

Refugees and the Workforce System: Achieving Success Through Innovative Programming

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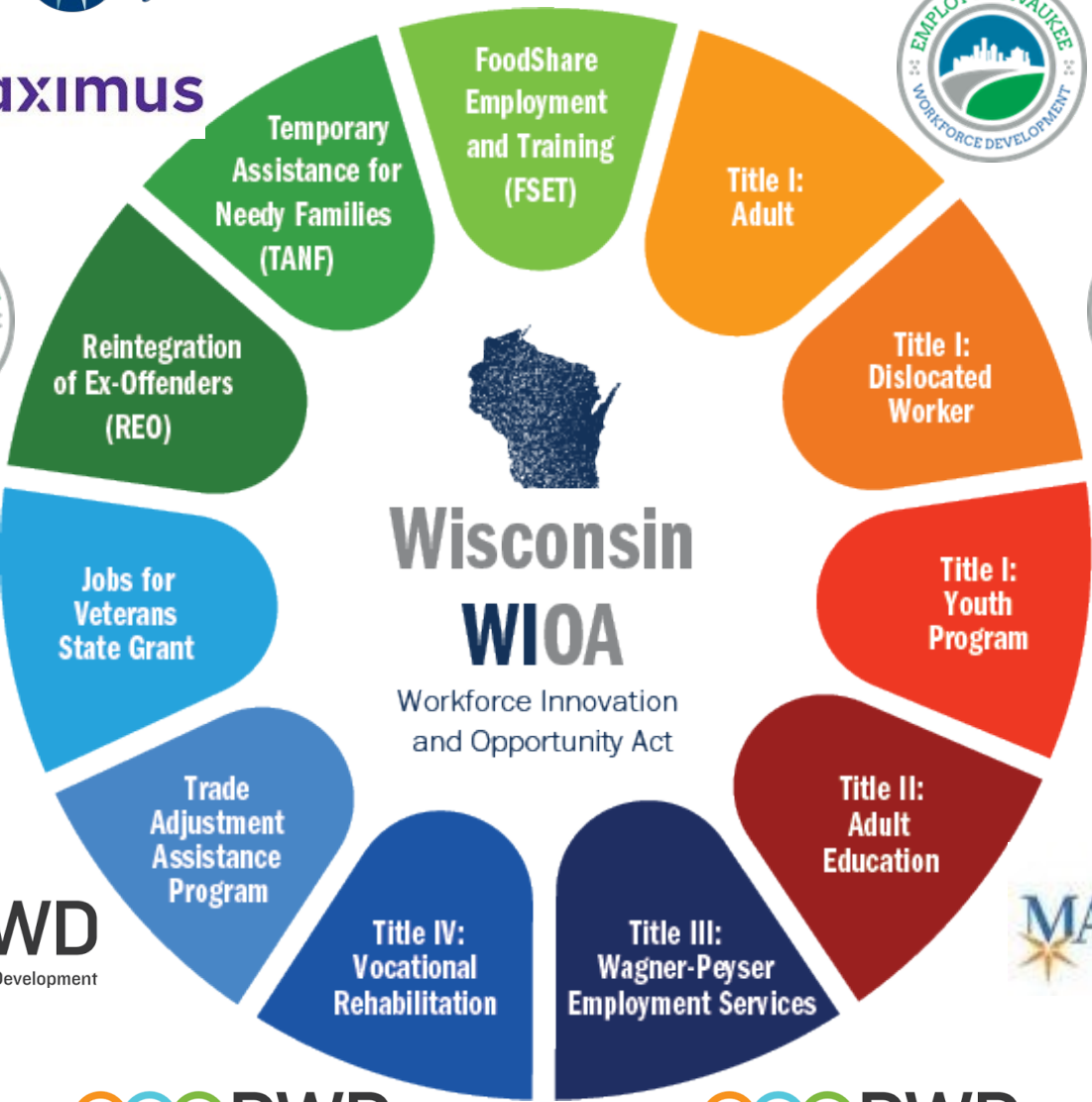
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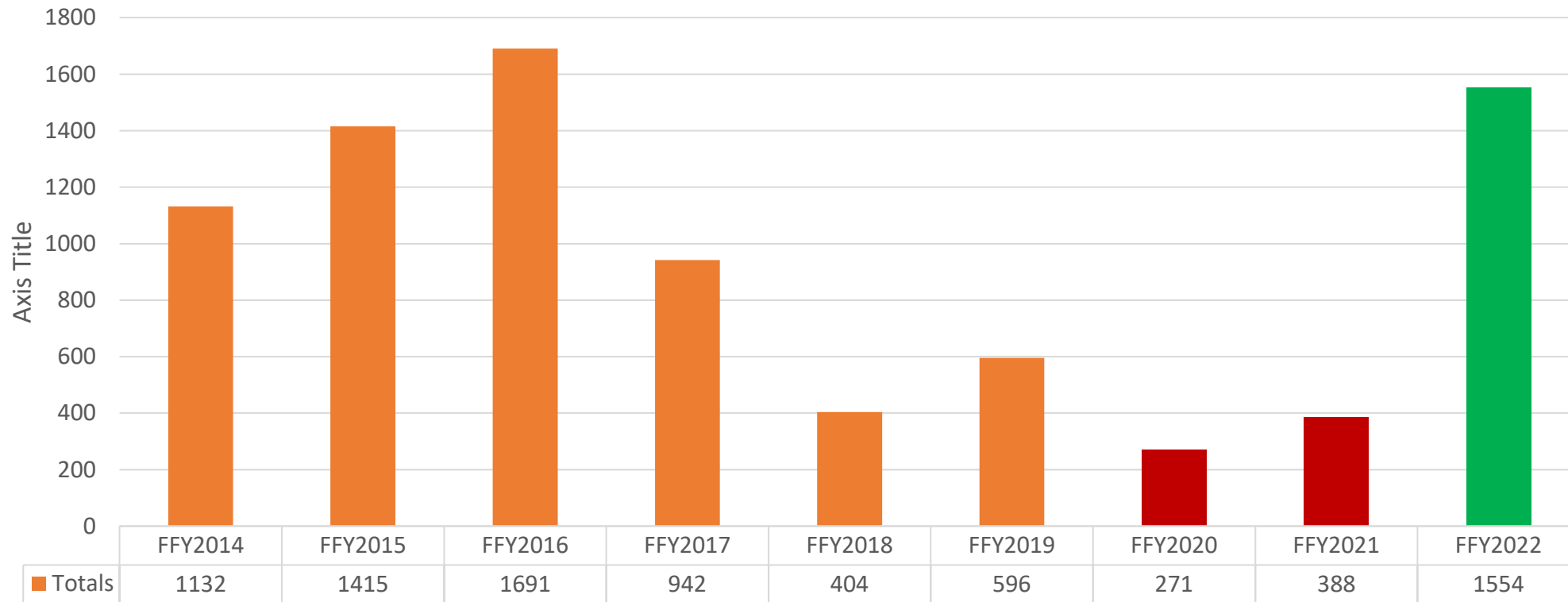
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Refugees and New Arrivals in Wisconsin Assisted by Resettlement Agencies by Federal Fiscal Year (FFY): October to September



Estimate for
FFY2023

1,320

Through
Resettlement
Agencies



Refugees and New Arrivals in Wisconsin: Where they were from and where they resettled*

Combined Data from Federal Fiscal Year 2022

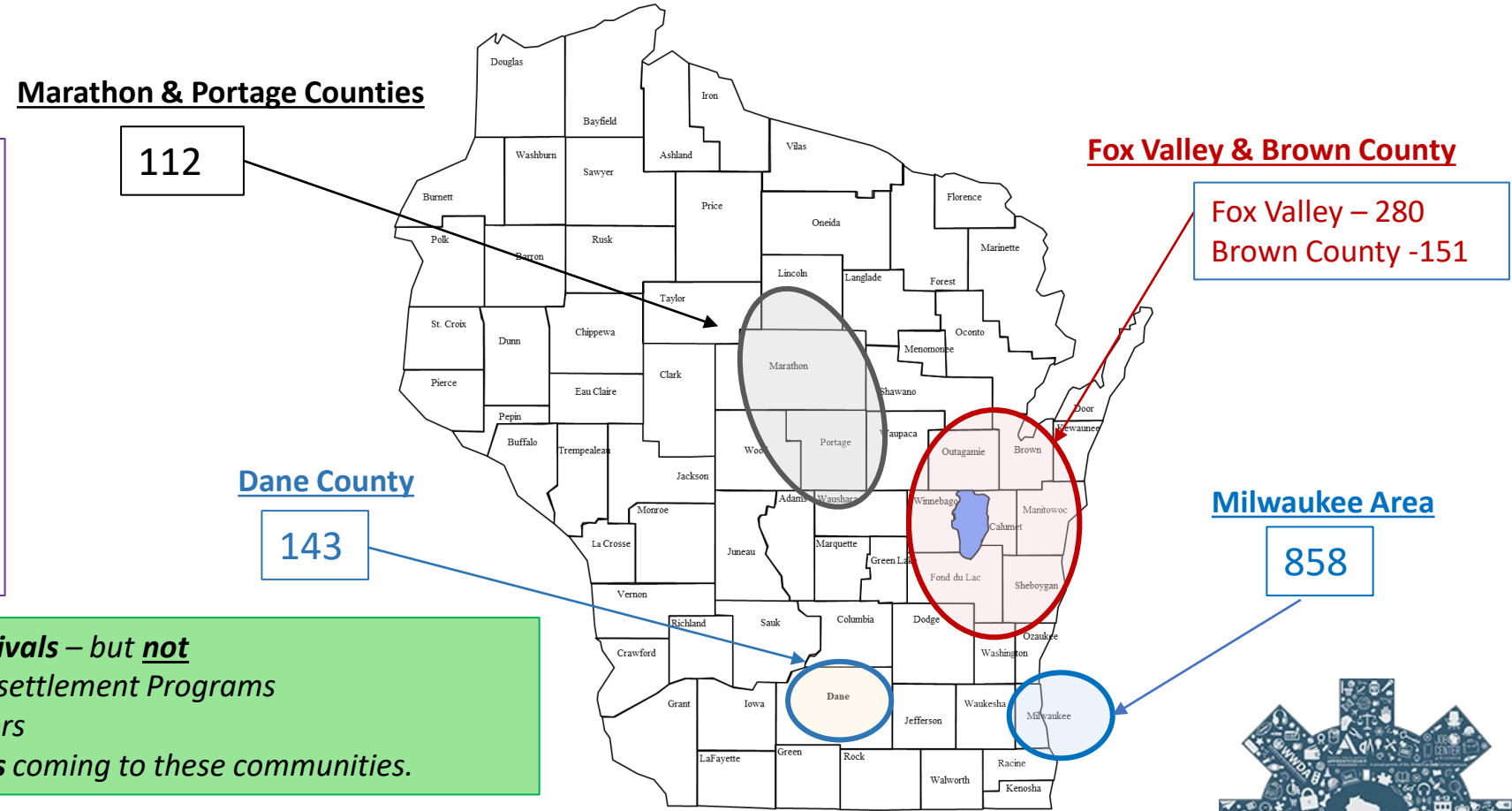
Source: U. S. Department of State

Countries of Origin

Afghan Humanitarian Parolees	- 868
Burma	- 324
Dem. Republic of the Congo	- 208
Syria	- 50
Afghanistan Special Immigrant Visa	- 39
Somalia	- 15
Burundi	- 14
Pakistan	- 13
Sudan	- 7
Iraq	- 4

***NOTE:** While this table shows *new refugee arrivals* – but *not*

- Afghan arrivals as resettled by Alternative Resettlement Programs
- Ukrainian arrivals resettled by Private Sponsors
- the increasing number of *secondary migrants* coming to these communities.



Current Service Delivery Model - Milwaukee

- Refugee Resettlement Agencies
 - Hanan Refugees Relief Group
 - International Institute of Wisconsin
 - Lutheran Social Services
- Access to programs and services
 - Milwaukee Enrollment Services (MiLES)
- W-2 and Refugee Cash Assistance
 - Maximus, Inc.
 - UMOS, Inc.



Collaboration across the workforce system:

- Identify key stakeholders systemwide
- Refugees and recent immigrant arrivals
- Refugee resettlement agencies
- Program service providers – WIOA, W-2/RCA, FSET
- Sponsors, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations
- Identify gaps in service delivery
- Provide solutions to fill the gap



Role of Business Services / Employment Specialists Organizations that Support Refugees and New Arrivals

- Have a thorough understanding of transferable skill sets
- Identify employers that have hired refugees to serve as employer champions
- Conduct outreach and education for employers seeking talent from immigrant talent pool
- Monthly meetings for Milwaukee Area Refugee Consortium Employment Specialists Group
- Convene quarterly statewide Refugee Employment Specialists Group meetings



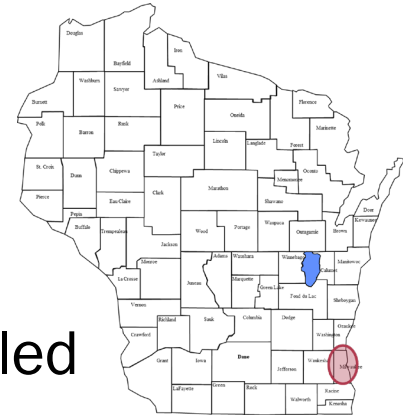
Role of Business Services continued:

- Provide employers with access to programs of support for recruitment, onboarding and retention
- Invite employers to virtual or in-person recruitment events
- Continually assess challenges in talent sourcing
 - Limited English language proficiency
 - Transportation
 - Housing
- ***Celebrate success!!!***



Innovative Approaches: Husco International & Manpower

- **Husco** and **Manpower** wanted to hire Afghan refugees
- Initiated by Executive Leadership as “The Right Thing To Do”
- **Lutheran Social Services** was able to provide access to newly resettled Afghan refugees and assist in initial employment placement
- **35** hired with 75% converted to full-time direct hires as of late January, 2023
- **Husco** identified potential for upskilling
- **Maximus** convened workforce partners to identify available program funding sources
- Since traditional WIOA Adult/DW funding was not an option **Employ Milwaukee, Inc.** used Worker Advancement Initiative (WAI) grant funds to meet the needs of the workers and the employer





Husco International: Shared experience

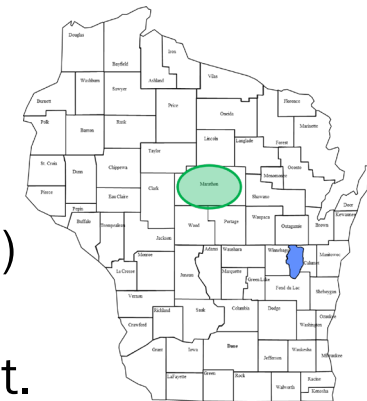
Mark Dreikosen, Director of Operations, Husco International

- When **Husco** started hiring refugees, they included several new hires who were fluent in English who assisted with those who didn't speak enough English to understand instructions and training.
- They work in teams of up to 10:1 people of no/limited English to fluent speakers so there was always someone to assist if needed.
- They also use the interpretation hotline so there is never a gap in communication.
- Having a strong team allowed for this to happen. Without a strong framework, it would be difficult to allow this to be as successful.
- Mark has seen firsthand how these individuals have grown to speak higher levels of English and learn on the job skills. One refugee was hired as an operations technician based on his past experiences and skillset. This person also assists Mark with translating work instructions for other refugees.
- [Husco International embraces Afghan refugees as a solution to workforce shortage - Milwaukee Business Journal.html](#)



Great Lakes Cheese

Paul Herold, Plant Manager, Wausau, Wisconsin



- Resettlement Agency – Multicultural Community Center (ECDC); Wisconsin Works (W-2) Agency – Forward Service Corporation
- Great Lakes Cheese is a family-owned business that was founded by a Swiss immigrant. Currently have over 500 employees.
- Great Lakes Cheese philosophy - We considers ourselves as a multi-cultural environment, with OVER 50% speaking English as a 2nd language. it has employee-owners from SE Asia, South & Central America, Africa, and the Middle East and tends to focus more on what they have in common, versus what makes us different.
- Since 2021, Great Lakes has employed 7 full-time refugees, one part-time, and one pending.
- Of the eight working, five are doing general labor roles and three have advanced into semi-skilled/skilled operator roles. The three that have advanced are further along in their English skills.
- Initially leveraged an off-site resource (via Zoom) to assist with orientation and basic training.
- Those that are multi-lingual have assisted the others in the day-to-day needs..



Great Lakes Cheese: Challenges & Opportunities

- Transportation has proven to be a hurdle, as the process of being transportation self-sufficient requires both personal growth [the ability to pass the written & road test] and resources for a vehicle.
- Although Great Lakes employs a diverse group of employees, they've never had a request to enable prayer during breaks. They have expanded the use of a separate space to offer privacy for prayer.
- Great Lakes Cheese has a group of new employee-owners who are actively working and are reliable. In what was a tight labor market, they have proven to be a benefit to the facility and community labor needs.



Great Lakes Cheese: Lessons Learned

- Get involved early and let others know you're interested in offering employment [e.g., participation in early group calls, expressing interest through the Chamber of Commerce, toured, and discussed potential to assist with local State representatives].
- Identify roles for those with varied communication skills.
- When there is employment interest, invite both the candidate and the sponsor team members for an overview and tour. Collaboration with Sponsors is critical to on-boarding and sustained employment.
- Pair new hires w/ current employees who can offer on-the-job support.





Best Practice in Action

- **Maximus** hosted Refugee Career & Resource Fair
- Identified over 50 employers that have hired refugees in the past year
- Outreach to employers from neighboring counties
- Over 25 employers registered for the event:
 - Healthcare
 - Manufacturing
 - Hospitality
 - Warehouse, Transportation & Logistics
 - Food production and food security



Questions?

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