

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR RESETTLEMENT AGENCIES

What is Every Campus A Refuge and what is an ECAR Chapter?

[Every Campus A Refuge](#), or ECAR, is a national non-profit organization. ECAR supports colleges and universities that partner with their local resettlement agency to offer free transitional housing, access to campus amenities and facilities, and a cohort of campus-community volunteers to support newcomers served by the agency. Some universities require their students to participate in [curricular](#) and co-curricular (e.g. service-learning, student clubs, etc.) activities related to this effort. If they sign a [Licensing Agreement](#) with ECAR, these universities are referred to as [ECAR Chapters](#).

Under ECAR, what does the partnership between a resettlement agency and a university look like? What are the responsibilities of the university and the resettlement agency in this partnership?

The local office and university partnership operates as a co-sponsorship* where the university provides integration support to a newcomer individual or family arriving to their community alongside the local agency. The services of the university vary by location and program but can be negotiated once there is interest from both parties; a core service is free transitional housing for up to one year. The goal of the partnership is to best suit the needs of the resettlement agency, the newcomers, and the university. It is recommended that the local resettlement agency and the welcoming university review the core services that need to be provided to the newcomer(s) and identify who will be responsible at the start of the co-sponsorship. To assist with building these expectations around responsibilities and services, refer to the template [Memorandum of Understanding \(MOU\)](#) between a resettlement agency and a university that ECAR has provided.

*Co-sponsorship is a form of community sponsorship which "is a model of refugee resettlement where groups of individuals commit to providing clearly definite financial and/or in-kind contributions and volunteer services to support the welcome and integration of refugees" (<https://www.state.gov/refugee-admissions/community-engagement-in-resettlement/>)

What does a successful partnership between a resettlement agency and a university look like?



A successful partnership between a resettlement agency and a university is one where the university supports the needs and visions of the newcomers resettling on their campus while relieving some of the workload of the resettlement agency. Such a successful partnership can flourish into a long-term co-sponsorship that consistently serves newcomers instead of a one-time effort. Universities are more likely to successfully establish and sustain this effort if 1) they can provide their students with related learning and community engagement opportunities that align with the university's values and educational mission and 2) the resettlement agency is actively ensuring that the university is adequately supporting their newcomer clients while also making certain that the university is not overwhelmed by the responsibility.

[Read more about one of our ECAR chapters here.](#)

In the process of developing a partnership, how does communication between the resettlement agency and the university happen?



Once the process for initiating an ECAR Chapter at a local university has begun, the university should establish a clear point of contact, such as the individual who reached out to the resettlement agency initially or an individual that the university has tasked with developing and overseeing this partnership.



How are volunteers from the university vetted and trained?



This is a point of discussion between the university and the resettlement agency, but a consensus is often reached by evaluating the vetting and training materials both parties currently use and deciding which might be necessary for volunteers coming from the university. For example, Guilford College offers its volunteers a 1.5-hour training provided by the College's ECAR program coordinator. Guilford College volunteers must undergo a background check (unless they are faculty or staff, in which case the HR background check suffices), sign a confidentiality agreement, and take the training before volunteering with the College's ECAR Chapter. In addition, the partnering local resettlement agency has offered supplemental training and information sessions for more active and engaged Guilford College volunteers. Other resettlement agency local offices could require additional onboarding requirements (for volunteer drivers, for example).

What role do university students play at an ECAR Chapter?



The time each individual student dedicates to being engaged with the co-sponsored newcomers will vary based on responsibility and their role within the ECAR Chapter activities. Regardless of individual student commitment, the goal of the co-sponsorship is to have the university provide much of the core services to the newcomers. Students are excellent at providing language tutoring, transportation to appointments, looking for long-term housing, cleaning and preparing the housing for arrivals, community orientation to the city and creating a welcoming environment: for example, student volunteers can ensure that culturally appropriate ingredients are stocked in the pantry so that the newcomer guests may have a taste of home in their new community.



What is the cost to the university and what are some possible funding opportunities?



The cost to the university is 1) housing and utilities which vary based on the location of the institution and arrangement with the resettlement agency; 2) part-time coordination of the ECAR chapter which can happen through graduate assistantships, fellowships, internships, etc. Some ECAR chapters are run by faculty-advised student organizations at no cost or as a service-learning experience through a program or course; 3) resources for the families which are typically raised through in-kind donations. In terms of funding, universities can apply [here](#) for up to \$10,000 from ECAR to become ECAR Chapters.

If this is primarily a partnership between a university and a resettlement agency, what is ECAR's role?



ECAR has an abundance of resources that it provides to the university to ensure a smooth program rollout as well as ongoing support once the ECAR Chapter has been established. These resources include campus volunteer orientation, [detailed descriptions of the role and responsibility of a university's ECAR Coordinator](#), [a Best Practices guide for the university](#), [an implementation checklist](#), and much more. ECAR also provides ongoing technical assistance (through a community of practice) and implementation oversight (through reporting mechanisms)* while a university builds and sustains their program. ECAR can also provide [funding](#) and a multitude of [training courses](#) to the university, depending on its needs.

*Through a google form sent by ECAR every 4 months.



Who is ECAR in communication with?



Generally, the ECAR Chapter coordinator at the university (regardless of who they are: faculty, staff, student etc.) will have the highest volume of contact with a staff member from the national ECAR organization, as the ECAR Chapter coordinator is the one overseeing the work on campus. However, if there is any feedback or concern, the ECAR staff are a great place for the university staff and the resettlement agency staff to find guidance. Otherwise, the majority of the communication takes place between the university's ECAR coordinator and the designated contact at the resettlement agency (frequently this is the newcomers' case manager or the agency's community sponsorship liaison). Accountability processes should be agreed upon and outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding between the university and the resettlement agency.

How does this partnership benefit the resettlement agency?



First and foremost, this partnership provides the resettlement agency with a co-sponsorship partner that can build capacity for their office. As co-sponsors, ECAR Chapters provide free temporary housing (up to 1 year) as well as an ecosystem of support and resources for newcomers who are clients of the resettlement agency. Many university partnerships provide co-sponsored newcomers access to campus facilities and amenities such as English Language Acquisition, the library, gym, career services, or cafeteria, and there is potential for educational opportunities as well. Within this ecosystem, there is also a well-trained and diverse cohort of university volunteers who understand trauma-informed and culturally responsive care and understand what it means to search for community, belonging, and inclusion.



How does the partnership benefit the campus?



There are many ways in which this partnership benefits the campus. It is a valuable educational opportunity as it creates a place-based learning environment that allows students to learn about international issues, such as forced displacement, in their backyard; ECAR offers a new kind of study abroad at home. It is incredibly relevant to current social issues and pushes students to connect with topics they care about. Additionally, an ECAR chapter creates collateral benefit, as improving systems to support one vulnerable group will, in turn, support other similarly vulnerable populations and the wider community; in short, refugee integration benefits everyone. ECAR globalizes the campus while also recruiting prospective students who are invested in equity, diversity, and community engagement. It also offers tangible benefits to students; this opportunity can include access to new minors or concentrations, apprenticeships, internships, certificates, training and conferences, and partnerships that support student career development and discernment. When seeking to develop an ECAR partnership with a university, be sure to highlight these myriad benefits. [See here for a study of ECAR programming impact on students](#) that can be shared with universities interested in learning more about this.

How does this partnership benefit newcomers?



As newcomers are resettling in the United States, they are faced with the immediate challenge of becoming economically self-sufficient as quickly as possible. Within the ecosystem of a university, there are numerous facilities that can support newcomers and mitigate this challenge as much as possible. With up to 1 year of free housing, newcomers are able to focus on ways to sustain themselves once this period of housing ends. The community of support might also mitigate cultural or emotional challenges that newcomers are facing through tutoring, support with appointments and city orientation, and companionship and hospitality. [Newcomers supported by ECAR have indicated](#) that participating in the program provided them with a softer landing and stronger beginning, especially in terms of greater financial stability and sense of belonging.

How do I connect with a university to establish an ECAR Chapter? +

The best place to start when looking to establish an ECAR Chapter is to identify contacts at the universities near you. [Use the PERC Map](#) to identify universities within a 100 mile radius of your office; select the radius that works for you and move forward from there.

Who do I contact? +

The first and most effective way to reach a university is to find out if the agency has an existing contact and reach out to that individual first. This avoids cold contact as those individuals will know the university system and will hopefully be able to refer you to the appropriate department or person. We also recommend an internal audit of your agency staff as there might be pre-existing relationships between your agency and the university. Consider: who has asked your agency for someone to guest speak? Who has requested information about internships, volunteer, or research opportunities at your agency? There might even be interns at your agency from a local university or alums who are now agency staff members. Compile those contacts and reach out to them. Another option in deciding who to contact is to look for relevant departments that may have students, faculty, or staff who could be interested in spearheading this partnership. This might include International Studies, Social Work, Migration Studies, Political Science, Policy Studies, Public or Community Health, Nursing, Women's Studies, Service-Learning/Experiential Learning Department, Division of Student Affairs, Center for Community Engagement, Volunteer Programs, and relevant student clubs or associations etc. Feel free to reach out to ECAR (everycampusarefuge@gmail.com) or the community sponsorship staff member at a local office or national RA if you are still unsure who to contact.



Who initiates? The resettlement agency or the university?



It depends on who identifies the need for an ECAR Chapter first, the university or the resettlement agency. In some cases, universities have initiated (especially to enhance their community engagement efforts). In others, the resettlement agency has (especially to access hard-to-find resources). We encourage resettlement agencies to initiate if a university has not done so.

How do we maintain this relationship between a resettlement agency and a university?



It is key to remember that both parties should have a main point of contact; this is not meant to add to the job description of those working at the resettlement agency. Resettlement agencies typically delegate this partnership to the staff person already working with community sponsorship or community engagement in their offices. This individual should act as the point of contact for the resettlement agency, while the ECAR coordinator at the university should act as theirs.



What are the first few steps? Resettlement agencies interested in forming an ECAR partnership should:



1. First, identify a university partner to work with using the information and resources above.
2. Second, invite them to brainstorm with you on how to create - or deepen - a partnership to support newcomers to your region.
3. Third, offer ECAR as an example of a way in which their campus can support newcomers; let them know about ECAR's useful and free resources that they can take advantage of immediately, especially the [free certificate-bearing training offered to higher education institutions](#) and [AHLAN: A Manual for Establishing Resettlement Campuses Together](#).
4. Fourth, work together to identify potential housing and additional resources on the university campus. Encourage the university to begin recruiting student volunteers, exploring ways in which this effort can be connected to curricular and co-curricular offerings.
5. Fifth, begin to solidify the partnership through a Memorandum of Understanding and a Licensing Agreement.
6. Sixth, invite ECAR staff to support and participate at any stage of the process.



To learn more about ECAR, please register for one of our [Refugee Welcome Collective Info Sessions](#) or email us at everycampusarefuge@gmail.com to set up a one-on-one info session or conversation.



USEFUL RESOURCES

ECAR Resources



- [ECAR Website](#) contains lots of information about ECAR including resources and trainings.
- [ECAR Template Memorandum of Understanding between a university and resettlement agency](#) outlines a possible agreement between a resettlement agency and university with regards to responsibilities and service provision. The template is based on the 9-year partnership between Guilford College and CWS Greensboro.
- [ECAR Best Practices Manual](#) is an A to Z of how a college or university can prepare for, host, transition, and then continue to support a refugee family.
- [ECAR Funding for Universities](#) of up to \$10,000 to become an ECAR Chapter.
- [AHLAN: A Manual For Establishing Resettlement Campuses Together](#) is the premier implementation guide for how to make a college or university campus welcoming to refugees and play an integral role in local refugee resettlement ecosystems.
- [ECAR/NASH-RRI free certificate-bearing training for higher education institutions](#) builds the capacity of colleges and universities in understanding forced displacement and creating welcoming campuses.
- [ECAR Refugee Welcome Collective Information Session](#) explains what the ECAR program is and how to be involved.
- [ECAR Program Coordinator Handbook](#) is an A to Z of how to coordinate an ECAR program on a college or university campus.
- [ECAR Implementation Checklist](#) is an outline of the life-cycle and the key milestones in implementing ECAR programming on a college or university campus.
- [ECAR Resource Folder](#) is full of resources useful when hosting a refugee family on a campus.
- [ECAR PERC MAP](#) is a geo-map that allows resettlement agencies and universities to find each other within a 100 mile radius.

Additional Resources



- [RWC Ready, Set, Launch](#) is a training for designing and managing a co-sponsorship program. This course provides local resettlement agency staff with knowledge and resources to initiate or further develop a co-sponsorship program.
- [RHS Leveraging College and University Housing for Newcomer Welcoming](#): In the face of the U.S. housing crisis, resettlement practitioners must embrace creative solutions to housing newcomers. One such solution involves partnering with institutions of higher education to meet newcomer temporary or long-term housing needs.

