United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

MAY - 1 2015

Dear Mr. Gowdy:

Thank you for your April 13 letter requesting information about the opening of a refugee resettlement affiliate in Spartanburg, South Carolina. The Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) provides funding and oversight of the refugee resettlement program. The Departments of Homeland Security and Health and Human Services also play important roles in the program. The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program reflects the United States' highest values and aspirations to compassion, generosity, and leadership. Since 1975, the United States has welcomed more than 3 million refugees from all over the world. These individuals bring a variety of skills, including the determination to persevere and rebuild their lives. Our nation has drawn great strength from its tradition of welcoming new Americans. It is what makes America exceptional, keeping our country young, dynamic, and entrepreneurial.

The refugee resettlement programs in communities around the country offer refugees fleeing persecution, violence and conflict the opportunity for peace, freedom, and hope. Since 1992, South Carolina has been a part of our country's effort to assist some of the most vulnerable individuals in the world through the resettlement program in Columbia. The new site in Spartanburg, while small, plays an integral role in ensuring that former refugees find a community which they can call home and which they in turn can enrich through their contributions. Key stakeholders such as the local churches in Spartanburg, which provided the impetus to establish this site, are a wonderful example of the support and spirit of the community.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to your questions about refugee resettlement in Spartanburg and the process undertaken by World Relief, a nonprofit, faith-based resettlement agency, in assessing the suitability of the community (see attachment).

The Honorable
Trey Gowdy,
House of Representatives.

Engagement of community leaders, stakeholders, the Government of South Carolina, and your office was critical in the process that led to our approving this site. Both your office and the office of Senator Graham were invited to participate in consultations last summer and we were pleased that you were able to send Josh Dix to learn about the program and provide feedback. We look forward to continuing discussions with you and other elected officials about this important program in Spartanburg.

Sincerely,

Julia Frifield
Assistant Secretary
Legislative Affairs

Enclosed:
As stated.

1) Please provide a copy of the proposal submitted by the resettlement agency and any subsequent correspondence between your Department and the resettlement agency.

Funding proposals to PRM are proprietary documents. However, World Relief, the national resettlement agency with the new affiliate in Spartanburg, has agreed to send you a copy of the documents included in their proposal that are relevant to their opening an affiliate in that area. We understand World Relief is already in contact with your staff on this issue.

2) When was the resettlement agency's proposal submitted? When was it approved by the USRAP?

On July 1, 2014, World Relief submitted a proposal to PRM as part of its annual federal proposal submission and review process for the refugee resettlement program. This proposal was reviewed and approved for funding in November, 2015.

3) How were the claims made in the proposal as to Spartanburg's readiness to resettle refugees verified for accuracy by USRAP prior to approval?

The initial interest in resettling refugees in Spartanburg emerged in April 2013 when World Relief was approached by the Spartanburg County Baptist Network. The group, along with 25 other individuals and church representatives, expressed their support for a World Relief resettlement program in their city. PRM requires that the national refugee resettlement agency, World Relief in this case, thoroughly assess the local resettlement capacity and environment of any new proposed resettlement sites before determining whether to proceed with resettling refugees in that location. World Relief did conduct a full assessment of the community following its U.S. Site Selection Protocol. The assessment process was described in the proposal.

As part of this process, the State Refugee Coordinator (SRC) was consulted and a letter of support was received from Dorothy Addison, the South Carolina SRC, as part of the proposal submitted by World Relief to resettle 60 refugees in Spartanburg in FY 2015. Ms. Addison, an employee of the SC Department of Social Services, is responsible for implementing the State Plan for refugee resettlement, overseeing grants for refugee services and collaborating with

national, local and community partners to maximize resources for the resettlement and successful integration of refugees into the state. As such, Ms. Addison was a key partner in the consultation process with the national World Relief office as part of the community assessment and affirmed the affordability, services, employment rate, access to public transportation, and emergent immigrant community that make the location conducive to refugee resettlement.

4) What, if any steps were taken to notify and consult with local government officials (elected or otherwise) prior to the approval of the resettlement proposal? If so who was contacted and did they approve the proposal?

As part of the community assessment and engagement process described in the previous question, two community meetings (August 2014 and January 2015) were convened to discuss refugee resettlement in the area. The August meeting, convened by World Relief, was attended by 54 members of the community including Josh Dix from your office, members of local churches, the Immigration Forum, and the Convention and Visitors Bureau for Spartanburg. Mr. Dix did not offer any concerns during the meeting or in follow-up afterward. Additionally, World Relief invited Senator Graham's office and although Laura Turner from his office initially indicated she would participate in the meeting, she ultimately did not attend.

While the World Relief proposal to open an affiliate in Spartanburg was submitted in July, further community consultations and assessment occurred (as described above) before PRM's approval of the site in November. These assessment activities also included onsite meetings with local churches, care providers, and public school representatives, as well as identification of potential housing locations.

5) Which officials/employees of the South Carolina State government reviewed and approved the resettlement agency's proposal? When was such approval given? Were these officials/employees contacted by USRAP to independently ensure approval was given?

Please see the response to question 3 above regarding the involvement of the State Refugee Coordinator.

6. What types of, and how much, funding will the resettlement agency receive from the federal government? How much of that amount must be provided to the refugees and how much can be kept by the resettlement agency?

The Department of State provides a fixed per capita grant of $1,975.00 per refugee admitted under Section 207 of the INA to the affiliate that resettles the refugee. At least $1,125.00 of that grant is to be spent by the affiliate on behalf of individual refugees for cash disbursement or for material goods, as needed, during the initial resettlement period (30-90 days). These direct assistance funds are expended to meet basic needs such as rent, food, clothing, and essential furnishings and household supplies. The remaining $850.00 of the total per capita amount is to be used by the local affiliate for staffing and administrative costs related to the delivery of resettlement services, including case management. Additionally, as a public-private partnership, the local resettlement agencies must make a private contribution in support of refugee resettlement. Such support often comes in the form of volunteer work, furniture donations, and funding.

7) When are the first refugees expected to arrive in Spartanburg?

Of the sixty refugees approved by PRM to be resettled in Spartanburg in FY 2015, none have arrived to date. Due to variations in individual cases and processing times, it is not possible to provide an exact timeframe for when a refugee may arrive. On average, it takes ten months for cases to arrive after they've been approved. Currently, the Spartanburg affiliate has nine refugees in their system who may start arriving in the next three to six months.

8) What federal, state, and local benefits are the refugees entitled to receive a) upon designation as a refugee and b) upon resettlement in the Spartanburg area?

PRM funds resettlement agencies to provide reception and initial integration services during a refugee's first weeks in the U.S. through the Reception and Placement (R&P) Program. The R&P program provides basic living assistance and support for up to the first 30 - 90 days arrival; the services and assistance provided do not vary upon the resettlement location and must comply with the standards and requirements established under the agreement each agency holds with PRM. The primary services and direct assistance provided to all refugees includes housing, cultural orientation, initial health screenings, assistance with access to

employment, English language classes, and enrollment of youth in school. Beyond the R&P Program administered by the U.S. Department of State, refugees are eligible to receive up to eight months of cash and medical assistance through the Department of Health and Human Service's Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). ORR-funded benefits are independent of Department of State benefits, are administered by States, and are available through State benefit-granting agencies. More information about ORR-funded benefits can be found on the ORR website. Refugees are also able to receive mainstream public benefits such as food stamps and medical and cash assistance, provided they meet the established eligibility criteria, which apply to any individual, whether native or foreign-born.

9) How many refugees will be resettled in the Spartanburg area?

The local World Relief affiliate in Spartanburg has been approved by PRM to resettle a maximum of 60 refugees in FY 2015. As described below in the response to question 17, an annual proposal process is conducted by PRM each year to determine the number of refugees approved for each location in the coming fiscal year.

10) How are the refugees chosen to resettle in Spartanburg?

At the beginning of each year PRM approves sites throughout the United States according to their capacity to access language services for specific refugee populations, safe and affordable housing, and access to employment. To aid in these placement decisions, the resettlement agencies regularly assess the capacity of their local affiliates based on a variety of factors such as family composition (large families, single heads of households, elderly), medical needs, and nationalities. As individual refugees are ready to enter the United States PRM leads a consultation process with the national agency partners to determine which location is most suitable for each refugee. Often refugees join family members or friends who assist in their integration and support PRM requires that the local affiliates convene quarterly community consultations to include all stakeholders in the area. Through these consultations and other means, the affiliates are able to continually gauge the capacity of the community for refugee resettlement.

11) What is the country of origin of each of the refugees to be resettled in the Spartanburg area?

The proposed nationalities to be resettled in Spartanburg in FY 2015 are Burmese, Colombians, Congolese, Cubans, Iraqis, Sudanese and Syrians.

12) Who is responsible for ensuring housing, employment, and education services for the resettled refugee?

Please see the responses above to questions 6 and 8.

13) Who is responsible for ensuring resettled refugees maintain employment, as opposed to tracking employment, for the first few months after being resettled?

Initially, employment services will be provided by the World Relief affiliate in Spartanburg. Through partnerships with local churches and the formation of Good Neighbor Teams, comprised of church and other community groups that wish to co-sponsor refugees, the affiliate agency will train these teams to assist with services including employment and life skills training. Additionally, any employable refugee adults who access public benefits will need to meet the established requirements in SC for job search and training activities.

14) How many of the refugees to be resettled in the Spartanburg area are of the age to attend K-12 schools? Of those, how many need the local government to provide interpreters or teachers who speak the native language of the refugee for the students?

Due to the nature of the USRAP, it is not possible to identify in advance the specific refugees and dates of arrival. Therefore, it is unknown how many refugee children will arrive. However, as the maximum number of refugees to arrive in Spartanburg in FY 2015 is 60, it is expected that the overall number of children arriving will also be small. In conducting the community assessment, World Relief spoke with representatives of school districts five and six in Spartanburg. Both stated that there is capacity for more students in their already existing English immersion programs. These programs focus on students learning English through immersion rather than through hiring staff who speak the refugees' and immigrants' languages.

15) Do any of the refugees to be resettled in the Spartanburg area have criminal convictions? If so, for what crimes has each been convicted?

Please see the response to the following question.

16) Please explain the background check process performed on refugees scheduled to be resettled in Spartanburg.

A rigorous security screening of refugee applicants for U.S. admissions is of the highest priority to the Department of State. Every refugee under consideration for U.S. admission undergoes rigorous, multi-layered biometric and biographic screening involving multiple intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies, including the National Counterterrorism Center, the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center, the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense in order to ensure that those admitted are not known to pose a threat to our country. Indeed, applicants to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program are currently subject to more security checks than any other category of traveler to the United States.

17) Will this be the only time refugees will be resettled to the Spartanburg area pursuant to the agency's proposal? Or can additional refugees be resettled pursuant to the proposal?

The proposal submission and approval/funding process takes place on an annual basis. Each year, the national resettlement agencies assess the capacity and environment of their local affiliates and determine the appropriate number to be proposed to PRM for resettlement in each area. In general, locations operate resettlement programs for many years and during this time build strong refugee support systems. PRM requires that the local affiliates convene a community consultation to plan for the submission of this proposal.