

Wilson Fish TANF Coordination Grant Program

Program Summary

The Bureau of Refugee Programs (BRP) received \$300,000 for each of four years to develop and implement a sustainable approach to enhancing the programs and services provided by the W-2 employment program to meet the unmet needs of 250 W-2 eligible participants and their families, and to advance opportunities for socio-economic self-sufficiency. Funding will be used for one full-time program position at the State Refugee Office and four supplemental staff at four W-2 agencies administering programs and services to refugees. These four agencies administer services and support across nine key counties where refugees have been resettling. The funding will also be used to contract with the company Transition to Success to expand an enhanced foundational case management tool currently in use by Forward Services Corporation. The counties where the project will be implemented are as follows: Barron, Brown, Calumet, Dane, Eau Claire, Milwaukee, Outagamie, Sheboygan, and Winnebago.

The greatest number of refugees arriving and settling in Wisconsin are Burmese (including Rohingya, Karen, Chin, and other Burmese ethnic minority groups), Congolese, and Somali. The project team will use available client data to determine the specific linguistic and cultural resources for the respective communities and will take advantage of existing network meetings, where possible, to integrate the program into existing communication strategies for a streamlined approach.

The objectives of the project are as follows: 1) Adapt existing in-person and remote W-2 resources and services to increase accessibility; 2) Increase effectiveness of and access to job-skills through enhanced English courses; 3) Reduce service gaps and increase family well-being through enhanced case management which is delivered according to Culturally and Linguistically Approved Services (CLAS) standards.

Approach: The central focus of this project is to better meet the needs of W-2 eligible refugees within the first 36 months of their arrival to Wisconsin, prioritizing those who are within their first year. This will be accomplished by adapting existing programs and resources at W-2 agencies. Four W-2 Refugee Programs Liaisons (RPLs) will provide support to Financial and Employment Planners at W-2 agencies and will be responsible for delivering the activities that will increase access to remote and in-person services for refugees. Through this grant, the BRP will also increase economic advancement for refugees and improve collaboration between service providers.

Activities, outputs, outcome targets: RPLs will work closely with other service providers in their communities who are providing support to shared participants to ensure service provision is complementary and will use the Transition to Success¹ enhanced case management tool to facilitate coordination efforts and to deliver project materials.

¹ <http://transitiontosuccess.org/how-it-works>

Key activities include: adaptation of digital literacy resources, translation of informative employment materials including child care pamphlets, rights and responsibilities for child care, job center resources, translation of career pathways tool from Transition to Success for enhanced foundational case management, on-the-job, job-specific English language courses, increased access to remote job skills trainings, improved coordination between all service providers who are providing case management services to mutual clients, and strengthen referrals by providing adapted materials. More specific information will be made available as we collaborate with partners and identify next steps, especially with consideration of the limitations presented by COVID-19.

Project evaluation and sustainability: Throughout the grant period, the project team will use the program's Log frame and regular reports shared by the RPLs with the W-2 Refugee Programs Coordinator to guide project performance. At the end of the first year of the project, the W-2 Refugee Programs Coordinator will develop satisfaction surveys and BRP will administer surveys to participants to gauge individual experiences with the project. At the end of year two of the project, BRP will commission an independent evaluation to gauge project progress and opportunities for improvement. Opportunities to sustain the project beyond the grant period will be actively explored with partners.

Project Initiation and Planning

While taking the necessary steps to recruit a W-2 Refugee Programs Coordinator and RPLs for each of the four W-2 agencies, BRP will also be reviewing the timeline and milestones submitted with the project application to begin identifying opportunities to ensure the project is implemented efficiently; ensuring that any barriers or risks are addressed timely.

A workgroup including staff from the Milwaukee Operations Section and Bureau of Regional Operations will help to ensure efficient communication and project implementation across the abovementioned nine counties.