

IMPACT REPORT

2025



For
**PARTNERS &
SUPPORTERS**



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Dear Partners and Supporters,

The year just ending has been extraordinarily difficult for those seeking a safe haven in the United States, as it has been for those – many of them former refugees themselves – who serve refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

The world is experiencing the largest displacement crisis in history – with more than 123 million people forcibly displaced at the end of 2024. But in January 2025, in spite of continuing global need, the new presidential administration moved quickly to suspend refugee admissions to the United States and made it nearly impossible for those facing persecution to seek asylum in this country. In the months since, refugee protections have been further diminished, as part of a broad program of harsh and discriminatory anti-immigrant measures.

The administration has abandoned America's longstanding humanitarian values, legal obligations, and global leadership in refugee protection.

Refugee Council USA (RCUSA) is a powerful advocacy coalition that unites more than 40 national nonprofits. We have met the moment with an Action Plan that has two straightforward goals: *defend* protections for refugees and other forcibly displaced people, and *reimagine* those protections for the future.

Even as the refugee program was being dismantled, we quickly stood up a program to capture the institutional knowledge of frontline refugee resettlement practitioners. We began mobilizing grassroots advocates with a new action alert capability. Our members collectively brought over 100 formerly displaced persons to Washington for our annual Advocacy Days event. RCUSA is partnering with our member organizations on refugee leadership training programs and supporting our members through enhanced rapid-response capabilities. We are joining allies in speaking out against harmful policies that slam the door shut to those in need of refuge – and threaten to overturn the lives of those already granted protection in this country by delivering them back into the hands of their persecutors.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**JOHN
SLOCUM**

Executive Director, RCUSA

Refugee Council USA recently launched a new, multi-stakeholder Task Force on the Future of Refugee Resettlement. And we continue to lead international delegations to global refugee policy gatherings to show the world what recent polling confirms – that the people of the United States still want to welcome refugees.

This year marked RCUSA's 25th anniversary. Our coalition's history is one of resilience, adaptation, and unwavering commitment to serving millions of displaced people. We honor all who have poured their energy into RCUSA over the years. We are grateful for our supporters and for all who do the work of welcoming newcomers. The work of Refugee Council USA has never been more important. We know that, through your generosity and acts of solidarity, together we will bend the arc of history toward justice and humanity.

John Slocum
Executive Director, Refugee Council USA



ABOUT RCUSA

OUR MISSION AND VISION

Refugee Council USA (RCUSA) mobilizes expertise, ideas, and influence to protect the rights of forcibly displaced people and build more welcoming societies. RCUSA envisions a just world in which people forced to flee their homes have agency, access to safety, and opportunity to thrive.

OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

- Defend, improve, and expand resettlement, asylum, humanitarian protection, and inclusion for forcibly displaced populations.
- Strengthen the collective power and effectiveness of RCUSA members and diverse partners in delivering responsive, equity-focused policies and programs and driving systemic change.
- Enhance the role of forcibly displaced people as leaders, experts, and advocates to influence policies, programs, and perceptions.

ADVOCACY & POLICY IMPACT

RCUSA's advocacy and policy work in 2025 focused on rebuilding the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) and defending humanitarian protections in the face of a barrage of harmful policies and hateful rhetoric leveled against refugees and asylees by the current presidential administration.



Our coalition has spoken out against punitive and discriminatory policies such as the near-total suspension of the refugee admissions program, the halting of all asylum decisions, the withholding of visas to Afghan allies who served the U.S. mission in Afghanistan, a partial or total ban on travel to the US for nationals of 39 countries, and the call to re-interrogate the cases of 233,000 refugees who arrived in the US during the Biden administration. We've joined with other coalitions to fight U.S. efforts to pressure other countries to reduce global refugee and asylum protections, return individuals to the places from which they fled persecution, and treat permanent protections as temporary.

Over the last year, RCUSA has played a critical role in unifying messaging, policy priorities, and policymaker engagement across our member organizations – and mobilizing local communities and stakeholders to make their voices heard.

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

Mobilizing Refugee Advocates to Defend Protections

RCUSA serves as a central source of information sharing and strategic planning for refugee advocates and the hundreds of staff who work across our member organizations – including many individuals with lived experience of forced displacement. As the coordinating body for the refugee-serving community in the United States, and a key convener at the global level, RCUSA's efforts this year have included massive mobilization to push back against the indefinite (and ongoing) suspension of USRAP and the Administration's withholding or misusing funds appropriated by Congress for humanitarian assistance and resettlement. We have amplified the Administration's failure to comply with U.S. law in promulgating a record-low refugee admissions ceiling (the Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions for fiscal year 2026). And this year, RCUSA filed our first-ever amicus brief, in support of the plaintiffs in the *Pacito v. Trump* lawsuit challenging the suspension of refugee admissions.

Safeguarding Basic Needs of Refugees and Asylees

RCUSA's mission extends to ensuring access to those basic services and benefits for which refugees and other forcibly displaced people in the United States are eligible. After Congress passed H.R. 1, the 2025 reconciliation tax and budget bill, also known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA), RCUSA published a legal analysis of the impact of H.R.1 on the eligibility of newcomers for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility.

ADVOCACY & POLICY IMPACT

MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS (continued)

RCUSA resources are helping states mitigate the harmful impact of SNAP eligibility modifications. Our analysis informed a state-by-state review of OBBBA implementation across the country and contributed to preserving access to SNAP for refugees and asylees who are Green Card holders. RCUSA was also a partner on a FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) request to compel the government to be more transparent about how Medicare access has changed as a result of H.R. 1.

Activating Congressional Oversight and Protecting Federal Funding

RCUSA ramped up policy advocacy and engagement with several congressional offices this year to push for congressional intervention on anti-refugee, anti-newcomer policies. RCUSA's work has been particularly important in helping negotiate safeguards as part of the FY 2026 appropriations process and protect against funding cuts to humanitarian accounts. As RCUSA has advocated for as much restoration of public benefits for refugees and newcomers as possible, our coalition has continued to equip congressional staff with programmatic and policy updates to push back against disinformation and stonewalling at hearings, briefings, and consultations.

Launching a Task Force on the Future of Refugee Resettlement

2025 marked the launch of RCUSA's multi-stakeholder Task Force on the Future of Refugee Resettlement, a bold new initiative to redesign the architecture of U.S. refugee resettlement, humanitarian protection, and our nation's capacity to welcome newcomers. Members of the Task Force include state and local leaders, former federal officials, and experts with lived experience in forced displacement. The Task Force is the centerpiece of RCUSA's new "reimagining" work, and aims to design the next refugee system—one that is more flexible, scalable, resilient, and better suited for 21st-century circumstances than our systems of the past.



INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT



Elevating the Voices of U.S. Refugee Advocates at the Global Level

RCUSA strengthened its international presence in 2025 through leadership at several multilateral convenings organized by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency. RCUSA used these international platforms to elevate the message that U.S. civil society and the American people remain dedicated to providing safety, welcome, and opportunity to those fleeing persecution and violence.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENINGS:

- **Working Group on Resettlement** (Madrid, February 2025)
- **Consultations on Resettlement and Complementary Pathways** (Geneva, June 2025)
- **Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme** (Geneva, October 2025)
- **Global Refugee Forum Progress Review** (Geneva, December 2025)

Launching the International Refugee Integration and Settlement Exchange (IRISE)

RCUSA partnered with the Refugee Council of Australia, the New Zealand Red Cross, and the Canadian Council on Refugees to launch IRISE, a civil society initiative that fosters collaboration across international borders to support refugee resettlement and integration. Throughout 2025, IRISE connected refugee service providers across the globe to exchange ideas, inspiration and information with a shared vision of creating communities where refugees are welcomed, valued, included, supported and thrive. The initiative hosted three virtual exchanges in 2025 on topics such as finding hope in challenging times, service provider mental health, and the role of sport in refugee integration.



INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE INTEGRATION AND SETTLEMENT EXCHANGE (IRISE)

Participants	Live Virtual Exchanges
899	3

“*[IRISE created] the opportunity to connect with and learn from colleagues from other parts of the world who are "like us" in that they are dealing with similar issues. Also, the opportunity to express our support for colleagues who are experiencing very difficult times.*”

ENHANCING THE LEADERSHIP OF EXPERTS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF FORCED DISPLACEMENT



RCUSA hosted its Annual **Refugee, Asylum, and Humanitarian Protection Advocacy Days** in June 2025. This year's Advocacy Days demonstrated the courage and resilience of former refugees in the face of a challenging policy environment. The event brought to Washington, D.C., more than 400 participants from across the country – many of them with expertise gained through surviving forced displacement – for three days of advocacy, leadership development, and coalition-building. Advocacy Days kicked off with the Refugee Leadership Forum, a day-long event in which FDP leaders engaged in shared learning and networking to drive transformative change in their communities and across the country. Participants engaged in two days of visits with more than 230 congressional offices.

The convening was grounded in the principle that those with lived experience of displacement must be at the center of advocacy for refugee, asylum, and humanitarian protections. It provided meaningful opportunities for refugee leaders to collaborate with advocates, deepen cross-movement solidarity, and strategize for sustained advocacy at the local level.

ADVOCACY DAYS 2025

June 2-4, 2025

Participants

400

Legislative
Visits

230

The **National Young Adult Leadership Council (NYALC)** is an annual National Refugee Leadership and Lived Experiences Council (NRLLEC) that offers robust leadership development to refugees, asylees with granted asylum status, and all other ORR-eligible populations who are between the ages of 18 and 24 and have lived in the United States for less than 5 years. This year, through NYALC, 15 Council Members participated in intensive virtual trainings, tailored mentorship, and an in-person gathering in Washington, DC. Council Members were guided through developing and implementing a community project to apply their leadership skills and positively impact their local community.

The 2026 Council Term will run from November 2025 to September 2026. All Council graduates will have the opportunity to continue their development through the NRLLEC Alumni Network.



Participants

15

Countries
Represented

7

FIRST COHORT OF NYALC

January 2025

“

This experience has been a big step for me in becoming more involved and confident. It showed me that even in difficult times, we can still come together to make a difference.

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COALITION STRENGTH AND COLLABORATION

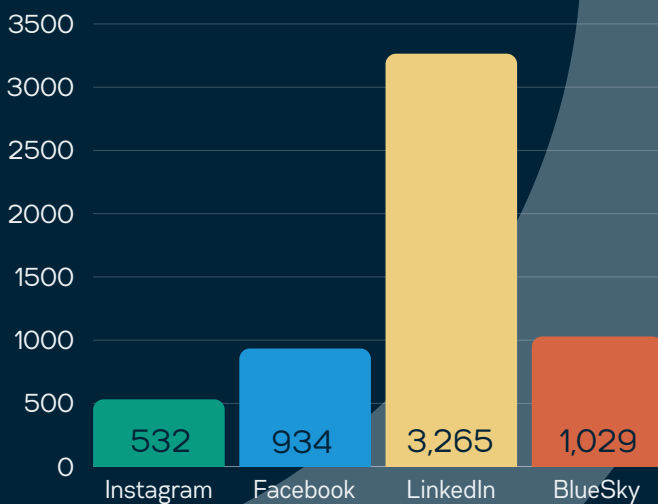
IN 2025, RCUSA ALSO:

- Launched the **Institutional Knowledge Project** to advance our “reimagining” work through focus groups with resettlement practitioners, to capture achievements and lessons from the Biden years, and recommendations for future policies.
- Created a **resettlement “alumni” newsletter** to support staff affected by sector layoffs and keep resettlement professionals connected and engaged.
- Launched the **#WeWillWelcome campaign** to amplify refugee voices and encourage a more compassionate and informed conversation around refugee resettlement.
- Collaborated with the Refugee Advocacy Lab and other partners to amplify **The Refugee Storytellers Collective**, a powerful platform to share the stories of refugees and asylum seekers and the challenges they face, and uplift the important contributions refugees make to our society.
- Formalized our grassroots advocacy network through the launch of RCUSA’s new **Action Center**, which enables our coalition to dramatically expand our voice and reach through educating and mobilizing local communities and constituents around shared goals. In 2025, we added over 3,100 individuals to our database and look forward to continued engagement and expansion in 2026.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS

RCUSA's audience growth on various platforms throughout 2025



Audience Across Platforms:

Audience Total:	22,173	30.3%▲
Instagram:	3,135	53.8%▲
Facebook:	13,246	108.5%▲
LinkedIn:	5,702	133.4%▲
BlueSky:	1,031	100%▲

2025 Action Alerts:

Total Number of
Campaigns

18

Total Number of Actions

17,310

Total Amount of Contacts

3,072

Key Milestones



17,310+ letters were sent to elected leaders across the nation to defend refugees and the USRAP



RCUSA expanded to **40+ members** across the nation



Started the **Resettlement Sector Alumni Listserv** for people who were laid off/furloughed from the sector to stay informed with monthly updates on what is in the news, action alerts, and more. (330+ subscribers)

LOOKING AHEAD

Defending policies and programs that protect refugees:

While federal government rhetoric and actions are highly visible and set national policy parameters, the front lines of welcoming refugees and other forcibly displaced people are at the state and local levels. RCUSA's flagship policy and advocacy work on Capitol Hill will be complemented by actions at the state and local levels. RCUSA is mobilizing grassroots supporters around the country through a new action alert capability – and doubling down on building our base and our collective power. RCUSA is poised to work with and through its members to deepen the advocacy engagement of the thousands of local community groups and individuals that sponsor refugees.

OUR COMMITMENTS

- We stand with refugees and all newcomers to the United States, and for ensuring the populations we serve are at leadership positions at the table to help guide these conversations.
- We are here for the diverse organizations, professionals, and volunteers who support refugees and newcomers in the U.S. and who provide essential services overseas.
- We will fight with a bold and decisive voice on behalf of our members, the communities they serve, and the communities that welcome newcomers in the face of disinformation and vitriol coming from this administration.
- We will cultivate new allies to demonstrate strength in numbers across geographies and political ideologies and ensure our voice is heard at the local, state, and national levels.
- We will seize opportunities to move hearts and minds and help our members amplify their voices effectively in their full power and authenticity.
- We will come with solutions. As we press forward in fighting for a better future, we will not settle for a system that is fragile or inequitable.

Reimagining the future of refugee protection:

RCUSA will marshal the full range of our coalition's assets and bring together key stakeholders to help develop policy and programmatic recommendations for a newly reimagined system of refugee resettlement – one developed in dialogue with other stakeholders, including leaders with lived experience of forced displacement. RCUSA's comparative advantage is our dedication to centering the knowledge and experience of those who do the frontline work of resettling newcomers. We will utilize our convening power to draw on the expertise of national and local resettlement professionals, state refugee coordinators, local officials, and refugee sponsor groups. And crucially, our efforts will ensure that refugees themselves play a role in future systems design.



CALL TO ACTION



**JOIN US AND DONATE
TODAY!**

rcusa.org/donate

RCUSA was founded 25 years ago to ensure excellence in U.S. refugee resettlement and integration efforts, and a powerful, unified advocacy voice. Our membership has grown by 60% in the past five years. Through many crises, we have not only persevered but also grown stronger as a coalition. Despite the challenges we face today, RCUSA is committed to doing all we can to help bring about the better future that we know is possible.

Together, we can build more just, welcoming communities where all people, regardless of where they come from, have the safety, agency, and opportunity to thrive. RCUSA unites a coalition rooted in equity, community, and belonging, and is committed to uplifting the voices of those with lived experience of displacement.

Become an advocate with RCUSA by supporting our coalition. Donations to RCUSA makes our work possible, including offering leadership and training opportunities for community members who have faced forced displacement.

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RCUSA extends gratitude to its member organizations, refugee leaders, donors, and volunteers whose unwavering commitment makes this work possible.

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#WEWILLWELCOME

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