

Supporting Higher Education in Refugee Resettlement

Building the capacity of colleges and universities to support resettlement.

SHERR Innovation Incentive Grants: Call for Proposals

Issue Date: December 18, 2023

Closing: January 21, 2024, 9:00PM, EST

The Supporting Higher Education in Refugee Resettlement project (SHERR) is pleased to announce the formal launch of its competition for **Innovation Incentive Grants**. The SHERR Innovation Incentive Grants program is designed to stimulate innovation and increase collaboration between U.S. higher education institutions and refugee resettlement organizations with the goal of increasing capacity to resettle refugees.

1. About the Supporting Higher Education in Refugee Resettlement Project (SHERR)

SHERR is a three-year capacity building project funded by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM). SHERR is implemented by a consortium led by World Learning with the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, the Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), and Welcome.US.

The purpose of SHERR is to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of refugee resettlement through leveraging the existing resources of U.S. higher education institutions. Such resources may include student volunteers, campus housing, service-learning channels, and campus-based expertise and professional support, among others.

Key activities of SHERR include:

- A national needs assessment survey to better understand the status and the potential of higher education in supporting refugee resettlement (completed July 2023; public report anticipated January 2024)
- A national workshop, "Higher Education and Refugee Resettlement: Partners in Action" (November 2023)
- Support for the growth and impact of the Welcome Campus Network (an initiative of Welcome.US)
- A new resource hub focused on higher education and resettlement (launching December 2023), complementing the Higher Ed Immigration Portal (an initiative of the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration)
- Communities of Practice to advance SHERR's Pathways of Engagement (launching January 2024)
- Ongoing trainings and development tools and resources
- Innovation Incentive Grants (launching December 2023)

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2. Purpose of SHERR Innovation Incentive Grants

The purpose of SHERR's Innovation Incentive Grants program is to pilot promising approaches to meaningfully and tangibly engage higher education institutions in initiatives to grow and strengthen the domestic capacity for placement of refugees in communities across the U.S. The Innovation Incentive Grants program emphasizes the development of sustainable models, projects and/or programs that hold strong potential to meaningfully increase the local capacity to resettle refugees through the Reception & Placement (R&P) Program and have an impact on resettlement outcomes, especially during the first 90 days. The Innovation Incentive Grants program emphasizes alignment with SHERR's Pathways of Engagement for higher education institutions, as well as collaboration between accredited higher education institutions and refugee resettlement organizations.

Resettlement Outcomes: SHERR's use of the term "resettlement outcomes" refers to the following performance outcomes that the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration has established for the Reception & Placement Program (see also Questions and Answers below):

- **Refugee is in a safe, stable environment.**
- **Refugee can navigate appropriate and relevant systems.**
- **Refugee family is connected to means of ongoing support for self/family.**
- **Refugee understands surroundings and situation.**

SHERR Pathways of Engagement: SHERR has identified seven Pathways of Engagement for higher education institutions, as SHERR's focus areas. These Pathways of Engagement reflect both the results of SHERR's national needs assessment conducted in summer 2023 as well as the collective understanding of SHERR consortium members about how to most efficiently and effectively use SHERR's resources. For the Innovation Incentive Grants, SHERR welcomes proposals that address any of these pathways. The first two listed below are the highest priorities – **Campus Utilization: Housing;** and **Service Learning, Volunteer Engagement, and Staffing.** Proposals associated with one or both of these two Pathways will receive extra points in the evaluation process.

- **Campus Utilization: Housing*** (highest priority for grants)
- **Service Learning, Volunteer Engagement, and Staffing**** (highest priority for grants)
- Developing Refugee Educational Opportunities: Reducing Barriers to Enrollment
- The Intersection of English Language Learning and Career Support
- Access to Vocational Technical Training
- Colleges and Universities as Employers of Refugees
- Evaluation and Research related to Resettlement Outcomes

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*Examples of grant activities to develop capacity related to the **Housing** Pathway might include: establish the administrative infrastructure to house non-student refugees on an ongoing basis; leverage course assignments, internships, work-study, or academic research resources to map relevant housing opportunities on or associated with campus; or pilot a subsidized temporary housing effort with a resettlement organization.

Examples of grant activities to develop capacity related to the **Service Learning, Volunteer Engagement, and Staffing Pathway might include: develop a service learning curriculum that aligns with educational objectives and meets the needs of a local resettlement organization; or leverage any/all elements of campus human resources (students, staff, faculty, others) to support local reception and placement of student and non-student refugees, through volunteer service, internships, etc.

3. SHERR Grant Duration, Funding Range and Type

- A. Funds available for the entire pool of SHERR Innovation Incentive Grants: \$360,000. SHERR anticipates administering a cohort of 7-14 individual grants with this funding.
- B. Maximum funding for each grant: \$50,000.
- C. Preferred minimum funding for each grant: \$25,000. SHERR will consider proposals seeking less than \$25,000 in exceptional cases with compelling potential for impact.
- D. Each grant agreement will be for a **fixed funding amount** (rather than cost reimbursable), with payment based on accomplishment of **deliverables**. “**Deliverables**” in this context means discrete products or activities – it does not refer to results or impact. (See examples below under Evaluation Criteria.)
- E. Funding will support activities taking place over a period of 10-11 months, ending no later than January 30, 2025. (Final reporting will be due subsequently.)

4. Eligibility

To be considered for SHERR funding, applicants must meet the following core requirements. Proposals that do not meet these requirements will not be reviewed.

- A. **Requirement of Collaboration:** Proposals must be submitted by a team of organizations that includes **at least one** accredited U.S. higher education institution and **at least one** refugee resettlement organization. Either may submit the application as the leading organization, serve as the administrative lead and be the direct recipient of funds. The other organization must provide a letter of support. (See also Questions and Answers below.)

National Resettlement Agency preference: Preference will be given to teams that include an affiliate, local office, branch, or headquarters of a national Resettlement Agency. (See list and additional information in Questions and Answers.) SHERR focuses largely on the capacity to support refugees in the earliest stages of their resettlement journey (first 90 days), and the national Resettlement Agencies have significant experience serving refugees during this stage of resettlement. However, collaborations

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between a higher education institution and other types of resettlement organizations are welcome and will be considered for funding.

- B. **Requirement of Welcome Campus Network Membership:** The higher education collaborator on the proposal team must either already be an institutional member of the Welcome Campus Network or commit to becoming an institutional member. SHERR's formal objectives include supporting the growth and impact of the Welcome Campus Network. Applicants who wish to become members may visit the website of the [Welcome Campus Network](#). Note that no required fees are associated with membership.

5. Application Process

- A. Applicants should read this Call for Proposals in its entirety, including the Questions and Answers section, to fully understand the eligibility requirements and details about the application process and evaluation/selection.
- B. Potential applicants may address any questions not answered in the Call for Proposals to SHERR@worldlearning.org. Questions will be answered directly on a rolling basis. The last day for questions is January 10 (by 9:00PM EST). All questions (anonymized) and answers will be posted on World Learning's [SHERR/Innovation Incentive Grants](#) webpage by January 12.
- C. A complete application consists of three documents: the application form, the budget, and a letter of support from the proposed second-tier subrecipient (the partner or collaborator):
- The **application form** and the **budget template** may be downloaded from World Learning's [SHERR/Innovation Incentive Grants](#) website. The budget template includes a tab with instructions for completing the budget. It also includes a column for concise narrative/justification. A separate budget narrative is not necessary.
 - The letter of support from the second-tier subrecipient should be on that organization's letterhead and state that the organization supports the proposal as described in the application.
 - Applicants should email the three documents (preferably as a ZIP file) to SHERR@worldlearning.org by January 21, 2024, 9:00PM EST. The SHERR team will confirm receipt of an application within 24 hours. If you don't receive confirmation of receipt within 24 hours, please email again to inquire.

6. Evaluation/Selection Process

- A. SHERR will screen applications for basic eligibility and completeness.
- B. Eligible and complete proposals will be reviewed by a panel representing SHERR consortium member organizations. The Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration at the U.S. Department of State and external reviewers with relevant expertise may also join the review panel. The review panel will develop

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a recommended list of proposals to be funded, for final review and concurrence by the Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration.

Formation of Grants Cohort: SHERR's recommendation of grants to be funded will be determined largely by the evaluation scores as outlined below. However, SHERR must also strive to form the cohort of grantees such that the total amount of funded grants aligns with the total amount of available funding. In addition, SHERR may consider factors such as geographic diversity in recommending the cohort, in order to maximize the impact of SHERR as a nationally-focused capacity building effort.

Review Panel Conflicts or Perceived Conflicts of Interest: All organizational members of the SHERR consortium have professional relationships with higher education institutions and/or refugee resettlement organizations. In order to mitigate conflicts or perceived conflicts of interest in the evaluation and selection process, members of the review panel will be required to agree to a "firewall" prohibiting them from discussing the process except with others on the review panel. As an additional mitigation measure, the ECDC panelist will be a non-scoring, consultative reviewer, commenting on but not scoring the proposals. Finally, World Learning, its School for International Training, and the national headquarters of ECDC, are not eligible for SHERR grant funding.

7. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria for SHERR Innovation Incentive Grants proposals are as follows:

- A. Overall Clarity: How clearly is the idea described? How clear are the details of the collaboration between the higher education institution and the resettlement organization? How clear are the deliverables to be accomplished? "Deliverables" for this purpose refers to specific, discrete products or activities accomplished under the grant. Examples of clear deliverables may include: specific services provided; a memorandum of understanding negotiated and signed; a family of refugees housed for three months; a supportive administrative infrastructure created; outreach initiative completed; a curriculum developed; an internship designed and piloted; etc. **[5 points]**
- B. Relevance: Is the idea relevant to one or more SHERR Pathways of Engagement **[5 points]**
- C. Feasibility: Can the proposed idea be carried out during the grant period? **[5 points]**
- D. Immediate or Near-term Impact on Resettlement Outcomes: During the grant period and/or soon after, what is the anticipated impact on resettlement outcomes for refugees? **[5 points]**
- E. Increased Capacity: What is the potential for an increase in local refugee resettlement capacity? To what extent may proposed activity contribute to a sustainable increase in the **number of refugees** resettled in the community and/or a sustainable improvement in **resettlement outcomes**? And to what extent is the proposed activity sustainable, scalable, durable, and/or replicable? **[10 points]**
- F. Budget: Is there a detailed budget, with reasonable estimates itemized in appropriate categories and clear justification/explanation? **[5 points]**

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- G. Housing Bonus Points: Does the idea address capacity and/or have impact on resettlement outcomes specifically related to the SHERR Pathway of Engagement “**Campus Utilization: Housing?**” Will funding be used to provide housing, prepare administratively to provide or facilitate housing, or otherwise increase the higher education institution’s capacity to be engaged with housing for non-student refugees? **[5 points]**
- H. Service Learning Bonus Points: Does the idea address capacity and/or have impact on resettlement outcomes specifically related to the SHERR Pathway of Engagement “**Service Learning, Volunteer Engagement, and Staffing?**” Will funding support innovations in how students, staff or other campus community human resources enhance the local community’s overall capacity to support resettlement, in particular of non-student refugees? **[5 points]**
- I. National Resettlement Agency Bonus Points: Does the proposal team include a national Resettlement Agency affiliate, local/branch office or national headquarters? **[5 points]**

8. Anticipated Timeline

Dec. 18, 2023	SHERR announcement of Innovation Incentive Grants program
Jan. 10, 2024	Last day for questions
Jan. 12, 2024	Anonymized questions posted, with answers, on World Learning’s SHERR/Innovation Incentive Grants website
Jan. 21, 2024 (9:00PM EST)	Deadline for proposals submitted to SHERR@worldlearning.org
Jan. 22 – Feb. 2, 2024	Review of proposals; selection; negotiations
Feb. 14, 2024	Grant agreements executed (after pre-award surveys)
Jan. 30, 2025	SHERR-funded grant activities completed
Feb. 25, 2025	Final reports due

9. Resources and Links

- This Call for Proposals as well as the application form and budget template are available on World Learning’s [SHERR/Innovation Incentive Grants](#) webpage, or by email if requested.
- Applicants are encouraged to review SHERR’s summary report on the recent national workshop, “**Higher Education and Refugee Resettlement: Partners in Action,**” available on World Learning’s [SHERR](#) website. This report includes examples of current and potential higher education engagement and collaboration on refugee resettlement and may be a source of inspiration to applicants.
- Additional recommended resources:

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- **Every Campus A Refuge (ECAR):** If your SHERR Innovation Incentive Grant proposal idea includes a housing element and you are not already familiar with ECAR, we urge you to review ECAR's free materials, resources and training opportunities before seeking funding from SHERR for support that may overlap with those. We encourage applicants to consider complementing or supplementing SHERR support with ECAR support as relevant.
- **The National Association of Higher Education Systems (NASH) Refugee Resettlement Initiative (RRI):** the [NASH RRI](#) offers a growing range of resources targeting public university systems, many of which are also open to other universities and colleges as well: from statewide convenings to connect statewide actors in higher education and refugee resettlement to a nationwide Training of Trainers program in partnership with ECAR, to the first U.S.-based Educational Hub for Displaced Ukrainians, as well as a national network of [Champions](#) with whom you can connect to learn more about their campus related support and activities, including those that are student-led. **NASH also offers grant funding to Champions at NASH-member higher education systems and their campuses** ([see the list of systems here](#)). To learn more about NASH's Catalyst Fund, visit its website: <https://nash.edu/catalyst-fund/> or contact jroche@nash.edu.

10. Questions and Answers about SHERR Innovation Incentive Grants

A. What if we have additional questions?

Answer: Please email any additional questions to SHERR@worldlearning.org. The last day for questions is January 10, 2024. Questions will be answered directly on a rolling basis, and anonymized answers will be posted on the World Learning [SHERR/Innovation Incentive Grants](#) webpage by January 12, 2024.

B. Can the proposal team include more than two organizations?

Answer: Yes, as long as there is at least one accredited U.S. higher education institution and at least one refugee resettlement organization.

C. Please explain in more detail the envisioned administrative relationship between organizational team members.

Answer: There are two options available for proposal team composition. The default option is to have a lead applicant that serves as the direct grant beneficiary, engaging a co-applicant as collaborator or partner to participate in project implementation. The SHERR application form is designed to accommodate this approach. In cases where this is not feasible for the collaborators, an exceptional option is for both a lead applicant and a co-applicant(s) to be direct grant beneficiaries, executing

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separate grant agreements and receiving separate funding, but effectively carrying out a single grant activity. If this is your preferred option, please mention it in the application.

D. Can the proposal include both a resettlement organization in the network of national Resettlement Agencies and also another category/type of resettlement organization?

Answer: Yes.

E. Can a higher education institution with no experience related to refugee resettlement be considered for funding?

Answer: Yes.

F. Can an institution or organization be associated with more than one proposal, or submit more than one proposal?

Answer: Yes.

G. What does SHERR mean by national Resettlement Agencies and their branch/field offices, or local affiliates?

Answer: “National Resettlement Agencies” refers to the 10 national agencies participating in the Reception & Placement Program under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of State. They are also referred to as resettlement agencies or RAs. The 10 National RAs are: Bethany Christian Services (BCS); Church World Service (CWS); Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC); Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM); HIAS; International Rescue Committee (IRC); Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS); US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI); United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB); and World Relief (WR).

RA “branch” and “field office” are local offices of a national RA. RA “affiliate” or “local affiliate” refers to a local agency/resettlement site that is an official affiliate of a national RA. There are approximately 350 of these local agencies/resettlement sites across the U.S. [Click here](#) for a full directory, map, and further information.

H. How can I learn more about the Reception & Placement Program of the U.S. Department of State, Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration?

Answer: Please visit the Department of States website for the [Reception & Placement Program](#) and consult the [FY 2023 Reception & Placement Fact Sheet.pdf](#).

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I. Budget Questions:

- i. Can a budget include personnel?

Answer: Yes, and the budget template calls for a detailed breakdown of costs related to personnel.

- ii. What happens if an organization does not have a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with a U.S. federal agency?

Answer: For budgeting purposes, an organization without a negotiated indirect cost rate should use the de minimis rate, which is 10% of modified total direct cost.

J. Expectations and Administrative Steps

If we are selected to receive a SHERR grant, what administrative requirements and next steps should we be aware of?

Answer: Some of the main requirements and next steps include:

- i. Administratively, the lead organization receiving the SHERR grant will be considered a subrecipient to World Learning (holder of the SHERR cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of State). The lead's funded partner(s) will be considered a second-tier subrecipient(s).
- ii. The terms and conditions of the federal award that apply to the subrecipient flow down to the second-tier subrecipient.
- iii. All selected grantees will be invited to a virtual meeting with World Learning to review procedures and expectations.
- iv. The lead recipient, and possibly also the second-tier subrecipient, will be required to complete a World Learning "pre-award survey," which is a comprehensive evaluation process designed to assess the capacity, financial stability, management practices, and compliance standards of potential subrecipients. This survey serves as a critical tool in ensuring that subrecipients possess the necessary capabilities and structures to effectively manage and implement the awarded federal funds. It helps identify any potential risks, ensures adherence to regulatory requirements, and promotes accountability and transparency throughout the grant lifecycle.
- v. Grant agreements will include commitment to Accountability to Affected Population (AAP), and Protection from Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, and Abuse (PSHEA) practices.
- vi. Lead grantees will be required to register as "vendors" in World Learning's online vendor system in order to receive funds by bank transfer or check.
- vii. Reporting and monitoring requirements will be as simple as possible within the constraints of funding originating with the federal government.

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