



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

NORA VARGAS
First District

JOEL ANDERSON
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

VACANT
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: September 26, 2023

05

TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

APPROVE SUBMISSION OF THE FEDERAL FISCAL YEARS 2024-2026 REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES PLAN, ADOPT A RESOLUTION FOR THE REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES PLAN, ACCEPT ADDITIONAL UKRAINE SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION ACT FUNDING, AUTHORIZE COMPETITIVE PROCUREMENTS, AND APPLY FOR FUTURE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

On August 6, 2019 (9), the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) approved and adopted the Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2020-2022 Refugee Employment Services Plan and associated resolution. The proposed Refugee Support Services (RSS) plan for FFY 2024-2026, was developed with feedback from community stakeholders, including current participants in RSS programs, and providers serving refugees and newly arrived immigrants.

The County of San Diego (County) receives federal funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement administered through California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Refugee Programs Bureau (RPB). Funding provides employment and supportive services designed to help refugees and newly arrived immigrants in the region thrive, achieve self-sufficiency, and integrate into society. The County Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities, Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (HSEC-OIRA) has developed the FFY 2024-2026 RSS Plan to meet federal requirements which includes feedback provided by local stakeholders, refugee residents, and service providers.

HSEC-OIRA also received two new funding opportunities from CDSS to support refugees who were displaced due to the war in Ukraine. This funding will be used to provide housing and utilities assistance, childcare referrals and assistance, English language training, and support with job searches.

Today's item requests the Board approve submission of the FFY 2024-2026 RSS Plan to CDSS RPB and adopt the associated resolution; authorize the Agency Director, HHSA or designee to execute agreements and take any other action necessary as required for acceptance of the Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act funding; authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, to issue a competitive solicitation for services to assist refugees

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displaced by the war in Ukraine; and authorize the Agency Director, HHSa or designee, to apply for future funding opportunities for programs or projects in alignment with the goal of expanding the economic inclusion of refugees and immigrants in the region.

Today's actions support the County's vision of a just, sustainable, and resilient future for all, specifically for communities in the County that have been historically under resourced as well as our ongoing commitment to the regional *Live Well San Diego* vision of healthy, safe, and thriving communities by supporting programs that remove barriers to employment and resources for refugee populations, thereby supporting regional economic inclusion and equity. This will be accomplished by pursuing additional funding opportunities to expand programs to increase refugee inclusion in economic growth in the region.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Approve submission of the Federal Fiscal Years 2024-2026 Refugee Support Services Plan to the California Department of Social Services, Refugee Programs Bureau and authorize submittal of revisions by the Agency Director, Health and Human Services Agency, or designee, when required by changes in funding or services.
2. Adopt the Resolution entitled: A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO RELATING TO REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES PLAN FOR FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2024 THROUGH FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2026.
3. Authorize the Agency Director, Health and Human Services Agency, or designee, to execute agreements and take any other actions necessary as required by the California Department of Social Services, Refugee Programs Bureau for the acceptance of approximately \$4.6 million of Federal Fiscal Year 2023 Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act Refugee Support Services funding, which includes allocations for the Housing Assistance for Ukrainians Program and for the Ukrainian Refugee Support Services Supplemental Funding.
4. In accordance with Section 401, Article XXIII of the County Administrative Code, authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, to issue a competitive solicitation for services to assist refugees displaced by the war in Ukraine, and upon successful negotiations and determination of a fair and reasonable price, award a contract or contracts for an initial term of up to one year, with four one-year options, and up to an additional six months if needed; and to amend the contract to reflect changes in program, funding or service requirements, subject to the availability of funds and the approval of the Agency Director, Health and Human Services Agency.
5. Authorize the Agency Director, Health and Human Services Agency, or designee, to apply for future funding, including grants, supplemental funding and other funding opportunities for programs or projects in alignment with the goal of expanding the economic inclusion of refugees and immigrants in the region.

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EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities, Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (HSEC-OIRA) prioritizes engaging with stakeholders that are representatives of the refugee community. HSEC-OIRA requires qualitative surveys from all providers assisting the refugee population, language translation, and interpretation efforts to increase bilateral communication with the refugee population and collaboration with internal and external partners to identify successes and progress.

Between May 12, 2023, and June 16, 2023, HSEC-OIRA gathered community feedback by surveying Refugee Support Services program participants and providers of refugee services. HSEC-OIRA collected over 150 responses. The results of the surveys indicated most clients were happy overall with the services they received, and the most important services requested by participants were English language training, referrals to childcare, job search assistance, referrals to transportation, learning how to use computers, acculturation, and assistance with creating resumes. HSEC-OIRA will work with its providers on ways to bolster needed services and opportunities to improve areas identified in the survey results. HSEC-OIRA will also continue pursuing additional funding opportunities to expand programs to increase refugee inclusion in economic growth in the region.

According to the California Department of Social Services, Refugee Programs Bureau (RPB), San Diego County (county) is a designated refugee-impacted county. Current data available from RPB indicates 3,980 newly arriving refugees and Special Immigrant Visa holders resettled in the county between October 1, 2018, and June 30, 2023, making San Diego the third largest recipient of refugee arrivals in California, behind Sacramento and Los Angeles counties, during this period. These statistics do not include secondary migration, where refugees who initially arrive in another county or state, relocate to the county for any reason.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Today's actions support the County of San Diego's Sustainability Goal #1 engaging the community in meaningful ways, Sustainability Goal # 2 providing just and equitable access, and Sustainability Goal #4 to protect the health and well-being of everyone in the region by engaging with the community through collaborative partnerships, regional listening sessions, forums, workgroups, steering committees, and conducting surveys to collect community input. The information collected was incorporated into designing Refugee Support Service programs to better serve the needs of refugee and immigrant communities. These programs aim to remove barriers and provide opportunities for equitable access to resources. To facilitate just and equitable access to these programs, language translation and interpretation services are utilized to increase access to vital information, services, and resources in a culturally competent manner. Opportunities for equitable access to resources assist with protecting the health and well-being of everyone in the region.

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FISCAL IMPACT

Funding for Refugee Support Services, Services for Older Refugees, Afghanistan Refugee Support Services and Afghanistan Services to Older Refugees are included in the FY 2023-25 Operational Plan for the Health and Human Services Agency. If approved, this request will result in costs and revenue of approximately \$3.0 million in FY 2023-24 and \$3.5 million in FY 2024-25. The funding source is the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Refugee Programs Bureau (RPB) and includes one-time funding allocations from the Afghanistan Supplemental Appropriations Act. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

Funding for new allocations for Ukrainian Refugee Support Services and Housing Assistance for Ukrainians are included in the FY 2023-25 Operational Plan for Health and Human Services Agency. If approved, this request will result in costs and revenue of approximately \$2.1 million in FY 2023-24 and \$2.1 million in FY 2024-25. The total allocation for FY 2023-24 to FY 2025-26 is approximately \$4.6 million. The funding source is CDSS RPB and are one-time funding allocations from the Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act. There will be no change in net General Fund cost and no additional staff years.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

N/A

ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

N/A

BACKGROUND

Refugees are individuals who have fled their countries of origin and are unable to return home due to persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political affiliation. San Diego County has been designated as a refugee resettlement site by the federal government since 1975 and has been one of the largest resettlement sites in the country over the last decade.

Historically, programs and services for immigrant and refugee communities have been limited or unavailable because of immigration status. Additionally, lack of outreach and community involvement have led to disconnects between enrollment in available services among eligible populations. To reduce these disparities, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHS), Department of Homeless Solutions and Equitable Communities, Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (HSEC-OIRA) works directly with community stakeholders to receive input and apply regional academic research, data, and best practices to advance equity and opportunities for immigrant and refugee populations in the region. Furthermore, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Refugee Programs Bureau (RPB) provides HSEC-OIRA with funding for immigrant and refugee services.

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Refugee Support Services Plan

Most newly arrived refugees face language and/or cultural barriers to employment and therefore require tailored services to address their unique needs. The Refugee Support Services (RSS) Plan is updated every three years and assists HSEC-OIRA in designing programs for newly arrived refugee families and longer-term refugees who have been in the country for less than five years, with achieving self-sufficiency by providing employment opportunities and RSS.

On August 6, 2019 (9), the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) approved and adopted the Federal Fiscal Years (FFY) 2020-2022 Refugee Employment Services Plan and associated resolution. To align plans submitted by all counties, and due to delays associated with the pandemic, CDSS extended the submission of support services plans and associated resolutions by one year for all counties, accounting for the one-year gap between the FFY 2020-2022 plan and FFY 2024-2026 plan. The proposed plan for FFY 2024-2026, now known as the Refugee Support Services (RSS) Plan, was developed with feedback from community stakeholders including current participants in RSS programs, and providers serving refugees and newly arrived immigrants.

Between May 12, 2023, and June 16, 2023, HSEC-OIRA gathered community feedback by surveying RSS program participants and providers of refugee services. HSEC-OIRA collected over 150 responses. The results of the surveys and details regarding the process used to collect the data are included in the attached FFY 2024-2026 RSS Plan in Exhibit 1. The results of the surveys indicated most clients were happy overall with the services they received. The services outlined in the 2024-2026 RSS Plan are in alignment with federal funding regulations and address priority issues identified through a review of stakeholder feedback and other community data. Strategies include providing support to English language learners as they look for employment and start work, strengthening connections between employers and refugee job seekers, increasing opportunities for acculturation, and helping to connect refugees with important supportive services and resources. HSEC-OIRA is proactively utilizing listening sessions and collaborative partnerships to create and fund programs that will expand, enhance, or pilot new services to address critical areas including but not limited to housing, health, language services, childcare, transportation, and more.

Utilization of Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriation Act Funding

In November 2022, CDSS RPB received over \$25 million of Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriation Act (AUSAA) funding to be used to provide RSS to Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians who were displaced from Ukraine due to war.

On July 5, 2023, and August 16, 2023, CDSS RPB allocated funds to eligible California counties. The County is eligible for \$4,577,420, which includes \$2,577,420 designated for housing and utility assistance through the Housing Assistance for Ukrainian program, and \$2,000,000 for childcare referrals and assistance, English language training, and support with job searches. Based on the listening sessions and survey feedback gathered for the RSS Plan for FFY 2024-2026,

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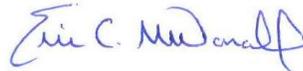
HSEC-OIRA will utilize the AUSAA funding to serve the most vulnerable refugees and immigrants from Ukraine. HSEC-OIRA will also administer competitive procurements for those services.

Today's item requests the Board approve submission of the FFY 2024-2026 RSS Plan to CDSS RPB and adopt the associated resolution; authorize the Agency Director, HHSA or designee to execute agreements and take any other action necessary as required for acceptance of the Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act funding; authorize the Director, Department of Purchasing and Contracting, to issue a competitive solicitation for services to assist refugees displaced by the war in Ukraine; and authorize the Agency Director, HHSA or designee, to apply for future funding opportunities for programs or projects in alignment with the goal of expanding the economic inclusion of refugees and immigrants in the region.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today's actions support the County of San Diego's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan initiatives of Sustainability (Resiliency), Equity (Economic Opportunity), and Community (Quality of Life). By providing equitable access to sustainable programs and resources, in a culturally competent and linguistically diverse manner, refugees and immigrants are better prepared to obtain self-sufficiency, which leads to increased resiliency, economic opportunities, and improved quality of life.

Respectfully submitted,



HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER
Interim Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

Attachment A – County of San Diego Refugee Support Services Plan FFY 2024-2026

Attachment B – A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO RELATING TO REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICES PLAN FOR FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2024 THROUGH FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR 2026