation Action Plan

Focus Areas	Action Steps
1. Support driving instruction	• Collect some data on what needed in driver training • Look for grants to support driver training
2. Expand transit literacy and navigation supports	• Create videos for bus training in different languages • Identify and train internal team members who can support bus training and partner program employees, preferably with multilingual skills.

Focus Areas	Action Steps
	• Set up a class for clients on how to read routes/language/etc.
3. Remove cost barriers for families and youth in transit	• Apply for grants to fun bus passes • Advocate for VRT for City-go discounted bus packages for clients • Advocate to VRT for free bus passes for children
4. Encourage advocacy from NU partners at the state level to better improve inter-city access	• Work with CTAI on supporting state level legislation for state funding to expand public transportation