

American Service

Strategic Plan Feb-Jun 2023

Prepared by Aswar Rahman
Executive Director of the American Service
501c3, EIN 88-3464025

Strategic Analysis	2
External Conditions	3
Internal Conditions	5
Vision, Mission & Values	8
Goals & Plans of Action	9
1. Determine practical monthly capacity.	9
2. Raise funds.	10
3. Expand housing stock.	13
4. Expand staff in Europe.	15
5. Expand staff in Minnesota.	16
6. Expand transportation fleet.	17
7. Trial flight loans.	18
8. Recruit I-134a filers.	19
9. Continually refine intake systems.	20
10. Establish functioning board of directors and bookkeeping methods.	20
11. Establish English language centers inside Ukraine.	21
12. Test viability of model with other parole-eligible populations.	22
13. Build brand.	24
Timeline	25
Monitoring	27
Note from Executive Director on Compensation	28
Summary	29

Strategic Analysis

In 2022, the United States federal government essentially invented a new form of immigration: “humanitarian parole.” Parole, as we shall call it in brief, is projected to annually enable 500,000 people from certain nations in extreme humanitarian need to live and work in the United States. As of January 14, 2023, the nationalities generally eligible for humanitarian parole are Ukrainians, Afghans, Haitians, Venezuelans, Nicaraguans, and Cubans. This makes parole ten times larger than our refugee pathway, and about half the size of traditional legal immigration.

Governmental and nonprofit resources are dramatically under-equipped to address this seismic shift in American immigration policy. Budget allocations from the Office of Refugee Resettlement have not increased nearly in proportion to the need. Resettlement agencies were already overwhelmed by the need to respond to the influx of Afghan parolees; the addition of Ukrainians mere weeks later pushed many past their breaking point. Now, the expected surge of Latin American beneficiaries is being met by service providers with a sense of surrender.

The American Service began in March 2022 as the American Service in Ukraine, helping Ukrainians relocate to the United States to live in a safe environment where they can work, study, and save up money to send back home. It is the only organization pioneering an employment-supported resettlement model for humanitarian parolees that foregoes traditional refugee resettlement services, avoids reliance on government and charity, and cuts to the chase of getting people from their devastated homelands to a safe place where they can start to rebuild.

We are, more than any other organization, equipped to meet the challenge of this moment. We can build out our employment-supported resettlement model to accommodate the needs and maximize the potential of a large portion of the incoming parolee population. We can take the precarious and unprecedented expansion of America’s immigration system and make sure that it works, both for the betterment of our society and of the lives of the people joining us.

External Conditions

The demand for humanitarian parole on the beneficiary side is extremely high. The US federal government had floated 100,000 as the maximum number of Ukrainians welcomed through parole. That number, just ten months into the program, is already in the rearview mirror and there are no signs of slowing down in the approval of applications.

After the Biden administration announced the expansion of parole in Latin America, illegal border crossing attempts showed a marked decline, with many more migrants opting to try this new legitimate pathway to the US.

The next humanitarian crises will likely see further expansion of parole. As parole has shown to be an effective extension of American policy both foreign and domestic, it is reasonable to expect that this administration and future ones will turn to parole as the primary tool to address mass humanitarian immigration needs.

The next two years will likely see further expansion, as the Biden Administration in particular grows more comfortable with utilizing parole to address immigration crises at home and humanitarian crises abroad. Notably, there was an absence of large-scale anti-immigration furor at the expansion of humanitarian parole to address this otherwise vitriolic issue of Latin American migration.

National parole eligibility is unlikely to expire without major cause, as parole is intertwined with America's foreign relations. The inclusion of Ukrainians for parole is an extension of America's support for Ukraine in its war in defense against Russia. The inclusion of Latin American nations is an extension of the United States' cooperation with nations throughout the region to address the issue of mass migration. We can expect that parole eligibility, once granted to a nationality, will largely remain in place barring major shifts in American foreign policy.

Traditional refugee services are unable to meet the demand. This has both been confirmed through the American Service's work at the local level, and from reports from national-level aid providers. The combination of Afghan parolees and the first portion of Ukrainians was enough to overwhelm federal, state, and local resources. Many were holding out for hope for a mid-year infusion of resources in 2022, only to be disappointed by a marginal

increase in funding from the federal level, far below what is needed by most resettlement agencies to meet their increased caseload.

It must be remembered that refugee arrivals over the past two decades have hovered, in a busy year, around 50,000. During the first years of the Covid pandemic, that number had dipped closer to 20,000 refugees arriving per year. But in 2022, there were nearly 100,000 people in a refugee-adjacent status coming from Ukraine alone. Before them, there was the sudden and massive influx of Afghan refugees and parolees. And now, there are Haitians, Venezuelans, Nicaraguans, and Cubans, at an allotted rate of 30,000 arrivals per month. It simply is too much for our existing refugee services.

Traditional immigration systems are unable to meet the demand. Since the abolition of the quota system in 1965, American immigration has followed a manageable pattern. Large numbers of immigration applications are received and adjudicated over long periods of time, sometimes over the span of years. A miniscule portion of applications are approved, after which the new arrivals take a years-long path to transition from their home country to here, often relying on patiently-built compatriot communities in large US cities, before settling in for the long haul.

The parole system throws all that calmness out the window, and packs a system of years and months into weeks and days. Parole-eligible populations are usually in dire, immediate need, and lack the luxury of a slow, methodical resettlement in the United States. Their financial situation is precarious. Their health, especially mental, is often badly bruised. Even established communities of their compatriots are unable to absorb them as fast as they come, and resentment, miscommunication, and ill will has fomented as quickly as the crises have presented themselves. The system required for humanitarian parole is drastically different to the system established over the last six decades of American immigration.

Economic opportunities abound for arriving parolees. Parole has been paired with expedited — often, as is the case for Ukrainians, automatic — work authorization. This is a major advantage of parole over immigration and refuge, and allows for a quick integration of newcomers into the American economy.

Simultaneously, there is a major need for workers in the American economy. In Minnesota alone, there are over 100,000 open jobs in a state with unemployment at a marginal 2%. We need people in Minnesota. We need people in our nation's economy at large.

Rapid employment leads to rapid self-sufficiency. The American Service has demonstrated this through our work with Ukrainians through 2022: our families can get on their feet fast with a combination of initial housing, job opportunities, and transportation. This will be discussed at length throughout this document.

Robust internal systems lead to more complete success for beneficiaries. The American Service has continually refined its internal mechanism to the external benefit of our program participants. Further, by rapidly adjusting to new announcements at the federal level, we have increased our scope and even further streamlines our systems.

Internal Conditions

The American Service has a remarkably effective staff. Though never numbering above five active staff members, the transnational team has created systems and enacted changes with precision and speed for the nearly ten months of the organization's existence. This can be attributed in part to good habits and internal cultural practices put in place at the start of the organization, but the maintenance of this quality is directly related to the empowerment of original staff members. The American Service goes above and beyond to ensure that the members of its staff are well taken care of, with competitive salaries, allowances for team meals, and a holistic approach to employee wellbeing. We care for each other, and hold each other to the highest standards.

The American Service has built itself a small but strong reputation in the Ukrainian diaspora, through our combination of transparency and efficiency. Our paid outreach is swiftly being replaced by organic word-of-mouth within the diaspora community, as successful beneficiaries are informing their larger social networks of the strengths and admitted weaknesses of the American Service's model.

The American Service has made several organizational friendships, but not many, and none at all with large, long-established organizations. This is due mostly to differences in strategy and purpose. For example, our strongest partnership has been with the Polish

organization My Z Wami, who were purpose-built to provide relief aid to Ukrainians within the nation's borders. This common mission led to many opportunities in cooperation and greater understanding. On the contrary, attempts to coordinate and cooperate with decades-old general humanitarian organizations have come up largely empty, as the American Service almost always moves at a pace that is not possible with the large overheads of these established organizations. Competition over funding pools has also led to a slight tension.

The American Service has a small group of self-organized volunteers, who are able to offer help to our arriving beneficiaries. Organizational policy has been to not rely on this aid, and instead to create opportunities where volunteers may be able to help, should they be ready to expend the effort. We do not dedicate significant manpower to make use of this volunteer corps.

The American service has gained a small group of dedicated advocates, who are contributing through various channels. This includes filing I-134a forms, recruiting others to file these forms, exploring job opportunities for our beneficiaries, and providing financial support to our organization.

The American Service does not have a functioning board, and this must be rectified post haste. The lack of a functioning board is due in part to illness of a member, and the voluntary resignation of another, over a potential conflict of interest. Minnesota law requires three board members to be in compliance, and meeting this requirement has become a top priority (see "goals" sections).

The American Service has only recently put in place the financial systems needed for efficient bookkeeping. These robust systems were largely redundant during the early part of the organization's development, especially prior to attaining 501c3 status, as all expense were made and tracked by the Executive Director. Now, as several staff members are able to make valid expenses on behalf of the organization, these systems are becoming necessary.

The Ukrainian community built in Minnesota by the American Service is exceptionally supportive of one another, and approaching a level of self-sufficiency. As hoped, the Ukrainians who have made Minnesota their new home through the American Service have adopted habits of supporting one another, ranging from connecting one another to social

services as needed to arranging airport pickups to helping each other get jobs. We anticipate this culture to only grow, and lead to greater autonomy for our beneficiaries, less workload per person from our organization, and ultimately greater success for our program.

We have a solid employment partner: Home Depot. The value of this partnership is immense and foundational to our hitherto success. Home Depot is able to provide jobs to our beneficiaries that pay a middle-class wage, with full benefits, in an environment that is conducive to their wellbeing and integration. We have been thoroughly impressed by the values this company lives up to, and the welcome our people have received in this company. While we offer additional job-finding support for our beneficiaries, we encourage any and all who are eligible within our program to take advantage of a Home Depot job opportunity.

We have established agile job-finding and housing tactics. Through weekly job-finding sessions and continued research into housing options, we have been able to find solutions to our beneficiaries' needs in little time. This has included finding motel-based housing for an exceptional case to directly securing job interviews with companies for beneficiaries.

We have reliable funding for the first 100-200 beneficiaries, through contributions from the Shapiro Foundation, bolstered by a generous gift from the Spalj family. We anticipate surpassing our current capacity by mid-March 2023. We are currently exploring the possibility of receiving federal funding through the Matching Grant program of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, as well as the sources listed in Goal #2.

Vision

We envision the strengthening of freedom and human dignity in the world through a successful expansion of the Humanitarian Parole program of the United States.

Mission

To support the unprecedented expansion of Humanitarian Parole in the United States by pioneering and refining an Employment-Supported Resettlement model, starting in the state of Minnesota with the displaced peoples of Ukraine.

Values

Gratitude. We consider it a privilege to be able to help, and hold immense gratitude that we may be able to make lives better for our people.

Respect. We approach every person with interact it, inside and outside of our organization, with fundamental human dignity.

Transparency. We are up front and honest in our interactions. We do not promise what we cannot do, and we keep our word when we give it.

Duty. We recognize that our responsibility is much larger than our selves, and we approach the work ahead of us with a sense of duty.

Tenacity. We will not give up on important problems easily. We will see the mission through to the end.

Efficiency. If there's a better way to do it, that's the way we'll do it.

Goals & Plans of Action

The American Service will emphasize these goals for the first half of 2023. Goals and plans of action are subject to adjustment per recommendation from a newly established board of directors.

1. Determine practical monthly capacity.

The American Service doesn't have the ability to determine its monthly resettlement capacity at the moment. This is partly due to the scalability of the organization's Employment-Supported Resettlement model. Several criteria, either alone or in combination, can define a limit:

- Processing capacity of staff members
- Employment options
- Housing availability
- Capacity on inbound airplanes
- Funding available
- Government-imposed limits

All except the last appear to be solvable through scale, and the last is highly unlikely in the next two years, as the Biden Administration has been unwavering in its support of the humanitarian parole program for Ukraine, at least. There are several smaller possible limiters, even less likely. For example: running out of American filers for the form I-134a, or being unable to find used cars for sale. Then, there are unforeseen factors that may prove to be limiters.

Plan of Action: Continue work at full speed, utilizing all available resources, while tracking potentially limiting factors. The American Service will march ahead, assuming that we can continue to scale through the additional of staff members, securing more housing units, et cetera. We shall only slow down or consider a limit when an immovable limit actually presents itself.

2. Raise funds.

As of January 15, 2023, the American Service has nearly \$250,000 in funding in our 501c3 nonprofit bank account to perform our work. This is enough to operate our ESR model at its current pace until mid-March 2023. Thankfully, an estimated 80% of expenses are likely to be recovered through discounted rent payments by program beneficiaries, but this is repaid on a three-month cycle. This creates an urgent need to focus on fundraising, so as to continue to grow our work.

To progress at its current pace throughout the first half of 2023, the American Service require a projected total of \$3,755,000 in funds. Specifically:

- \$1,950,000 to secure six-month leases for up to 500 bedrooms, at a maximum rate of \$650 per month per bedroom.
 - \$1,657,500 (85%) recovery expected through beneficiary rent payments.
- \$180,000 to add up to 15 staff for a six-month period in Poland and Ukraine.
- \$150,000 to add up to 5 staff for a six-month period in Minnesota.
- \$125,000 to add 25 or more large-capacity vehicles to organization's fleet.
- \$850,000 to offer up to 1,000 travel loans for qualified candidates.
- \$40,000 to recruit up to 1,000 additional I-134a filers.
- \$200,000 to create 5 English language centers inside of Ukraine.
- \$20,000 to explore expansion to Latin American parole-eligible countries.
- \$90,000 to fund video storytelling program.
- \$150,000 to compensate Executive Director for 2023 in full.

Plan: The American Service will pursue funding for \$3,755,000 through four sources: foundations, individuals, employers, and government.

For foundations, the American Service will approach the foundations who have already supported us, and those who have expressed support in the past. This will be done through direct contact and requests for meetings to present the organization's strategic plan and needs.

Certain foundations will be prioritized in outreach:

- those who have contributed to the American Service in the past

- those not primarily based on donor-advised funds, and who make direct investments in projects
- those with a history of investing in individual empowerment projects
- those with a connection to a corporation or other large-scale employer

We aim to raise 40% of our needed funds through foundation grants.

For individuals, we will likewise rely on past donors and their advocacy to build our network of possible donors. We will prioritize larger contributions, as the effort to collect smaller donations may fast outpace the monetary benefit of that effort, and will likely require the hiring of additional staff or consultants. In conjunction with the foundation approach, we will focus on presenting our plans to the benefit of donor-advised fund managers, who may be able to motivate funding from the clients.

We aim to raise 20% of our needed funds from individual contributions.

For employers, we shall focus on the companies that benefit most from our employment-supported resettlement model. These companies are saving money on recruiting, and avoiding the major expense of an unfilled position. Therefore, it makes sense for them to contribute financially to our project, both as a way of sharing the benefit they receive from our work, and to motivate further cooperation. Employers who contribute to our organization, provided that they are verifiably good companies to work for and well-suited for the needs of our beneficiaries, will be given priority in job placements.

We aim to raise 35% of our needed funds from employers. This proportion will likely be targeted for significant expansion in the latter half of 2023.

For government, we are actively pursuing involvement in the Matching Grant program offered by the federal government's Office of Refugee Resettlement. This program has the benefit of offering \$2 for every \$1 raised in private donations, provided these donations go towards certain resettlement needs.

The major drawbacks of this governmental funding are pace and complexity. The funding provided, if any, would come on a quarterly basis, meaning the earliest possible eligibility for

receiving funds would be in the month of April. Our work is having to move much faster than that, with over a hundred arrivals expected before the first of that month. Scarcity is an issue, as these programs are notably underfunded, and distributed through a wide range of national partners, who are all mostly guessing as to where this funding will be needed. If a region is underfunded or overfunded, correction between funding per region takes time and attention, both of which are already in short supply for all parties involved. From work with Minnesotan agencies involved in this funding mechanism, the impression is that there are far fewer slots available than demand. Moreover, the funding provided is not all that substantial.

Nonetheless, we aim to raise 5% of our needed funds from governmental sources. This may seem like an insignificant portion, but the main goal here is to be included at all in some form of government funding. This may open the way for much larger investments from the federal level in the coming months.

NOTE ON PUBLIC-RELATED INVESTMENTS (PRIs)

The American Service recently became aware of an innovative funding mechanism termed “Public-related Investments” which provide some marked advantages for donors and recipients alike. These can be studied on the vennfoundation.org website. While traditional grants usually have the advantage of simplicity, PRIs may be a preferred route of contribution for some donors. If so, we will be happy to work within this funding mechanism.

3. Expand housing stock.

The single biggest expense for the American Service is also the most fundamental need for our beneficiaries: initial housing. “Initial” is used here to describe housing that is temporary in nature, and heavily discounted, so as to allow our beneficiaries the chance to save their earnings to secure their own housing.

We measure by the bedroom, with each bedroom assumed to be double-occupancy permitted by law. The duration of housing is usually a minimum of two whole calendar months, meaning the average stay is between sixty to ninety days, depending on date of arrival within a given month. This method allows us to make housing arrangements more accurately, with minimal unoccupied time. Larger rooms are double-occupied first, before putting two people into a smaller room. For families, either large rooms are provided, or the family is required to rent multiple rooms.

The American Service enters into formal agreements with housing providers under the following terms:

- the house must be safe and clean
- the American Service must have discretion to place people in these houses after our due diligence, and upon notification of the owner
- the American Service can either pay a substantial portion of the six-month lease at the onset of the agreement, or in another payment format agreeable to both parties

Our best housing partner so far has been North Bay Companies, who have offered over fifty units for use by our program, all near the University of Minnesota. Moreover, they have shown a great willingness to help and be flexible as our program gets used to this new model of providing initial housing.

Plan of Action: The American Service aims to secure \$1,950,000 to secure six-month leases for up to 500 bedrooms, at a maximum rate of \$650 per month per bedroom.

With this funding in place, the American Service will reach out to companies who — like North Bay Companies — have multiple unoccupied units in the Dinkytown area of Minneapolis, and offer a flat rate of \$500 per bedroom. If the rooms are of exceptional quality, a rate of up to a maximum of \$650 may be offered per bedroom.

The American Service then will offer these bedrooms to our program beneficiaries at a cost of up to \$400 per person. For smaller rooms, or those of lesser quality, the price may be further reduced. American Service has gathered substantial experience in the administration of this housing system through our work over the past year.

500 bedrooms will enable us to house between 1,000 and 3,000 individuals over the coming half year. We are confident that, with housing in place and possible recruitment of a staff member assigned specifically to this, we will be able to secure 500 bedrooms for in under three weeks.

4. Expand staff in Poland and Ukraine.

Our office in Wrocław, Poland, is central to our model as it applies to Ukrainian beneficiaries. This office began in early December, and currently hosts two staff members who are Ukrainian nationals. They serve as the organization's intake and outreach officers, and are responsible for marketing our program through social media, reviewing introduction form submissions, vetting and advancing eligible candidates, and facilitating paperwork for all candidates approved by the Minnesota office.

Their individual workload is immense and while they are facing this challenge bravely, it is wise for the organization to recruit further staff members to facilitate. The office is physically located in a central shopping mall in the city of Wrocław, which allows for quick expansion if more space is needed to seat more staff.

Plan of Action: The American Service aims to secure \$180,000 to add up to 15 staff for a six-month period for in-person positions in Poland and remote positions within Ukraine.

With this funding in place, the American Service will put out a job posting, through a process that we have already refined in our first round of hiring that secured our two current Poland-based staff members. Per our policy, we will prioritize hiring members from the community being served, which in this case will be Ukrainian nationals.

Of the 15 new staff members:

- 1 will be assigned to social media marketing
- 2 will be assigned to initial contact and answering questions
- 9 will be assigned to interviewing and vetting
- 3 will be assigned to USCIS paperwork processing and coordination with US-side filers.

The two current staff members in the Wrocław office will gain supervisory responsibilities and commensurate increase in pay.

5. Expand staff in Minnesota.

The paid Minnesota staff currently consists of 1.5 FTEs. Sofiia Rudenko, an Ukrainian national, is our full-time Minnesota Director, whose importance to the program is hard to overstate. She is the de facto leader of the Ukrainian community developed by our program, both in Minnesota and in Europe. Supporting her is Taras Zhmurko, working in a part-time capacity, and the only authorized driver in our organization. He is also the first Home Depot employee through our organization.

The Minnesota office needs to be further developed, to complement the much greater needs facing our beneficiary population in the coming weeks and months.

Plan of Action: The American Service aims to secure \$150,000 to add up to 5 staff for a six-month period in Minnesota.

Of the 5 new staff members:

- 1 will be assigned to growing and maintaining our housing stock.
- 1 will be assigned to growing and maintaining our employer connections.
- 1 will be assigned to oversee our vehicle fleet, and provide transportation services as needed. This person will ideally be a CDL license holder.
- 1 will be the Deputy Minnesota Director, assisting Sofiia Rudenko. This person will be responsible for financial accounting within the organization.
- 1 will be the Deputy Executive Director, assisting Aswar Rahman. This person will spearhead our marketing plan.

All new staff members will be required to be proficient in English and either Ukrainian or Russian. The average starting salary will be \$48,000 plus medical benefits.

6. Expand transportation fleet.

The Minnesota program has made excellent use of our one organization-owned vehicle, nicknamed “Grace” after the granddaughter of a generous donor. Grace seats 7 people, and has enabled our organization to rapidly connect newcomers to employment opportunities.

As demands on our organization skyrocket, we will need to scale up our fleet of available vehicles.

Plan of Action: The American Service aims to secure \$125,000 to add 25 or more large-capacity vehicles to organization’s fleet.

Vehicles will hold an average of nine passengers, combining mostly passenger vans with shuttle buses and — if a CDL driver is hired — a full-size school bus.

Vehicles will be purchased primarily as much as possible through warrantied used car dealers, such as Erik’s Auto on Lake Street in South Minneapolis. Vehicles will be tested before purchase. Gasoline and basic maintenance costs will be covered by small payments from program beneficiaries who use the vehicles. Vehicle use will be largely limited to work commutes, airport pickups, occasional trips to purchase essentials, and occasional field trips for our beneficiaries’ enrichment.

Each vehicle will be resold if and when the program deems them surplus to needs. By this method, we expect to recoup at least 50% of the cost of purchase of these vehicles.

7. Trial flight loans.

In certain cases, a strategic offer a partial or full flight loan has potential to greatly strengthen our program and our beneficiary community. The American Service would like to be able to offer travel flight loans to exceptional candidates, or to help cover part of the expense for families with children.

Plan of Action: The American Service aims to secure \$850,000 to offer up to 1,000 travel loans for qualified candidates.

With this funding in place, the American Service will establish formal criteria for travel loan eligibility. (These conversations are already underway, but at an entirely theoretical level.) Once criteria are established, requests for flight loans will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Approval will be required from the Executive Director for final disbursement. The recipient will have to sign a separate promissory note, including a payment timeline to cover the cost of the loan.

Travel loans will be limited to \$850 maximum, which is the average high for ticket prices from Poland to Minnesota. Very few cases will merit full loans. More often, the American Service will offer loans to cover a portion of the flight cost. The fiscal resilience of each loan recipient will be additionally scrutinized to ensure likelihood of timely and full repayment.

Each loan repayment will include a \$85 fee in excess of the loan amount. While we anticipate a 90% on-time loan repayments, this additional fee should recover the full amount invested into our loan program, without creating undue burden on our beneficiaries. Payment will be received through electronic methods, further reducing administration and processing costs.

8. Recruit I-134a filers.

The I-134a form is filed with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to begin the humanitarian immigration process for an Ukrainian beneficiary. This form must be filed by an American resident, and generally requires proof of financial stability, record of tax payment, and proof of legal status in the United States. Each applicant is generally limited to filing for 6-10 Ukrainian individuals.

Finding eligible filers for this form has been a constant necessity for the American Service, and this need will only grow as the scale of the program grows.

Plan of Action: The American Service aims to secure \$40,000 to recruit up to 1,000 additional I-134a filers.

With this funding in place, the American Service will launch a marketing campaign (see “Establish Brand and Build Network” goal and plan below) to specifically target young professionals who wish to support Ukrainians but are not able or confident in their ability to provide traditional sponsorship.

The expenses related to this campaign include in-person events, which are essential to trust-building, and the associated location and basic food and drink costs. There is a lot of convincing and schmoozing involved with this phase, but it helps cover one of the most fundamental needs of our organization.

9. Continually refine intake systems.

The American Service is outstanding in its ability to adapt, and we know we are in the relative calm before the storm. As we take on the sheer numerical challenge of the coming weeks and months, we are going to ensure that our internal systems — particularly systems related to intake and processing in Poland — are continually refined.

Plan of Action: The Executive Director of the American Service will take responsibility for continually assessing and optimizing our internal systems, and providing remedies to make the work easier on our team, and the experience better for our beneficiaries.

10. Establish functioning board of directors and bookkeeping methods.

The American Service has focused so much on its work that certain administrative bases have been left uncovered. While this has not caused problems so far, the time has come for us to establish (1) a functioning board of directors, and (2) bookkeeping methods.

Both of these will allow us to create the stable internal conditions necessary to better address the volatile conditions in the refugee resettlement sphere.

Plan of Action: The American Service will attempt to resolve both these administrative needs at once by recruiting Board Directors with financial management experience.

The total number of board members is to be limited to five. The composition of the five-member board will ideally be this:

- The Executive Director of the organization.
- A representative of the Ukrainian beneficiary community.
- An member of a major corporation with financial management experience.
- Another member of a major corporation with financial management experience.
- A former executive or other strategic thinker who can help refine our long-term plans.

All board members will be unpaid, though expenses related to their board functions may be reimbursed.

11. Establish English language centers inside Ukraine.

English language centers (ELCs) are the American Service's forward operating centers, where prospective beneficiaries can be tested and certified for their English language ability. Then, they are encouraged to take classes to advance to the next level, regardless of their determined ability. Should they pursue further training, American Service personnel become more and more familiar with the prospective beneficiary, which may then lead to enrollment in our employment-supported resettlement model.

Of all recruitment and introduction methods we have tested as an organization, centers dedicated specifically to English language training have proven to be the most robust and effective. This is due to a few factors:

- ELCs help determine the English ability of prospective beneficiaries, which is directly related to their likelihood of successful resettlement in the United States.
- ELCs can measure the work ethic, punctuality, determination, attitude, and level of personal accountability of prospective beneficiaries, which is directly related to their employability.
- ELCs quickly build trust with local populations of eligible prospective beneficiaries, as they are providing a direct and necessary service in the form of English language training.

Moreover, ELCs are cost-effective, usually requiring only one or two staff members, who themselves can be found from the region's English instructor community. Also, ELCs are inherently positive institutions, even outside of their function as recruitment centers for the American Service. English language training is a valuable resource to be shared.

Plan of Action: The American Service aims to secure \$200,000 to establish 5 English language centers inside of Ukraine.

With this funding in place, the American Service will establish an ELC in five key urban centers in Ukraine, including one each in the cities of Kyiv and Lviv. The other three cities will be determined based on a fast but thorough assessment of conditions on the ground, and the safety and connectivity considerations of any staff who work at these ELCs.

ELCs will be built for a six-month span. If generally successful, they will receive further funding.

12. Test viability of model with other parole-eligible populations.

The United States is significantly expanding the humanitarian parole program. The program was adapted during the Afghan emergency of early 2022, before being expanded to Ukrainians. There are developments indicating the expansion of the humanitarian parole program to an even larger number of countries and crises, but the ones confirmed so far have been to four Latin American countries: Haiti, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Cuba.

The American Service has been meeting a need in the humanitarian parole sphere that no other organizations have been willing and/or able to address. As such, we carry a responsibility to at least test whether or not our work may be applicable in the alleviation of suffering and the creation of opportunities for other parole-eligible populations.

Plan of Action: The American Service aims to secure \$20,000 to explore expansion to Latin American parole-eligible countries.

With this funding in place, the Executive Director of the American Service will replicate the early stages of the process that led to the creation of the program for Ukrainians. This will involve travel to key cities in the nations *adjacent* to the nations suffering humanitarian crises, whose populations are now eligible under parole. As of the time of writing, the plan is to make information-gathering visits to the following four cities:

1. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, to assess applicability to the crisis in Haiti.
2. Cartagena, Colombia, to assess applicability to the crisis in Venezuela.
3. San José, Costa Rica, to assess applicability to the crisis in Nicaragua.
4. San Diego, California, to assess applicability to the crisis in Cuba and for all eligible Latin American populations in general.

These four visits are to be performed in a circuit, so as to save money on return tickets. Each location will be visited for a few days, with the express purpose of meeting with local refugee service providers and English language instructors. In-person introductions have to led to significantly more and stronger partnerships in Ukraine, and are expected to lead to the same here.

The funding amount includes a budget to facilitate travel for a videomaker, so as to create stories from this trip that can be used for fundraising, whether for our organization at large, or for a Latin American expansion in particular, or a combination of the two.

A report will be presented to the staff, board, and donors at our first annual gathering of these three groups, likely in the last week of February, 2023. A decision will be made collectively as to whether or not we will expand our program from the Ukrainians to eligible Latin Americans. If approved, the Executive Director will develop an efficient plan that builds on the lessons learned from the Ukrainian experiences so far.

13. Build brand.

The American Service, in our single-minded dedication to the work before us, has been an admittedly poor advocate for itself. The establishment and enactment of this strategic plan — the first for our organization — provides an opportunity to invest in our brand, tell our story better, and thus expand our network of supporters, advocates, funders, and the like.

Video-based storytelling is likely to be the most effective route available for the rapid brand- and narrative-building our organization needs. As a media format, it is demonstrably far more effective than other means of communication. It is also especially well-suited for organic propagation, which will likely save our organization significant expenses that would otherwise be dedicated towards paid advertising methods.

Plan of Action: The American Service aims to secure \$90,000 to fund video storytelling program.

The Executive Director of the organization is professionally a digital content director, and as such has cost-effective options in the local production community. The Executive Director already has a standing commercial agreement with M&D Media Productions LLC in Minneapolis, Minnesota, whose excess capacity will be redirected towards the American Service at a significantly discounted rate. At the time of this writing, this work is already under way, from the Executive Director's personal budget.

The products of these video projects will establish the base of our brand as a warm and determined organization who like to cut to the chase of refugee resettlement by providing initial housing, early needs, and pathways to middle-class jobs with great companies. The brand assets that are usually necessary for print literature and static media will be developed from the needs associated with video production. Audience targeting will be achieved through organic push strategies inside of our existing audience of passionate supporters, donors, and other advocates. Part of this budget will be used to experiment with paid advertising routes, though this will be a more central part of our brand- and network-building plan in the latter half of 2023.

Timeline

JANUARY

13-22 — This strategic plan is drafted.

23-31 — Plan is refined through consultation with stakeholders.

FEBRUARY

1 - 28 — Fundraising period. See Goal #2's Plan of Action for details.

MARCH

1 — Executive Director purchases additional cars.

1 - 15 — Staff hired in Europe and Minnesota

1 - 30 — Executive Director recruits I-134a filers using low- or no-cost methods. These strategies will be augmented by raised funds starting in March.

1 - 30 — Housing stock is greatly expanded, through meetings with rental companies open to six-month multi-tenant leases.

APRIL

1 — First flight loans are offered.

2 - 28 — Executive Director travels into Ukraine and establishes English language centers.

MAY

15 - 30 — Executive Director travels to Latin America to determine viability of program there.

JUNE

15-29 — Assess effectiveness and develop 2023 latter half strategic plan.

Late in month — Presentation to the board at an organizational dinner on outcome of this strategic plan, and proposal for a strategic plan for the latter half of 2023.

Monitoring

Transparency has been a central value for the American Service since its inception in a wartime environment. We fast discovered that clear, kind, and unreserved communication helped our team adapt quicker and respond better to our ever-changing circumstances. Moreover, it created a more democratic environment, where hierarchies were only enacted when useful, and all members were invited to contribute to the direction of our team. In the execution of this strategic plan, we will continue to live up to this organizational principle of transparency.

The progress of this strategic plan will be monitored through a combination of constant internal evaluation and periodic stakeholder presentations. The main presentation for the benefit of non-staff stakeholders will be during a dinner hosted at the end of June 2023 (see “Timeline” above) with board of directors and all substantial stakeholders represented.

Weekly internal meetings will revisit this strategic plan to assess progress and respond to changing circumstances. The American Service team reserves the right to adjust our plan if it leads to better outcomes for the Humanitarian Parolees we serve. Any substantial change must be defensible, and has to be justified, at the June dinner.

Note from Executive Director on Compensation

“The development of the American Service through 2022 required sacrifice from all my team members. Mine had a major financial element. While I had a successful digital consulting business at the start of 2022, now at the start of 2023 I am sad to say that business has dwindled down to just one client. All my cash reserves went to the cause, and my available workable hours have been poured into our mission of refugee resettlement and support for our Ukrainian friends.

I am torn between these two routes to rebuild my personal financial strength: either through refocusing on growing my digital consultancy client list, or by requesting a portion of the budget to cover about 60% of my general income, so that I may meet my obligations and support my family. I am following this latter route, as my full attention will lead, I believe, to a far greater success for our organization.”

Summary

Our unwritten motto as an organization has been what Hannibal said when told about the impossibility of crossing the Alps into Italy: *aut viam inveniam, aut faciam*. We add a “*nos*” at the start to say, “We will either find a way, or make one.” This strategic plan asks for help, but rest assured that our work will march forward whether that external help arrives or not.

For all those who wish to support us in our work, we aim to return their investment in time, energy, and money manifold in humanitarian impact. We have, through our Employment-Supported Resettlement model, made something out of next to nothing. Our families currently all have jobs, housing, and a way to rebuild their lives. In a short time, they will be funding the rebuilding of their homeland.

This is the way forward when it comes to addressing the fundamental shifts in America’s immigration systems, and the several humanitarian crises affecting — and which will continue to affect — the world. We are ready. We are already marching. We could use your help.

All potential funders, filers, or friends who would like to be part of the American Service are encouraged to begin a conversation via email with Aswar Rahman, Executive Director of the American Service, at mail@aswar.us.

###