

November 2018

Potential Impacts of FY 2019 Reception and Placement (R&P) Program Decisions

The United States Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP)

Currently, nine national resettlement agencies are approved to administer the R&P Program by the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) at the Department of State. These nine agencies have the approved “capacity” to serve **45,000** refugees and **15,000** Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders to total **60,000** beneficiaries of the R&P Program in federal fiscal year (FY) 2018. All nine agencies have received an extended contract to continue to administer R&P services under their FY 2018 awards, including to new arrivals to the United States, until December 31, 2018.

PRM has indicated the likelihood that not all nine currently operating national resettlement agencies will continue to participate in the R&P Program in FY 2019. We do not know how many national resettlement agencies will continue to administer the program in FY 2019, nor details regarding how or when these agencies will be decided, though a decision is expected sometime this quarter.

Decreased Admissions Ceiling

The administration has reduced the refugee admissions ceiling from **45,000** refugees in FY 2018 to **30,000** refugees in FY 2019. There is also an expected decrease in projected SIV arrivals from 15,000 in FY 2018 to 10,000 in FY 2019. With arrivals below the national capacity for resettlement in FY 2018, it is uncertain whether the United States will admit even these reduced numbers in FY 2019.

According to the most recent available [public directory](#) of resettlement affiliates, there are currently **267** affiliates in **130** locations across the United States. Locations often include multiple cities as affiliates resettle refugees in surrounding cities within a 100-mile radius of their office. Lower admissions numbers could result in many smaller agencies not receiving enough refugees in a year to remain operational. Because the R&P Program is funded locally on a per capita basis, few and infrequent arrivals threaten the financial sustainability of local R&P Programs as well as their agencies as a whole. In addition, PRM has paid closer attention to the size of affiliates in recent years. At present, while a minimum number of arrivals is not required to remain operational, local resettlement agencies are required by PRM to maintain a capacity to resettle no fewer than 100 refugees. This posture has led to fears that PRM could expand this rule to terminate local R&P Programs that resettled fewer than 100 refugees in FY 2018 or are projected to resettle fewer than 100 refugees in FY 2019.

Impact on Ongoing Resettlement Programs

Local resettlement offices that no longer participate in the R&P program may also be removed from the Matching Grant (MG) employment and self-sufficiency program, which is a grant funded by the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). By statute, only agencies that participate in the R&P Program or the Cuban and Haitian Entrant Program (CHEP) are eligible to participate in this program. CWS and USCCB are the two national resettlement agencies participating in the Cuban and Haitian Entrant Program.

ORR also awards national resettlement agencies funding for the Preferred Communities Program, which offers ongoing intensive case management services to the most vulnerable refugees. At this time, national resettlement agencies expect that all nine agencies will be able to continue to operate this program as participation in the program is not restricted by statute and agencies are in the third year of a five-year grant cycle. However, adjustments to this program's current service network are anticipated based on R&P decisions that could impact the scale of need for PC services in affected locations.

State-funded resettlement services that are available to refugees for up to five years after arrival will be awarded according to the strategies of each state. Some states may desire to maintain capacity of multiple resettlement agencies in their community regardless of R&P decisions; therefore, they could continue to award agencies no longer participating in the R&P program with state contracts to maintain capacity of as many agencies in their community as possible. Others may choose to consolidate their state programming to fewer agencies, increasing funding insecurity for those agencies no longer participating in the R&P program.

ORR is currently in conversations regarding changes to funding decisions that could potentially help maintain capacity in key areas, but it is unclear what these might be.

Potential Impacts of R&P Changes on the United States Resettlement Network

If any of the nine agencies were to lose their contract there would be multiple communities in which there would no longer be a resettlement office that is able to continue receiving refugees in the immediate future. If any one national resettlement agency is eliminated from the USRAP, it could have the following impacts:

- Anywhere from **14** to **77** local resettlement offices would no longer be authorized to administer the R&P program.
- There are at least **70** communities throughout the USRAP where only one affiliate is present. If any of these affiliates were to lose their national agency, there would no longer be a resettlement agency in this community.
- Offices no longer participating the R&P Program could lose the ability to offer longer-term integration services such as the Matching Grant Program, Preferred Communities Program and other state-funded service programs. In some cases, this could mean that these programs are absent in an entire community.

- With the loss of their principal funding sources, some local resettlement agencies may find that they are no longer able to sustain their operations and could close altogether.

Possible Approaches to Adapting to Fewer Local and National Resettlement Agencies

Scenario 1: A Community Retains At Least One Resettlement Agency

- In communities with more than one resettlement agency present, the affiliate(s) associated with a national agency continuing to participate in the R&P program could absorb the resettlement capacity of the affiliate(s) no longer participating in the R&P program, especially given that arrivals are so low at this time.
- Affiliates who no longer administer R&P may continue to operate some ongoing post-R&P services depending on the affiliate, their national agency's eligibility for these programs and the community. In some cases, discontinuation of the R&P program and related programs could result in the complete closure of the local resettlement agency itself.

Scenario 2: A Community with No Remaining Resettlement Agency

- Continuation of services with the pre-existing local resettlement agency under the auspices of a different national resettlement agency will be considered on a case-by-case basis. It is unclear under what circumstances that this scenario would be considered by PRM, local resettlement agencies and national resettlement agencies. Also unknown is how the dynamics of the corporate structure of the national resettlement agency could come to play in these decisions. Some local resettlement agencies are incorporated into the national resettlement agency's corporate structure, whereas others are independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organizations subcontracting with a national resettlement agency. Still others are Catholic dioceses. Whether a corporate arm of one resettlement agency will be permitted to subcontract with another resettlement agency, as well as challenges and dynamics of those potential relationships remain unclear.
- Another local resettlement agency within 100 miles could take on the resettlement and community consultation responsibilities for this community, serving clients from a potentially great distance and requiring extensive travel for clients and local resettlement staff to provide and receive services and engage with the local community.
- The nearest resettlement agency (within 100 miles) could propose to open a satellite or sub-office to continue serving this community. This could involve the establishment of an entirely new program to continue to offer services or be done in partnership with the pre-existing local resettlement agency.

- Local resettlement agencies no longer operating an R&P program that maintains operational capacity could participate in the Remote Placement option offered by the Department of State if there is no other local resettlement agency operating within 100 miles. Through this program, community groups agree to provide R&P services to refugees arriving to a community because of the presence of a family or friend relationship in the area. This option would mean that only refugees with family or friends in a community may be resettled in that location.
- Communities with few or no new refugee arrivals are most vulnerable to decline in ongoing resettlement services. With no incoming population through the USRAP, ongoing resettlement services are likely to dwindle for those individuals who are already living in the community. This could also result in heightened isolation of refugee communities, as fewer agencies and programs exist to broker relationships between refugees, local programs and institutions (such as schools), and the overall community.

Lasting Impacts on Communities

The loss of local R&P programs creates a ripple effect that will over time result in a more challenging resettlement experience for refugees and the loss of bridges and connections between refugees and host communities:

- If the loss of local resettlement agencies' federal programs results in agency closures, the focal point for refugee integration and community education in a given location could be eliminated.
- Employers would suffer from a lack of eager and able refugee employees, and the wraparound support that resettlement agencies provide their refugee employees, including pre-employment support, employee referrals and social services for active employees.
- Public schools, medical professionals and other public and community services will be less prepared to serve and engage with refugees without the guidance and education from the local resettlement agency.
- Language access would be hampered, as resettlement agencies often serve as sources of interpreters and translated materials for community partners.
- Without specialized refugee youth services, schools and youth programs could struggle to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate opportunities for children to adapt and thrive in their new home.
- Resettlement agencies serve as conveners and bridges between refugees and the receiving communities. Without their presence, community members and refugees will have less access and fewer opportunities to engage and learn from one another, impeding the integration of both groups into an interwoven community.

- While many larger multi-service agencies may remain vibrant and thriving organizations in the community, if their refugee-focused services are eliminated, these agencies will also lose their ability to serve these functions to the community, as trained and knowledgeable members of their staff move away and the overall agency's connections, cultural competency and understanding are eroded.

Additional Considerations

Our advocacy team at CWS recommends that the following factors be considered in making decisions about where to locate or support resettlement offices:

- Offices located in the state and/or district of Congressional leadership or members of the Judiciary, Appropriations, Homeland Security, and/or Foreign Affairs committees
- Offices that would be the only remaining office in a state and/or community represented by a congressional champion and/or detractor
- States and localities that have faced local and/or state anti-refugee and/or anti-immigrant policy proposals and/or rhetoric, and/or those that have successfully introduced and/or passed pro-refugee and pro-immigrant resolutions and policy changes
- Offices that have a community organizer and/or engage in advocacy and/or refugee leadership development with key partners
- Offices in rural and/or more conservative locations that have mobilized the support of communities of faith, business, and/or conservative voices.