

How to Recruit and Retain Housing Providers Toolkit



Refugee Housing
SOLUTIONS

STEPS TO THE H N E H N O C

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Introduction

Every year, the U.S. welcomes many refugees and other newcomers in response to world crises, especially conflict and war and, increasingly, from climate change impacts. Refugee Housing Solutions (RHS) is an innovative project funded by the U.S. Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration through which Church World Service (CWS) leads one response in support of ten national Resettlement Agencies and 300+ local offices and affiliates as all seek safe, affordable housing for refugees and other newcomers to the U.S.

In this How to Recruit and Retain Housing Providers Toolkit, refugee resettlement practitioners, sponsors, and volunteers will learn about strategies and ways to identify, recruit, and retain housing providers – primarily traditional landlords and property management companies – plus new housing providers in the refugee housing mix.

Due to the high demand for affordable housing for many people in the U.S. combined with ever rising rent, it is essential for resettlement agencies and their services partners to have strong, successful housing partnerships. Even in the best of circumstances, the landlord recruitment process is complicated. With rental property shortages, high rents, and often misunderstood refugee renters, it is even more difficult to recruit and retain quality housing providers interested in renting to newcomers.

To help address this challenge, RHS is designed to support all refugee resettlement stakeholders, especially the ten national Resettlement Agencies (RA) and their local offices and affiliates, plus refugee sponsors and volunteers, in securing affordable housing for refugees and newcomers. The RHS team comprises experienced housing and refugee resettlement experts to support national and local resettlement agencies and non-profits as well as sponsors and volunteers in finding resources and developing strategies to increase success in recruiting and retaining housing providers who are open to renting to newcomers.

Disclaimer: The contents of this toolkit are intended for informational purposes only. Refugee Housing Solutions makes no claims or guarantees of the completeness or accuracy of the information herein.

Nothing contained in this toolkit constitutes an endorsement or recommendation of any organization.

The Benefits of Having a Housing Specialist on Staff

Permanent housing for all refugees or newcomers — a single person, a couple with two children, or a large extended family — is the goal of all resettlement practitioners and sponsors. But, to permanently house an individual, couple, or family of any size within 90 days of their arrival in the U.S., safe, affordable housing must be available. And, of course, landlords must be ready and willing to rent to refugees.

Because the affordable housing market is so competitive across the U.S., having a designated staff member — Housing Coordinator or Housing Specialist — to focus solely on housing search and procurement is highly recommended. Having a designated staff member who (i) knows and follows the local housing market for trends; (ii) educates potential landlords about refugees and the resettlement process, and (iii) promotes your resettlement agency's mission will significantly expand agency capacity to identify, recruit, and maintain housing provider partnerships that make your refugee housing efforts successful and rewarding.

As refugee housing search is complicated — and often relationship-driven — it is ideal to employ staff with specific expertise in the affordable housing field, or with a real estate background. When you are recruiting a housing specialist or coordinator, note that the role includes, but is not limited to:

- initiating or expanding, and then overseeing outreach efforts
- maintaining positive relationships with housing providers, and
- being a key contact for newcomers as your agency's staffing structure allows so newcomers can have an internal go-to person for the housing search.

Housing Specialist Remit and Qualifications

With a housing specialist, coordinator, or manager, there is a one staff member who is responsible to:

- Oversee housing provider outreach/search, recruitment, and retention: traditional landlords as well as non-traditional housing providers like hotels and those who rent rooms in a house they own
- Manage housing provider relationships; be the point person for all landlords
- Free case managers and other agency staff of housing search and procurement responsibilities, including housing provider liaising

When hiring an experienced housing coordinator or specialist, look for someone who:

- Is knowledgeable about affordable housing and has a network of affordable housing contacts
- Has a working knowledge of property management
- Has persuasive communication skills with a salesperson persona
- Is a go-getter who will proactively seek and negotiate partnerships that benefit the housing provider and the newcomer tenant in an affordable, safe, and dignified new home, apartment, duplex, house, or room in a shared house

Case Manager vs. Housing Specialist

Case Managers' primary focus is supporting the overall resettlement and settling-in experience for refugees and newcomers, that is, concentrating on clients. S/he manages Cultural Orientation including self-sufficiency planning and, once safe, affordable housing is secured, drafting a housing stability plan.

Housing Specialists' primary focus is recruiting and maintaining landlord relationships while connecting clients and housing providers, and trying to ensure that both tenants and landlords understand their respective roles, and their respective and shared, responsibilities.

Housing Specialist

Sample Job Description and Duties

Primary Purpose: The Housing Specialist is responsible for procuring safe, secure and affordable housing for newly arriving refugees by building relationships with landlords and property managers and educating them about our refugee-serving programs. Additionally, the housing specialist is responsible for preparing each housing unit with furniture, household goods and food as outlined in the Department of State/Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration Cooperative Agreement.

Essential Duties as Housing Specialist

- Leads outreach for new relationships with potential landlords and property managers, maintains positive relationships with local landlords, owners and property management companies.
- Educates landlords and property managers about agency resettlement programs.
- Provides presentations to public housing providers and stakeholders about refugee housing needs, opportunities, and challenges.
- Secures initial housing for all refugees by visiting properties, making safety inspections, submitting applications, and booking temporary housing, if needed.
- Liaises with landlords throughout housing negotiations, lease signing, and initial move-in.
- Obtains and organizes donated and purchased household items, using judgment for affordability for the newcomer on purchases made for them.
- Places orders for the purchase, delivery and installation of beds to clients' housing.
- Hires furniture moving assistance and ensures all household furniture and supplies are placed in the apartment or other housing prior to newcomers' arrivals.
- Coordinates housing set-ups and works with volunteer coordinator and case managers to secure volunteer assistance.
- Completes and submits for approval all check requests related to housing, including but not limited to rent, security deposit, application fees, lease transfer fees, telephone, beds and other furniture, household goods, etc.

Housing Specialist

Sample Job Description and Duties, continued

Shared Duties:

- Advocates on behalf of refugees, and refugee-serving voluntary agencies.
- Stays informed about refugee and immigrant issues, and available services to refugees.
- Represents the program relevant to the responsibilities of the position.
- Performs all duties in a culturally appropriate manner.
- Works varied hours, including occasional night and weekend work.
- Undertakes other duties as assigned, including roles in donation and/or case management, opportunities, and challenges.

Qualifications:

- Education: Associate's degree or higher.
- Experience: Previous work and/or volunteer experience in refugee resettlement or other direct social services preferred. Ability to provide culturally sensitive service and a willingness to work with a diverse, non-English speaking clientele is required.

The Toolkit

With background, context, and the purpose of having a housing specialist on a resettlement team outlined, the balance of this document comprises the guidance that a housing specialist and resettlement generalists need to have a successful housing provider recruitment and retention program.

Preparing for Housing Provider Outreach

Before starting to recruit landlords, apartment building managers, or other housing providers, outreach and promotional materials are needed. When creating outreach materials be sure the design is visually appealing and that your messaging is simple with the benefits of the landlord–refugee tenant partnership clearly outlined.

Because a refugee/newcomer applicant is new to many housing providers, the benefits of renting to this group should be highlighted positively in promotional materials. For example, emphasize the fact that refugees are among the most vetted applicants they will have, and that refugees and other newcomers such as Afghans and Ukrainians, come with “a village” — resettlement staff, sponsors, community volunteers, and other social service providers — to support their success and troubleshoot challenges.

Outreach for Recruitment

Once the housing specialist has prepared a list of prospective housing providers to start recruiting, there are several ways to reach out.

Outreach letters and emails that include:

- Your agency’s vision, mission, and services
- The benefits to a housing provider of partnering with your agency and a newcomer — individual, couple, or family
- Testimony from other housing providers who have rented to newcomers
- Incentives, if any, e.g., a rent guarantee fund or additional deposit.

Outreach emails are an effective way to start by introducing yourself and your agency. Be confident — and succinct — in your initial email. Do not think of your outreach email as spamming because the goal is to introduce landlords, rental apartment building or complex managers, *et. al* — to a new tenant clientele. This should be your pitch: “Here is an opportunity for you as a housing provider.” A follow-up email or call will likely be necessary. And because your purpose is to identify housing providers who may be interested in a new client based, e.g., refugees and newcomers.

- Your email should include a catchy subject line and a brief introduction of yourself and your reason for writing.
- After this opening line, the email body should clearly state your rental housing needs and the benefits of partnering with a refugee resettlement agency.

The email should end with a call-to-action in support of housing newcomers safely and affordably in the U.S.

Sample Outreach Email

Dear {name of the landlord or property manager}

Hello. My name is Lynette Pearl, and I am the Senior Associate of Housing with Refugee Housing Solutions (RHS), a project of Church World Service under an agreement paid for by the U.S. Department of State. Church World Service is a faith-based organization working to help communities around the globe with sustainable responses to hunger and poverty, displacement, and disaster.

If I may, I would like to take a few minutes of your time to introduce RHS and explain how you, as a landlord or property manager, can help welcome newcomers to the U.S. by partnering with us and others to offer secure and safe, affordable housing in the U.S.'s tight, expensive rental housing market.

Knowing there are many questions about the details of refugee tenants – and wanting to make renting to newcomers to America a positive cross-cultural experience for landlords and property managers – my team and I are here help. Through RHS, we are doing this by bringing interested landlords, property managers, rental association leaders, large rental property owners, social service agencies, community and church partners, and families together. Then, depending on interests, needs, and opportunities, we share comprehensive information, in-depth education, and additional learning resources. We host a National Housing Working Group and regional housing communities of practice, and the RHS team offers on-demand housing technical assistance about specific rent/related questions.

Why Do We Need Your Partnership?

Affordable housing is key to families if they are to settle successfully in the U.S. This has been especially for Afghans and Ukrainians who have been in the news; and there are many others too. By partnering with RHS, you will be a valuable resource to your community, especially your local agencies that directly support refugee resettlement. You can offer housing to families, and RHS can help make this a positive, profitable experience.

You Can Partner with Us!

- List your available properties or units on the RHS website <https://refugeehousing.org/>
- Recruit other landlords and property managers to join by learning more about refugee welcoming and resettlement and the importance of housing to their success in the U.S.
- Join RHS webinars and suggest topics for webinars to share your expertise and experience in renting to refugees
- Join a regional housing Communities of Practice virtually to discuss housing challenges as well as ideas to help create innovative solutions for affordable newcomer rental homes <https://refugeehousing.org/get-involved/>.

If you are ready to partner with those of us engaged in welcoming refugees to secure, safe rental homes, please complete this [form of interest](#) on the CWS RHS Rent to Refugees page or contact me at lppearl@cwsqlobal.org. I look forward to hearing from you!

Respectfully,

Lynette Pearl

Lynette Pearl
Refugee Housing Solutions is housed under www.refugeehousing.org

In-person appointments with a leave-behind Landlord Outreach Packet

Once appointments are made – from cold calls, referrals, or prospect responses to emails or letters, a landlord outreach packet showcases your agency’s accomplishments, and it invites potential housing providers to become more familiar with your agency’s services in support of refugee resettlement process. The **Landlord Outreach Packet** should include these items:

- **Refugee Resettlement Process Summary**

Because the idea of renting to resettled refugees and other newcomers is new to many housing providers, a one-page (one or two sided) topline explanation of the process and how your agency fits into the resettlement process is important. For guidance on one-pager, refer to the Refugee Housing Solutions [Landlord Toolkit](#).

Be sure to include information about alternative documentation that the housing provider can accept in lieu of customarily required documents:

Alternative Documentation		
Screening Criteria	Typical Documentation	Comparable Documentation
Proof of Identity	Driver’s License or State ID	Travel Documents, I-94 Card
Ability to Pay	Credit Report	Promissory Note, Letter of Support
Ability to Pay	Income Verification	Promissory Note, Letter of Support
Criminal History	Background Check	I-94 Card
Rent History	References	Letter of Support

- **Agency Fact Sheet**

This document outlines your agency Vision and Mission and highlights your refugee/newcomer programs and services. Information about how many newcomers were helped by your agency in the last year or two, plus any statistics or quotes about the impact your work for local refugee tenants, landlords, and the community should be included too.

- **Newcomer Success Story**

With the person's or family's consent, tell their housing success story. When a housing provider can attach a face to a landlord-tenant success, there can be an emotional connection, which can help in recruiting. Success stories also give texture and credibility to refugee resettlement and bring awareness to housing as a foundation for newcomers' success in the U.S.

- **Partnership Benefits Summary**

The goal of a reputable housing provider is to have a consistent stream of income while providing quality housing that is fair value for cost to long-term tenants who help preserve the property. In summarizing the benefits of a landlord-resettlement agency partnership, cite the assumption that the landlord is reputable and valuable.

Because the affordable rental housing market is competitive, mention the financial benefits of having a steady supply of dependable tenants. Related to this, list the non-financial incentives you can offer too as they sometimes outweigh financial ones. For example, note that resettlement staff are there to support newcomers and, to an extent, landlords. Highlight how partnership with resettlement professionals can help them, or their staff, mediate disputes. Note, too, how resettlement agency staff check in with refugee tenants to be sure they have the help they need to be successful tenants. *Be sure to note that these intangible incentives can help them retain their employees and reduce staff turnover which, in turn, is a financial benefit.*

- **Another Landlord's Letter of Support**

Because you are trying to build a new partnership with a potential landlord, include a letter of support from a current landlord partner to give added credibility to your agency and mission with a testimony to how you manage your partnership.

- **A List of Incentives**

Incentives — both non-monetary and monetary — are valuable tools to make a business case for landlords to rent to newcomers. They can offset the potential or perceived added time and costs to landlords in renting to refugees. For recruitment to be effective, it must make landlords feel supported and not negatively affected financially if the tenant proves to be unreliable. Of usual concern to landlords is fear that refugee tenants will fail to pay rent or cause damage to the property.

Best Practices Incentives

» **Financial incentives for a housing provider entail agency costs.**

- **A Master Lease** is a lease that gives the lessee, your organization, the right to manage and sublease a unit to a newcomer during the lease term while the owner retains the legal title. There are variations of a master lease, with the most common being that the lessee (your agency) assumes all responsibilities of the unit, including rent payment guarantees as well as maintenance and repairs. The master lease incentive gives the landlord financial security and frees them of minor maintenance and repair costs during the lease term.
- **A Rent Guarantee Fund** gives the landlord a commitment that an organization will step in if the newcomer is unable to pay the rent. As a guarantor, your organization is only liable to pay rent when the newcomer is unable. Guaranteeing rent payment does not cause equal liability for other aspects of the lease, i.e., the agency is not responsible for other lease obligations.

- **Co-signing a lease** shows the landlord that your organization is financially invested in not only the newcomer’s success, but also theirs.
- **Housing Stability Bonuses for Lease Renewals:** By providing a landlord with a housing stability bonus, they are more likely to renew the newcomer lease at the end of the term. The best practice is to offer a dollar amount that is equivalent to one month’s rent.
- **Pay the first and last month’s rent** in addition to deposits.
- **Pay a two-month additional cost incentive**, e.g., for utilities and services not included in the rent.
- » **Non-financial incentives for a housing provider also incur agency costs.**
 - **Conflict Mediator:** A mediator responds to landlord/tenant concerns and helps to resolve misunderstandings and disagreements. Both parties usually benefit as evictions are costly in time, money, and emotions — so, landlords prefer to avoid them. NOTE: A housing specialist can take this responsibility.
 - Agree to make all *small* repairs, within limits, during the tenancy.
 - Make a time-limited “wear and tear” guarantee.
 - Offer a move-out crew to make repairs when the tenant leaves.

Note: These incentives will require the agency to be obligated beyond the 90-day resettlement period.

Promotional materials to support other outreach and recruitment

- **Brochures** are a cost-effective tool for essential, and comprehensive, information-sharing, including information that
 - captures attention
 - educates
 - outlines the benefits of partnering with your agency in a way that builds trust
 - specifies benefits to the landlord and the tenant, in a win-win situation
 - highlights any incentives, financially and nonfinancial, your agency can offer
 In addition, a brochure will include your agency’s vision, mission, and services, and give key contact information.
- **Business cards** are portable marketing tools in both professional and casual settings. With your agency’s branding — name, logo, tagline — a business card shows agency professionalism and is an invitation to be contacted — by you! Besides your name, phone number, email address, and/or LinkedIn contact, your card should show Facebook and Instagram contact information as well.
- **Recruitment video:** A short and comprehensive video can be a creative recruitment tool for housing providers who engage well with visual images. Importantly, a video can include a current, satisfied landlord giving a personal testimony about renting to newcomers, who have support from your organization, volunteers, and sometimes sponsors.

In addition to housing provider testimonial, a video should include educational information about resettlement, including facts about how thoroughly vetted refugees are (criminal background and other safety/security checks) before they come to the U.S. It can also mention alternate

documentation (see page 11) that can be accepted in compliance with fair housing policy and regulations. Your video can also include a colleague from your agency talking about partnership benefits and, as relevant, incentives on offer. Finally, having a partner from a fair housing agency in the video to address housing providers' frequent questions is ideal. [This HUD link](#) will help you locate your local fair housing agency.

- **Swag** not only helps with advertising your organization's mission and brand, but will also make an impression on potential housing provider partners by reminding them that your agency is there to provide vetted, supported tenants. If your agency's swag has a house-shaped silhouette or image, the link can be strengthened on novelty pens with a house-shaped topper or house-shaped mouse pads or coasters, which can be used in an office setting. If you have the budget, house-shaped chocolates are a great leave-behind after a meeting or give-away at a landlord gathering, meeting, or conference.

SUMMARY

Materials should be visually appealing, straightforward, and clearly outline benefits about refugee/newcomer tenants:

- they are thoroughly vetted for all U.S. landlord background checks
- they receive support from your agency and others while settling in
- financial and nonfinancial partnership incentives

Outreach & Recruitment Materials Summary

- Outreach Letter and Email (pages 9-10) • Landlord Outreach Packet (pages 11-13)
 - Brochure • Business Cards • Recruitment Video
 - Housing-themed Swag

Know Your Housing Provider Recruitment Pool

Former Refugees Housing Providers: Among the best landlords you can recruit and retain are those who were refugees themselves. Because of their own experience with resettling, many refugee landlords are welcoming — and often flexible and understanding — as landlords.

Joining and, when possible, staffing an information table at ethnic, cultural, social, and political events — festivals, community educational events, and religious services — can lead to new landlords. Of course, knowing the event's focus and context will help you decide how to participate appropriately. If possible, have a community member — ideally a current landlord — as a co-presenter and/or interpreter, as needed, either at the table or in a short talk (if possible) to explain your presence.

Your Agency Board of Directors: As appropriate, and in line with Board members' responsibility to ensure agency legal, fiscal, and managerial stability, engage your organization's board of directors in your recruitment strategy. It is common and often required for board members to raise financial and in-kind support for their agency. Be sure agency leadership invite them to use their connections to recruit landlords in their personal and professional circles. Some board members are more activist than others. With senior leadership concurrence, do use the most-engaged board members' influence to find new housing providers.

Sponsors & Volunteers: Consider asking sponsors and volunteers to use their professional and personal connections to identify potential landlords.

Your Local Housing Authority: A community's private housing resources can be leveraged with public ones as part of a landlord recruitment strategy. The local housing authority is a key partner in this. Because landlords are difficult to recruit for the Federal Housing Choice Voucher Program (formerly known as Section 8), joining housing authority landlord events will help you learn their recruitment practices and to network with landlords. Most housing authorities post landlords' housing availability for voucher holders on their websites, which you can access for learning and networking. You can find your local housing authority [here](#).

Your State Housing Finance Agency (HFA) is integral to the affordable housing system. HFAs are mandated to finance the purchase, development, and rehabilitation of affordable homes and apartments for low- and middle-income households in line with a state's plans. Each state HFA was created to meet the affordable housing needs of its respective state. You can contact your HFA to learn what current developers offer tax-credit properties (affordable housing) or what new developments are arising that will offer affordable units. HFAs can also provide you with affordable grant programs that are available in your state. Connect to your State Finance Authority [here](#).

Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC): This program has been one of the most extensive efforts to created affordable housing across the U.S. With LIHTC-eligible properties, the owner or developer claims a Federal tax credit for offering affordable housing to low-income families and individuals. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has a [database of LIHTC properties](#) (projects) through 2021. Phone numbers are not included, but names and addresses are, so affordable properties can be found for landlord recruitment outreach.

Churches, Synagogues, and Mosques own a great deal of property in the U.S. Churches, especially, have many un- or under-utilized buildings. The process by which faith communities decide to use their buildings to house vulnerable people, including refugees and newcomers, is complex and years-long. Still, partnerships with faith groups can lead resettlement agencies to new housing opportunities with rental property owners in their faith community.

As importantly, for decades, faith communities have been an integral part of other aspects of welcoming refugees among those they feed, clothe, protect, and shelter. So, for several reasons, connecting with faith-based organizations and individual faith communities can lead to a variety of support for newcomers and, possibly, housing development opportunities with un- and underutilized buildings in the mid-to long-term. For more information on this latter topic, start with [Proximity Project: Empowering Churches to Connect Mission & Place](#) and [Church Properties | Fitzgerald Institute for Real Estate | University of Notre Dame](#), whose staff can lead you to other resources. Or, knowing your own community (town, city, etc.) well, strategic conversations with faith community leaders who have un- and under-used buildings might be the best way to engage.

Whether it is a mosque, temple, or church, believers come from different walks of life and varying backgrounds. With the endorsement of leadership, this diverse spectrum of resources and people can offer the opportunity to recruit much-needed sponsors and volunteers as well as potential landlords.

Every religious group has hierarchies and protocols so, if you do not know a community, start with research on history, leadership, and, if available, mission statement, bylaws and other guiding documents, which will inform your approach to learning about refugee/newcomer housing possibilities, if any, with the group. As with other landlord prospects, use all appropriate ways and means to engage:

- Speak to congregations during or after services, or staff an information table outside the church, synagogue, mosque, or other gathering place on an agreed day/time, e.g., during a celebration. Consider suggesting the weekend closest to World Refugee Day or another community celebration.
- Share the RHS Landlord Toolkit and a copy of your landlord recruitment video
- Place an ad in the weekly bulletin, monthly newsletter, or website.

SUMMARY

There is a broad and deep pool of potential housing providers for refugees and other newcomers, even amid the affordable housing crisis that continues across much of the U.S. In addition to all the leads cited above, you and your resettlement team may know others, which the Refugee Housing Solutions would like to know and share.

[Fill out a Best Practices Toolkit Template](#)

Understanding the Real Estate Market

Recruitment for housing partners within the real estate market seems obvious, and this section review key leads you may want to follow while searching for potential housing providers. Realtors have relationships with homeowners as well as other real estate agents and brokers, plus housing developers and investors. They know the housing landscape, and because affordable rentals go fast, they can help you discover and navigate new listings quicker than a housing specialist (if your agency has one).

Benefits of Using a Real Estate Agent

- **Multiple Listing Service (MLS) Access:** MLS is a *private* property database where buyers and agents list opportunities. MLS listings are considered to be the most accurate re: unit availability. Cultivate positive relationships with realtors as they are great resources for finding rental units, especially large ones.
- **Lease Signing:** Realtors can facilitate leasing from the start as they can explain if lease terms are favorable. They are also a source for understanding State and local real estate and housing laws and regulations. Because they are licensed and understand fair housing laws, they can also help educate potential landlords about accepting alternative documentation (see page 6) that meets fair housing documentation requirements.
- **Timely Searching:** Searching for rental properties/units is time-consuming. If your agency is not staffed to dedicate enough time to rental search, a realtor's donated resources, including staff time, can be invaluable.
- **Rent Negotiation:** Because they know local rental markets well, real estate agents are informed and savvy at negotiating rent amounts and lease terms.
- **Landlords Pay the Fee:** For some, a deterrent to partnering with realtors in housing search is the misconception that they charge fees. In fact, landlords usually pay MLS fees as well as the commission to the realtor once the property is leased. Before working with a realtor, confirm who will cover the commission and, if it is the renter, perhaps negotiate a lower fee if the agent is sympathetic to refugee/newcomer housing challenges.

Other Resources

- **Apartment Finders/Locators** are real estate professionals for clients. They know local housing markets and housing laws. They can make the search and leasing process faster and easier. As with realtors, the housing provider covers any fee. NOTE: These services are not available in smaller and rural markets.
- **Ask a realtor you know to invite you to speak or host an information space** at landlord, property manager, and apartment associations meetings/conferences.

SUMMARY

Realtors who can be engaged to support the mission of housing refugees and other newcomers are an asset in housing search. Engage a trusted real estate agent, or several, to help with your agency's housing searches.

Networking

Networking is just as important to recruitment as advertising and marketing are. It tells people outside the resettlement agency–landlord–community volunteer/sponsor circle about your agency’s work and networking opens recruitment opportunities. When networking, strategically identify events and meetings to join to connect with potential landlords. For example:

- Join landlord association or Chamber of Commerce meetings or events; attend real estate and property management conferences; join civic-service club meetings,
- Host an in-person or virtual Open House to showcase your housing program, and share refugee impact stories and landlord testimony, and/or
- Host an informational session and/or materials-sharing table at the Public Library.

Use Your Professional and Social Circles because these include people from many backgrounds. It is possible that someone in your circle is, or knows, a potential landlord. Consider your friends and colleagues and, as you are comfortable and it is appropriate, invite them to an informational gathering or talk to them individually about being part of your agency’s refugee and newcomer housing network. As with other housing provider prospects, share an overview of the resettlement process, the need for committed landlord partners, and the benefits of renting to newcomers. When compiling your prospect list remember your sorority or fraternity, your alumni association, your service clubs, e.g., Junior League, Rotary, Lions, Kiwanis; synagogue, church, and mosque goers; your sports teammates, *et al.*

Word of Mouth is the most cost-effective method to recruit possible landlords. This free approach can take many forms. Landlords know other landlords, so use your current partners to spread the word and referrals. A reliable source of referrals is satisfied landlords you already engage. Family, friends, and acquaintances are also great at spreading the word and can tap into their networks to find landlords who own smaller apartment complexes or rental homes. You can also share housing provider needs on your own social media accounts. Just be sure that your social media messaging does not conflict with your agency’s. For example, if you post political messages, or quite personal ones, you may not want to post work messages too.

Landlord Rapport: Partnerships are best solidified with face-to-face meetings. When recruiting housing providers, you are selling not only the agency’s mission and the specific need for housing — which the partner can provide — but the relationship. Once a housing provider says they are interested in learning more, try to set up a time to meet and start building rapport. If they agree to meet, use the in-person time to find out what motivates them to be interested in renting to newcomers, what challenges they face as a landlord, their awareness of the local rental market, and any other expertise they could bring to the refugee housing space.

As always, be prepared to answer questions and address concerns, particularly about resettlement and having tenants without customarily required documents and rent payment history. After questions, be sure to mention the benefits of leasing to newcomers. And leave the **Landlord Outreach Packet** behind.

SUMMARY

Networking widely outside the groups and individual who already know about refugee welcoming and resettlement can lead to new housing provider options that benefit landlords/rental property managers as well as newcomers.

Retention & Stewardship

The amount of time and effort devoted to recruiting housing providers must also be invested in stewarding relationships for retention.

Communicate Regularly

- If it is helpful to the housing provider, sign a simple **Memo of Understanding (MOU)** outlining partnership expectations.
- Have a designated **point of contact**, and a back-up to steward landlord relationships — especially when there are emergencies with tenants.
- Beyond emergency contact, **check in regularly** — monthly or quarterly — to ask how things are going and to answer questions, hear ideas and suggestions, and address issues that affect the partnership, especially tenant-related points.
- If you have a **newsletter**, be sure to add landlords to your mailing so they have up-to-date information about your agency. Consider featuring a landlord regularly in the newsletter and/or on the agency's website.
- Invite landlords and housing providers to join relevant **education and training** sessions in person or virtually.
- Host occasional **landlord recognition and thank you** gatherings.

Reinforce Partnership

- Treat housing providers as you would treat valued customers with timely **customer service**, including follow-up to inquiries.
- Create and support a **mutually positive landlord-tenant relationship**, especially in the early months of the tenancy.
- If your agency is making rent payments, be timely.
- A **landlord advisory committee** or **ambassador program** can help build loyalty among housing providers and catalyze outreach to other landlords.
- Involve interested landlords in hosting **new landlord orientations**, perhaps over breakfast or lunch, and invite prospective housing providers too.
- Invite landlords to **educate agency staff about leasing/property management**.
- Invite landlords to visit your organization occasionally to share insights and perspectives on being a refugee housing provider with staff and volunteers.

Recruiting and retaining new landlords/housing providers not only changes the life of the newcomer who can be housed, but it can also change the life of housing providers — individuals, families, and apartment complex managers/staff — as they become an integral part of refugee and newcomer welcoming and resettlement.

Advertising

In light of continuing high numbers of refugees and other newcomers to the U.S., and the fact that this trend is expected to continue, all resettlement agencies must consider quantity as well as quality in housing options. So, the call for landlords must cover the marketing spectrum that generates leads, including advertising. Here are some ideas to consider if your agency can afford and is interested in advertising in more and different places than in the past.

- **Place recruitment ads** in landlord, property management, and apartment associations newsletters and magazines.
- **Internal Partnership:** As far as agency priorities allow, engage your fundraising and marketing team to support the landlord recruitment campaigns by engaging with program staff to create a donor prospect list and a strategy for marketing team colleagues to lead.
- If possible, **establish a partnership with your local Home Depot, Lowes, Menards, and/or Ace Hardware stores** to see if setting up an informational table is allowed. This can provide an opportunity to network and educate shoppers on resettlement and the need for good landlords. Also, see if they are willing to provide discounts and/or rebates to your partnering landlords.
- **Billboards:** Strategically placed billboards reach a large audience 24/7. Billboard ads can be expensive, but there are ways to make them affordable. The development and marketing team can add this need to their donor requests and/or work with a vendor willing to provide the service at a discount rate or for free.
- **Transit Authority Partnership:** Ads on buses or at bus stops and shelters are not for bus riders. In fact, these ads are designed for pedestrians and passing vehicle passengers. Ads on buses are eye-catching because buses are hard to miss, whether in traffic or at a stop light. For a variety of reasons, public transport authorities have partnerships with nonprofits to promote services of mutual interest – like affordable refugee housing. As with billboards, seeking donated or discounted ad placement is something for your marketing colleagues to consider.
- **Portable Recruitment:** Using a bus or van as a mobile recruitment office is another way to recruit landlords. As an example, Caterpillar parked a bus with its ad on both sides in a high traffic area to recruit employees. Interested people could complete applications and have on-the-spot interviews. By identifying high-traffic areas that are strategic for finding landlords, and with all due city/town and business consent, consider this idea to educate passersby, advertise, and recruit in one setting.
- **Vehicle Wrap:** Wrapping agency-owned vehicles is a cost-effective and wide-reaching way to bring awareness to your agency and services, including refugee housing. A wrapped vehicle with agency identity and a catchy landlord recruitment phrase directing them to your website or phone number is suggested.
- **Car Magnets:** If vehicle wrap is not possible or preferred, consider vehicle door magnets for housing/related employees' vehicles while they are using them for work. Magnets have the same outreach impact as a vehicle wrap. As an incentive, consider giving interested staff a stipend or other incentive to place a magnet on their cars during the weekend and after work hours.

Additional Outreach Ideas

- **Local TV and radio stations** always look for community news, so securing an interview can benefit your agency in many ways, including landlord recruitment. Most local TV and radio stations accept story ideas on their website, or you can contact the story assignment editor to assign a reporter to your story.
- **Public service announcements** on local TV and radio are also a great way to call people to action about affordable housing for newcomers. PSAs are free to air but do have production costs. The large audiences they reach can make this recruitment idea worthwhile, though.
- **Word of Mouth** is the most cost-effective way to recruit housing providers and it takes many forms. Landlords know other landlords, so use your current partners to spread the word. Family, friends, and acquaintances who support refugee housing are also great at spreading the word and using their networks to find landlords — especially private ones. You can also share your recruitment needs on your own social media accounts as long as your agency allows this.
- **Cold Searching** can be in-person and virtual. Walking or driving through neighborhoods to find “For Rent” signs is a tried-and-true resettlement agency strategy that can yield options while you assess neighborhoods.

Below are online options that include popular search engines, top property management companies, and subsidized properties.

— Popular Search Engines

- [Airbnb](#)
- [Zillow](#)
- [Trulia](#)
- [4Stay](#)
- [Apartments.com](#)
- [Hotpads](#)
- [RentCafe](#)
- [Rent.com](#)

— Largest Property Management Companies

- [Greystar Real Estate Partners](#)
- [Lincoln Property Company](#)
- [Pinnacle / Alliance Residential](#)
- [FPI Management](#)
- [Winn Companies](#)
- [MAA](#)
- [BH Management, LLC](#)
- [Equity Residential](#)
- [AvalonBay Communities, INC](#)
- [The Bozzuto Group](#)
- [Hunt/LEDIC Realty Company](#)
- [Edward Rose and Sons](#)
- [Starwood Capital Group](#)

— Subsidized properties are listed at [AffordableHousing.com](#) and [SocialServe.com](#)

— **Facebook Marketplace** and **Craigslist** are also places to look using these best practices for landlord recruitment:

- Before leasing with a private landlord, you find through either of these outlets, check the property’s ownership status to prevent being defrauded. These resources help verify homeownership.

- **Tax Assessor:** On your local tax assessor's official website, you can look up property tax records and find the property owner by their address. You can learn who owns the home and how much property tax they pay.
- The **county clerk's office** has public records of property, deeds, and other useful information when searching for the property owner. Not only will this tell you about the house's owner, but it may also give insight into the property history.
- The **library** may have a database to conduct a property search. This could be available online, or you may be able to find public records in person.
- A **title company** can research property deeds and perform title searches. Not only will you be able to find the owner of the property, but a title search will also check for any issues with the property. Using a title company comes with a cost for them to run the search.

SUMMARY

There are many advertising and other opportunities to promote your agency's initiatives to secure safe, affordable housing for newcomers. If funding and staff are available and the ways and means cited work for your organization, new housing providers can be found using some or all of the ideas cited in the section above.

Toolkit & Refugee Housing Solutions Summary

Refugee Housing Solutions offers comprehensive tenant and landlord toolkits as well as individual fact sheets on most aspects of being a new tenant or a new landlord to newcomers. These are available at RefugeeHousing.org and explain in detail all aspects of tenancy and other housing-related tasks, i.e., inspections, lease signings, move-ins, and move-outs.

For technical assistance and/or to talk about any aspects of this housing provider recruitment and retention toolkit, please contact info@refugeehousing.org.



Refugee Housing
SOLUTIONS

Refugee Housing Solutions is a project of CWS
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