

## **USCRI/Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program**

### **Annual Consultations with Stakeholders**

**May 3, 2016**

**St. Michael's College, Tarrant Center, Hall of Fame Conference Room  
Colchester, Vermont**

#### **Attendees:**

1. Amila Merdzanovic, Director of USCRI/VRRP
2. Hal Cohen, Vermont Agency of Human Services
3. Denise Lamoureux, State Refugee Coordinator
4. Suzy Comerford, PhD, UVM
5. Stacie Blake, USCRI Director of Government Relations
6. Lisa Falcone, United Way Northwest VT
7. Yacouba J. Bogre, Executive Director of AALV
8. Sita Luitel, Reach Up Case Manager
9. Kristen Rengo, Coordination of Interpreting and Translating USCRI/VRRP
10. Martha Friedman, VT Department of Health
11. Shannon Furnari, Rep. Welch's Office, Case Manager
12. Kelley Goulette, Senator Bernie Sanders, Constituent Services Coordinator
13. Matt Thompson, Coordinator of Programs USCRI/VRRP
14. Anne Lizak, Mercy Connections
15. Laurie Stavrand, Community Partnership Coordinator USCRI/VRRP
16. Ashraf Alamatouri, English Language Coordinator USCRI/VRRP
17. Sandrine Kibuey (CVOEO)
18. Adnan Sancic, AHS
19. Ashley Oakley, note-taker
20. Josh Demers, VAL
21. Christine Johnson, AHS
22. Leisa Pollander, Sara Holbrook
23. Beth Truzansky, Building Bright Futures
24. Ray Coffey, City of Winooski
25. Christopher Louras, Mayor of City of Rutland
26. Miriam Ehtesham-Cating, BSD
27. Margaret Bozik, CHT
28. Thato Ratsebe, AALV
29. Jane Helmstetter, AHS
30. Erin Carmichael, AHS-DVHA

#### **Welcome - Amila Merdzanovic, Director of USCRI/VRRP**

Overview of the Annual Consultation: This meeting (the Annual Consultation) is the first in a series of six meetings this week. Today's meeting is with heads of agencies and programs and the other sessions are topical.

- PRM requires quarterly meetings with community partners which, for us are RISPNet meetings that take place every six weeks, and once a year annual

consultations are conducted in preparation for the new FY Reception and Placement proposal to the US Department of State, Bureau of Populations Refugees and Migration (PRM).

- This meeting is an opportunity to speak about perspectives in services, challenges, gaps, and ways to move forward.
- The application for the new FY17 is due May 20th. VRRP will forward application to USCRI this Friday, May 6th and USCRI will forward all affiliate applications to PRM. The state will also have an opportunity to weigh in.

These meetings give us an opportunity to talk about the year in review: successes, challenges and solutions together as we begin the new fiscal year.

### Introduction - Hal Cohen

Good morning everyone. Thank you for the great work and all the stakeholders here in the work that you do in resettling refugees. It was a very proud moment, I lose track in this job, but about a month ago I was at a meeting with governor Peter Shumlin. That day it had been announced that a number of governments were going to close their borders, close their States to refugees. They weren't going to allow Syrian refugees into their State. But, our governor said we are going to do the right thing, the moral thing, and accept refugees with open arms. In Vermont we are going to open up our borders. For me, it was a very moving and proud moment. When we look at America we are all the foremothers and forefathers of immigrants. Both of my grandparents were refugees from Eastern Europe. If America hadn't opened its arms to my family, perhaps I wouldn't be here today. Resettling refugees, opening up our arms and our hearts to people is a very important thing. The state of Vermont is committed to that, we have many programs that support that – the Refugee office lead by Denise who is totally committed to this work and does a fantastic job. Our resettlement work also cuts across many departments, we know every refugee that comes to Vermont through the VT department of health will get a medical exam, will receive preventative care, a home and in our other programs like department of children and families, immigrants right off the back will be involved in reach up program, 3 squares, eligible women who are pregnant or with children can join WIC program, so all refugees who come to this state get the services that all Vermonters get and it's quite a number of important services to give refugees a really good start. When a family struggles we are there – we offer developmental services, mental health services, all of these programs are there to assist refugees. Our goal is to resettle people quickly and to get them to the place where they are self-sufficient. We know the refugees who come to our state are extremely hard working, they come and see this as a tremendous opportunity, they don't want to be on public assistance they want to be contributing members of the State. Part of our work is to provide feedback, we serve as a voice in the community – so getting input from stakeholders is very important, and this is really important work. Vermont gains from diversity – new ideas, delicious food (laughs) a real commitment to

wanting to make our county and our State a great place. So again thank you all for your work.

Amila: We are very proud of our relationship with community partners and stakeholders in this meeting and in Vermont and the future of refugee resettlement in our State.

### **Introduction – Denise Lamoureux**

Welcome everyone. I am going to be brief - we are here to listen. I want to listen to you and hear how to address challenges together. This morning I just thought about how lucky we are in Chittenden County. Since Gov. Shumlin mentioned that the government will be accepting Syrians to VT, yesterday afternoon I got an email from people in the NEK, people from all around the State, people want to be involved in this. In Chittenden County we have been doing this for a long time – if we look at Burlington and Winooski you see we increase our quality of life by having a more diverse population, we make our community more able to deal with a diverse world that's interconnected. But, it's teamwork and it takes a lot of hard work – it takes effort. It didn't happen overnight, it's a long-term project, there's the intense and urgent resettlement that VRRP/USCRI does so well – it's a miracle. They do it; they always find apartments despite 1%. They have great ESL programs that does wonders with the little donations we have. They have this great volunteer program, and recognize that almost all of them at VRRP are former refugees. We have such a great relationship and cooperation.

I'm so grateful to have an ethnic based organization, I remember when we didn't have AALV and I can't think of continuing this project without them. Then of course we have our partners and stakeholders that meet at RISPNet to discuss what they are doing for the population - it's amazing. Every time I leave this meeting it reminds me why I love my job so much. I have hundreds of people around me that support me. This is integration; this is a long-term process, not just a short-term process. We know it takes a long time.

I just want to mention one success in ending that you are a part of as community stakeholders. I see more and more New American faces in your organizations and that is a big success that will help you have great outcomes. And frankly, it's a great example for us in the State of Vermont to follow - integrating and having people from those communities who will serve as leaders in the future. Thank you.

### **Facilitator**

Thank you, I want to say we are all rooted in deep values. I also wanted to share a story with you, I'm teaching a number of courses at the social work department with refugees. Today I was reading some service learning journals, one student was working with a young woman and she doesn't need to look over her shoulder in fear anymore and she can build a new life. Sometimes when we are embedded in

struggles we forget what a gift it is to have a home where you don't have to look over your shoulders.

Ground Rules:

We are here as colleagues to help inform each other  
So if anyone speaks to long I might give you a high sign to move on  
We want to build our understanding and to use all the wits we have  
I'd like to start with introductions and I'm going to go to my right.

#### **VRRP Year in Review – Amila**

This year I want to start differently, between 250,00-300,000 Syrians have been killed since 2001. Half of Syrians population pre-war of 20,000,000 have been displaced. 4 million are in the neighboring countries, and hundreds of thousands have made it to Europe. Last year this time the number was set at 70,000. Throughout the summer and fall we all witnessed images like that, and images worse. So our federal government decided to raise the overall projection to 80,000 to accommodate, and so we raised our numbers to 350.

As Denise was referencing earlier, what we experienced has been an outpour of consistent support, communities around Vermont wanting to support, wanting to engage refugees being resettled in Vermont. Laurie and I travelled 2,000 miles in the past months. One of the most exciting developments is that in talking to different communities, 5 different communities offered to resettle refugees. We go by very strict criteria the federal government makes us look at housing availability (safe and sanitary), availability of employment, transportation other support services, school health, social services, and obviously community support. The first time we met with Rutland's Mayor Chris Louras was in December last year. We had a 2-hour meeting asking how can this work? So between Dec. and now we decided that Rutland was right and ready for refugee resettlement. So the next step is that USCRI is going to hold meetings with stakeholders in Rutland next week and submit an application to PRM to resettle refugees in Chittenden County and to expand to Rutland. The decision is with PRM, we have no reason to believe they will not support our application, but we will hear back by June.

2015, we came closest to the ceiling set for that year, in VT we were behind, The U.S number was set at 85,000 and VT 350; for 2017 the overall projection there is a push to admit 100,000 refugees in the U.S and in VT we are looking to propose 350 in CC and 100 in Rutland so a total of 450 individuals in 2017.

VRRP provides wrap around services: volunteer support, interpretation and translation, employment services, language services, case management. The most intense core services are provided in the first 90 days, we find housing, children are registered in school everyone gets a health assessment and so forth.

The employment services are provided up to one year in the U.S and then the AALV provides services up to 5 years. ELL classes are available up to 5 years in the U.S. Wilson Fish, federally funded provides traditional cash assistance up to 8 months in the U.S. and intensive case management up to 1 year in the U.S. Then there is matching grant which is accelerated employment program, singles or families with children then cash assistance can go up to 5 months.

**TANF/Reach Up**

- Agency of human services, department for children and families
- Families with children, 60 month cumulative maximum (might be able to reapply)

**Refugee family strengthening**

- Health and human services
- Relationship skills and case management

**Community engagement program**

- Various funding streams

**FY15 Arrival Groups (312) TOTAL NUMBER 325**

We will be very busy with arrivals for FY16. Groups through April  
Age groups breakdown, minors in last three years consistently on average we resettle 100 minors, 200 workers consistently for years, and about 100 total elderly since 2008.

**Question:**

Why is 65+ considered elderly and not 60? There are different program definitions for what age is considered elderly. For instance, ReachUp when they reach 60 they would be exempt.

Then resettlement by town through this FY through end of April. 41 apartments in total were rented. Last year we rented 42 apartments, but we resettled 170 people. It reflects that families join (reunification) and share apartments. Cost of housing is expensive, it goes without saying. Winooski is more expensive than Burlington on this chart.

**Question:**

We are seeing a big stratification of apartments being built in Winooski and in a small city those numbers make a big difference. So we say as development continues how can we make housing affordable?

**Employment:**

88% of all employable adults were considered self-sufficient at 8 months. Self sufficiency is defined differently by different programs, income exceeding

expenses, for Wilson Fish there is a formula that the state uses: income exceeds state standards, the average wage keeps going up, the minimum wage was set at 9.60 this year, retention is at 95% so after 90 days 95% are still employed and health benefits offered which is very high.

Question:

Do the health benefits reflect a change in where people are working? It reflects also VT Health Connect.

Our typical case is a family of 5, so if we have one employable (and often there is just one employable in the family) renting a 3 bedroom apartment, making 10\$ an hour and working full time, that is the State formula for ReachUp standards for a family of six to be considered self-sufficient.

**ELL Program:**

ELL Program continues to flourish – I cannot say enough about Ashraf and what he's been able to achieve. We serve 625 individuals through our classes. 8 are volunteers; we have 15 teachers in total. And then we have 36 tutors and teacher's assistants. Tutors work with individuals one on one in their homes.

**In Kind Donations:**

This is the time and the classroom space – when I saw the figure I thought Ashraf was playing with me. 89% of clients pass the assessment. We have a few new English for specific purposes classes that have been added. Our newest is Pathway to Higher Education, which is a partnership with VSAC.

**Community Partnership Program**

We matched 25 families with family friends. We match mentors and mentees. We have different events throughout the year, some of you have come out throughout the year to various events, most recently Destination BTV.

**Community Engagement:**

The list on the right is all the communities that have reached out to us since last fall, 5 asked us to resettle refugees: Waitsfield/Warren, Woodstock, Brattleboro, Bennington and Middlebury – who said they can do it better than Rutland and asked why can't we do it?

As an anecdote, we received over two-dozen calls from Vermonters offering their summer homes in the lakes and valleys.

**Interpretation Services:** (Kristen Rengo)



One of the great things about refugee resettlement is that we have people who speak many different languages; we have many interpreters. The program has been in existence for about a dozen years in VT. Historically, interpreters were either available over the phone or in person, but now we will also have an option to provide audio visual interpretation – similar to Skype. We will be working with the larger USCRI network to fulfill demand because we have so many different language groups. So the goal is if we cannot find an interpreter in VT we can reach out to one of our partner offices to help us to fill that need. The really good thing about this program is that it's a social enterprise; our interpreters are professional and well trained.

This curriculum is recognized by the national council for health care and so ethical conduct and confidentiality will be maintained. MY UL Software, the program for AV is called Blue Jeans, its really easy, one click connectivity, one email you click on the link and then magic will happen. It will work on any device on your iPod, Android device, whatever you want no special license required. It meets HIPA requirements. You can be on a home visit, in your office, wherever and you can get an interpreter on your iPad. It is secure and each session will have it's own unique ID number. Any questions please let me know; I can come to you and provide training.

Amila: I will close with this, the total number of this year to be resettled 85k. By FY17 100k it looks like it will be set at. The new group for us again is Syrians and the projected arrivals are 350 Chittenden County and 100 individuals for Rutland starting in October.

Video.

### **AALV Presentation:**

#### **History:**

- 13 full time employees.
- AALV was formed in 1999 as a small community based organization.
- The organization in 2000 became a non-profit.
- Expanded services in 2008.
- Served 356 unduplicated clients as of last year – they have different needs: employment, health care, immigration services, case management and referrals.

#### **AALV Core Services:**

- Case management
- Work force development,
- Behavioral health education,
- Interpretation and immigration services

**Employment:**

- 180 clients placed in various jobs.
- Referral services to other agencies 207 successful referrals.

**Workforce development program:**

- PCA funded by United Way of CC – calendar year 2015, 45 graduates now fully employed. This year we received a grant from the Dpt. of Labor to provide the same services.
- Home based childcare program we had 10 successfully trained. Budgeting (125) and parenting (48) in partnership with Opportunity Credit Union and Connecting Cultures. Our New Farm program continues to grow strong, funded mainly through private grants and donations right now.

**Preventative Health Education:**

- Reached 85 youth ages between 10-20 with teenage pregnancy and HIV/STI prevention. We also reached 100 individuals with peer outreach education.

**Immigration Services:**

- 172 applications, 165 naturalized.
- Adjustment of status services also offered.
- Citizenship: includes education for individuals with limited English proficiency and immigration legal assistance.

**Interpreter Services:**

- 52 interpreters and 27 different languages including dialects.
- Recruitment and selection of interpreters.

Thank You.

**State Refugee Office – Denise Lamoureux**

Hand out provided.

Just so you see the work that is not provided by VRRP or AALV. I think it's important to see the work our community partners are doing – that you all are doing.

I outlined a few of the things I am doing at the State Refugee Office and that Martha is doing. On the back I have community service providers that provide specialized services, mainly from grants from my office, but also from mental health services, Burlington and Winooski school districts and also special work force development programs – Champlain Valley Department on Aging and all the State services and benefits that are so important as Secretary Cohen has



mentioned. We don't want to forget all of you and your contributions to this project.

### Question Period (Strengths):

Okay, now for the fun part – so a good social worker always starts with strengths, strengths of the refugee program. So we have about 50 minutes to talk about strengths from your own vantage point.

- Well looking around the table, we can see the willingness that's pretty phenomenal.
- What I hear from new Americans in Winooski is the sense of community that they feel and what I hear in conjunction is this sense of small communities in Vermont. So when leaders from small communities go to regional or national meetings they see how great Vermont is because of that.
- I think the fact Vermont has been doing this for a while; we have worked out the kinks. We have those relationships in place. So for Rutland, the work has been done, the map has been put down. It might not be as heavy of a lift.
- The way resettlement is framed too – it's a value. We see it as a strategic advantage, not to say there aren't complexities to it but I think Vermont communities see that this is going to strengthen them.
- The intentional coming together that Denise and Amila have fostered has been incredible to directly connect with other providers. It has really expanded our ability to appreciate what is in the community and to make those connections.
- The ability to just call Howard Center or the Dept. of Health and get answers right away and not have to wait 7 days. The relationships have really been incredible
- I think the agencies we have here in Chittenden County have a more diverse work force, which makes our work easier and better – I can say at King Street center and United Way it's making a big difference.
- I think it broadens everyone's outlook on life, makes us think more about the services we are providing and how we look at individuals. Most people came here from somewhere else, whether its Africa or New Jersey, we are people with different backgrounds and I think that the complexity that is added to our community throughout the years, it has been along haul, we have been exposed to many different people and it has added to the fabric of the state in a wonderful way.
- The focus on valuing diversity has helped schools and school districts value diversity and bring the issue of equity to the forefront of their mission. The strength of a relatively friendly and accessible network of support, a relatively quick learning process to learn who to call if you have a question.
- The positive leadership in both Winooski and Burlington, I cannot imagine doing resettlement without that support so we are lucky.
- Our communication is very strong, so w/e happens in November our commitment is there and will stay the same

- The dedication of individual staff members, we all know the environment of nonprofits with funding, the dedication is amazing to give so much of their time and their talents, serving without looking back, without saying I'm not making 50,000 year. Having that heart. I second that.
- The business community and the value add of increasing our workforce, our shrinking workforce this is the growth in our community and its very important.

#### **Question Period (Challenges):**

What are some of the challenges that we need to handle together?

- Mayor Louras--From Rutland, what I'm going to talk about is intertwined. What Rutland has seen over the last week has been an overwhelming demonstration of support. There is a group called "Rutland Welcomes" that within 24 hours is just shy of 900 individuals growing from 50. They have scheduled their first meeting next week. The challenge, we need to ensure that the energy that Rutland has and the passion doesn't abate. My guess is the way to address that is to build that volunteer capacity and meet them where they are. When we've got hundreds and hundreds of people that is different than 30 volunteers. How do we effectively and efficiently martial and take advantage of those resources in the community who want to play a positive role and aren't formal stakeholders?

#### **Proposed Solutions:**

- o Information is key. Knowledge is key. I believe it depends on how you well you organize them; have them be culturally trained, teach them the cultural traits they will be exposed to. Without information, it's very difficult. Training comes first.
- o For us the hard work starts now, the announcement was made last week. So next week we will go down to Rutland and meet with different groups. So between now and October we will be reaching out to those groups, the citizens of Rutland and the surrounding area - starting the conversation, I couldn't agree more that education is the key, laying the groundwork so to speak.
- o It might be interesting for this group here to mentor people there in similar positions. We have offers, the city manager of Winooski has offered to go down to Rutland and Laurie already has a running list of volunteers.
- o 900 is great, but what we wish we could do better is not only preparing the folks who are coming here but preparing the community that's receiving them.

Question: How do you prepare the broader community for the change?

- o That's learning we are still trying to do in Burlington and Winooski - and there's still work to do in the broader community.



- One of the issues we deal with is cultural competency. This is about understanding the unique cultures people are bringing. So between someone who is Bhutanese to Burmese the different trauma they embody that effects their communication styles together. We tend to group all refugee groups together without recognizing these cultural differences, we ignore the nuances - this can be intimidating and lead to burnout.
- Related to migration, one of the biggest things we see is the mobility and then the issues of continuity of learning and living for children. So we estimate 30-35% mobility. So if you think about a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class, 5 of those kids move in and out each year of 15 kids. So the challenge for those kids moving districts and for the teachers – this is something to be strategized to make that mobility a little more seamless?
- Question: Why are people moving?
  - Housing is the biggest reason

#### Challenges Continued:

- I see a service gap. We offer a preschool class called Headstart because of the income level of the families most are available for childcare subsidies who work 2-3 jobs but their work schedule does not align with childcare hours. So we have 2-3 families who are looking at this childcare bill in order to stay in the workforce. This is a childcare issue for third shift families' not just refugees, so parents are keeping kids at home because they can't afford childcare so it's a safety issue also.
- We have so many New Americans that can't take our classes because they don't have access to childcare so having on-site childcare like VNA has done is very important so people can take advantage of our programs.
- One of the challenges I am seeing more in a positive light is our inability to have hard conversations that need to continually happen about racism and not to be shy to have these conversations. We know this is happening globally, locally the incident that happened very unfortunate, a woman being pointed at for wearing a hijab. We need to have these conversations at individual levels, but also at service levels and to work as advocates for the people we serve in the larger community.

#### Question: Have there been RISPNET trainings around race and bias in particular?

- No. It has been difficult to find someone who is trained and qualified to do that. It is very important.
- One thing for us as a city, we are trying to do a better job at is engagement: from getting people out to meetings, to having an interpreter on site to being involved in those conversations. It's an area we are really trying to unwind



and do better. I'd love to see us moving towards a means of having non-citizen voting and decision making. For them to not have a voice in that decision making process seems like a huge risk. I know Burlington made an effort but I'd love to see us move in that direction more soon.

Question: Is out migration a challenge for Chittenden County?

- Out migration is not an issue for VT. What we see is much more in-migration.
- Last year we had negative migration – 25 to be exact. But generally it's 25- 30 more than more in than out. Compared to other states our out an in migration is practically nil. Our tracking system is very limited; we don't track it at the state level. We just know when other states claim their names as migrants in their states.

**Challenges Continued:**

- People viewing refugees in education as a uniform group, in language learning too they think all immigrant and refugee youth need a certain kind of educational service when really it's a continuum. Viewing people in this monolithic way is a disadvantage, so to make programs that address that instead of this unified way is a challenge. Naming multiple generations is a strength, but things that happen across generations lose their ability to communicate with their elders so managing and addressing expectations at multiple levels. Engaging parents in the broader community is a sacred mission and vitally important. But, it's hard work to do it in a way that's fully integrated and equitable rather than something separate with interpreters challenges me everyday.

**Stacie Blake, Closing Comments:**

It is such a privilege, to be in this conversation one time a year. You can hear it differently than when you are in the throws of it. So I feel compelled to share observations of this conversation. People keep saying we are lucky, you are in no way lucky, what you have chosen is intentional. None of it is luck. It is on purpose, so I'm applauding people in this room for being welcoming on purpose.

The other thing I'm noticing about this convo on challenges, 3<sup>rd</sup> shift childcare, non-resident voting, childcare in general, I want you to understand how finely tuned those challenges are compared to challenges in other communities. You aren't saying immigrants are taking our jobs, we had to hire a new teacher, you are saying you want to do even better. The level of expectation here is so high, which is why you have net positive migration even though the rents are crazy high. I want to give you that. And that you would even float the idea about having a convo or training on racism is absolutely needed, but that you would float it in



this room is both basic and high level critical thinking about how we do better and a lot of communities can't have that convo because they are busy perceiving the other things they perceive as challenges.

You know I'm going to applaud my colleague Amila and the rest of my colleagues in this room. The last thing I'll add when you saw those employment numbers for example, that info rolls up into all the resettlement groups that USCRI has, and frankly USCRI VT has the best outcomes, and then our numbers roll up at USCRI compared to Lutheran services and so we can see comparatively how other resettlement approaches are doing – we continue to lead, and this office continues to lead. This work together is having these important outcomes so thank you for that.

**Question: How do we measure the success rate of our services?**

We have been doing this for a very very long time. We are providing amazing services, when it comes to really knowing how well we do and the impact that we have on the community it is difficult because of the data to get we do assessments of needs we think we know what is needed we try to address the problems and try to find solutions to them. But, how good are they? How well impacted are they? What is the success rate in the communities? I think we had that discussion last year, but how do we know the success rate? We need to address this, the process is long and hard but we need to know what we are doing here. We say every year we always say we are doing great.

**Transportation:**

I want to look beyond our own community and work with the State to come up with a reliable transportation plan for the State. So that people can live here and work someone else, or visa-versa. But if the community is left to fend for themselves for transportation we are not going to succeed. But if we can look at a reliable bus system, train system etc. how would one survive if they do not have access to reliable transportation system. Need communities to come together to ask State to invest in our transportation system. We have lawmakers; the state should look at the long-term plan.

**Funding: Denise Lamoureux**

This is going to be a very exciting year but also challenging as well, while we are trying to expand to a community I'm expecting funding for refugee services is going to decrease this year. Social services are decreasing by 35k I don't know if we'll get targeted assistance, it's formula based. So what we are going to have to do is think about a plan to distribute or share the funding among more providers – so school impact support, employment is not growing unless we find other sources of funding, another direction I see going is less on less discretionary grants we've been applying over 12 years and getting it. It's going to be formula



based no longer based on discretionary. We always lose with formula base in Vermont because we are so small we always get the minimal amount. So the funding for elders 100k a year with the discretionary grant down to 75k with formula base because we don't have enough people to get more. We need to be able to do more with less, as usual. That is an important factor we need to address.

#### **Homeownership: Amila**

Homeownership particular Somali – there are no interest free loans available in Vermont. There are different models in the country, there are different programs in the city that offer interest free loans to potential home buyers, the more people that come in there is a greater need to look at that and to consider how to make it better. The shared equity program is wonderful, but they aren't always accessible. So a lot of folks who have been here 5-6 years cannot really access those programs. So I know it's costly to get these things translated, but that or to have an interpreter available at these sessions would help.

#### **Cultural Competency:**

We struggle a lot with culturally appropriate programming, language, but it's still really hard. We in our organizations need to lead and I've definitely seen leadership. It's still really hard to talk about cultural competency in organizations.

9 minutes left:

#### **What can we coalesce about priorities for the next year?**

- Finding ways to measure this, a VT definition for economic sustainability. Is there a VT way to define that? I think there's much more to success than the money that is made.
- Race conversation and learning around that as a key for our community.
- To build understanding in the community that people are fully formed individuals when they come, look at them by 350 degrees, not just the English they speak. They are us. They are not other.
- I think there are great examples of collaborations with grants in the community; I think diversifying funding so it's not just federal sources or state sourced. So whether it's through RISPNet or other collaborations to put together funding proposals would be helpful.
- There are a lot of nuances to this work – federal dollars, state and local dollars. Let's connect the dots where we need to be is the key, this isn't just a shot from feds, state or local city we need to work that much harder to coordinate things. I'm working on a piece of work for the Secretaries office and I'm thinking how do we make this broader and walk in the same direction on this I see a lot of opportunity here.

- One of the challenges I'd like to point out, we need to applaud business that hire us as we come into VT. But also look at businesses that take advantage of New Americans- a lot of car dealerships that take advantage of newly arrived people here. I know we hear from this in individual cases, but we need to come together at RISPNet maybe and figure out how to approach businesses and say this is not right. So many people being taken advantage of.
- In kind donation is fantastic, w.in the communities because of the funding decreasing doing more with less, there is some potential resources within we have to look for them. It can be different skillsets that that community arriving here already has. This demands an open mind to add more to the education and knowledge of how the workforce system works here. Reaching within to get that in kind that you don't have by hiring someone that is still within the system here would be a good thing.
  - o Someone said the state should be the leader when working with diversity, talking about it is good acting on it is better. I've been here two years and I'm really hoping to see something when it comes to the leaders workforce diversity happening.
- As I hear that knowledge is power, teaching if we are going to provide learning it must come with a quality we cannot provide learning with less quality. Speaking English is the way to integrate with the society. I think it's everyone's responsibility in this community - it's your friend, it's your coworker. I work with universities, schools, the kind of motivation I find in our clients is hard to find. I hope that and I'm very grateful for our partnerships with organizations. It is everybody's responsibility, you are a fellow citizen, a fellow Vermonter to know English and know his or her rights.

**I'd like to go quickly around the room for one word that describes our convo:**

-Pleased  
win win win  
success  
collaboration  
power  
inspired  
model community  
future  
collaboration  
hope  
accomplices  
motivated  
interesting  
inspired  
commitment  
unity

awareness  
willingness  
progress  
human  
engagement  
steadfast  
grateful

I want to thank all of you; it's amazing what happened in this conversation today. We really are working towards a new level of organizational development. Please thank everyone in your organization for what they do. Thank you.