

## HOUSING & WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS: PARTNERING WITH MULTI-FAMILY EMPLOYERS

# Key Learnings from the Entryway x Refugee Housing Solutions Innovative Partnership

## Overview

The [U.S. Chamber of Commerce reports](#) that nearly every state is struggling to fill vacant jobs, a challenge projected to persist for the next decade due to an aging workforce. At the same time, the [National Low Income Housing Coalition's 2025 Gap Report](#) finds that no state has enough affordable housing for low-income renters. The shortage of housing directly impacts employers' ability to recruit and retain workers, making workforce development and housing deeply interconnected.

The multi-family housing industry faces its own labor shortages and high turnover rates. A 2021 [survey of 700 industry professionals](#) identified workforce shortages — particularly for maintenance technicians, property managers, and leasing agents — as a top concern.

To address these challenges, employers are integrating housing into their recruitment and retention strategies, while workforce programs are creating direct pipelines into the multi-family sector. These innovations offer mutually beneficial solutions, ensuring a stable workforce while expanding access to housing — strengthening both local economies and communities.

## ORR-Eligible Populations Contributions to Workforce Demand

Refugees and other [Office of Refugee Resettlement- \(ORR\) eligible populations](#) bring valuable skills, a strong work ethic, and a proven ability to gain self-sufficiency through stable employment and housing.

A [Department of Health and Human Services report](#) highlight the significant economic contributions of ORR-served populations. An analysis of the 2018 U.S. Census Bureau's Current Population Survey found that 36% of building, ground cleaning, and maintenance workers were newcomers, aligning closely with the labor needs of the multifamily housing industry.

Recognizing this opportunity, Refugee Housing Solutions partnered with the national nonprofit Entryway in 2024 to connect ORR-eligible households with career opportunities in the multi-family housing sector while pioneering an affordable housing solution. This collaboration leverages existing workforce development efforts to create a sustainable model that integrates employment with access to stable housing.

## Entryway Model

**Entryway** is a national nonprofit that connects individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness with careers and housing in the multi-family housing industry. Originally founded as Shelters to Shutters, Entryway rebranded in 2023 to better reflect its mission of expanding opportunities in the multifamily housing sector.

Entryway partners with real estate employers to provide job training, career placement, and housing benefits, offering a direct path to economic stability. Participants, identified through community partners, receive industry-specific training, resume support, and interview coaching before being placed in full-time roles such as maintenance technicians, leasing agents, and groundskeepers — many of which include discounted on-site housing.

In 2024, 403 individuals entered the program, a 15% increase from the previous year. Participants saw an average financial benefit of \$95,750 in income, housing discounts, and services after one year. By integrating workforce development with employer-driven housing solutions, Entryway provides a scalable model for addressing labor shortages and housing insecurity nationwide.

## Refugee Housing Solutions Partnership

A [housing needs assessment](#) conducted by Refugee Housing Solutions (RHS) of State Refugee Coordinators found that 35% of respondents cited the lack of affordable housing as contributing to difficulties in securing sustainable employment for ORR-eligible populations. Entryway's model offers an innovative pathway to both housing and employment for newcomers. Many households are at the beginning of building their new life in America and may not have immediate access to reliable transportation. Entryway and RHS share a mission of empowering households to achieve self-sufficiency and housing stability through dedicated support and services.

## Key Learnings

### Adapting Entryway's Intake Processes

Entryway plays a vital role in serving housing insecure families, partnering closely with local organizations that serve individuals at risk of or experiencing situational homelessness. Through collaboration with Refugee Housing Solutions, Entryway modified its language and processes to include refugees and other ORR-eligible populations, who may be securing housing upon arrival but do not fit traditional definitions of homelessness.

Additionally, both organizations worked in close collaboration to revise intake questions including ORR-eligible populations unique experiences. For example, many ORR-eligible households lack rental background history due to their limited time in the country, but all have undergone extensive vetting prior to arrival. To acknowledge this, the intake form adapted language to: *"Ability to pass background checks or document alternate procedures as relevant to eligible U.S. immigration statuses."*

### Educating Partners

Upon revising internal processes, Refugee Housing Solutions' team members hosted a training opportunity for Entryway Executive Directors to provide key information to promote cohesive support of ORR-eligible households. Training topics included an overview of ORR eligibility, various forms of identification for eligible statuses, and work authorization. Additionally, Entryway directors learned how local resettlement agencies administer ORR grants to provide essential services to eligible households, including case management, translation services, and cultural integration. Resettlement agencies administering ORR programming were identified as a key referral partner in connecting households in need with Entryway support.

## Fostering Local Collaboration

While Entryway offers workforce development services, ORR-eligible populations may have unique needs such as transferring certifications or English-language support. By partnering with local organizations equipped to serve ORR-eligible populations, a team of providers can collaborate in their areas of expertise to provide a whole-person approach. Per collaborative conversations, the activities below were identified to be led by the strengths of the stakeholder:



- Career training (offered via virtual platforms)
- Resume and interview coaching
- Negotiating placements with apartment industry partners
- Discounted housing model

### ORR-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS

- Interpretation and translation services
- Support in transferring relevant education and certifications
- Engagement and outreach to ORR-eligible communities

## Employer Buy-In

Property management companies and real estate partners play a critical role in this innovative model. Both Entryway and ORR-serving organizations can leverage their strong outcomes to engage multifamily housing employers in new partnerships. For example, Entryway participants demonstrate higher retention rates than the industry average, providing a compelling case for employers seeking a stable workforce.

**This model offers a mutually beneficial solution, positioning employers as key stakeholders in both housing and workforce development.**

**By participating, multifamily housing employers benefit from cost savings, a reliable talent pipeline, and a proven model for integrating housing benefits for employees.**

Local community-based organizations (CBOs) and resettlement agencies can further strengthen employer engagement by presenting workforce data on retention rates and long-term employment outcomes. This model offers a mutually beneficial solution, positioning employers as key stakeholders in both housing and workforce development.

By participating, multi-family housing employers benefit from cost savings, a reliable talent pipeline, and a proven model for integrating housing benefits for employees.

## Conclusion & Replicable Action Steps

The collaboration between Entryway and Refugee Housing Solutions offers a replicable framework for integrating workforce development with housing solutions in the multi-family sector. By adapting intake processes, educating partners, and fostering local collaboration, this model addresses both labor shortages and housing insecurity.

For stakeholders interested in replicating this approach, key action steps include:

### **BUILDING LOCAL EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIPS**

Identify multi-family housing companies experiencing workforce shortages and engage them in discussions about hiring ORR-eligible job seekers.

### **ADAPTING INTAKE & HIRING PRACTICES**

Work with CBOs and resettlement agencies to refine hiring processes, considering alternative background verification and credentialing for newcomers.

### **LEVERAGING EXISTING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES**

Partner with organizations offering career training, language support, and case management to create a seamless transition into employment.

### **EXPANDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING MODELS**

Encourage multi-family housing employers to consider housing benefits as part of compensation to address both retention and affordability challenges, including discounting onsite housing or offering housing assistance at network properties

By implementing these strategies, communities can create sustainable workforce-housing partnerships that strengthen local economies and provide stable pathways for growth.

**By adapting intake processes, educating partners, and fostering local collaboration, this model addresses both labor shortages and housing insecurity.**

Community-based organizations or resettlement agencies in an [Entryway location](#) are encouraged to connect directly with local executive directors to explore deeper collaboration.

## SUCCESS STORY

# Sayed's Journey to Stability and Success

Sayed, an Afghan refugee who assisted the American military, arrived in the U.S. facing the daunting challenge of rebuilding his life from scratch. Despite his strong work ethic and professional background, he struggled to find stable employment and housing. Through Entryway's workforce development program, Sayed received industry-specific training, resume support, and interview coaching.

Recognizing his potential, Entryway connected Sayed with a career opportunity in the multi-family housing industry. He secured a full-time maintenance position that provided not only a steady income but also on-site housing — offering him both stability and a fresh start. With dedicated support and a clear career path, Sayed has not only built a stable future for himself but has also become a valuable member of his new community — demonstrating the transformative power of integrating workforce development with housing solutions.



**Watch Sayed's Story**

# Appendix

1. [The States Suffering Most from Labor Shortages \(U.S. Chamber of Commerce\)](#)
2. [2025 “The Gap” Report \(National Low Income Housing Coalition\)](#)
3. [Success in Multifamily Leasing Performance \(Knock\)](#)
4. [The Fiscal Impact of Refugees and Asylees at the Federal, State, and Local Levels from 2005 to 2019 \(U.S. Department of Health & Human Services\)](#)
5. [State Housing Needs Assessment Report: A Survey of State Refugee Coordinators \(Refugee Housing Solutions\)](#)
6. [Sayed’s Journey to Success \(Entryway\)](#)



[\*\*www.refugeehousing.org\*\*](http://www.refugeehousing.org)

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