



HOUSING BEST PRACTICES TOOLKIT

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Project	Welcome Co-op		
Contact	Emily Laney, emily@welcomco-op.org		
City, State	Atlanta, GA		
Partners	Catholic Charities (USCCB), Inspiritus (LIRS), New American Pathways (CWS), the IRC Atlanta		
Funding Timeframe	Early 2019 until now		
Total Funding	FY24 Budget- 690k in operating and 1.7 million direct client		
Funders:	fee payments from partner agencies, local foundations		
Funding details	Funder	Type: grant, loan, donation, in-kind	Amount Value
Housing Funding	New AP (from CWS)	Contract	50,000
Capital Campaign Funds	Woodruff Foundation	Grant	700,000
Partner Agency Fees	Partner Agencies	Fees	324,000
In Kind	Varies	In Kind	165,000

1. Project Summary

In Atlanta, four resettlement agencies formed a 501(c)3 non-profit – The Welcome Co-op – in 2019 to develop and maintain housing provider partnerships, and to lead the search to secure housing for R&P refugees (and, from 2021, Afghans and other newcomers) regardless of the agency that is managing the resettlement process. In addition to securing safe, affordable housing, the Welcome Co-op team executes the set up of housing, furnishing apartments with needed items, including purchasing and using donated items. Partner Agencies pay fees per apartment set up to support program operations and reimburse the organization for supplies purchased.

2. Implementing Organization / Group

Catholic Charities (USCCB), Inspiritus (LIRS), New American Pathways (CWS), and the IRC Atlanta came together to form Welcome Co-op. Each agency has two staff on the board of the directors of the organization, allowing each partner to contribute and provide input on the operations and organizational policies. New American Pathways currently serves as the fiscal agent of the organization.



3. **Specific Housing Challenge** (problem statement) | **Analysis**

- a. Affordable housing situation in your location (town, suburb, city): In Atlanta's metro area the rental housing situation is similar to that in other cities. There is simply not enough safe, affordable rental housing for citizens, refugees, and others who need it. The four resettlement agencies who are PRM's partners there assessed that, by joining forces for housing search, they could optimize housing for refugees, leading to more collaboration and less competition for resources. This has led to new housing partners and a more streamlined process for finding housing in new neighborhoods in Metro Atlanta.
- b. Average length of time to find, secure, and prepare safe, affordable housing for client move-in: It takes 1-2 weeks to secure a 2 bedroom apartment, and 3-4 weeks to secure a 3 bedroom apartment.
- c. Average rents
 - o 2-bedroom apartment, townhouse, etc: Current range is \$1,000- 1,400/month
 - o 3-bedroom apartment, townhouse, etc.- Current range is \$1,500- \$1,800 a month
 - o 4 bedroom apartment- Current range is \$2,200 plus a month.



4. How did you go from project ideation to implementation, i.e., what were your top line decision points leading to an actionable plan?

Decision Points	Steps (research, meetings, negotiations, etc.)	People involved
1. Resettlement agencies met to discuss joint action to find more housing more efficiently.	a. meetings	The Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta funded a consultant through the Georgia Center for Nonprofits. (GCN)
	b. brainstorming/analysis	
	c. agreeing solutions and next steps	
2. On agreement to create Welcome Co-op, a Board of Directors was named	a. Registering the 501(c)3	The GCN consultant led this part of the process.
	b. Naming the Board	
	c. Drafting SOP, a budget, and a fundraising plan	
3. A budget was agreed, and fundraising began	a. While raising funds ...	The Board of Directors (BOD) and GCN consultant supported this process
	b. staffing agreed, JDs written, advertising	
	c. Hiring staff	
4. Welcome Co-op started	a. Orienting staff	First organization leader, John Arnold, led the implementation with support from the BOD.
	b. Securing office/warehouse	
	c. Starting operations	

5. Resources needed and steps to acquire each

Resources, e.g., property to buy or rent, materials and workers to renovate	Steps to secure and accomplish each
1. Funding All four agencies' staff, Board members, and/or volunteers to lead and implement	a. Build a budget
	b. Decide funding priorities
	c. Identify, cultivate, solicit private donors and public funders
	d. Agree when enough funds & pledges are committed to open the Co-op
2. Office with warehouse space Designated staff from one/more agency to do the search and recommend a facility/office	a. Search while fundraising is ongoing
	b. Secure and sign a lease
3. Organizational Development Select staff (HR, ops) from some or all agencies	a. While fundraising is ongoing, draft key operational documents for Board approval
	b. Board approval
4. Staffing HR and program staff from some or all agencies to lead essential tasks.	a. draft JDs and advertise; draft interview questions
	b. shortlist, interview, and recommend hiring decisions for Board Approval

6. Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Role(s) in the project and/or all local housing programs
Catholic Charities	Member Agency
Inspiritus	Member Agency
The IRC Atlanta	Member Agency
New American Pathways	Member Agency and current fiscal agent
Housing Partners	R James Properties and others who provide housing
Foundation Partners	Atlanta foundations who have provided funding, several times.
Faith Communities	Faith communities who have done housing set ups, supply drives, and hygiene kits
Nonprofit Partners	Nonprofit partners who provide supplies, set up apartments.
Corporate Partners	Corporate partners who do volunteer projects like setting up apartments and providing hygiene kits.



7. Did you create standard operating procedures (SOP) that others could follow?

We do not have a concise document at this time to share.

8. Outcome(s)

1. A new model for shared efforts and success in securing housing
2. Increased collaboration and pioneered cooperation, vs. competition, among resettlement agencies for a shared challenge → goal
3. Improved efficiency of housing logistics, e.g., furnishing, move-ins.
4. Decreased stays for refugees in temporary housing. Decreased stays by one week or more.
5. Increased capacity for resettlement agencies' program teams to focus on core welcoming programs/activities, e.g., cultural/health/housing orientation and housing/rent <i>support</i> .
6. Increased number of landlords and neighborhoods of resettlement in metro Atlanta.

9. Evaluation | How did you assess the project's effectiveness, and what were Lessons Learned for improvement, replication, etc.?

Evaluation of the project is ongoing and we are about to analyze data and publish our first annual report, as well as begin the strategic planning process for our first strategic plan as an organization. We are moving from a start up phase to being a more established nonprofit, with preliminary evaluation measures showing success in the beforementioned outcomes. Preliminarily, the Welcome Co-op has benefited Atlanta's four refugee resettlement agencies – and, significantly, refugee/newcomer clients – by streamlining and making qualitative improvement in the housing process.