



Enhancing Refugee Housing Solutions Annual Housing Needs Assessment Report

FY 2025 | Resettlement Network
Serving ORR-Eligible Populations



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Methodology & Demographics	3
Summary of Findings	4
Housing Overview	6
Key Takeaways	10
Conclusion	11

Introduction

Refugee Housing Solutions (RHS), an initiative of Church World Service (CWS), is composed of a dedicated team of housing and refugee resettlement specialists focused on addressing and creating solutions to housing challenges to benefit ORR-eligible populations and communities in the United States.

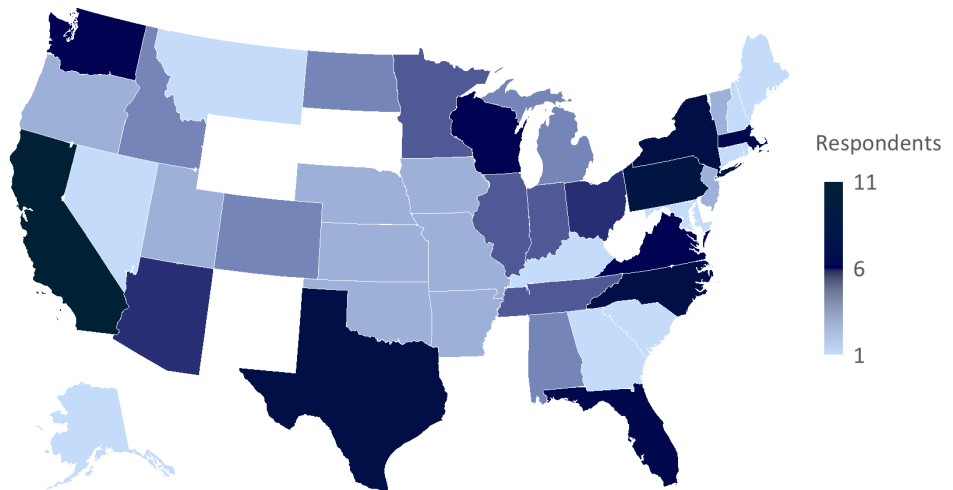
To gain a deeper understanding of the housing landscape and challenges faced by these individuals and communities, RHS conducted in December 2024 one of two planned annual surveys for FY 2025. The following report details the findings from the year's first **Enhancing Refugee Housing Solutions Annual Housing Needs Assessment**, which targeted the resettlement network to analyze housing trends and challenges. Another qualitative survey to capture insights from various stakeholders engaging with ORR-eligible populations will be administered in June 2025. The results of these surveys provide measurable insights highlighting the critical nature of this work to equip key stakeholders with the data necessary to optimize services, guide strategic partnerships, ensure effective and efficient use of funds, and implement solutions that enhance housing stability and self-sufficiency for ORR-eligible populations into thriving U.S. communities.

Methodology & Demographics

EMAIL SURVEY

The Enhancing Refugee Housing Solutions Annual Housing Needs Assessment survey was designed to take an estimated 10 minutes to complete. Individual surveys were initially sent to the 10 national resettlement agency housing point-of-contact staff with the opportunity for them to send it to their network of providers to ORR-eligible populations. RHS also shared the survey in myriad meetings as well as in its monthly newsletter. The survey was conducted from **December 3, 2024 to December 20, 2024** and included 30 questions spanning the period of December 1, 2023 to November 30, 2024, both multiple choice and open-ended, on national and regional housing trends and how best to support ORR-eligible populations.

Qualitative and quantitative data was collected, and the data insights play a critical role in enhancing and informing ongoing work and strategic partnerships, and they allow decision makers to streamline services and develop evidence-based solutions that directly address housing barriers both for ORR-eligible populations and the greater U.S. population alike.



RESPONDENT INFORMATION

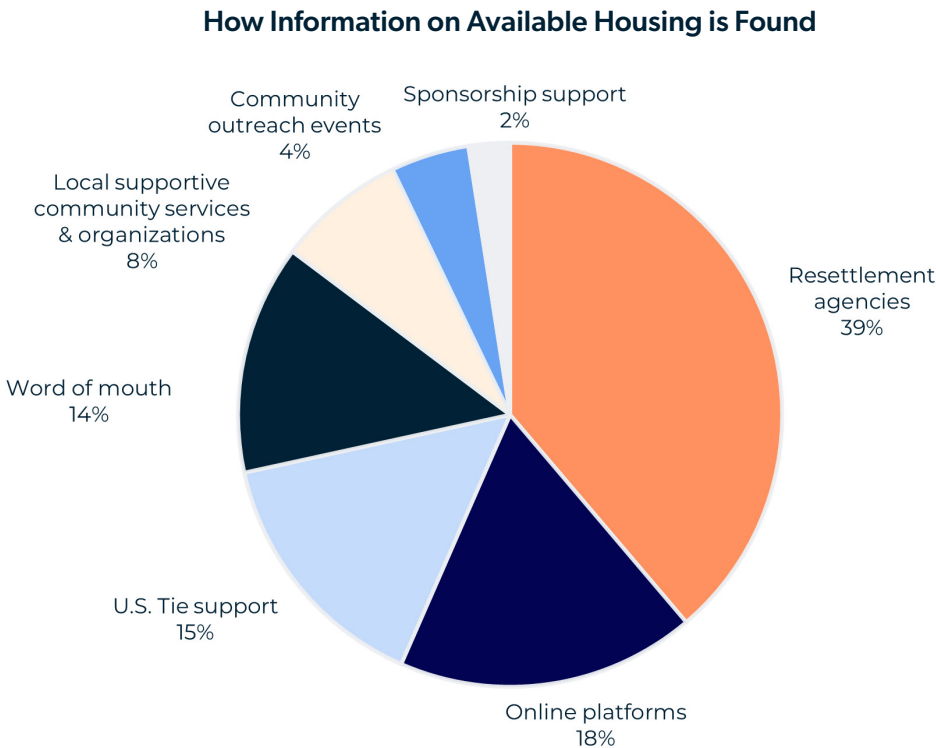
The survey received **149 responses**, representing **44 states** and **all 10 national resettlement agencies**. Of the 149 responses, the organizations stated **79% had dedicated housing staff**. Among all respondents, 45% were Housing Coordinators, 22% were Resettlement Directors, 16% were Program Managers, and the remaining respondents identified as either “Other,” a Case Manager, or a Community Outreach Specialist.

Summary of Findings

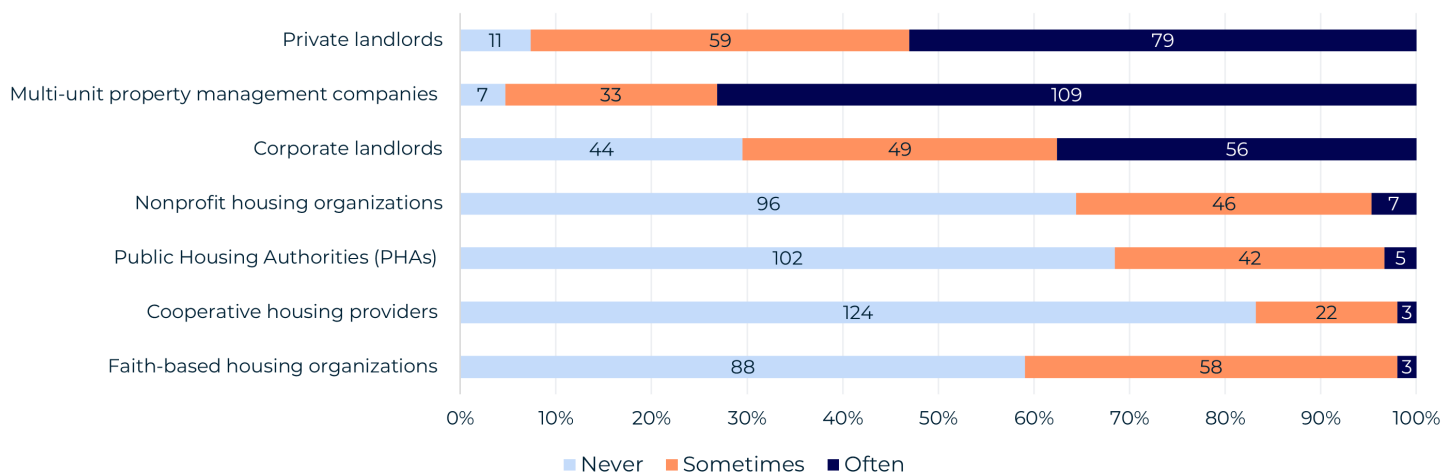
Despite the ongoing national housing shortage, resettlement agencies have demonstrated remarkable effectiveness in securing permanent housing for ORR-eligible populations. An overwhelming **91% of respondents** (136) reported that, with the right tools and support, they were able to secure stable housing through a resettlement agency. This underscores the vital role these organizations play in not only facilitating housing access but also fostering long-term stability, successful integration, and overall community well-being. For details on how permanent housing was secured for the remaining 9% outside of resettlement agencies, see the table below.

TYPES OF PERMANENT HOUSING	N	%
Privately rented housing (secured by a resettlement agency)	136	91.3%
Privately rented housing (secured by a sponsor or a co-sponsor)	1	0.7%
Privately rented housing (found by the client)	4	2.7%
Privately rented housing (secured by a U.S. Tie)	2	1.3%
Living in a U.S. Tie’s home or property	1	0.7%
Living in a sponsor or co-sponsor’s home or property	2	1.3%
Public housing or government-subsidized housing	2	1.3%
Other	1	0.7%

In addition to securing housing, responses highlight how ORR-eligible populations learn about available housing and the organizations they collaborate with, as shown in the following graphs.



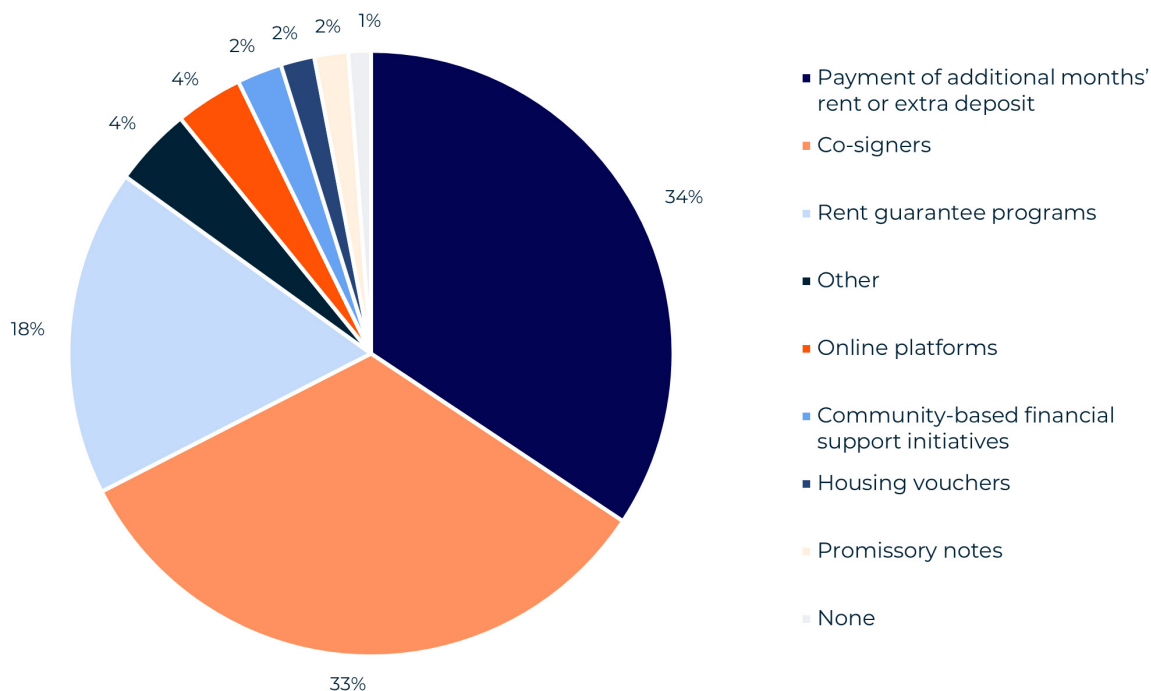
Primary Housing Partners of Resettlement Agencies



Positive findings indicated that **118 respondents (79%), on average, were able to secure permanent housing** for new arrivals within 90 days, indicating 21% remained in temporary housing. However, **56% reported increased difficulty in finding housing** compared to last year, highlighting the continued need for housing support for ORR-eligible populations.

Respondents cited specific tools as valuable for securing housing, underscoring the necessity of innovative approaches to positively impact ORR-eligible populations and promote community prosperity through similar support mechanisms.

Valuable Tools Used to Secure Housing



Survey data reveals that ORR-eligible populations face significant housing affordability challenges, mirroring the broader systemic issues impacting communities nationwide. **Only 16% of respondents reported their clients could sustainably afford rent**, highlighting the need for robust employment support, community resources, financial assistance, and systemic changes to address the high cost of living. Moreover, **52% of respondents observed a decline in housing affordability** over the past year, highlighting a trend affecting all residents.

Despite these challenges, it's essential to recognize the substantial economic contributions of these communities. Research indicates that immigration boosts local economies and generates significant housing wealth.¹ According to research by Americas Society/Council of the Americas (AS/COA) and the Partnership for a New American Economy, **immigrants contributed \$3.7 trillion in housing wealth** between 1970 and 2010, stabilizing urban costs and revitalizing neighborhoods without exacerbating the affordability crisis.² More generally, refugees resettled in the U.S. from 2005-2019 contributed a net positive fiscal impact of \$123.8 billion across state, local, and federal government, according to a 2024 study by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.³

Given the demonstrated economic benefits of community integration, investing in effective housing solutions for ORR-eligible populations becomes a strategic opportunity to benefit all cost burdened households. By assessing the current housing efforts for ORR-eligible populations, we can develop innovative models that strengthen housing stability, stimulate local economies, and create more cohesive and prosperous communities for everyone.

Housing Overview

Refugees and other ORR-eligible populations face significant challenges resettling in the U.S., exacerbated by the nation's persistent affordable housing shortage. The National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) shared data showing a 20% increase in median rent since January 2021, reaching \$1,373 per month by January 2024.⁴ Simultaneously, the supply of low-cost rental units has declined, contributing to a record high of 21.6 million cost-burdened renter households in 2021, as reported by Harvard's Joint Center for Housing Studies.⁵

Misunderstanding among housing providers regarding topics such as ORR benefits eligibility categories, forms of acceptable alternative documentation for securing housing (i.e. photo identification, rental history, source of income, etc.), and available local support further complicates ORR-eligible individuals' search for long-term housing. Not only does this prevent many from being housed with dignity and safety, but it also **prevents landlords from realizing stable rental income from reliable tenants**.

While community groups and faith-based organizations have long partnered in providing housing support, these organizations alone cannot resolve the crucial need for increased affordable housing stock in the commercial real estate market. Addressing this shortage is essential for all renters, including ORR-eligible populations.

1 Migration Policy Institute. 2024. [Global Affordable Housing Shortages Can Harm Migrant Reception and Integration](#).

2 Americas Society/Council of the Americas (AS/COA). 2013. [Immigrants Boost U.S. Economic Vitality through the Housing Market](#).

3 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 2024. [The Fiscal Impact of Refugees and Asylees at the Federal, State, and Local Levels from 2005 to 2019](#).

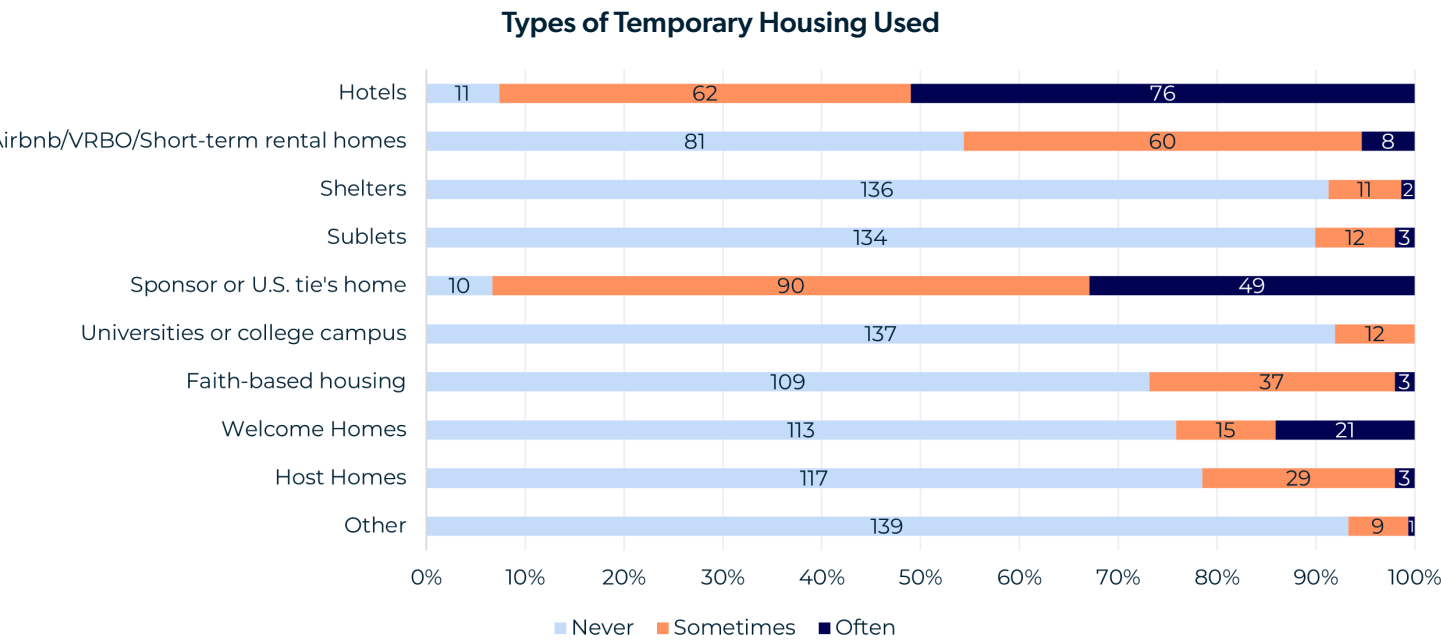
4 National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC). 2024. [The Gap: A Shortage of Affordable Homes](#).

5 Joint Center for Housing Studies. 2023. [The State of the Nation's Housing 2023](#).

The results of this Needs Assessment survey shed light on the ongoing trends in the U.S. housing market and their impacts on ORR-eligible populations.

TEMPORARY HOUSING

Regarding temporary housing, which may take the form of hotel stays, short-term rental homes (i.e. Airbnb, VRBO), campus housing, sponsor-provided housing, and others, **90 respondents (60%)** said clients typically stay in temporary housing accommodations for **less than one month**. Of the types of temporary housing used by respondents for newly arrived ORR-eligible populations, hotels, sponsors’ or U.S. Ties’ homes, and Welcome Homes were the types most often used (see *Types of Temporary Housing Used* below). University or college campus housing was the only type of temporary housing that no respondent reported using often, perhaps indicating an opportunity for training and assistance on how resettlement staff can form partnerships with higher-education institutions.



16 respondents (11%) reported that clients typically stay in temporary housing for **more than 90 days**. However, only **52 respondents (35%)** said they provide financial support to clients to secure temporary housing post 90-days. Of those who provide financial support, **32 (62%)** reported **covering 76-100% of temporary housing costs post 90-days**.

DIRECT HOUSING ASSISTANCE & PRIVATE FUNDING

To gain insight on the resources available to support sustainable housing affordability long-term, RHS first surveyed respondents on additional funding utilized and/or needed and to understand if the respondents received private funds (defined for the purpose of the survey as being financial resources obtained from non-governmental sources, such as individuals, foundations, or corporations) to provide housing support. **51% of respondents said yes** to utilizing private support and 49% responded no.

When analyzing the usage of private funds received by organizations, RHS inquired what percentage of these private funds was allocated towards temporary versus permanent housing. A majority (70%) of the 76 respondents stated **0-25%** of their private funding goes to temporary housing support costs, while another 51% said the same percentage of private funding received was allocated towards permanent housing.

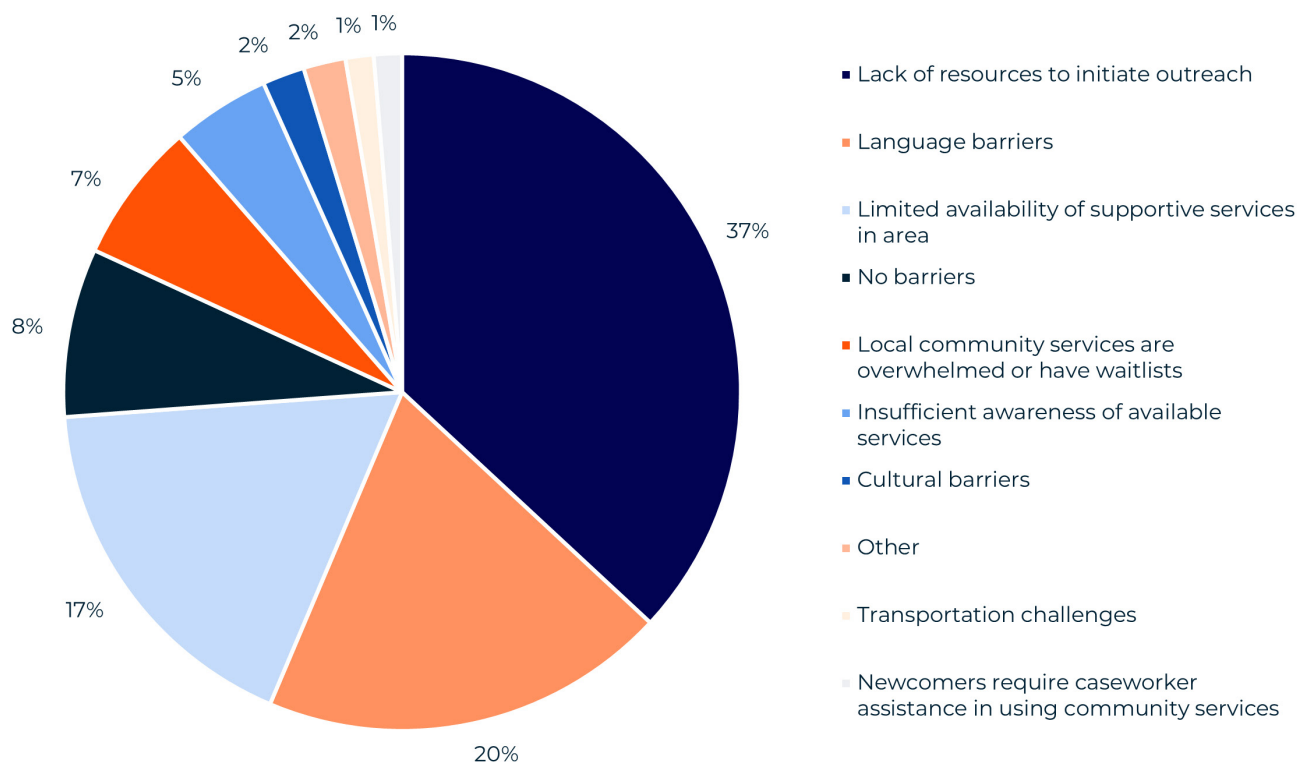
SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY SERVICES

In addition to providing financial assistance, respondents were surveyed on their agency's engagement with local housing community support services. RHS defined supportive community services as, but not limited to, organizations such as community-based groups engaged in housing, ethnic community organizations offering housing services, faith-based entities providing housing assistance, and/or higher education institutions engaging in resettlement support. When surveyed if agencies use supportive community services, **59 (40%) responded yes, 70 respondents (47%) are not engaged, and 20 respondents (13%) were unsure.**

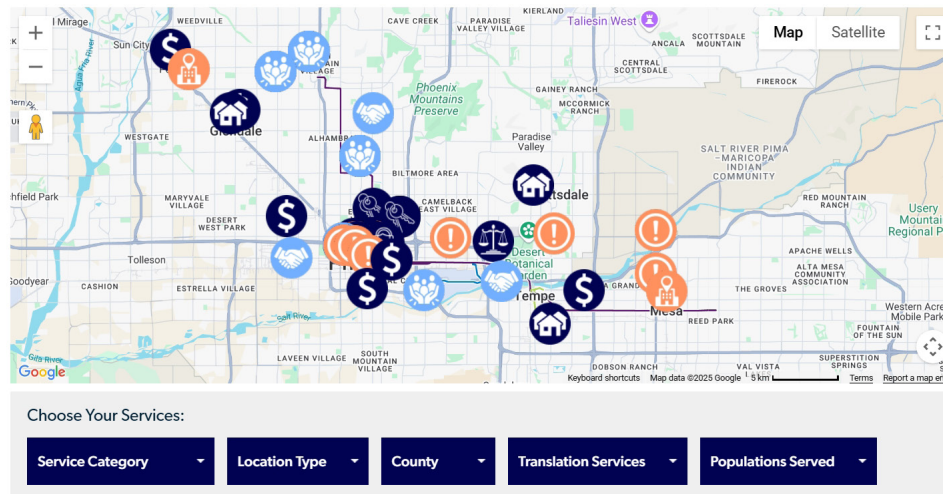
These types of services, that the **59 respondents who answered yes** to, include but are not limited to emergency housing assistance, financial assistance, housing counseling, community navigation and resource referral, public housing support, language and translation services, among others.

With 70 respondents stating they were not actively engaged with community services on housing, RHS inquired about potential barriers to the lack of engagement. The overwhelming reason given was a lack of resources to initiate outreach to supportive service providers in the area.

Barriers to Engaging with Supportive Community Services



An insight from this response is the opportunity for additional connections from RHS to ORR population-serving organizations and stakeholders on the various forms of community services locally available and linking them with ORR-funded providers to better serve ORR-eligible populations. Additionally, RHS' [Housing Hub and Directory](#) (pictured below) — a centralized platform that provides access to localized housing resources for ORR-eligible populations — is an innovative tool to provide this information to organizations.



ENGAGING PUBLIC HOUSING AUTHORITIES & CONTINUUMS OF CARE

Effective partnerships with Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) and Continuums of Care (CoCs) are key to expanding affordable housing and support services for ORR-eligible populations. PHAs administer public housing programs and vouchers, while CoCs coordinate housing and services for those experiencing homelessness.

Public Housing Authority (PHA) Engagement

A Public Housing Authority (PHA) is a government agency that oversees affordable housing development, allocation, and regulation, including administering public housing programs and vouchers.

Survey responses indicated limited engagement with PHAs among ORR-serving organizations: 16% had partnerships with PHAs and 10% had partnerships in progress. **43% were interested in forming a partnership**, and 31% had no current or planned partnership. These findings highlight opportunities to strengthen connections with PHAs, which could improve access to rental assistance and public housing and address key housing stability gaps.

Continuum of Care (CoC) Engagement

A Continuum of Care (CoC) is a coordinated system of services and housing designed to support individuals and families experiencing homelessness through emergency shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing.

Survey results showed relatively low engagement with CoCs: 13% reported being CoC members, 4% were in the process of joining, 38% were interested in forming a partnership, and **44% had no membership or interest in joining**. The low participation in CoCs suggests an untapped opportunity for service providers to integrate into housing systems to support ORR-eligible populations when applicable.

Broader Collaboration Efforts

Beyond PHAs and CoCs, many organizations collaborated with other partners to enhance housing access and resettlement: **77% work with agencies, nonprofits, government offices, and community sponsors.** 6% are establishing partnerships, 10% are interested in forming partnerships, 7% do not engage in collaboration.

While there is strong commitment to multi-sector collaboration, the lower engagement with PHAs and CoCs indicates a need for targeted efforts. Strengthening these partnerships can enhance housing stability, well-being, and improve outcomes for households.

Key Takeaways

Based on research findings, the following recommendations are made to enhance effectiveness of ORR programs, highlighting the critical nature of this work and the ways in which it improves housing stability for ORR-eligible populations.

- 1. Stakeholders should continue to invest in housing support by resettlement agencies who play an important role in securing initial housing for ORR-eligible populations.** RHS acknowledges that housing is a very localized topic and survey responses varied based on state and locality, along with the perspective and housing knowledge of the respondents. Understanding this, the survey results and historical context solidify key needs in engaging ORR-stakeholders to expand and bolster housing success for ORR-eligible populations. Per survey results, more than 90% of households were connected to housing by a local resettlement agency. By building capacity and resources for specialized housing support at resettlement agencies, communities can leverage existing expertise and outcomes.
- 2. Additional support and capacity are needed for ORR-eligible population-serving organizations to develop relationships with supportive services in their community.** The survey revealed a prevalent “limited availability of supportive services,” a challenge RHS anticipated due to historical gaps between resettlement practitioners and housing organizations. While some rural areas may inherently have fewer resources, the survey indicated a significant lack of awareness and utilization of existing services among ORR-providers. To address this, RHS proactively developed and launched the innovative **Housing Hub and Directory**. This centralized platform provides access to localized housing resources for ORR-eligible populations, promoting community awareness of available support and fostering long-term stability
- 3. Investment in innovative programs and pilot projects should be made to develop broader innovations in housing stock creation.** As results found, many households nationwide are struggling to navigate the affordability challenge. As such, efforts to support ORR-eligible households should include exploration into solutions for creating and sustaining additional affordable housing. RHS is actively forging partnerships and pilot programs focusing on developing innovations in housing stock creation. This includes exploring new models for affordable housing development and strategies to increase the overall availability of housing options, ultimately benefiting the entire community. Recognizing the importance of mutual understanding, RHS is also committed to actively listening to and understanding the perspectives and needs of housing stakeholders, ensuring that support strategies are both effective and sustainable for ORR-eligible individuals while contributing to wider community housing solutions.

Conclusion

The housing needs of ORR-eligible populations present a significant challenge, mirroring the broader national struggle for affordable housing. However, this challenge also represents a powerful opportunity. Strategic collaborations with key housing stakeholders and investments in innovative solutions can achieve substantial progress. Allocating resources to address housing affordability directly promotes healthier, more stable communities and ultimately fosters the successful integration and well-being of ORR-eligible populations across the United States. This collective effort enhances the overall prosperity and resilience of communities, creating a more connected and thriving nation for all.



March 2025

Refugee Housing Solutions is a project of Church World Service (CWS) paid for in part by an agreement with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. CWS received a cooperative agreement through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, CA #90XR0092.

The contents of this resource are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.