Webinar: Developing Strategies to Strengthen Quarterly Consultations in Newcomer Receiving Communities

May 13, 2024, 1:00 – 2:15 PM ET

Transcript

Introduction

Barbara Day: Welcome, everyone. As we see you popping in, it's great to see the number rising. You are here for Developing Strategies to Strengthen Quarterly Consultations in Newcomer Receiving Communities. Welcome. We'll be starting in about one minute, so make yourselves comfortable. Grab a glass of water, pencil, settle in.

[pause]

BD: Welcome, everyone. Welcome to our Switchboard webinar, Developing Strategies to Strengthen Quarterly Consultations in Newcomer Receiving Communities. I know we'll expect a few more people to join us, but in the meantime, it's probably time to get started. My name is Barbara Day. I am not Rob Callus. Rob was initially tapped to lead this webinar, although he is deeply regretting that he is unable to be with us. He's in Tanzania and all of Eastern Africa somehow lost Internet connection. So I will be happy to lead this conversation today and we are ready to go. I have retired, although apparently I didn't get the memo because here I am. I did end up my career at the State Department as Chief of Domestic Resettlement, where I had many years of wonderful experiences. I've led a local program and a national program and yeah, I've had lots of fun. Our other speakers today were all listed in your invitation.

We're really excited to have with us Meg Sagaria Barritt. She is the Integration Partnerships Coordinator for the Colorado Refugee Services Program, the State Refugee Coordinator's Office in Colorado. And she leads communications outreach and partnership building efforts. So we're really happy that Meg can be with us. Sean Kirkpatrick is the coordinator of the East Bay Refugee and Immigrant Forum. It's a coalition of over 35 community-based organizations, public systems, advocates, and community leaders in the San Francisco East Bay area. So we're thrilled also that Sean can be here.

Lillie, where are you? Where are you? There you are. Lillie Hinkle is Rob's primary partner in pulling this together, and she is Associate Policy Analyst with the Migration Policy Institute National Center on Immigrant Integration Policy. She works on issues including refugee resettlement, humanitarian populations, and access to benefits and services for immigrant families. So we have a great group of people with us today, including all of you, up to 107 who have joined us. We really look forward to a great conversation.

Zoom Orientation

BD: Please notice these Zoom webinar quick tips. Connect your phone or computer audio under audio settings. The chat will be disabled during this webinar due to the large number of participants that we're expecting. However, you may type a question or click the thumbs up icon under the Q&A feature in Zoom to participate in questions. Please also note that this webinar is being recorded and it will be emailed to you along with all recommended resources. So you can sit back, enjoy, take notes. All right.

Today’s Speakers

BD: Oh, today's speakers. Well, there are our photos. So you can match who we are with what we're saying, as I have just introduced.

Learning Objectives

BD: By the end of this session, we really hope that you will be able to describe key elements of successful quarterly consultations in newcomer receiving communities, that you will develop or be able to develop strategies for effectively managing challenges encountered during quarterly consultation planning and execution, and identify at least one promising practice to prioritize during quarterly consultations. Sounds like a good one, huh?

Poll Question

BD: If you could please click on that QR code and join this slido.com, the number's right there, and identify:

Which of the following best describes your role in this topic?

BD: I was going to say refugee resettlement. We know refugee refers to all of the populations in, wow, in ORR lingo. Here we go. Very interesting. We have 120 people on this call so far.

Let's see how we shake out as far as representation. Fun, huh? Real time. We just wanted to see who was here. Looks like non-client facing leadership or administrative roles. Lots of administrators curious about how they're going to implement or better, make better consultations. All right. You can keep doing that, but we're going to go to the next slide. In your own words, this is kind of an important question.

Poll Question

What is the purpose of holding consultations in newcomer receiving communities with a variety of local stakeholders? Like, what do you think is the purpose of holding these consultations?

BD: You can write sentences or words or phrases. Look at that. Awesome. Lots of very similar sentiments here. Everybody, please keep answering these questions because it helps us to understand the priorities and numbers. Good going. 40 people. Come on, there's still 126. So we want 80 more people to chime in here. Don't be shy. Because you're all anonymous. All right, we're slowing down a little bit. You can keep typing. All right. Wow, these are great. Transparency, resources, lots of collaboration, sharing information. Excellent. All right, we are going to wrap this up and move on.

1. Guidance on Quarterly Consultations

Quarterly Consultations (QCs)

BD: So today we're going to look at quarterly consultations through the lens of ORR's new guidance. You might not be aware, but ORR recently issued Dear Colleague Letter 24-09, current as of April 24, 2024, announcing revisions of ORR's state plan template for grants to states and replacement designees for refugee resettlement. Don't worry, a link to this guidance will be dropped into the chat at the end of the webinar. It will be shared with you at the end and will be mailed to you. So please just stay with us. And remember also that the term refugee in this context means all individuals eligible for ORR services.

Okay? So we all know that quarterly consultations are really a great way to foster increased engagement of refugee service providers and community members, to strategize and discuss solutions to ongoing resettlement challenges, and to share promising or best practices, programs, successes, and ideas. And some of you mentioned some of these as you were sharing what you thought quarterly consultations were really all about or should be all about.

ORR State Plan Template Activities

BD: The new ORR state plan template guidance states that quarterly consultations must address assessing community capacity for placement and service provision and planning for appropriate placement and arrival planning, assessing refugees' needs for services and assistance and using the best available data to gauge projected services and benefits needed. So these three things must be addressed in ORR's consultations.

Consultations are encouraged to address coordinating supports and services for refugees, ensuring that benefits and services are neither omitted nor duplicated, and developing a community strategy to support refugee integration and participation in civic life. The new ORR guidance also states that the state or RD means replacement designee will convene, not less often than quarterly, meetings where representatives of local resettlement agencies, local community service agencies, and other agencies that serve refugees meeting with representatives of state and local governments to coordinate the appropriate services for refugees in advance of refugees' arrival. So this is who should be there, right?

Furthermore, such meetings shall include outreach and invitation to at a minimum public school officials, public health officials, welfare and social service agency officials, and police or other law enforcement officials for jurisdictions in which refugees resettle. So this is who else might be invited.

Common Challenges of QCs

BD: So some of you are wondering how the ORR and PRM guidance fit together. A year ago, Switchboard met with representatives of SCORE, State Refugee Coordinators, ARC, State Refugee Health Coordinators, and resettlement agencies to identify common challenges to quarterly consultations, as well as to affirm what was going well. The top three challenges were listed here. Meetings often feel more informational than consultative. Community capacity is defined differently across various sectors. And finally, ORR and PRM requirements for QCs are not entirely aligned. The last point is especially important as we await word about PRM's QC guidance. Let's see what we can do in the meantime. Lillie is going to talk about overcoming some of these challenges. Lillie?

2. Strategies for Overcoming Consultation Challenges

Challenge 1: Other Populations

Lillie Hinkle: Thank you, Barbara. It's great to be here today with you all. So for this section, like Barbara said, we're going to dig a little deeper into some strategies for overcoming some of these common quarterly consultation or QC challenges. The first challenge that I'd like to highlight is really rooted in the fact that resettlement and the broader humanitarian protection landscape in the United States has evolved rather significantly in recent years, but particularly so under the Biden administration. We've seen the introduction of new resettlement actors like private sponsor groups through the Welcome Corps initiative, and we've also seen new ORR-eligible humanitarian populations, such as humanitarian parolees from nations like Cuba, Haiti, Ukraine, and Afghanistan. So with all of that that has changed in the landscape, it has been kind of unclear how to adapt the coordination processes like formal quarterly consultations to recent developments of the landscape.

Poll Question

What are you practicing in your community to address this challenge of including new resettlement actors and other newly eligible humanitarian populations in your consultation conversations?

LH: And so we'd like for you to fill out this Slido on the next slide. You'll see. What are you practicing in your community to address the challenge of including new resettlement actors like private sponsor groups and newly eligible humanitarian populations like humanitarian parolees into your consultation conversations? And if they're not currently reflected in community engagement processes, feel free to name some of the barriers to that. So we'll take just a minute to do this. And I know that we have maybe had a technical issue with Slido. But that's been resolved. So in the meantime, I'll give everybody a chance to start populating some responses into this. And you can do so by scanning the QR code on your phone, if that's easier for you, or accessing it through your web browser.

So seeing that they are being reflected in QCs, some folks are actively participating. Seeing folks say include, and this will do a word web in which the most common responses become larger and larger. So, seeing a lot of language around inclusion. Some language that they're not being currently reflected, but are meeting informally in engagement opportunities, say with an ethnic community-based organization. We've got community navigators participating. But really seeing a lot of language around outreach, inclusion, and meeting updates. But some challenges like having siloed conversations, loss of contact, and maybe a lack of inclusion, but a desire to include. We're coming up on about a minute here, but this has been really helpful to see. And I'll give the last couple of people typing an opportunity to populate and then we'll move on. Great. This looks awesome.

Thanks everyone for participating in this. It's been really helpful.

Recommended Solutions

LH: As we move into the recommended solutions, which have been largely informed by the field and practices in the field and insights from folks and stakeholders just like you, the first solution that we think about in addressing this can be understanding the value of developing outreach positions and staff roles that focus on new resettlement actors like private sponsors and financial supporters. Again, distinguishing private sponsors being those that are supporting refugees coming through reception and placement and financial supporters who are individuals that have agreed to support certain humanitarian parolees. Though consultations are sometimes the only spaces for community stakeholders to learn about resettlement in their community, this is not the case everywhere, but in some communities it is.

And it's understandable that consultation is not always the most conducive space for bringing in all sorts of participants who may need that additional sort of refugee 101 type of information in order to effectively participate in QC activities and other resettlement discussions in their community. So to help bring new stakeholders up to speed, some states and communities host informational meetings outside of regular consultations for new resettlement actors and other interested parties to achieve a well-rounded understanding of what resettlement looks like in the community, if that's what they're looking for. And this offering helps get valued information to individuals who may be new to resettlement, and it also creates a baseline knowledge for folks who may want to participate in quarterly consultations in the future as a more informed party.

Challenge 2: Administrative Capacity

LH: Moving on to the second challenge, I'd like to highlight that this revolves largely around administrative capacity. And this is an issue that we often confront in a field that covers a breadth of services, but it's a valid one nonetheless, because limited resources and the administrative lift required for community outreach can at times make it difficult to coordinate logistics for effective consultations.

Poll Question

What are you practicing in your community to address challenges related to limited administrative capacity for QC advancement?

LH: And so, again, we're going to turn to you all the audience to participate in another Slido though that asks, what are you practicing in your community to address challenges related to limited administrative capacity for quarterly consultation advancement? Again, we'll take about a minute, minute and a half here to let responses come in and you can respond on your phone or through the web browser.

So information, miscommunication. Okay. Seeing some language around, sharing the coordination with the other LRAs, dedicating staff time, seeing some information about co-hosting outreach. Again, coming up as a really big through line here. Let a couple of other folks weigh in here. Some collaboration language around collaboration, partnership, coordination, lot of shared responsibility, which is great to see. Part of the job description also coming up. Awesome. And we will wrap this up in just a couple of seconds. Seeing some challenges crop up as well, like a lack of facilitation or some miscommunications, but also really seeing a lot of, of themes about sharing the responsibility and in a collaborative approach to this.

Recommended Solutions

LH: So this is a great segue into the next slide, because part of the recommended solutions are this idea or is this idea of sharing the QC leadership. And I think this is particularly relevant within the context of the new guidance, because there is language that recommends this co-leadership, leadership by the state agency or co-leadership. And I understand that this can be very much dependent on the local context and what's most appropriate. But this co-leadership, if appropriate in the local context, can be tremendously helpful in sharing that responsibility, the administrative burden and the logistical effort that it really takes to convene a really well developed consultation session. And the second approach or recommended solution to this challenge of limited administrative capacity and resources may be obvious, but I think it's worth saying that it's important to leverage resources like space provisions and facilitation from within community stakeholder networks. I cannot tell you how many times I've heard how valuable it is to have snacks, have a prepared facilitator at the community QCs. And I think if snacks and excellent facilitation are not a great segue into our next section on promising practices from our colleagues, I don't really know what is. So I'll pass it off to Barbara to introduce the next section of our webinar and hear from our colleagues.

3. Promising Practices for Successful Consultations

BD: Oh, thank you, Lillie. That was great and really fun to see the input from all of the people participating in this webinar. This is the part where Rob is going to be missed a lot because he was very invested in seeking out promising practices and talking with several leaders throughout our national network to identify the next two speakers. So first we're going to hear from Meg, now remember Colorado and hear what she has to say about solutions in her three locations.

Resettlement and Quarterly Consultations in Colorado

Meg Sagaria-Barritt: Great, nice to see everyone today. Thanks for inviting me to be a part of this. And I'm Meg Sagaria Barritt. I'm with the state refugee office in Colorado. We call ourselves the Colorado Refugee Services Program. I'm representing the state refugee office, but I'm also really representing the collaboration that happens here in Colorado. So thank you to my partners. If you are on the call that I get to share kind of what we're all working on. So next slide please. A little bit of context about the state of Colorado in terms of our resettlement program. So Colorado is, you could call us a medium sized resettlement state. Last federal fiscal year, we had about just over 2000 arrivals. This is just through the reception and placement or R&P program. So you've got some states like Washington or Minnesota that are bigger than Colorado.

And then you've got states like Massachusetts and Utah and a bunch of other states that are smaller. So some sense of what it looks like here in Colorado. We have three main primary resettlement locales in Colorado, so kind of moving from north to south across the state. We resettle in northern Colorado in the Greeley area. We resettle in central Colorado. That's the metro Denver area, our biggest resettlement locale. And then last but not least, also in southern Colorado in the area around Colorado Springs. And so for each of these areas, there's a slightly different dynamic based on the number of resettlement agencies in those locales, and that kind of defines how we co-lead these quarterly consultations. What I'll add is that in all of these scenarios, the state refugee office is absolutely in a kind of co-leadership role. We have been like this for the whole time I've been at the state refugee office, which is five years.

And even in the time preceding that, I think we had seen as a group that even though there was some misalignment between PRM or State Department requirements and ORR requirements, there was also a lot of alignment. And we said, let's do it together. So in northern Colorado and southern Colorado, there's just one local resettlement agency, and that's Lutheran Family Services, Rocky Mountains, which is the Global Refuge affiliate. They used to be called LIRS. And then in metro Denver, we have four resettlement agencies. So again, Lutheran Family Services. We have Jewish Family Service, which is the HIAs affiliate. We have the African Community Center, which is an ECDC affiliate and then international Rescue Committee. And so how we manage it is a little different based on kind of size and scale. In Northern Colorado and Southern Colorado, we're really fully sharing all of those duties in terms of sending out invites, managing the, the list of attendees who will come, kind of co-leading and building that agenda together, tracking participant RSVPs and things like that in metro Denver.

We tend to kind of rotate the administrative you could call it burden or roles or whatever you want to call it. So we rotate that throughout time. So there's one agency that's more of a lead, I would say, because of that state refugee office role. We're still pretty heavily involved in that coordination, but it's nice to have someone who takes the lead on the invites. And I'll share a little bit more about some of our, some of our tools for coordination as well. And then, last but not least, I know you all are probably thinking about this in your locales, I would call us kind of post pandemic and sort of revisiting how do we want to have these meetings? What's the right format for these communities? You can see that Northern Colorado is consistently doing a hybrid meeting that they have good technology for, and that's working out well.

Metro Denver and Southern Colorado are toggling between an all virtual meeting one time and an all in-person the next time. People have indicated a bit of a preference for that in-person, but we also know that ease for attendance, especially from certain stakeholders, can be a little bit easier in that virtual context. I'll go ahead to the next slide. So I'll share a couple of promising practices. These are things that have worked for us. They may or may not work in your particular context, but happy just to highlight some of the things we're playing around with. The first piece, I, I kind of touched on shared coordination already. The piece that I'd like to highlight here has to do with templates. So Lillie spoke to administrative burden. I saw the word burden popping up on Slido. Nobody likes administrative burden. It's a pain for all of us, right?

And so how can we relieve that? A couple of years ago this was pre-operation Allies welcome. I had some breathing room and I said, let's develop some templates for this work. So we have a handful of different templates that we use. One of them is a template email to invite our stakeholders. Another one is a template RSVP form, so we know who's coming and we can track that together. We do shared contacts in all of the locations just to make sure that if we hear of a new person, pop it on the list at that time. People leave, we can remove them from the list as well. We also have a template agenda that is kind of the baseline for our meetings. The lead administrative entity kind of kicks that off and, and delegates some assignments for folks as well.

One thing that I would note that's a tiny bit tricky around this, the state refugee office is on Google products. And so we like to use Google and we like to force other people to use Google along alongside us. Not everybody loves Google. Sometimes it's tricky. Sometimes people have to add a separate email, so it's nice to coordinate, yet there can be some imperfection with that as well. So the next piece I want to share is that at these quarterly consultations we have always talked about all of the ORR populations that we're serving. I had no idea this was a best practice until Lillie and MPI had highlighted it in their report. I just thought it was a natural way that we would do things. And so again, this, this speaks to some of the, maybe the differences between PRM and ORR.

So we have always spoken to all of the populations. I think you're likely seeing this in your own communities, is just those rise of the non RMP arrivals, right? And we're serving a lot more that that's looking closer and closer to 50% here in Colorado. So it's a big lift. So we look at all of those communities together. And then just that reference to secondary migrants those would be people with an ORR eligible status who then move to Colorado and enroll in program services. So again, another group that's that's worthwhile to kind of track and acknowledge, where are they moving to, things like that. The next practice is how we share data in Colorado. So the way we have typically shared data at these quarterly consultations is I actually go into the state database. We have a, a Salesforce based database with charts and graphs and things like that, and we share things at a state level.

And then also we're able to kind of hone in on that municipality specific or regional specific data as well. One of the benefits of sharing this, I think people feel like they're in the know I'm sharing in real time out of our database. There's some value there. Another thing too is it prevents for, for us, especially in the metro Denver context, one resettlement agency presenting and then another resettlement agency presenting and people having to do math or kind of add this all up in their brains at once. One piece of feedback we had recently gotten long ago, this feels like an eternity go. We used to do handouts. We used to hand out paper. We're printing so rarely these days, but people have said, I want to walk away with something. And so this was a recent recommendation is that they like the real time part.

But they also want to kind of leave and say: Hey, colleagues, bosses, funders, here's what we know. So we may need to shift that practice a little bit as well just to accommodate the fact that it's a lot of information and sometimes people need to, different people will learn differently. And finding ways to equip them is a good idea. Which brings me to the last point for now. It's just this idea of consistently improving our processes. So when Rob invited me to the webinar, I said, are you sure Colorado's ready to share our best practices or our promising practices? And he said, yes, you are. But I think the acknowledgement as well that we're, we're still trying to learn and grow. I think we at times can feel the requirement to meet all of those obligations and share X, Y, and Z at the same time as if we're committing energy to a particular meeting.

We want to have value out of it. We want our partners to get value out of it. So in, in two of our recent quarterly consultations, my ECDC colleague here in Denver, and then my Lutheran colleague up in northern Colorado, we had taken some time at recent meetings to break out into small groups and say to folks, what do you guys want? Why do you, why do you even come at all? What's valuable for you? What would make this more valuable? So right now we're actually sitting on a fair amount of feedback from folks. So we've got the chance to kind of keep tweaking what we're doing, staying within the guidelines, meeting all of those expectations, but being able to play with the format a little bit. So I think that's where I'll pause in terms of initial presentation and I'll be back more for Q&A but I'm going to hand it over to my colleague Sean over in California. Thank you, Sean.

Consultations in San Francisco—Merging and Re-Separating BACQQ and EBRIF

Sean Kirkpatrick: Thank you very much, Meg. I'm Sean Kirkpatrick. I'm the Coordinator for the East Bay Refugee and Immigrant Forum. We pretty much cover Contra Costa and Alameda County in the East Bay area of San Francisco. Just to note a bit about myself, I don't sit in the state and I don't sit at an RA. So we have a model that is based on the history of our, our forum, which I'll go over right now. So EBRIF was founded in 1978 as the East Bay Refugee Forum. We were supporting Southeast Asian refugees displaced by the Vietnam War. In 2018 we made a collective decision to change the name to include immigrant explicitly in the name, because we were realizing that there were a lot of partners that had very valuable services and programs and resources and perspectives that didn't see EBRIF as a table that they should be at.

So we've worked very hard in, in the past five, five to 10 years to actually talk a little bit more about how we want to include conversations about a broader array of refugees and immigrants, no matter what their status is. Currently we have 35 members plus public systems participants from both counties. We have community leaders and advocates. So now let's shift over to talking about the, what we call the Bay Area Quarterly community consultations. We have four refugee resettlement agencies in our region currently. We have two IRC offices, one in Oakland and one in San Jose. We have two highest affiliates, Jewish Family and Community Services East Bay. They're in Concord. And Jewish Family Services of Silicon Valley. They're in Los Gatos. And recently we have added church World Service, which has opened to new office in Walnut Creek.

Historically EBRIF was not involved in coordinating the quarterly community consultations in our area. Although our coordinator attended the meetings, we had our own separate meetings every other month for as long as I can remember, which goes back to 2009 or so with the lowered arrivals cap. During the Trump administration, EBRIF was approached to provide additional support for the RAs in coordinating and documenting these quarterly consultation meetings. Their capacity to actually hold the administrative side of these things, especially was at a very low point in 2017/18. So we agreed that we would consolidate and then Covid happened. We decided that actually there was another reason to consolidate the meetings because the pandemic was making a very hard to, obviously we couldn't be meeting in person. And also we were wanting to make things as easy as possible since service providing organizations were making the shift to doing more things remotely than before.

Okay, let's move to the next slide. So, some of the things that have worked we've had great collaboration between our RA participating organizations. We were able to coordinate with them as a co-lead. The state mostly has participated in our EBRIF meetings and our QCC meetings. So the leadership has been shifting towards the RAs plus plus East Bay Refugee and Immigrant Forum leadership, holding those meetings in a collaborative fashion. We have dedicated support for meeting documentation pre, in-meeting post-meeting, provided by myself as a coordinator, VBRIF. And we have volunteers from our steering committee who help with note taking, answering things in chat, and helping, helping with facilitation is needed. We also get very detailed notes. I request pre-meeting that any presenter do their best to provide to share their presentations before the meeting so that we can include it in our notes and focus on things like listening for questions and answers and nuance. That is not in the planned presentations. What did not work. We've had a very there's not enough time for additional kinds of conversations that we were having before in, in our EBRIF meetings which tended to be more local, more regional within the counties that are...

Most of our members are from. Meetings tended to be saturated with data from our resettlement partners from the state, sometimes from federal entities like USCIS, et cetera. And we also focused on ORR populations meant that a lot of our partners that might have been coming to our EBRIF meetings dropped off because we weren't able to discuss, or we were not discussing as much issues related to other immigrant communities. We also were not able to do as much community and cultural building conversations that we were having in our EBRIF meetings before, so we were kind of pushed around by the quarterly consultation format, so we had less room for our staff, our local staff. EBRIF was contributing documentation also for free, and there was not a lot of benefit or agenda space for the things that we wanted to discuss. Next slide, please.

So what I'd like to wrap up with is that, we've actually split our meetings again, because of the issues related to our ability to hold EBRIF topics and conversations and culture and place. Outside of the quarterly consultations, we have much more capacity for doing that kind of thing. We stagger our meetings now so that they are actually in a sequence of quarterly community consultation, then the next month, our EBRIF meeting and then the next month, our EBRIF steering committee meeting. We also have the RAs actually are on our steering committee, so we've been able to have a lot of open conversations and a lot of supportive conversations about how to distinguish the meetings, but also support the two different contexts. Let's see. Everything has been virtual still since COVID. We actually have very, very large participation. 50 to 70 is not unusual for these quarterly meetings. Another thing that we've done is that we've actually come up with a solution that supports the RAs, but also doesn't put a burden on EBRIF. So I have a separate contract that is a pooling of about 4,000 a year from our resettlement partners. We rotate, so they only pay for one of four meetings per year. It ends up being around $4,000. So I think I can leave it there.

BD: I just want to jump in real quick and say thank you so much to Meg and Sean, it's like, it's not the first time I've seen these slides in preparation or that we've discussed this, but I was struck again by Meg about the flexibility in how you adjust to meetings. Just the meetings themselves. They're different in different locations and it works for people. And the templates that you've created to make it easier for participants to do the business, do the basic business of setting up meetings, ease in communication. And that you're talking about all the ORR populations, your data sharing, Salesforce of course, I know is incredible. And you're so lucky, I think in the way the Colorado program is set up because it's unique, and that you do have access to information that can be shared so freely.

And Sean, I think what I really appreciated about your presentation was how a non-ORR, a non-RA organization can play such a key role in bringing people together. And the experience that you shared, deep experience you shared about the nitty-gritty stuff like time and cost, and the effort in organizing agendas and making sure people are heard, communities are heard and needs are met. So just two really awesome and different perspectives. Now, we're going to have a Q&A panel. Lillie's coming back on to lead us. Take it away.

Q&A Panel

LH: Yes. Thanks Barbara, and thanks to both of our excellent panelists from the field. This has been a great panel so far, and I want to give the audience an opportunity to ask questions. Some questions we can address just speaking, and then there are some questions that we're happy to just type in as we can in the chat. But I already see one big question that I'd really love for both Sean and Meg to speak to, which is this idea that the required or mandatory participants thing, folks like the department chief, selected officials, they're typically sending lower level administrative staff on their behalf and not really showing any interest in consulting. We're acknowledging this opportunity for communication with resettlement folks. And so I'm wondering if we can start with Meg.

Do you have any suggestions for reaching these mandatory participants that are harder to reach or harder to engage?

MS: We're talking about shared pains here, so we have this sometimes as well, and we send a lot of last-minute emails to say, Hey, is public safety represented? So we have your challenges as well. I think a couple of thoughts is, just everyone thinks their own meeting is the most important, right? We want people at our meeting, right? And so I think figuring out what are folks kind of priorities and desires, and how can you find some alignment in terms of inviting them? So a couple of thoughts I have is, you have to have relationships beforehand that if you're saying, I need you in my meeting, that you're a little bit late in terms of that relationship. So finding ways of having, whether it's information sharing or ways you can support them, equip them and make them look good, right?

So I think the relationship beforehand is useful. I think another thing we found to be useful is the invitation to speak on a particular topic. So, just as an example, I know the staff of members of Congress can sometimes help with immigration related issues. So some of the nudging and relationship with USCIS, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. So they like to kind of tout the ways they help the community, and so giving them a chance to make a quick announcement or maybe a presentation, we had a lot of non-ORR eligible migrant arrivals in Denver. And so we invited our municipal partner, city of Denver to update people, because people aren't making. Sean, you referenced this too, is that these are different immigration statuses, yet some similar challenges. And so inviting in that same conversation, even if it's kind of maybe straying outside of the lines of the core purpose of the QC.

And I think the last piece is the data. I think people come for data. I think elected officials in particular do not want to feel a sense of surprise about who's here, and so if you can find ways to make them feel like I know what's going on, that can be a valuable thing. In terms of this piece around maybe more administrative staff or more junior staff, those folks do so much. Sometimes it's nice you do want the higher official, but I think in a lot of ways, in terms of who's really doing some of that work, they actually do have mechanisms for filtering that info backup to folks. So I think you take what you can get and certainly it's nice to have those relationships.

LH: Yeah, no, that's helpful and totally, I can understand why these relationships and the access to data can feel really empowering for participants. So making sure that that's polished is really important. And I'd love to hear from you, Sean, especially given this kind of unique cadence you have where you have a federally compliant meeting and you alternate between meetings that don't necessarily have to be so compliant, but representation is equally as important in those meetings. And so I'm curious if you could speak to issues with that sort of compliant component. But also—

If there are folks that you really want to engage that are not coming to meetings, just generally what are some strategies that you've implemented to bring them to the table?

SK: So I think a lot of our challenges are very similar for the quarterly consultations. We have particular issues with getting public safety and local government. It's become a bigger problem because now we're doing the whole Bay Area. So we have I think six counties represented now at our meetings, six county systems. We hear reports from social services and from their health folks usually, sometimes behavioral health, these meetings become puzzles for figuring out how do you incentivize getting people... A public service officer from Oakland, why are they going to be interested in a meeting that's talking about Santa Clara County, for example? It's a real cognitive puzzle, I think, for a lot of people to figure out why they would want to be in this meeting.

The other thing that we do is we do really leverage our connections and our relationships. It's not always easy, because there is turnover for some of these positions. New governments, new police administrations, for example, that make it very difficult for us to keep up. I'm not on the ground as much in my role, so I often rely on our organizational CBO partners to be the connecting folks, but they're also stretched because their primary issue is not that outreach, their primary stuff is to do the services and supports. So I think... I'm wondering if it's a reasonable expectation to have all those sectors represented sometimes because it's a lot of work. And even when you think somebody is coming, often, they don't come to the meeting.

LH: Great.

SK: I don't know. That's not very helpful. But.

LH: No, but it's real. And we are here to sort of troubleshoot these things together and name the issues. I think this idea of the CBOs connect—community-based organizations being this connective tissue is crucial. And understood that sometimes these outreach things ebb and flow with turnover and as relationships ebb and flow as well. So I hear you on that, and I think it's a work in progress now, but I think a lot of these strategies that have been shared have been really helpful. I know that we have a couple of questions coming in. Some have to do with the engagement piece, not necessarily bringing people to the meeting, but engaging people during the meeting.

And I want to talk a little bit about that because oftentimes, we hear that consultation can sometimes, while data is a really important element to this, to help people feel equipped and informed and empowered, it can also sometimes on the other side of the coin, feel like this info delivery session instead of this consultative experience where you are having engaged conversations and given the time constraints, I can see how that happens too. So I'm curious if Meg—

Could you speak a little bit to how you've navigated this balance, a delicate one for sure, between the delivery of valuable data and information, and receiving feedback and engagement and concerns from folks that are participating in the meeting in a meaningful way?

MS: Yeah, I think we struggle with that balance. Also, I think in a recent quarterly consultation, we said, let's do the national data presentation and the state presentation, let's do it fast. So I'm not sure exactly how that went for people, but there was an intent to kind of carve out some of that time. And we have toggled between that times for... In the remote environment, just an hour long meeting with in-person, I think way back in the day, we may have been at two hours, we're at 90 minutes at this point in time. So I think extending the meeting is also one option. We've heard a fair amount of requests just for that in-person kind of dialogue. And so even just saying we know that the agenda's going to start 15 minutes late, so if you get there on time, you're going to chat with the people at your table. So that's a actually an intentional strategy.

In terms of some of that kind of engagement piece, I'm also finding that our attendees look different than they did a couple of years ago. There's the natural turnover that happens at resettlement agencies, at nonprofits, in any sort of workplace environment. And so we're just finding that stakeholders are new. And I love the suggestion too to that have those kind of 101 informational type meetings too, is that some people need a bit more of a baseline. And I had done a very brief, not comprehensive, but kind of a refugee 101, summer education with partners in the Colorado Springs area, and it's a very new network. It was a very small local resettlement agency a couple of years ago, and they have grown tremendously, especially on Cuban arrivals. And so just building that kind of baseline of knowledge, I think we're still open to some of the different ideas around what this piece could look like and I think there's the idea that we could topically tackle some more issues and carve out some time for that. I think that's a particular one where it go, it moves away from announcements and kind of more into the brainstorming and the collaborative work. But I'm open to everyone's ideas, so just don't consider me the expert here. I want to know what everyone else is doing too. So.

LH: Yeah, definitely. And if there are participants who feel like you're doing that really well, feel free to share, because yeah, it is a delicate balance and it is an iterative process of striking that balance, I think. But Sean, I find that you're, again, this very unique position where you do have a bit of a wider net of folks that are participating in your community dialogue meetings, and you have folks that are maybe looking for information or opportunities to discuss things that may not, they may not make the cut or they're not talked about for constrained agendas, or it's just not what you're doing that day. And I'm curious how you strike a balance between getting people information and giving them opportunities to connect and talk about these sorts of topics.

SK: So I was thinking about this that there are some hidden benefits to having a separate coalition meeting that happens alternatively with the quarterly community consultations. Those meetings are largely organized around work groups. So we have this opportunity to cover a lot of territory. The RAs are also part of our work groups and are part of our leadership. So in addition to having this federal requirement meeting, we also do a lot of collaboration and conversation and problem solving and identification locally through these work groups. We cover housing, immigration and legal services, lots of... We have probably close to a dozen work groups that are actively doing things and we do our best to build in time in our forum meetings for those conversations, which is kind of a nice glue for keeping that level of work together.

I think we leverage the challenges and successes sections of the QCC agendas to let people share a bit more about what they're seeing on the ground. That's kind of apart from the data report at the beginning of our meetings, which takes up probably at least half an hour, maybe 45 minutes sometimes, depending on who's reporting. I think we also we... At the forum level, we've got kind of an exceptionally large steering committee I think, probably too big in some ways, but what it does is it allows for more sharing of leadership generally. We feel like we're all leading this thing and I think that the QCCs benefit from that because it's a lot of the same people are coming to the meetings. To both sets of meetings, even though we're more focused on the East Bay for the EBRIF meetings. During the QCCs, I think we have a better relationship now with our other county partners than we have before we put the meetings together, which is nice.

LH: Yeah, I love that idea of working groups. And just to clarify, so the working groups, if you have the time they can report out on what they've been working on, so you have sort of the top line items that all the working groups are deeply engaged in to bring everybody kind of into the fore on these things.

SK: And I also just to add one last thing about like, we've worked very hard to include lived experience leadership in our steering committee, which gives us kind of by proxy, some more community perspective that we don't have when it's just organizational leadership. So that's helpful.

LH: Yeah, that's a great segue too, because I do have a question that revolves around this idea of engaging lived experience, because it's come up a few times, certainly behind the scenes in conversations around consultation, but would love to highlight it here. So I appreciate you bringing it up, Sean. And it sounds like your steering committee has a representation, which is excellent in this sort of horizontal leadership structure, it sounds like. And I'm curious, Meg, if you wanted to weigh in on this at all—

To what extent has lived experience or client experience reflected in consultation?

MS: Yeah, I think with the sort of packed agenda at this point, we've not like explicitly prioritized it. Something I always like to give a shout out to whenever I get the microphone and I'm talking about Colorado is, well we have an awesome group that's called the Colorado Refugee Speakers Bureau.

LH: Awesome.

MS: So this is a bureau, professional speaking bureau of folks with lived experience as refugees. And folks can be, they can be going to school environments, they can be speaking to people who work in the state labor and employment agency. They can speak with legislators and things like that. We haven't typically integrated them. There's some natural overflow between those groups. A staff member at IRC who happens to participate in the consultation, who happens to also be in the bureau, kind of multiple identities, but we haven't been explicit because we try to kind of encourage people to engage with that particular group in their own venues. Invite that person into your agency for training or for a particular conversation, or come to our event on refugee day or things like that.

And I think that maybe the other place where we have some of the engagement is just with the ECBO community leadership, is that we have a number of organizations, I think all states really do, that are led by people who came as refugees or have a refugee background. And so that's kind of one place, but again, if you go back to the information heavy versus community engagement, sometimes they are a bit more in that participatory sort of space around, Okay, I'm getting the information about funding and getting the information about data, things like that.

LH: Definitely, and I would echo that just in my own work and looking into this, that ECBOs can play a really instrumental role in the reflection of client voice, definitely, but totally acknowledge the attention point sometimes between balancing all of the content and having a really participatory conversation that is reflective of the lived experiences. I know that we've gotten a couple of questions about the technicalities, some of the logistics of how consultations work, things like how do we provide snacks or folks are providing snacks, and I see Sean that you answered to that a little bit in the chat about…oh wait, this is a chat that only I can see.

Sean, do you want to talk a little bit about [the logistics of how consultations work]?

SK: Sure, so as a coalition, we do our own fundraising separately, it's largely membership dues, but also we raise money for our annual World Refugee and Immigrant Day event, which is in June. We have a partner in 1951 Coffee Company, they train newcomers and coffee careers. When we were meeting live, they would bring coffee, tea and cookies, and it is very convivial to have food in the meetings. We would annually also try to host a meeting where we ended with lunch, so we would meet from 10 to 12 or so, and we would buy food and so that people can hang out and talk. I know that our partner forum in Santa Clara County, they built networking and food sharing into their monthly meetings, so it does work.

LH: Yeah, I love that then, as someone said in the Q&A, everyone loves snacks and everyone does this, and I'm glad that that has been such a great opportunity for you to work with this coalition or work with this partner. I think that's great. I know that we are coming up to the around the last 15 minutes, and I want to make sure that Barbara has time to conclude, but before I turn it back over to her, I want to give space for any questions in the chat that we have not answered. I know that there are still a couple of lingering questions about the modality of consultation, is it hybrid, what days are they usually held, and how freshmen sort of provided. And I know that it's very context-specific and definitely determined by what works in that community and in that sort of in the spirit of co-leadership and collaboration.

I've definitely observed in all of the folks that I've talked to who convene consultation that it's very different, some folks find that virtual is really the only modality that works for them. There are folks who really value the in-person component of these things, and sometimes they provide refreshment, sometimes they go for a lunch, and sometimes the model changes throughout the year where you have one really intense meeting that's in person, very long, lots of food.

Sometimes it's a shorter meeting, it's very dependent on what we have going on, and also I've found that quarterly consultation meetings can be sensitive, obviously to what's going on in the world, so during operational is welcome, for example, obviously community consultations looks different because bandwidth and capacity was strained and there were also much different concerns for folks who typically participate in consultations. So the substance also changes, and so that's just to say that consultation, while it's great to have these standards of practice and these promising practices, it really is very locally specific and a part of the collaborative process to find what works best, both logistically and substantively. But seeing no more questions in the chat, I know we've gone through a lot of material. So Barbara, are you ready to take us out and go through a couple of last minute housekeeping and final announcements for us?

BD: Absolutely, I just was wondering how long it takes to set up a Slido poll because it would be really fun to hear how people do have snacks. That's like when you're trying to figure out where to go for lunch. That's always the most vexing staff problem, you know, like where can we go for lunch, but I think how to fun snacks right up there with number two maybe. So remember, everyone that and feel free to put in the chat, I think having a refugee agencies or restaurants, there's all kinds of ways that you could be creative about getting snacks on the table.

Conclusion

Recommended Resources

BD: Alright, so we do have some recommended resources here, we have of an archived webinar, strengthening refugee integration through community resource mapping that might be of interest to some of you, a template in advancing goals in community engagement, editable outreach templates. I know there was a question about whether or not Meg would be willing to share her templates. Is that possible Meg?

MS: I was just saying, I wanted to respect switchboard as the lead here so that I'm happy to share anything, and once you share it, it's welcome to go all across the country, as long as it works for people. I always, you can have my templates, but please make them your own, so I was about to... I believe I can drop in the chat, just those handful of questions we asked people recently to say, what could get better here? I'll see what it looks like when I pop it in the chat.

BD: Okay. Or we could forward that for you as well so. And then there's a blog, a resource list on community engagement and a toolkit, building and sustaining community collaborations for refugee welcome from Welcoming America. Reminder that we will also be making this webinar available to you all and the various... There we go, Meg already pop something in for us that we'll be able to share with you all. Okay. So let's see what's next? Slide, please. There we go.

Feedback Survey

You can scan this QR code or click the link in the Q&A section, I think is not necessarily in the chat, we have a short... Is it in the chat now? We have a short... Yes, it is a short survey, takes less than 60 seconds. We are literally going to pause for 60 seconds so that you all can complete this short, five-question survey, it helps us improve our training and our technical assistance to you, so again, scan the QR code or go to the chat, which now does have the link in there for you.

Stay Connected

BD: If you're wondering, there are still 20 seconds left in our 60-second pause, sometimes a minute it seems like a long time. Feel free to continue, there we go. There's the timer. Alright, please stay connected with us, we'd love to hear from you. There are several, as you can see, there are ways that you can stay connected, I'm assuming you're on our mailing list because you registered for this webinar, but if you're not, or you know others who would like to be part of this community, please do, we have all kinds of wonderful resources and conversations ongoing on a regular basis. Thank you all so much. I want to thank Meg, Sean, Lillie, it's been great, really fun and preparing and going over all of these fabulous ways that we can all do our jobs better, right? Thank you so much.

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