Refugee Welcome Collective

# National Community Sponsorship Conference

May 15 – 17, 2024

## Virtual Conference Agenda

| Day 1: Wednesday, May 15, 2024 | |
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| **12:00-1:00 p.m. ET**<br>***11:00-12:00 p.m. CT***<br>***10:00-11:00 a.m. MT***<br>***9:00-10:00 a.m. PT*** | **Welcome and Opening Remarks**<br>**Presenters:**<br>*Jessica Ashcraft, Senior Program Officer for Community Sponsorship, Refugee Welcome Collective*<br>*RWC Members*<br>This session will welcome participants, review the agenda, and cover essential housekeeping instructions. For the remainder of the session, RWC is honored to partner with headquarters staff from across the national resettlement agencies to facilitate group discussions, goal setting, and planning pertaining to the conference. |
| **2:00-3:00 p.m. ET**<br>***1:00-2:00 p.m. CT***<br>***12:00-1:00 p.m. MT***<br>***11:00-12:00 p.m. PT*** | **Grounding in a Growing Ecosystem: An Overview of Community Sponsorship and Refugee Welcome Collective Supports**<br>**Presenters:**<br>*Jessica Ashcraft, Senior Program Officer for Community Sponsorship, Refugee Welcome Collective*<br>*David Sulewski, Associate Director for Training and Engagement, Refugee Welcome Collective*<br>Community sponsorship has evolved and expanded rapidly over the last few years. This session will serve as a comprehensive level-set for that ecosystem including RWC's role in it. Participants will be provided with the current ecosystem map, definitions, and benefits pertaining to all community sponsorship pathways. Participants will also engage in interactive activities as they learn about how RWC can support their community sponsorship program. |


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## Day 2: Thursday, May 16, 2024

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| **12:00-1:30 p.m. ET**<br>***11:00-12:30 p.m. CT***<br>***10:00-11:30 a.m. MT***<br>***9:00-10:30 a.m. PT*** | **Managing Group Dynamics & Navigating Difficult Situations in Community Sponsorship**<br>**Presenter:**<br>*David Sulewski, Associate Director for Training and Engagement, Refugee Welcome Collective*<br>This interactive training session focuses on addressing challenging sponsor group dynamics and managing conflict between community sponsorship staff and sponsor groups. Participants will consider program elements to mitigate challenging group dynamics and strategize navigating difficult situations with sponsor groups. |
| **2:00-3:30 p.m. ET**<br>***1:00-2:30 p.m. CT***<br>***12:00-1:30 p.m. MT***<br>***11:00-12:30 p.m. PT*** | **Demystifying Monitoring: How to Design Community Sponsorship Programs that Check All the Boxes**<br>**Presenter:**<br>*Rebekah Korver, Community Sponsorship Coordinator, USCCB*<br>This training session will highlight the importance of strong community sponsorship systems to support the monitoring process for resettlement agencies. The training will include an overview of monitoring and provide participants with guidance on how to ensure community sponsors meet the requirement for documentation. |
| **4:00-5:00 p.m. ET**<br>***3:00-4:00 p.m. CT***<br>***2:00-3:00 p.m. MT***<br>***1:00-2:00 p.m. PT*** | **Panel**<br>**Communication is Key**<br>A community sponsorship program is only as successful as its communication structures and policies. Effective communication builds strong relationships, mitigates and manages conflict, ensures services are delivered properly and on time, and improves satisfaction among all program participants. Local resettlement agencies will share an overview of their program's communication structures, policies, and tools. Participants in this session will have an opportunity to ask panelists questions and walk away with new RWC tools for communication. |


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## Day 3: Friday, May 17, 2024

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| **12:00-1:30 p.m. ET**<br>***11:00-12:30 p.m. CT***<br>***10:00-11:30 a.m. MT***<br>***9:00-10:30 a.m. PT*** | **Fostering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Community Sponsorship**<br>**Presenters:**<br>*Denver Governor, Regional Program Officer for Gender, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI), International Rescue Committee HQ*<br>*Greg Marino, Program Officer for Community Sponsorship Training, International Rescue Committee HQ*<br>Community Sponsorship provides opportunities for community groups to partner with resettlement agencies toward resettling refugee families in their communities. Aside from the mechanics of facilitating some core services during the community sponsorship period, community groups play a pivotal role in engaging with the refugee families they sponsor on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion as they integrate into American society. This can be challenging for group members who may be unfamiliar or unaware of identity issues in their personal experiences and/or their own environments, which can lead to unintended harm towards refugees paired with sponsors. During this session, through interactive exercises, participants will apply a Gender, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (GEDI) lens in examining elements of the GEDI continuum toward effective co-sponsor program design and implementation. Participants will take away tools that will enable co-sponsor groups to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion into their relationship-building with the families they serve. In turn, co-sponsorship staff can use the intersectionality wheel to open conversations about the identities of the group members, their clients, and themselves. |
| **2:00-3:30 p.m. ET**<br>***1:00-2:30 p.m. CT***<br>***12:00-1:30 p.m. MT***<br>***11:00-12:30 p.m. PT*** | **Community Sponsorship Recruitment: From Interest to Commitment and Commitment to Success**<br>**Presenter:**<br>*Philip A. D'Agati, PhD, Program Manager — Community Sponsorship and Engagement, Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Boston*<br>Community Sponsorship hinges on the willingness of people to organize to help a stranger. While on paper the arguments in favor are logical, the barriers to participation and success can feel insurmountable to the uninitiated. This training session offers participants the opportunity to learn best practices, approaches, and strategies for moving interested groups passed barriers and into partnership. |


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| **4:00-5:00 p.m. ET**<br>***3:00-4:00 p.m. CT***<br>***2:00-3:00 p.m. MT***<br>***1:00-2:00 p.m. PT*** | **Closing & Peer-sharing**<br>**Presenters:**<br>*Jessica Ashcraft, Senior Program Officer for Community Sponsorship, Refugee Welcome Collective*<br>*RWC Members*<br>This session will give participants an opportunity to provide feedback on the conference and information on how to stay engaged with RWC throughout the year. RWC is honored to be partnering again with headquarters staff from across the national resettlement agencies to facilitate group reflection and discussion around conference learnings. |


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# Presenter Bios

**Jessica Ashcraft** is the Senior Program Officer for Community Sponsorship at Refugee Welcome Collective. She received her BA in Psychology from Georgetown College and her Master of Science in Social Work degree from the Kent School at the University of Louisville. During her time in Louisville, she worked with Americana Community Center where she discovered a passion for working with immigrants and refugees. Jessica has experience in program development, strengths-based case management, mental health group work, and training development and implementation. Most recently, she served as the Volunteer and Internships Coordinator at Kentucky Refugee Ministries overseeing the recruitment, training, and management of interns, volunteers, and community support groups.

**Philip D'Agati** currently serves as the Program Manager for Community Sponsorship and Engagement at Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Boston. The Community Sponsorship and Engagement team works with dozens of partners across eastern Massachusetts to provide core services to refugees and humanitarian parolees. Dr. D'Agati earned a Masters degrees in World History and in Comparative Politics & Public Administration and graduated from Northeastern University with a PhD in Political Science. He is the author of three books, a scholar on Nationalism and ethnic Identity, and an expert on Olympic legacy and bid processes. He is a part time member of the faculty at University of Massachusetts Amherst, an advisory board member of the National Council on US-Arab Relations and an active volunteer in his local community.

**Denver Governor** (She/Her/Hers). Although Denver's journey at the IRC began in Intensive Case Management, her background in Organizational Psychology and Inclusive Engagement led her to the Gender Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (GEDI) unit, where she supported the development of the IRC's DEI Strategy, foundational DEI lexicon, and GEDI engagement plan. As part of the Resettlement, Asylum, and Integration (RAI) department, she established a cross-regional GEDI Community of Practice and provided technical support to program offices across the U.S. southern border region and within Europe. Denver previously supported inclusion, belonging, and wellness initiatives within the Peace Corps, Florida State University, University of South Florida, and Rutgers University, helping to improve the experiences and practices of staff, students, and community stakeholders. She currently resides in Tampa, Florida with her partner, cat, and 29-year-old turtle.

**Rebekah Korver** is the Community Sponsorship Coordinator at USCCB. She has been working in refugee services for the last 7 years and has been with USCCB for almost 3. Her first role at USCCB was as a Field Support Coordinator for the R&P program, providing support and training to new affiliates being added to the USCCB network and monitoring APA and R&P programs for compliance. Her prior experience includes supporting Alight's government affairs office and managing volunteers and co-sponsors for an EMM affiliate. She holds a Bachelor's in Philosophy and a Master's in Conflict Resolution; and she is a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer.


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**Greg Marino** is the Program Officer for Community Sponsorship Training at the International Rescue Committee (IRC) headquarters. Since joining the IRC in 2002, he has provided onboarding, training, and technical assistance support for staff and community groups engaged in community sponsorship in both the APA and R&P Programs across the IRC network. His prior experience in refugee resettlement includes launching and managing the Community Co-Sponsorship Program at Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS) in New Haven, Connecticut, where he provided training, onboarding, ongoing case management, and professional development support for over 50 community groups resettling refugee families throughout the state over 6 years. Prior to entering the refugee resettlement space, he created and managed professional development programs and initiatives in higher education and professional development in the US and internationally. He holds a BA in International Affairs and an MBA in Organizational Behavior and Marketing and is based in Shelton, Connecticut.

**David Sulewski** is the Associate Director for Training and Engagement at Refugee Welcome Collective. He has worked with forcibly displaced persons in the U.S. and abroad and is committed to strengthening the role of agencies and communities in welcoming newcomers. As an employment specialist with the International Rescue Committee-Boston and later with Jewish Vocational Service-Boston, David assisted newcomers with job placement and skills training. David then co-managed a welcome center for forced migrants in Quito, Ecuador as part of the Mennonite Central Committee, working with UNHCR on durable solutions and partnering with grassroots peacebuilding collectives to foster positive host-migrant relations. David has also participated in a Sponsor Circle to welcome an Afghan family. He holds an MA in Human Security and Global Governance with a certificate in conflict resolution from UMass Boston.


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