Refugee Cash Assistance

Evaluation of the Public/Private Partnership Model for the Minnesota Department of Human Services

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Consultant's Report

Refugee Cash Assistance

Evaluation of the Public/Private Partnership Model for the Minnesota Department of Human Services

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Prepared by:
Paul Anton, Alexandra (Sandi) Pierce, and Allen Burns

Wilder Research
1295 Bandana Boulevard North, Suite 210
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55108
651-647-4600
www.wilder.org

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Section I: Executive summary

This study is an evaluation of the new Public/Private Partnership (PPP) model instituted to distribute Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) in eight counties of Minnesota beginning in October 2003. The RCA program provides cash assistance to non-disabled refugee adults and childless couples during their first eight months in the U.S. while they work toward self-sufficiency. One goal of the program is to help participants secure employment as soon as possible. To that end, RCA recipients are required to participate in Refugee Employment Services (RES) in order to retain their eligibility for aid.

Prior to October 2003, RCA in Minnesota had been administered solely by counties as part of their administration of other kinds of aid, such as the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP). New federal policies permitted states to develop partnerships with voluntary agencies (VOLAGs) to administer RCA, since VOLAGs already provided Reception and Placement Services (R&P) during refugees' first 90 days in the state. The new PPP-RCA model seemed to be a promising change in RCA administration. It was hoped that the close connection of refugees to voluntary agencies and the coordination of R&P and RCA staff within the voluntary agencies would enhance the continuity of service to refugees and produce better employment outcomes during RCA participation.

This study uses formal quantitative and statistical techniques to answer research questions relating to early employment, time in the RCA program, subsequent use of General Assistance, and continuity of service. Data on RCA participants who received services from the voluntary agencies under the new partnership model were compared to data on participants who received RCA from the eight counties during the two years prior to the change. Thus, Period 1, from October 2001 through September 2003, is the comparison period; Period 2, from October 2003 through September 2005, is the period for which new partnership model results are analyzed.

This study also includes a benefit-cost assessment of the new PPP-RCA model. Additional qualitative evidence was collected to guide and complement the quantitative analysis and to provide added perspective on the impact of the new model.

Findings

The main analysis is focused around five questions. Additional analysis, both quantitative and qualitative, was done for the largest subgroups of refugees and data on the individual voluntary agencies who provide RCA services.

Basic questions

1. To what extent does each model (county distribution of RCA versus the PPP-RCA distribution) result in rapid early employment of participants?

   - The PPP-RCA model appears to lead to significantly more RCA participants gaining early employment. The new model accounts for approximately 80 percent of the improvement in share of refugees finding early jobs in Period 2.

   - The PPP-RCA model appears to have increased the average amount of time for RCA recipients to find their first employment, although the data do not permit us to ascertain why. Actually, the average time to the first job was approximately equal in the two periods, but we estimate that the effect of the new model was offset by changes in the nationality mix and gender distribution of recipients.

   - Since the new model began, refugees have had more sustained employment lasting beyond RCA eligibility and they have earned an average of 54.5 percent more in total wages for the two years following their entry into the United States. Most of the increase appears to be due to more sustained employment.

2. To what extent does each model impact the length of time a participant receives RCA?

   - The average number of days on RCA declined in the period following implementation of PPP-RCA (Period 2). The data are inconclusive as to whether this result is due to the new model of delivery or to other factors.

3. To what extent does each model impact the receipt of General Assistance?

   - The PPP-RCA model significantly reduced the subsequent use of General Assistance by people who reached the end of their RCA eligibility period. We estimate that approximately 60 percent of the reduction in General Assistance use by Period 2 participants is attributable to the new model.

4. To what extent does each model impact the continuity of service between Reception and Placement Services (R&P) and receipt of RCA?

   - The new model significantly improved the continuity of service to refugees. Refugees received earlier and more continuous income support under the new model and had better communications with voluntary agency staff to solve problems.

5. To what extent could the PPP-RCA model be viewed as a "best practice" approach from an outcome perspective and a cost-benefit perspective for serving new refugees nationwide?

   - When compared to the previous county-based method for distributing RCA, the new partnership model returns an estimated $4.66 of benefits for each dollar of added cost.

- We believe that the Public/Private Partnership model as implemented in Minnesota should be deemed a "promising practice" since the data presented here show that it produces better outcomes than the previous model. If more data and subsequent studies confirm its positive effects over time, it may come to be considered a "best practice."

Group results by nationality

Analysis of disaggregated information for the largest subgroups was also undertaken and outcomes under the new model were compared to the outcomes produced from the old model used in Period 1. Those five groups were Somali, Ethiopians, Liberians, Russians, and, in the second period only, Hmong.

- Somalis had greater success in finding early employment under PPP-RCA than in the earlier model, 18.2 percent versus 8.2 percent, and the average length of time to find their first jobs fell dramatically. Somalis had somewhat less English fluency and less education than the average RCA recipient during Period 2.

- Ethiopians' success in finding early employment more than doubled under the new model, to 32.4 percent from 14.7 percent earlier. They were the most successful group at finding jobs during Period 2, though their educational attainment and language skills were close to the average for all RCA recipients.

- Liberians also had good success in finding early employment under the new model, 30.7 percent from 22.2 percent. They also spent the least time, on average, in RCA and made the least use of General Assistance following completion of RCA. Relative to other RCA users, they were much more likely to have completed high school. They also had much greater fluency in English, though their dialect and accent may have somewhat reduced the positive impact of their language skills.

- Russian RCA recipients found jobs with greater frequency under the new model, 25.0 percent versus 6.1 percent in the two years before PPP. Part of this improvement is likely to have been the result of the higher education of the Russian participants during Period 2; over 20 percent had college degrees. Very few Russians spoke English when they entered the United States but, with their higher education level, they may have acquired language skills relatively quickly.

- There were no Hmong recipients during Period 1. Hmong who received RCA during Period 2 had the greatest challenges and the poorest outcomes of any group. Only 10.5 percent found jobs during RCA, less than half the average for all recipients. Those who found jobs took longer to do so, and a higher percentage ended up using General Assistance after their eight months of RCA eligibility were finished.

Information on VOLAGs

This is an evaluation of how RCA was administered by voluntary agencies under the PPP-RCA model compared to the earlier county-based model. To provide additional perspective on how and why outcomes were different under the PPP-RCA model, we examined data on the range of employment and other outcomes experienced by refugees served by different VOLAGs. In the information that is presented, numbers or letters are used to avoid identifying the individual VOLAGs.

■ There was substantial variation in the outcomes for refugees served by the different agencies. There was especially wide variation in the percentages of their clients finding work during RCA, the average length of time to first job, subsequent use of General Assistance, and also in the average length of time in the country before their RCA cases were opened.

■ Even when the outcomes for specific nationality groups were compared across different agencies, substantial variation remained in employment outcomes and use of General Assistance.

■ All of the voluntary agencies refer clients to RES providers, but some VOLAGs also provide clients with the option of receiving RES services from within their own agency. The results for the external RES providers were significantly better than those for internal providers, but we cannot be sure whether the improvement was the result of better services or of other factors such as the mix of clients.

Recommendations

A final section of the report is devoted to recommendations that flow out of the quantitative analysis and the qualitative investigation. These include:

■ Continue the new Public/Private Partnership model of RCA distribution.

■ Within the general model, continue promising practices in the areas of application for RCA, over-the-counter distribution, cooperation between R&P and RCA staff, economic incentives, and combining school with RES participation in the first few months of RCA participation.

■ Consider and explore some specific possible changes that might potentially enhance the overall effectiveness of RCA administration.

Section II: Introduction

Overview of refugee assistance

The *Refugee Act of 1980* (Pub. L. No. 96-212) was enacted to provide for the effective resettlement of refugees, asylees, and other special populations and to assist them in achieving economic self-sufficiency as soon as possible after their arrival to the United States. The *Refugee Act of 1980* provided the following definition of a refugee, which can be found in the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) at section 101(a)(42):

> ....any person who is outside any country of such person's nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion.[1]

The Refugee Act made provision for regular flow as well as emergency admission of refugees, authorized federal assistance for the resettlement of refugees, and provided the legal basis for today's refugee assistance programs. The Act also provided the foundation for today's asylum adjudication process and the establishment of the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) and the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The HHS is responsible for the domestic program of refugee resettlement services provided during a refugee's first five years in the United States. These programs include cash and medical assistance, employment assistance, and other social services to help refugees transition to life in the United States. Within HHS, the ORR provides funding and assists in the coordination of refugee service programs offered through state governments and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Through grants to the states, NGOs, and other organizations, the ORR assists states in implementing programs that ensure refugees are employed as soon as possible after their arrival so that they can gain economic self-sufficiency and become established members of their new communities.

In Minnesota, the Resettlement Programs Office (RPO), also known as the State Refugee Coordinator's Office, is responsible for ensuring the effective coordination of public and private resources and administering refugee resettlement programs, as mandated by the ORR. The goal of the RPO is to ensure that individuals and families resettling in Minnesota are successful in meeting their basic needs and becoming contributing Minnesota citizens.

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[1]   INA § 101(a)(42)(a); 8 USC § 1101(a)(42)(a)

Minnesota's refugee service delivery system includes voluntary agencies (VOLAGs), counties, mutual assistance agencies (MAAs), faith-based organizations, and other not-for-profit agencies.

The Refugee Cash Assistance program

Due to the circumstances in which many refugees leave their native countries, they generally enter the United States without income or assets with which to support themselves. Transitional cash assistance benefits are provided to refugees on the basis of family composition.

Refugees who are ineligible for other cash assistance programs such as the Minnesota Family Investment Program/Diversionary Work Program (MFIP/DWP) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are eligible for Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) for up to eight months after arrival to the United States.[2] An RCA unit consists of a single adult or a childless couple. The goal of RCA is for participants to become employed as soon as possible. Refugees receiving RCA are automatically eligible for Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA, a federally authorized medical assistance program) if they are not eligible for the state's Medical Assistance program.

In Minnesota, the RCA assistance standards are currently $250 per month for a one-person unit and $437 for a two-person unit. To be eligible for RCA, refugees must also 1) have been in the United States less than eight months; 2) provide the name of their Voluntary Resettlement Agency (VOLAG) and give consent to contact the agency; 3) not have voluntarily quit employment or refused an offer of suitable employment without good cause within 30 days prior to application; and 4) not be enrolled in the VOLAG's Matching Grant (MG) program. In addition, refugees must register for Refugee Employment Services (RES) with the authorized RES provider of their choice within 30 days and participate in RES activities.[3] RCA participants must accept an offer of suitable employment from any source and participate in any social services programs included in their employment plan, including English language instruction. If they are receiving any earned income, RCA participants are required to submit a monthly Household Report Form (HRF) that is used to determine their continued RCA eligibility.

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[2] This report section based on: Minnesota Department of Human Services. (2005). *MDHS Combined Manual: Chapter 30, Refugee Resettlement Program (ML 134)*. Retrieved on March 27, 2007 from http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_FILE&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&Rendition=Primary&allowInterrupt=1&noSaveAs=1&dDocName=dhs_id_048195.

[3] Those that are exempt include refugees that are: employed at least 30 hours per week, age 60 or over, temporarily or permanently ill or disabled, responsible for the care of a spouse who is ill or disabled, or experiencing a personal or family crisis as determined by the VOLAG.

The PPP-RCA model

To meet the unique needs of newly arrived refugees in the United States, the ORR issued final rules regarding the RCA program on March 22, 2000. The new regulations allowed for the establishment of the RCA program as a public-private partnership between states and local VOLAGs that were responsible for the initial Reception and Placement (R&P) of refugees. Under this new program (PPP-RCA), states could enter into a public-private partnership by contracting with VOLAGs providing local R&P services to refugees, to administer both the provision of RCA and the services needed to help participants become employed and self-sufficient within the RCA eligibility period. The new regulations were implemented to ensure continuity of service from initial resettlement to economic self-sufficiency.

In January 2003, the ORR approved Minnesota's plan to establish the public-private partnership (PPP-RCA) model in eight counties (Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott, Washington, and Olmsted) effective October 1, 2003. More than 95 percent of the refugees who have been resettled in Minnesota reside in these counties. Olmsted County is the only participating county that is not in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. The remaining 79 counties are not involved in PPP-RCA, and RCA application processing and RCA services continue to be through their county offices.

Under the new model, secondary migrants would be referred to a VOLAG by the Lead RCA Eligibility Coordinator, housed at International Institute of Minnesota, since they had received R&P services elsewhere. The VOLAGs participating in PPP-RCA at implementation were:

> Catholic Charities, Winona Diocese, Rochester, MN
> Catholic Charities, SPM, St. Paul, MN
> International Institute of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN
> Jewish Family and Children's Services of Minneapolis, Minneapolis, MN
> Jewish Family Service, St. Paul, MN
> Lutheran Social Services, Minneapolis, MN
> Minnesota Council of Churches, Minneapolis, MN
> World Relief, Richfield, MN

The PPP-RCA model for RCA distribution was expected to have several benefits. The State determined that the new model made programmatic sense because it ensures a continuity of assistance from initial resettlement to self-sufficiency. Because RCA would be provided by the same VOLAG that assisted the refugee at arrival, it was expected that fragmentation of services would be minimal. In addition to distributing cash assistance, VOLAGs would ensure that RCA participants are participating in and receiving appropriate employment services from the RES provider. It was also expected that because refugees

develop a trust relationship with the VOLAG during the process of reception and placement, they will be more likely to ask questions and seek help when they encountered problems in becoming self-sufficient or when they were uncertain about requirements or processes.

Policy changes from Period 1 to Period 2

A number of policy changes were implemented with the new PPP-RCA model or in the two-year period following implementation, which are shown in the table below.

1. Changes in Refugee Cash Assistance processes and policies, Period 1 to Period 2

	Period 1	Period 2
Application for RCA	CAF filed with the Human Service agency in the county of residence.	CAF filed at the VOLAG. RCA Eligibility Coordinator (EC) immediately faxes page 1 to the county.[4]
Review	County financial worker (FW) completes an intake interview with the refugee and reviews CAF and verifications to determine eligibility.	EC completes an intake interview with the refugee, reviews CAF and verifications to determine eligibility, and orients the refugee to RCA.[5]
Approval	County FW approves application.	EC approves application, faxes completed CAF to county along with verifications.
RCA issuance	RCA benefits issued via EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer), refugee issued an EBT card.	RCA benefits issued via check, which is mailed to the VOLAG. EC distributes monthly checks to refugees over the counter (OTC).[6]

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[4] New arrivals must file their application with the VOLAG that provided their R&P. Secondary migrants and asylees may file their applications with the county, but the applications are sent to a VOLAG to process their RCA eligibility.

[5] Orientation covers the work incentive/earned income disregard; participants' rights and responsibilities; information about shelters and programs for victims of violence; the Child & Teen Checkup Program available to eligible refugees under age 21; eligibility for health care programs; the necessity to obtain immediate employment; the RES participation requirement and available RES providers; information on volunteering for RES; and sanctions for non-compliance.

[6] OTC issuance was to ensure timely submission of information about employment or household changes and early resolution of any challenges to self-sufficiency. There are two exceptions to this requirement. After the RCA participant has been on RCA for two months, if they are exempt from RES or are employed less than 30 hours per week but have a work schedule that makes it difficult to pick up the check at the VOLAG, their RCA benefits may be issued via an EBT card.

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1. Changes in Refugee Cash Assistance processes and policies, Period 1 to Period 2 (continued)

	Period 1	Period 2
Case maintenance	Refugee submits completed HRF to county, FW responsible for reviewing HRF and confirming RES compliance. FW determines whether eligibility.	Refugee submits completed HRF to VOLAG. The EC confirms RES compliance and determines whether eligible.
	No scheduled case reviews or meetings with the refugee.	EC reviews the case in the 7th month of RCA, then schedules a face-to-face meeting with the refugee to develop an exit plan for when RCA ends.
Other programs	During review of CAF, county diverts refugee to MFIP/DWP or GA if eligible. County responsible for referring refugee to SSI if refugee appears eligible.	EC refers refugee to the county to apply if they appear to be eligible for MFIP/DWP or GA, refers to SSI if refugee appears eligible.
Eligibility	$90 work expense allowed, subtracted from monthly gross earned income when determining net monthly income.	50% of gross earned income is subtracted from monthly gross earned income when determining net monthly income.
	Assistance standard (amount of assistance) for couples is $260.	Assistance standard for couples is $437.
	Resettlement grants counted as income.	Resettlement grants not counted as income.
	Full-time students attending an institution of higher education not eligible for RCA.	Full-time students attending any school (including high school) not eligible for RCA.[7]
	Families and pregnant women not eligible for RCA.	A pregnant woman (and spouse) with no minor children are eligible for RCA until eligible for MFIP/DWP (ineligible for MFIP/ DWP until they meet the 30-day residency requirement).
	Age 65 or older exempt from RES participation.	Age 60 or older exempt from RES participation.
	Asset limit: $1,000	Asset limit: applicant - $2,000; participant - $5,000
	Prospective eligibility test.	No prospective eligibility test.

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[7]   A refugee age 18 or older and without a high school diploma, whose primary language is not English, could attend high school half time and remain eligible for RCA if they also participated in RES activities (Minnesota Department of Human Services *Bulletin* #02-06-01, November 25, 2002).

1. Changes in Refugee Cash Assistance processes and policies, Period 1 to Period 2 (continued)

	Period 1	Period 2
Case closure	FW terminates the case if the refugee is no longer eligible (i.e. eligible for MFIP/DWP, GA or SSI, or does not comply with RES or reporting requirements, or moves out of state, etc.).	EC terminates the case if the refugee is no longer eligible (i.e. eligible for MFIP/DWP, GA or SSI, or does not comply with RES or reporting requirements, or moves out of state, etc.).

Section III: Evaluation methods

Purpose of the evaluation and research questions

As stated earlier, the quantitative research is designed to provide answers to five key questions through statistical analysis of outcomes produced by the Public/ Private Partnership model of Refugee Cash Assistance. Those outcomes are compared with the results produced under the previous model where RCA services were provided by counties. The five key questions are:

1. To what extent does each model result in rapid early employment of participants?

2. To what extent does each model impact the length of time a participant receives RCA?

3. To what extent does each model impact the receipt of General Assistance (GA)?

4. To what extent does each model impact the continuity of service between Resettlement and Placement (R&P) and receipt of RCA?

5. To what extent could the PPP-RCA administered model be viewed as a "best practice approach" from an outcome perspective and a cost-benefit perspective for serving new refugees nationwide?

These questions will be addressed for the RCA population as a whole and, to the extent possible, the first four questions will be addressed for subpopulations, as well. Finally, differences between the outcomes achieved by the VOLAGs in Period 2 will also be investigated. These outcomes include probability of employment before the end of RCA eligibility, length of time to first job, and probability of using GA after completion of RCA.

This evaluation includes both rigorous quantitative analyses to answer the basic research questions and also qualitative analysis to complement the quantitative findings, provide context, and bring additional issues to light. In this section, we summarize the quantitative and qualitative techniques used, detail how the data sample for analysis was formed, and summarize the economic conditions that prevailed during the two periods being studied.

Quantitative methods

Two types of quantitative methods were used to evaluate the outcomes of RCA in the two periods. First, the direct outcomes data were inspected and formal statistical tests of the differences were performed. Then, detailed regression analyses were performed in order to isolate the effect of the change in RCA model from other factors affecting refugee outcomes.

Direct inspection of data on outcomes

The quantitative analysis begins by direct inspection of the outcomes produced by the two models of RCA service delivery in the two study periods. Outcomes measures for employment success, length of time in RCA, and use of GA were calculated and compared for the two periods. For example, the percentage of RCA participants who found early employment in each period was calculated and the results were compared.

Tests of the statistical significance of differences in outcomes were performed using standard analytic techniques. Not only was the percentage of participants finding early employment higher in the second period, the percentage was found to be statistically significant.

However, a demonstration that a certain outcome differed significantly in the first and second periods does not mean that the change was caused by the change to the PPP model of service delivery. An improvement in employment success in the second period could be the result of a number of other factors, including:

- The second period refugees might have had more education, better English proficiency, or more marketable skills.

- The second period pool might have included a greater percentage of ethnic groups who have an easier time finding jobs in the U. S., perhaps because of well-developed networks of previous immigrants.

- The second period jobseekers may have faced stronger local labor market conditions, making it easier for them to find employment in the Twin Cities and Rochester.[8]

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[8] In point of fact, even though the national economy was stronger in the second period, some measures indicate that employment growth in the Twin Cites was actually lower in the second period than in the first period.

Statistical inference strategy to isolate impact of model change

To differentiate between the effects of different factors and to isolate the effect of the change to PPP in the second period under analysis, our general approach is to estimate statistical regression models the form:

$$R_i = bX_i + cY_i + dD_i + ePeriod_i + f_i$$

i represents the ith individual refugee

R_i is an outcomes variable such as days to first employment, length of time receiving RCA, whether or not GA was received

X_i is a vector of individual attributes such as age, gender, years of schooling

Y_i is a vector of external economic variables expressing economic conditions thought to affect the employment experience of immigrants, including both national and regional economic growth and labor market conditions

D_i is a vector of dummy variables (with values of zero or 1) each serving as an indicator of some condition such as whether or not individual i belonged to a certain ethnic group

$Period_i$ is a single dummy variable that differentiates Period 1 from Period 2

f_i is a random error term affecting the ith individual, and

b,c,d,e are vectors of coefficients to be estimated

This general formulation will permit us to estimate separate effects for different relevant factors and to isolate effects of specific interest. The variables in data sets X, Y, and D contain a variety of factors that could be important in explaining the outcomes variable being used as dependent variable, R. In this regression model, the coefficient of the Period variable indicates the estimated size and sign of the effect of the PPP model used in Period 2. If statistical tests show that e is significantly different from zero, we can conclude that the change to PPP had the effect indicated by e.

For example, if we were considering the question of whether or not time to first employment was shorter in Period 2, R_i would be the time variable and $Period_i$ would be the single dummy variable set to equal 0 for all refugees from Period 1 and to equal 1 for all refugees in Period 2. Then if e, the coefficient of that dummy variable, is negative and statistically significant, we can conclude that the PPP model reduced time to first

employment, assuming the rest of the modeling captures the other significant influences on employment outcomes.

Of course, the specification of the different variables included in the particular regression may vary depending upon the question being asked. This type of analysis will be used to help answer the first three questions asked in this study.

Benefit-cost analysis

To assess the overall impact of the PPP model, we conducted a benefit-cost analysis. The analysis applied standard economic tools to the outcomes data from MAXIS and administrative cost data provided separately by the Department of Human Services.

Total administrative costs to the state were compared for Period 1 and Period 2. Payments to counties for RCA were estimated by prorating the payments to counties for all refugee services by percentage of RCA cases in their total case loads. The Period 1 payments to counties had to be scaled up to reflect the increased case load in Period 2 and also were adjusted for inflation to make them more directly comparable. The net added cost for the PPP model was then compared to total benefits.

Benefits were estimated using standard techniques to calculate the added income and reduced public costs resulting from the change to the PPP model. These were:

■ Increased total earnings – the value of added total earnings by refugees in RCA was calculated by comparing their actual total earnings with an estimate of what their total earnings would have been under the old model. This quantity includes both added earnings during RCA eligibility and the increased earnings that they received in roughly the first year following RCA case closure.

■ Net benefits from early employment – the dollar savings from a greater number of people finding jobs during RCA was estimated. Although people did not get off RCA faster under PPP, there was a net savings because when people started working, their earnings went into unit budget calculations and payments were reduced. So it was assumed that RCA payments were cut in half for these extra workers for three months of remaining RCA. This produces a conservative estimate, in our view.[9]

■ Net savings from reduced use of GA – the dollar savings from reduced use of GA by former RCA participants was also estimated. The estimated effect of the PPP program was applied to the Period 2 numbers to estimate how many more people

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[9]   The estimated benefits from the PPP model would have been slightly higher if there had not been a policy change to disregard a somewhat greater portion of workers' incomes in Period 2, but the effect of the policy change on estimated benefits is very small.

would have used GA in their first year after RCA in Period 2 under the old model. It was assumed that each of these added users of GA would receive payments for six months, another conservative assumption. In reality, the possibility exists that payments may extend for a longer period and that additional former RCA participants may begin to use RCA in the future, but we did not have a long enough data series to support a longer assumed payment stream.

The total net benefits of the PPP model were then compared to the total net additional costs of the model.

The sample data

The quantitative analysis makes use of two sets of primary data, RCA case data stored on the MAXIS database at the Department of Human Services, and wage detail data on RCA participants obtained for the Department of Employment and Economic Development.

Maxis data

The MAXIS database is the chief data system that is used for storage of administrative data for RCA and a number of the programs in the Department of Human Services. We received data on all persons registered in RCA during both study periods. The data were stripped out of the MAXIS system after careful evaluation of the different MAXIS data screens and data records that could provide useful information for analysis. In addition to fields that identified different individuals, the data set included information on country of origin, age, marital status, educational attainment, need for English interpretation help, dates of entry to the country, admission and exit to the RCA program, dates of finding work, receipt of GA in subsequent time periods, and other variables of interest.

Initially, we received records of all persons whose personal information had been entered into the Maxis system in the two periods being studied. Initially, the sample included 718 people for Period 1 and 2,476 people for Period 2. However, some adjustments had to be made to that initial sample to form an appropriate data set for analysis.

The most important change was to exclude persons who had not actually received RCA payments. Administrative practices require that all members of a household where someone received RCA had to be entered into the case record for the unit that received RCA, either a single adult or a childless couple. These extra unit members could be identified through the case closure data field in their MAXIS records. These members failed a person test and as "unit members" but did not have their MAXIS entries closed until the case that they were connected with had been closed.

Table 2 summarizes the data on the reasons for case closure recorded in MAXIS. The table includes both person tests failed and case tests failed. Each person had one or more case closure reasons recorded. Many, but not all, of the records included information that the person had failed a person test, an event which triggers failure of a case test. As the table indicates, 30 people in Period 1 failed the "unit member" test and 538 in Period 2 failed. These records were excluded from our sample of RCA participants.

2. Refugee Cash Assistance registrants, major reasons for case closure (total records received)

Reasons	Period 1		Period 2	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Person Test				
8 Month	474	83.0%	1,097	49.8%
Absence	11	1.9%	88	4.0%
Duplicate assistance	9	1.6%	29	1.3%
Eligible other program	12	2.1%	92	4.1%
Immigrant status	2	0.4%	24	1.1%
RES cooperation	1	0.2%	39	1.8%
SSI	30	5.3%	212	9.6%
SSN cooperation	1	0.2%	1	0.1%
Student status	0	0%	81	3.7%
Unit member	30	5.3%	538	24.4%
Total	570	100%	2,201	100%
Case Test				
Application withdrawn/closed	16	2.3%	19	0.7%
Applicant eligible	5	0.7%	75	2.8%
Eligible other program	12	1.7%	101	3.8%
Eligible person	554	78.4%	1,903	70.7%
Fail to cooperate	2	0.3%	29	1.1%
Prospective net income	27	3.8%	39	1.4%
Residence	33	4.7%	243	9.0%
Retrospective net income	13	1.8%	179	6.7%
Verification	45	6.4%	103	3.8%
Total	707	100%	2,691	100.0%

Source(s): *MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services*

In addition, some other records were excluded from our analysis sample. A small number of applications were listed as withdrawn or closed, 16 in Period 1 and 19 in Period 2. These people actually withdrew from the RCA process before receiving any aid and should not be included.

Also, a small number of records were excluded because of confusing information in the closure codes that made it difficult to assess the appropriateness of that record's inclusion. Only a small number of records were affected by this issue.

When all of these exclusions were made, we were left with a sample that included only people who had actually received RCA payments. The final data sample included a total of 2,556 individuals, 667 in Period 1 and 1,889 in Period 2.

It should be noted that the VOLAGs appear to have done a better job of monitoring the use of RES by participants and of implementing the "sanctions" policy under which participants were declared ineligible if they failed to cooperate in certain ways or failed to provide information. Thus, Table 2 shows a dramatic rise in the percentage of people who failed the person test for "RES cooperation" or who failed case tests under either "failure to cooperate" or "verification." These people were included in the final sample since they became RCA participants but were then later dropped from aid for non-compliance with some aspect of the program.

In addition, other adjustments were made to the sample for consideration of particular research questions. If people were exempt from RES, for example because of age or disability, they were excluded from analysis of employment success. There were a large number of such people in Period 2. As the Table 2 indicates, over 200 people in Period 2 had their cases closed because they were eligible for SSI, Supplemental Security Income. Many of these people were elderly Hmong refugees.

For analysis of subsequent registration and use of GA by RCA participants, we excluded students who were transferred to GA in Period 2. As explained in an earlier section, a policy change was made in January, 2003 to move certain students off of RCA and onto support from GA while they went to school. To have included these students with other RCA participants who left the program for employment or other reasons and went onto GA a short time later would have biased the valuation against the second period model. As the table shows there were 81 students who left RCA in Period 2 as a result of this rule.

Wage detail data

To complement the MAXIS data, we received quarterly employment data for RCA participants covering the years immediately following their participation. These data include one record for each participant working in Minnesota for each employer during the quarter. Participants who moved out of state before joining the workforce or who did not work for wages are not included in this data set. In addition, religious workers, federal government employees, and seasonal workers are not included. Workers who commute to another state to work or who work for cash in the informal economy are also not included. Still, these records are the most comprehensive individual employment data available to us. These data were provided by the Department of Employment and Economic Development.

For Period 1 participants, these data cover first quarter 2001 through fourth quarter 2004, a total of 1,717 records for 395 of the 718 participants. For Period 2 participants, these data cover first quarter 2003 through second quarter 2006. There are 6,964 records covering 1,196 of the 2,476 participants.

Many participants had more than one employer in a given quarter and many had several quarters of employment recorded. In some cases, it appeared that a person was working at more than one job, while in other cases, it appeared that a person had changed jobs during a given quarter. For Period 1 participants, a maximum of eight quarters of data and five employers per quarter are recorded. For Period 2 participants, a maximum of 11 quarters of wage data and 6 employers per quarter are recorded.

Economic environment

The economic conditions in the United States, as a whole, and in the Twin Cities and Rochester, in particular, were somewhat different during the two periods being studied here, but not as different as casual observers may believe. In the econometric analysis that follows, we tested different economic variables to see if they could explain some of the variation in employment outcomes experienced by refugees who received RCA in Minnesota during the two time periods. This section includes a brief summary of the economic conditions during those periods, both national and local.

National economy

In the aftermath of the September 11 attack on the World Trade Center, most Americans (and most economists) expected dire economic consequences including a recession. In fact, economic output grew in the fourth quarter of 2001 and grew every quarter after that as measured by Gross Domestic Product, the sum of the value of all goods and services

produced in the United States. Later analysis would show that the U.S. economy had been in a very mild recession in the months leading up to September 11 and that the recession ended in November 2001.

During the eight quarters beginning in October 2001, the U. S. economy grew at an average rate of 2.6 percent a year, in real (inflation-adjusted) terms. This represents healthy, though not spectacular economic growth, about in line with the average growth rate over the previous two decades.

However, that information was not known on the morning after September 11. Many businesses took actions to prepare for the recession that they believed was coming. They drew down inventories, postponed capital investments, and, most importantly for our analysis, reduced staffing. Many analysts argued, at the time, that companies should have cut staff earlier in light of the slowdown in the economy earlier in that year. Whether or not that is so, the universal pessimism among businesses and the general public had the effect of reducing our nation's workforce even though employment continued to grow.

Employment growth resumed after a couple of quarters, but businesses remained cautious in their hiring plans for some time. As a result, for the first period, national employment grew at an average rate of only 0.6 percent per year. The average unemployment rate for the entire period was 5.7 percent.

3. **Selected national economic indicators, United States (annual growth rates, unless otherwise stated)**

	Period 1	Period 2
Growth in Gross Domestic Product	4.6%	6.5%
Growth in real GDP	2.6%	3.4%
Growth in Consumer Price Index	1.9%	3.6%
Growth in Employment	0.6%	1.7%
Average Unemployment Rate	5.7%	5.3%

Source(s): *Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Dept. of Commerce*

In contrast to Period 1, the next eight quarters (Period 2) were a time of fairly rapid national economic growth and stronger employment expansion. Real GDP grew at an average rate of 3.4 percent a year, almost a full percentage point faster than in the previous two years. Moreover, employment growth was more in line with output growth, averaging a healthy 1.7 percent per year. The average unemployment rate for the period declined to 5.3 percent.

All-in-all, the national economy was healthier in Period 2 than in Period 1. But what mattered to refugees seeking work in the Twin Cities and Rochester during those periods was whether local employers were in a hiring mood. We now turn to local labor market conditions in those two areas.

Local economies

Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and comparable data from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development do show, in fact, that the unemployment rates in both of those areas were higher in Period 1 than in Period 2, in line with the national data (see Table 4). The unemployment rate in the Twin Cities dropped from 4.5 percent to 4.2 percent between the two periods and the jobless rate in Rochester declined from 4.0 percent to 3.8 percent over the same period.

Moreover, employment growth in the Rochester Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) picked up between Period 1 and Period 2, again in line with the national indicators. Job growth accelerated from an average of 1.2 percent in the first period to 1.7 percent in the later period.

While employment growth was stronger in the second period, both in the national economy and in Rochester, the Twin Cities labor market displayed a different pattern of growth. Surprisingly, job growth in the Twin Cities was actually slightly slower in the second period that it was in the first period we are studying. In the first eight quarters, jobs in the Twin Cities grew at a rate of 0.92 percent per year, higher than the national average for the same period. But when national hiring rates rose in Period 2, Minnesota companies, especially those in the Twin Cities were somewhat slow to follow. At the time, economists at the State of Minnesota were surprised by this and no explanations have ever been put forward that completely explain why local employment lagged during that period. Eventually, in 2006, Twin Cities employment sprang forward more rapidly and moved closer to the national averages. But for the eight quarters of our Period 2, the rate of job growth was only 0.88 percent, slightly lower that it had been in the preceding two years.

4. Selected local labor market indicators, Minneapolis-St. Paul MSA and Rochester MSA

	Period 1	Period 2
Minneapolis-St. Paul		
Growth in Employment (% per year)	0.92%	0.88%
Average Unemployment Rate	4.5%	4.2%
Rochester		
Growth in Employment (% per year)	1.20%	1.68%
Average Unemployment Rate	4.0%	3.8%

Source(s): Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Commerce

So while the 46 RCA participants in the Rochester area during Period 2 may have faced a somewhat stronger job market, those looking for jobs in the Twin Cities actually faced somewhat slower overall economic growth in the latter period. In our subsequent analysis, we will use monthly data on labor market conditions to reflect the conditions that individual workers faced as they addressed the job market. But these average statistics make it clear that the contrast between the two periods was not great in the Twin Cities. In fact, it may have been a little harder to get a job in the Twin Cities in Period 2 than in Period 1.

Limitations of the quantitative data analysis

There are a couple of limitations that should be mentioned in respect to the quantitative data analysis.

First, we were limited to the data on individuals that is saved in the MAXIS database and can be converted into cross-section data that can be used for statistical analysis. Other individual attributes that are likely to be important predictors of the economic success of individuals, such as previous employment history or detailed information about the level of English language competency may exist in case notes for many individuals but could not be converted into database form for inclusion in statistical testing.

Second, the menu of local economic data was not rich enough to provide a larger set of variables that could represent the varied labor market conditions faced by RCA participants in their job searches. In particular, it would have been interesting to include a variable on the volume of help wanted ads in the two metropolitan markets, but such indexes are only calculated every six months and, thus, could not be used to reflect the conditions faced by a given participant in a given month.

Finally, no statistical analysis can ever "prove" causality in an absolute sense. Thus, if we find that participants found jobs sooner in Period 2 and we have corrected the data for obvious factors like education, English fluency and national origin, we attribute the improvement to the change in RCA administration. But the possibility always remains that there are unanalyzed factors that could have contributed to that success. The best we can do is adjust for those that we are aware of. Likewise, it may be that the change in RCA administration may have had impact but that impact may be obscured by other events or policies that took place simultaneously, and whose influence cannot be separated from RCA's without more detailed investigation and the development of additional data.

Qualitative methods

To assess the contextual aspects of services provided by VOLAGs through the PPP-RCA program, to explore RCA clients' perspectives on services offered, and to inform the design and interpretation of quantitative analyses, evaluators used four methods to collect qualitative data. Those methods were:

■ Focus groups with 30 Hmong, Liberian, and Oromo working-age adult RCA participants from Periods 1 and 2, to gather information on refugee experiences in both models.

■ Telephone interviews with a total of 10 Somali working-age adult RCA participants from Periods 1 and 2.

■ Key informant interviews with 14 refugee program staff from six VOLAGs and four staff from three community-based organizations that provided social services to Hmong, Liberian and Somali RCA participants during Period 2.

■ Reviews of a random, stratified sample of 35 Hmong, Liberian, Oromo and Somali refugee R&P and RCA case files at one VOLAG, Period 2 only.

Hmong, Oromo, and Somali RCA participants were a focus of the qualitative data collection because these were the largest refugee groups arriving in Minnesota during the 24 months following PPP-RCA program implementation. Liberian refugees from the same time period were included to permit some examination of the impact of speaking English at the time of arrival on rapid employment and self-sufficiency.

Key informant interviews with VOLAG refugee program staff

To understand the context and process of continuity of refugee services from Reception and Placement (R&P) to employment from the VOLAG perspective, Wilder Research conducted telephone interviews with 14 key informants at six VOLAGs during October and November 2006. Staff from Jewish Family and Children's Services (Minneapolis) and Jewish Family Service (St. Paul) were not interviewed because these Voluntary Agencies served no Hmong, Liberian, Oromo or Somali refugees during Period 2. Table 5 lists the VOLAG staff participating in these interviews.

The VOLAGs' Directors of Refugee Programs determined which of their staff would participate in the key informant interviews, identifying those most knowledgeable about the ways that continuity of services is ensured from first contact with the VOLAG to RCA and employment.

Interviewers asked key informants to describe their own VOLAG's overall process and approach in working with refugees from their date of arrival through their eight months of Refugee Cash Assistance eligibility, including services and resources their programs provide to refugee clients and referrals they make to other types of support or services. Key informants were also asked to describe common challenges they see their refugee clients encounter on the road to self-sufficiency (defined as the ability to support themselves financially), their VOLAG's strategies for helping to address those challenges, and the benefits they had observed of administering RCA through the same VOLAG that provides the refugee with R&P services. The questionnaire for these interviews is included as Appendix 2.

5. Key informant interview participants

VOLAG	Participants
Catholic Charities, Rochester	Gordon Richard, Director of Refugee Resettlement
	Dyneé Stetzler, RCA Program Facilitator/Case Manager
	Karri Blair, Employment Manager, Intercultural Mutual Assistance Association (the Refugee Employment Services provider that works with all Catholic Charities RCA participants)
Catholic Charities, St. Paul	Tom Kosel, Director of Refugee Services
International Institute of Minnesota	John Borden, Executive Director of Refugee Programs
	Robin Dusterhoft, Lead RCA Eligibility Coordinator
	Pao Vang, Resettlement Coordinator
Lutheran Social Services	Patti Hurd, Refugee Cash Assistance Program Director
	Hamas Elmasry, Employment Program Manager
	Kim Dettmer, Resettlement Program Manager
Minnesota Council of Churches	Joel Luedtke, Director of Refugee Services
	Mike Zaslofsky, Director of Employment Services
World Relief	Patricia Fenrick, Director of Refugee Resettlement
	Oksana Voskresensky, RCA Eligibility Coordinator

Focus groups with former RCA participants

Focus group questions were submitted to the Department of Human Services for review prior to conducting the groups. Focus group questions, information about the project, and recruitment scripts were then translated into Hmong, Oromo, and Somali by native-speaking consultants that were contracted for these responsibilities and to facilitate the focus groups. The English-language version of the Hmong, Liberian, Oromo, and Somali recruitment scripts are provided as Appendices 3 to 6. The English-language version of the focus group questions are provided as Appendix 7.

Hmong-speaking interviewers attempted to contact all 213 Hmong refugees from Period 2 whose MAXIS files included a telephone number, to request their participation in a focus group. Whenever it was confirmed that the eligible person continued to be in the household for a telephone number, the interviewer either spoke to the eligible person, spoke with the relative answering the phone if the eligible person was not available, or left a voicemail message describing the purpose of the focus group and requesting the eligible person's participation. Interviewers continued to call all numbers identified as accurate for two weeks, attempting to recruit participants up to the scheduled day of the

group. They were only able to speak with six Hmong RCA participants (all males under the age of 25), but those six all participated in one focus group.

The Liberian, Oromo and Somali consultants contracted to recruit for focus groups, facilitate the groups, and transcribe the conversation into English all encountered similar difficulties. Each consultant called through the list of eligible participants generated from the MAXIS database and, using methods most consistent with cultural norms for requesting participation, recruited participants for two focus groups. The Liberian and Oromo consultants were able to complete some focus groups, but were unable to recruit the full number of participants with desired characteristics for any of their group. The Somali consultant was unable to convene or complete any focus groups at all, despite three separate attempts to recruit for two scheduled groups. In each case, none of the Somali RCA participants that had confirmed they would participate appeared within an hour of the scheduled time. Table 6 shows the number of participants in each completed focus group.

6. Focus group participant characteristics

	# primary refugees	# secondary refugees	# Women	# Men	Total participants
Hmong focus group November 7, 2006	6 Period 2	-	-	6 Period 2	6
Liberian focus group #1 October 27, 2006	2 Period 2	1 Period 2	2 Period 2	1 Period 2	3
Liberian focus group #2 October 27, 2006	5 Period 2	1 Period 1	1 Period 1 2 Period 2	3 Period 2	6
Liberian focus group #3 October 30, 2006	1 Period 2	1 Period 2	1 Period 2	1 Period 2	2
Oromo focus group #1 November 25, 2006	4 Period 2 1 Period 2	1 Period 2	3 Period 2	1 Period 1 2 Period 2	6
Oromo focus group #2 November 25, 2006	3 Period 1 4 Period 2	-	1 Period 2	6 Period 2	7
Total participants	3 Period 1 22 Period 2	2 Period 1 3 Period 2	2 Period 1 8 Period 2	3 Period 1 17 Period 2	30

The Liberian focus groups were conducted in English and Hmong, Oromo and Somali focus groups were conducted in those refugees' languages, with the contracted facilitators asking participants a set of questions about:

■ Their process of being connected to a VOLAG for resettlement and RCA.

■ Any types of orientation they received for RCA or for employment programs, resources and referrals they had received.

- Any difficulties they encountered in establishing eligibility or receiving assistance.

- The effectiveness of RCA support programs, especially employment services within and outside the VOLAG, in helping them obtain jobs and become self-sufficient.

Wilder Research staff attended all focus groups, oversaw digital recording of the group conversations, and confirmed that all participants were eligible by checking their names and birth dates against the list of RCA participants from the MAXIS database. The focus group conversations were digitally recorded and provided to the consultants to transcribe into English for analysis.

Telephone interviews with Somali RCA participants

Telephone interviews were not part of the original qualitative design for this evaluation, but because Somalis made up the largest refugee group in both Period 1 and Period 2, the Somali consultant was asked to re-contact all of those that had confirmed they would attend and attempt to complete telephone interviews with them. Evaluators condensed the focus group questions to a 15-minute telephone interview to make it easier for the consultant to convince as many Somali RCA participants as possible to complete the interviews (the questionnaire is provided as Appendix 8). The consultant successfully completed ten short interviews with those respondents in December 2006 and January 2007. Table 7 shows the characteristics of focus group and telephone interview participants.

7. Somali interview participant characteristics

	# primary refugees	# secondary refugees	# Women	# Men	Total participants
Telephone interviews	3 Period 1 6 Period 2	1 Period 2	1 Period 1 3 Period 2	2 Period 1 4 Period 2	10

Case file reviews

Several efforts were made to review a random, stratified sample of Period 2 RCA participants' R&P and RCA case files maintained by VOLAGs, but there was some concern about clients' confidentiality, so case files were reviewed at only one VOLAG. No information specifically related to RCA administration could be gleaned from those files, so no additional case reviews were done.

Key informant interviews with refugee-serving community programs

Because so few Hmong and Somali RCA participants participated in focus groups, Wilder Research agreed to interview lead staff from two community organizations (the Wilder Foundation's Southeast Asian Program and Somali Success School) that had provided educational and social support services to large numbers of Hmong and Somali refugees during Period 2. The organizations were selected because lead staff was reasonably familiar with R&P and RCA programs, and the goal was to gain some perspective on RCA participants' common needs and experiences related to RCA distribution through VOLAGs. The questions asked in the interviews are included as Appendix 9.

Qualitative data analysis

The Liberian focus groups were transcribed verbatim since they had been conducted in English, and the Liberian dialect was left intact. Oromo and Somali contractors that facilitated the focus groups or conducted telephone interviews prepared English transcripts as close to verbatim as translation would allow from the digital recordings. Wilder Research used Atlas TI, a qualitative analysis software program, to code the qualitative data. Within Atlas TI, Wilder coders employed open coding to identify major themes in the transcripts related to a refugee's process of achieving self-sufficiency in the United States, including experiences during resettlement, transition from resettlement program to RCA, experiences with employment assistance, and experiences with employment.

Open coding was used to develop categories based on common concepts appearing in responses to questions (themes). Open coding first examines the data in minute detail while developing initial categories or codes to capture those concepts. The second stage is more selective coding to identify sub-themes and systematically assign codes to text illustrating those sub-themes with respect to the core concept.

To ensure analytical rigor, each coded portion of text is compared within and between similar comments by the same speaker and by other speakers. Two coders check one another's work, and when there is disagreement on how a particular comment or block of text is coded, the two coders try to negotiate a code definition that ensures no further disagreement, or create and apply a new set of codes that more accurately capture the theme or sub-theme. The general concepts first applied to these data included processes, services, resources, barriers or challenges, and outcomes, and within each of those concepts, sub-themes were identified and coded.

Limitations of the qualitative data

The major limitation of the qualitative data is that they cannot be considered representative in any way and are anecdotal at best. Each type of qualitative data has limited usefulness for varying reasons.

First, for the key informant interviews, only nine individuals were interviewed. Second, each VOLAG determined which individuals from the organization should be interviewed based on their being identified as the most knowledgeable about continuity of services from R&P to RCA and employment, the processes through which RCA participants moved toward self-sufficiency, and the outcomes of PPP-RCA administration related to self-sufficiency. This resulted in a high level of variation in which program staff were interviewed and whether they were interviewed singly or in a conference call with others. For some staff, their knowledge about the specifics of RCA administration was not as complete as would be desired for a rigorous analysis. Finally, the key informant interviews with four staff of refugee-serving community agencies also varied in the level of knowledge about the specifics of refugees' experiences with RCA administration through VOLAGs, and their comments were most oriented toward VOLAGs' effectiveness in helping RCA participants obtain employment.

The focus groups also resulted in very little specific information about RCA administration through VOLAGs during Period 2 or about county administration during Period 1. The major challenge was that refugees' contact information was entered into MAXIS at the time of their initial RCA application. We had expected to be able to contact the refugee through their anchor family using that information, but in many cases we found that the information was no longer valid for either the refugee or their anchor family. Relying on MAXIS contact information for recruitment resulted in much smaller number of focus group participants than expected, complicated by the fact that this sample was neither random nor representative.

Across three major refugee groups, only 30 individuals participated in focus groups. The telephone interviews with Somali, intended to address the lack of information from Somali RCA participants, did not result in detailed information about RCA administration. The vast majority of responses to focus group and telephone interview questions, across all four refugee groups, focused on refugees' experiences with R&P programs and refugee employment assistance programs. Many of the respondents were not even aware that they had participated in three separate programs.

Section IV: Findings

The first section of findings presents descriptive statistics on the refugees who made use of RCA during the two periods being studied, showing similarities and differences. In the second period, many more refugees used RCA and there was a shift in the composition of program participants in terms of country of origin, including an influx of Hmong who were not represented at all in the Period 1 population.

The second section compares the two alternative models through analysis of data on the outcomes from the two periods. First, the five primary research questions are answered using data on all RCA participants. Then, an additional analysis summarizes the attributes and results for five major ethnic groups: Somali, Ethiopian, Liberian, Russian, and Hmong.

The third section compares the results of the different VOLAGs in Period 2. First is a subsection comparing the overall results of the six VOLAGs in three areas: early employment, time on RCA, and use of GA. A second subsection takes this analysis a step further by comparing the results of different VOLAGs for the three mains subgroups in Period 2 — Somali, Ethiopian, and Hmong.

Descriptive statistics on RCA participants

Based upon the number of refugees for whom an RCA case was opened, the use of RCA by refugees in Minnesota rose dramatically between the first and second periods being studied here.

- ■ In Period 1 (October 1, 2001 through September 30, 2003), 667 refugees received Refugee Cash Assistance.

- ■ In Period 2 (October 1, 2003 through September 30, 2005), 1,889 refugees received RCA, an increase of 183 percent.

We will consider some descriptive statistics that highlight the similarities and differences of the two groups.

Country of origin

In both periods, a small number of countries supplied the majority of the RCA participants. Table 8 shows participants in the two periods broken down by country of origin. Groups that had more than 30 applicants in either period are listed by country.

8. Refugee Cash Assistance participants, by country of origin

Country/Ethnicity	Period 1		Period 2	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Ethiopia	174	26.1%	374	19.8%
Hmong	0	0.0%	213	11.3%
Liberia	41	6.1%	93	4.9%
Russia	55	8.2%	34	1.8%
Somalia	302	45.3%	1012	53.6%
All other	95	14.2%	163	8.6%
Total	667	100.0%	1889	100.0%

Source(s): *MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services*

Five groups represented 85 percent of participants in Period 1 and over 90 percent of Period 2 participants in RCA.

Somalis were the most numerous group in both periods, representing a majority of the applicants in the second period. Their share of total applicants grew from 45.3 percent in Period 1 to 53.6 percent in Period 2.

Ethiopians were the second largest group in both periods. While their absolute numbers grew in Period 2, their share of total participants fell from 26.1 percent to 19.8 percent in the latter period.

Hmong refugees were the third largest group in the latter period, but there were no Hmong participants receiving RCA in the first period. A large number of Hmong were resettled in Minnesota, chiefly in Saint Paul, during this period and this dramatic shift reflects that event. Hmong refugees were 11.3 percent of RCA participants in Period 2.

Liberian refugees were the fourth largest users of RCA in Period 2. Their absolute numbers grew from 41 in the first period to 93 in the second, though their percentage of total applicants fell slightly in the latter period, from 6.1 percent to 4.9 percent.

Russians were the other group represented in substantial numbers in both periods. Their absolute number declined from 55 in Period 1 to 34 in Period 2. So their share of total applicants fell dramatically from 8.2 percent to 1.8 percent.

All other countries of origin accounted for 14.2 percent of RCA participants in Period 1 and a lower 8.6 percent in the second period. Numerous countries were represented.

Age distribution

The age distribution of RCA applicants changed somewhat in the second period as the data in Table 9 indicate. In the latter period, there were both more younger people and more older people than in the first period. The percentage of people under the age of 30 rose from 61.4 percent to 68.1 percent; the share of persons over 60 rose from 10.0 percent to 13.9 percent in the latter period. Thus the middle-aged group between 30 and 60 was smaller share of the total population of RCA users in Period 2.

Since refugees over 60 years old are deemed less likely to be employable and are not required to participate in Refugee Employment Services (RES), this means that the group that was seeking employment in Period 2 was a smaller percentage of RCA applicants. Moreover, that employable group included more refugees under the age of 30. It is plausible that these younger people might be more adaptable to the U. S. labor market than their middle-aged counter parts, but they would also be likely to have had less work experience in their native countries.

9. Refugee Cash Assistance participants, by age

Age	Period 1		Period 2	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
20 years and under	135	20.2%	307	16.3%
21 through 29 years	275	41.2%	978	51.8%
30 through 59 years	190	28.5%	341	18.1%
60 through69 years	47	7.0%	170	9.0%
70 years and over	20	3.0%	93	4.9%
Total	667	100.0%	1889	100.0%

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

More generally, this shift in the mix of applicants could generate a reduction in the length of RCA use if younger people found jobs faster and if more immigrants over 60 years of age moved to the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and, hence, out of RCA.

Gender

The gender mix also shifted from Period 1 to Period 2 as the data in Table 10 demonstrate.

10. Refugee Cash Assistance participants, by gender

	Period 1		Period 2	
Gender	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Female	348	52.2%	865	45.8%
Male	319	47.8%	1024	54.2%
Total	667	100.0%	1889	100.0%

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services

Women were in the majority in Period 1; men were in the majority in Period 2. The share of men in the total RCA population rose from 47.8 percent to 54.2 percent. If more men than women had been employed outside of the home in their native countries, it could give the second group a leg up relative to the first group in seeking employment in Minnesota. Of course, the actual skills of the immigrants and their applicability to the jobs available in Minnesota could counterbalance this possible advantage.

Marital status

The marital status of RCA users at the time of their application varied only a little between the two periods. People who had never been married comprised almost two-thirds of the total population in both periods.

11. Refugee Cash Assistance participants, by marital status (at time of application)

	Period 1		Period 2	
Status	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Never Married	423	63.4%	1226	64.9%
Married	65	9.7%	202	10.7%
Married, living apart	143	21.4%	326	17.3%
Legally separated	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
Divorced	5	0.7%	37	2.0%
Widowed	31	4.6%	97	5.1%
Total	667	100.0%	1889	100.0%

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services

The largest change was in the percentage of married persons who were living apart, a drop from 21.4 percent of applicants in Period 1 to 17.3 percent in the later period. Conversely, the number of divorced participants more than quintupled, but remained a small percentage of the total population.

Education

The distribution of education levels among RCA participants differs considerably between the two periods, as shown in Table 12. The largest share of refugees in both periods were recorded as having less than one year of education, an entry of "0" for years of education. Over 44 percent of RCA users from Period 2 fell into that category, a rise from 36 percent in the first period. It is likely that both numbers include some whose education level is unknown, so it hard to get an accurate assessment of just how many in each group received no schooling. Still, it appears likely that more of the Period 2 RCA participants had no formal schooling.

12. Refugee Cash Assistance participants, by education level

Status	Period 1		Period 2	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than first grade/unknown	242	36.3%	842	44.6%
Grade school	61	9.1%	355	18.8%
Some high school	152	22.8%	349	18.5%
High school graduate	189	28.3%	286	15.1%
Some post-secondary	12	1.8%	26	1.4%
College graduate	5	0.7%	18	1.0%
Graduate degree	6	0.9%	13	0.7%
Total	667	100.0%	2476	100.0%

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services

Likewise, Period 2 users of RCA included only about half the percentage of people with high school diplomas or college degrees as in the earlier period, 18.2 percent, down from 31.7 percent in 2001 to 2003. There was also a smaller percentage who had attended some high school, while the share of RCA users who had a grade school education almost doubled in the later period. In both periods, only a smattering of RCA users had some post-secondary education. That number was less than 4 percent in both periods.

This lack of education could represent a substantial challenge to the RCA participants in Period 2 with regard to the ease with which they could move into the labor force in their

new home. That is especially true when this factor is considered in combination with the lower English language proficiency of the later group.

Moreover, lacking information to separate the population with no formal schooling from those whose level of schooling was unknown presents an additional challenge to quantitative analysis. To the extent that some participants in both periods had more formal schooling than reported here, the coefficient of the effect of education attainment will be biased toward zero in regression models that use education as an explanatory variable.

English proficiency

English proficiency is an extremely important factor influencing the ability of a refugee to find work and to adapt to living in a new country and culture. There is no formal testing of the English language proficiency of refugees applying for RCA. However, a determination is made at intake as to whether the person will need an interpreter in applying to and dealing with the RCA system, as shown in Table 13.

13. Refugee Cash Assistance participants, by English proficiency (at time of application)

Proficiency	Period 1		Period 2	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Needs interpreter	485	72.7%	1521	80.5%
Does not need interpreter	181	27.1%	365	19.3%
Code missing	1	0.1%	3	0.2%
Total	667	100.0%	1889	100.0%

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services

The share of RCA applicants deemed to need an interpreter was significantly higher in the second period than in the first, 80.5 percent compared to 72.1. It should be noted that this field of a person's MAXIS record is filled in at the time of application. There is no operational reason why a case worker would alter the initial code if a person's English language skills improved during his or her time in RCA. To the extent that some refugees learned English during RCA, it is possible that these data may understate the language skills of some RCA participants at the time they actually were attempting to secure employment.

Summary of descriptive data

In summarizing these descriptive data, four elements stand out.

Two elements, the shift toward more men in the refugee population and the bimodal age shift to both more people in their twenties and more people over 60 may improve the chances of refugees moving out of RCA more quickly in the second period, either to work or to other programs such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

On the other hand, two elements seem to increase the obstacles to employment of refugees in Period 2. The lower educational attainment of the second group and their greater need for interpreters both seem likely to complicate the task for those seeking employment (and for those helping them).

Overall PPP Model Evaluation: Period 1 versus Period 2

In this section, we present statistical evidence bearing on the five central research questions of this study. We first look at evidence of the overall performance of the two alternative models in providing RCA to refugees. Then we consider whether there are differences in the outcomes of the major ethnic groups under the two models.

Question 1: Early Employment

- **To what extent does each model result in rapid early employment of participants?**

To answer this question, we focus on two separate outcome variables. First we examine the percentage of working age participants who achieved early employment, that is who gained employment before their eight months of RCA eligibility ended. Then, we examine the average time it took those who found work to get their first job. We compare the direct data on the outcomes variables first; then we undertake more detailed modeling to adjust for the effects of different factors and, thus, isolate the impact of the alternative RCA delivery model. In a third section, we go further to examine whether RCA participants in the two periods had sustained employment after RCA and also to compare the total wages they received during that period.

Percentage of participants getting early employment

The first outcome variable used is the percentage of participants who got jobs before the end of their eight months of RCA eligibility. To compare the results for the alternative models, we computed the proportion of working-age, non-student participants who were

not otherwise exempt from RES and who found jobs within eight months of arriving in the United States.

14. Proportion of working-age, non-student, non-RES exempt participants who got employment before completing RCA eligibility

	Period 1		Period 2	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Got early employment	74	12.8%	356	23.7%
Did not get early employment	504	87.2%	1146	76.3%
Total	578	100.0%	1502	100.0%
Significance level, difference				.000

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services

As shown in Table 14, RCA participants in Period 2 achieved early employment more often than their counterparts in Period 1 by a sizable margin. Almost 11 percent more working-age refugees found jobs in Period 2 than in Period 1. Moreover a formal statistical test shows that the difference is statistically significant.

But this difference between the two periods could be the result of a number of factors besides the change in delivery of RCA using the PPP model in Period 2. For example, the pool of refugees in Period 2 included a different mix of nationalities with different levels of educational achievement and English fluency. As explained in the methods section, we used a multiple regression to sort out the different influences on job success and to isolate the effect of the change in model for Period 2. A regression model was fitted to pooled data on individuals from the two periods. The dependent variable was a zero-one variable, set at zero if an individual did not obtain a job before the end of his or her RCA eligibility and at one if the person did get a an early job. The results of that regression are contained in the next table.

15. Regression results, probability of getting an early job

Explanatory variable	Coefficient	T-statistic	Significance level
Constant	.430	4.03	.000
Period 2 indicator	.089	3.85	.000
Gender/marital status	.038	3.71	.000
Somali	-.118	-6.26	.000
Russian	-.139	-2.44	.015
Hmong	-.193	-4.34	.000
Education level	.030	4.22	.000
Needed interpreter	-.044	-2.08	.012
Metro unemployment rate	-.077	-3.62	.002
R- squared	.074		
Observations	2079		

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services, and MN Dept of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)

Five of the explanatory variables were indicator variables, the Period 2 indicator, the zero-one variable for being Somali, the zero-one variable for being Russian, the zero-one variable for being Hmong, and the indicator for needing an interpreter. Gender and marital status were combined in a single variable set at one for a married woman, two for a single woman, three for a single man, and four for a married man. Education level was set as a banded variable taking values from zero to six. And the metro area unemployment rate was the seasonally unadjusted rate for the metro area in which the individual was seeking employment (Twin Cities or Rochester) expressed as a percent. All of the coefficients were significant at the 5 percent confidence level; most were significant at the 1 percent level.

The individual coefficients may thus be interpreted as percents. For example, needing an interpreter at the time of application lowered one's chances of getting an early job by 4.4 percent. Being Somali or Russia lowered ones chances of getting a job, other things being equal. Moving up one category in gender/marital status increased one's chances by 3.8 percent and moving up one category of educational attainment increased one's chances by 3.0 percent. If the unemployment rate was a full percent higher at the time an individual was looking for work, his or her chances were reduced by 7.7 percent.

Finally, after all of these influences are accounted for, the indicator variable for Period 2 enters with a highly significant coefficient of .089. This means that the effect of looking for work in the second period when the PPP model was being used raised one's chances

of getting a job by 8.9 percent. We attribute this change to the difference in RCA administration model. **This implies that 82 percent of the improvement in the percentage of participants getting work before completing RCA in Period 2 was due to the change to the PPP model.**

The qualitative data, though certainly not representative, suggest that the monthly visit to pick up RCA checks and confirm continued eligibility with the VOLAG's RCA eligibility coordinator might play an important role in encouraging employment. These comments from the focus groups are examples:

> Every time I see her she asked me if I got a job or not, and if there was anything I need or I want her to help me with. And she told me if I had any problem or questions I can call her any time (Oromo focus group participant).

> I understood the process, how it works, that I have to look for a job (Somali interview participant).

> [The VOLAG] sent me to a temp [agency]…They would say, "Okay, today go meet them and see if you are going to work." If you don't work, they inform you that they will cut the assistance (Hmong focus group participant).

> [The RCA worker] made us to understand that [RCA] is not going to last forever. It's just something to put you on your feet like start a job and then when you start working, and you cannot lie. 'Cause if you start working they're going to know. And they're going to cut it off so as for me, I stayed here two months and a half, and I started working (Liberian focus group participant).

Length of time to first job

As a second measure of early job success, we looked at data on the time it took individuals to secure employment after entering the United States. Data on all the individuals who obtained early employment were analyzed and the average length of time from entry to first job was calculated for the two periods, as shown in Table 16.

16. Refugee Cash Assistance participants, time from U.S. entry to first job

	Period 1	Period 2
Number of participants gaining early employment	74	356
Average time to first job	143.43 days	143.81 days
Increase from Period 1 to Period 2		+0.38 days
		+0.2%
Test of difference in means, significance level		.975

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services

Participants who obtained early employment during either period showed no significant difference in the average length of time it took to obtain those jobs. In fact, the averages are almost exactly equal, differing by only 0.2 percent. But this result does not necessarily mean that the change to the PPP model had no effect on the time it took job finders to become employed because there could have been offsetting effects from several different factors.

To investigate the effect of the change in model from Period 1 to Period 2, we again estimated a regression model that separated the effects of other factors that could influence job market success. This model used only data on the 398 individuals who secured early employment in one of our two sample periods.

17. Regression results, days to first job

Explanatory variable	Coefficient	T-statistic	Significance level
Constant term	22.4	0.44	.000
Period 2 indicator	23.0	1.82	.068
Somali	-48.6	-3.85	.000
Ethiopian	-60.8	-4.80	.000
Liberian	-59.9	-3.20	.000
Russian	-81.5	-2.34	.020
Education level	10.5	3.18	.002
Gender/marital status	-9.1	-1.77	.078
Years of age at case opening	1.51	3.58	.000
Metro unemployment rate	28.1	2.73	.007
R- squared	.139		
Observations	395		

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services, and MN Dept of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)

The regression coefficients cannot be interpreted as easily in this type of regression as in the previous one where they had meaning as percents. Education level, chronological age and a higher local unemployment rate all increased the number of days it took successful job seekers to find work. Moving higher on the gender/marital status variable shortened the time to first job, thus indicating that married men were more likely to obtain work in a shorter time. The negative coefficients on the individual on the indicator variables should not be taken literally as, for example, signifying a strong comparative advantage for Russians.

But these variables do add explanatory power and the negative signs are probably the result of Hmong and other groups taking a greater time to secure jobs on average.

The Period 2 indicator variable enters this equation with a positive sign and the coefficient indicates that, other things being equal, the new model takes somewhat longer for refugees to find a first job. We attribute this effect to the PPP model but it could also be affected by other factors that were not accounted for in the specification of our regression framework that had impact in Period 2. **So we estimate that the new model added 23 days to the average time it took to find a first job in Period 2.**

The qualitative data suggest that one impact of gender and marital status could be that younger women may not get jobs due to pregnancy while their husbands do. These are some comments from interviews with female Somali RCA participants from Period 2:

> I was assigned a job counselor who speaks the Somali language to help me find a job, but I got pregnant and sick, therefore stopped looking for a job...I took the cash for seven months (Somali interview participant).

> They assigned me a job counselor, but I didn't get a job. I was pregnant and after 8 months I had my baby. After that I am no longer in a single program (Somali interview participant).

Average earnings

In addition to data from MAXIS on the date at which individuals on RCA got their first job, we also obtained individual wage detail records from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED). These data give the actual quarterly earnings for RCA participants during the eight quarters following their registration for RCA. These data can be used to compare the average wage and total earnings of RCA participants from the two periods being studied. Strictly speaking, these data do not shed light on whether RCA participant gained early employment, but they do indicate the extent to which participants were able to maintain sustained and remunerative work after completing RCA.

18. RCA participants, earnings data for eight quarters following RCA registration

	Period 1	Period 2
Number of RCA participants	578	1502
Number with DEED wage data	355	914
% of participants with wage records	61.4%	60.9%
Average number of quarterly records	3.28	4.45
Average quarterly wages (in current dollars)	$2,813	$3,144
Average quarterly wages (adjusted for inflation)	$2,942	$3,144
Average total earnings (adjusted for inflation)	$10,868	$16,794
Added earnings (adjusted for inflation)		+$5,926
Percentage increase in total earnings		54.5%

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services, and MN Dept of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)

Note: Period 1 data were adjusted for inflation using the change in the Consumer Price Index for the Minneapolis/St. Paul Metro area from 2002 to 2004.

The wage detail data show that approximately the same number of RCA participants from each period eventually showed up in the state's wage records. (If people were working for family members or friends, in the so-called unreported "underground economy," we would have no record of that employment.) About 60 percent of the working-age refugees in both periods found jobs in Minnesota, according to the DEED data.

The refugees from Period 2 showed more sustained work histories, on average, than the refugees from Period 1. Their records showed an average of 4.45 quarters with a non-zero wage entry relative to only 3.28 for the refugees from Period 1.

In addition, the average earnings of the Period 2 refugees were significantly higher than the earnings for Period 1 refugees by a margin of 54.5 percent. While we do not have data on individual hours and weeks worked, it appears that these higher earnings are more attributable to more sustained employment than to merely higher wages. If we divide the statistics on quarters worked as a rough indicator of the relative length of employment, we estimate that workers worked 35.6 percent longer, leaving the balance of the increase, 18.9 percent, to be explained by higher wage rates for the Period 2 refugees.

In summary, the foregoing data lead us to the following conclusions:

Conclusion 1A: The new model appears to lead to significantly more RCA participants gaining early employment. The new model accounts for approximately 80 percent of the improvement in the percentage of refugees finding early jobs in Period 2.

Conclusion 1B: The new model appears to have increased the amount of time for early job gainers to find their first employment. Even though the average time to the first job was approximately equal in the two periods, it appears that was the result of other factors instead of the change in model.

Conclusion 1C: Refugees in Period 2 had more sustained employment lasting beyond RCA eligibility and earned an average of 54.5 percent more in total wages for the two years following their entry into RCA. Most of the increase appears to be due to more sustained employment.

Question 2: Time Receiving RCA

■ To what extent does each model impact the length of time a participant receives RCA?

To answer this question, we looked first at the average length of time that individuals received RCA in each period.

Length of time receiving RCA

The average length of time receiving RCA was calculated for the participants in each time period. (See Table 19.)

19. Refugee Cash Assistance participants, time in receiving RCA

	Period 1	Period 2
Number of participants	667	1889
Average time in program	162.49 days	156.62 days
Decrease from Period 1 to Period 2		-5.87 days
		-3.6%
Test of difference in means, significance level		.046

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services

These data show that participants in Period 2 spent an average of almost six fewer days in the RCA program, a difference of 3.6 percent. Moreover, a test of equality of means for the two samples indicates this difference to be statistically significant at the five percent confidence level.

Moreover, an analysis of the distribution of lengths of time in the program further shows a statistically significant difference in the distributions for the two periods. Table 20 shows the difference in the distribution of time in the RCA program across individuals. A formal statistical test rejected the null hypothesis that the two distributions were the same.

20. Refugee Cash Assistance participants, distribution of time in program

Time Interval	Period 1		Period 2	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
6 weeks or less	36	5.4%	98	5.2%
6 to 20 weeks	182	27.3%	650	34.4%
20 to 28 weeks	169	25.3%	397	21.0%
28 to 35 weeks	269	40.3%	740	39.2%
More than 35 weeks	11	1.6%	4	0.2%
Total	667	100.0%	1889	100.0%
Chi-square test of equality of distribution, significance level				.000

So, there appears to be some difference in the length of time that participants were in the program in the two periods, with those in the second period being in for a shorter time. To investigate whether the difference should be attributed to the shift of RCA administration to the VOLAGs, we estimate another regression model that separates the effects of different possible factors.

21. Regression results, days in program

Explanatory variable	Coefficient	T-statistic	Significance level
Constant term	171.36	36.11	.000
Period 2 indicator	.724	0.236	.814
Somali	-13.99	-4.82	.000
Liberian	-29.54	-4.40	.000
Russian	15.19	1.69	.091
Education level	-2.68	-2.42	.016
Needed interpreter	6.92	1.93	.053
R- squared	.029		
Observations	2079		

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services, and MN Dept of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)

The regression shown in Table 21 is designed to adjust for alternative possible factors affecting the length of time refugees spent receiving RCA.[10] Other variables available to us did not add to the explanatory power of this equation. Thus, while the average number of days in the program was lower in Period 2, the indicator for Period 2 does not enter this equation with a statistically significant coefficient. Our statistical model, thus, attributes the lowering of the average number of days in the program to other factors, but it should be noted that the explanatory power of this equation is quite low. Moreover, the days in program data are not as amenable to regression analysis as some of the other indicators since the ending date for each case in MAXIS is the first of the month following the ending of eligibility.

Conclusion 2: The average number of days on RCA declined in Period 2. The data are inconclusive as to whether this result is due to the PPP model of delivery or to other factors.

Question 3: Receiving GA

■ **To what extent does each model impact the receipt of General Assistance (GA)?**

To answer this question, we collected data on whether or not individuals received GA in the first year following the closure of their RCA cases. Only working-age individuals who were not exempt for RES and were not full-time students who were moved to GA during their RCA tenure were included. The raw results are included in Table 22.

22. Proportion of working-age, non-student, non-RES exempt participants who received GA in the first year following closure of their RCA cases

	Period 1		Period 2	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Received GA	144	24.9%	272	18.1%
Did not receive GA	434	75.1%	1230	81.9%
Total	578	100.0%	1502	100.0%
Significance level				.001

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[10] It could well be that different elements of the administration of RCA had differing (and opposite) effects on the amount of time people spent in RCA. For example, during Period 2 policy was changed to disregard a greater amount of participant income in assessing eligibility and calculating aid to be paid. This would have the effect of keeping people in the program somewhat longer and may have offset the effect of some other policies that shortened refugees time in the program. We are not able to separate the differing effects of parts of the PPP program or additional administrative changes that took place in Period 2.

As the table shows, 18.1 percent of second period RCA participants received GA sometime during the first year after leaving RCA. This compares to 24.9 percent of Period 1 participants who received GA after completing RCA, a drop of 6.8 percent. But, as with the other questions analyzed above, more detailed statistical analysis is needed to determine how much of that difference was due to the change in the RCA administration model and how much was due to other factors. The regression model results are included in Table 23.

23. Regression results, probability of receiving GA in first year after RCA

Explanatory variable	Coefficient	T-statistic	Significance level
Constant	.035	.333	.739
Period 2 indicator	-.041	1.81	.070
Gender/marital status	-.042	-4.20	.000
Ethiopian	-..073	3.66	.000
Liberian	-.087	-2.11	.035
Education level	-.037	-5.48	.000
Age (in years)	.005	6.07	.000
Needed interpreter	.057	2.58	.010
Metro unemployment rate	.042	1.99	.047
R- squared	.071		
Observations	2079		

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services, and MN Dept of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)

The regression results in the table indicate that a number of factors affected the likelihood that a working-age RCA participant would receive GA in the first year after completing RCA. The standardized coefficients may again be read as percents. Being in a more employable gender/marital status cohort decreased the chances of using GA by 4.2 percent. Being Ethiopian or Liberian also decreased the chance that someone would use GA in the first year by 7.3 percent and 8.7 percent, respectively. Having attained one higher level of education led to a reduction in the chance of using GA of 3.7 percent.

Being older, needing an interpreter, or facing a tougher local job market all increased a person's chances of using GA in the year after leaving RCA. Every year of age increased the probability of using GA by 0.5 percent. Needing an interpreter at the time of RCA application increased the chances by 5.7 percent. And the chance of using GA increased by 4.2 percent for each full percentage point increase in the local jobless rate.

When all these other effects are accounted for, the Period 2 indicator enters the regression with a coefficient of -.041 that is significant at the 7 percent level. This means that, other things being equal, the new model of RCA administration led to a 4.1 percent lower chance of a working-age participant going on GA in the year following the closure of his or her RCA case. It was not possible to see if this effect persists for future years because not enough time had elapsed since the end of Period 2 to form a longer data set. By comparing the size of the effect of the new model to the total improvement in use of GA of 6.8 percent noted above, we estimate that 60 percent of the improvement in lower use of GA is due to the new model.

Conclusion 3: The new model of RCA administration significantly reduced the subsequent use of GA by people who have completed RCA. Approximately 60 percent of the reduction in GA use is attributable to the new model.

Question 4: Continuity of service

■ **To what extent does each model impact the continuity of service between Resettlement and Placement (R&P) and receipt of RCA?**

We define continuity of service to mean that refugees move smoothly and quickly from R&P to RCA with little or no wasted time. In Period 1, refugees who received R&P services from a VOLAG had to register with their county in order to receive RCA. In Period 2, refugees would receive RCA from the VOLAG with whom they were already working during R&P. By design, R&P services last for the first 90 days a refugee is in the United States and during that time the refugee can register for RCA.[11] Hopefully, refugees would be more likely to register for RCA with the VOLAG, and to do so sooner, than when they had to go to a separate agency, the county.

We did not have data available on refugees who received R&P services but not RCA, so we cannot estimate the number of people dropped either in Period 1 or Period 2.

Therefore, one concrete measure of whether the change to the PPP model in Period 2 improved the continuity of service is to compare the actual timing of registration for RCA in Period 1 and Period 2. We analyzed data for all participants and calculated the length of time between their entry into the United States and their registration for RCA. If the Period 2 model has improved continuity we would expect to see the average time interval shortened in the second period. The results of that analysis are shown in Table 24.

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[11] Actually, refugees can register any time in their first eight months in the United States, but the later they enroll, the shorter the time they can collect benefits.

24. Refugee Cash Assistance participants, time from U.S. entry to registration for RCA

	Period 1	Period 2
Average time to receiving RCA	55.96 days	33.37 days
Reduction from Period 1 to Period 2		-22.58 days
		-40.3%
Test of difference in means, significance level		.000

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services

As the table indicates, the average time to register for RCA fell from 55.96 days after entry to the U.S. in the first period to 33.37 days in the second period. This is difference of 22.58 days and statistical tests show the difference is significant at the one percent level.

Apparently, the VOLAGs have been extremely efficient at making sure that refugees were registered for RCA much earlier in Period 2. Under the PPP model, the one-time R&P cash grant was disregarded. Thus, participants could be enrolled even in their first month in the country, thereby receiving more continuous income support.

In addition, our qualitative data, though fragmentary, also support the conclusion that the continuity of service to refugees has been improved as a result of the change to the PPP model of delivery in Period 2. Both VOLAG administrators and RCA participants supported the notion that the new system provides better continuity.

VOLAG administrators pointed out a number of ways in which service to refugees was improved. They felt they built closer relationships with the clients and were quicker to respond to problems than county workers. They made sure that people got their checks with no interruption if they moved. In interviews, VOLAG administrators also pointed out that clients could receive multiple services in one location and that they could often have quick, in-house communication between resettlement counselors, RCA and employment counselors. Moreover, individuals said that RCA cases were opened faster under the new system, a claim backed up by the data cited above.

The seamless nature of the new delivery system was evident in the responses of participants in the focus groups of Period 2 participants as well. When we asked questions about the continuity of services from R&P to RCA, almost all participants were unaware that they were in two different programs. The refugees believed they had been in a single program. Even though the focus groups were a small sample of the refugee population, this response

was so universal that we expect similar opinions were held by a large number of participants in RCA.

Conclusion 4: The PPP model of service in Period 2 has significantly improved the continuity of service to refugees. The refugees received earlier and more continuous income support through RCA and had better communications with VOLAG staff to solve problems.

Question 5: Benefit-cost analysis

■ **To what extent could the PPP-RCA administered model be viewed as a "best practice approach" from an outcome perspective and a cost-benefit perspective for serving new refugees nationwide?**

Based on the answers to the preceding questions, the change to PPP-RCA was an improvement on the previous practice of administration through counties. The practice has led to:

- ■ A greater percentage of earlier employment by RCA participants during RCA eligibility.

- ■ Higher average earnings for RCA participants during and subsequent to RCA.

- ■ Lower usage of GA after RCA ends.

- ■ Greater continuity of service between R&P and RCA.

These benefits are, in our view, only partially offset by our analysis that shows that the PPP-RCA model appears to have resulted in early job finders taking somewhat longer, on average, to get their first jobs. The higher incomes and more sustained employment that refugees appeared to obtain would, in our view, outweigh the average of 23 more days it takes people to find employment under the new model.[12]

We also conclude that the PPP model has not resulted in shorter times in the RCA program to this point. Even though average time in the program declined during Period 2, our analysis supports the hypothesis that the improvement was due to other factors beside the change in the RCA administration model. But, on the other hand, when other factors are taken into account, the PPP model has not lengthened the average time on RCA. Therefore, on net, the positive impacts of the PPP model seem to far outweigh the apparent addition to job search time.

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[12] Moreover, it could be that, within the PPP model, additional changes could be made, or may have already been made, to improve the effectiveness of RES services provided or referred by the VOLAGs. See succeeding sections for discussion of this issue.

However it should be noted that the PPP model does cost more because the payments made to the VOLAGs to administer RCA are significantly greater than the previous payments made to counties under the earlier model. In order to assess the net impact of the PPP model more formally, we conducted a benefit-cost analysis comparing the results of the new model in Period 2 with the estimated results that would have obtained in Period 2 if the old model had still been in place.

A benefit-cost analysis was conducted as outlined in the Methods section.

Costs were estimated as described in the Methods section. Total administrative payments to VOLAGs in Period 2 were added to some small continuing payments to counties for RCA in Period 2. Prorated payments to counties in Period 1 were scaled up by case load and inflation and then subtracted to generate total net costs of the PPP model.

Benefits were also calculated as described earlier. Total added earnings in Period 2 were estimated but were then cut in half as an adjustment to reflect the fact that we cannot conclusively attribute all of the earning improvements in Period 2 to the PPP model. This is an extremely conservative approach, in our view. Based on our analysis, we assumed that 32 more RCA participants (8.9%) would find early employment and have their RCA payments reduced thereby.[13] Based on our analysis of GA participants, we assumed 11 fewer people would have received GA under the PPP model and valued that outcome as described.

It should be noted that we do not have a methodology for valuing the increased continuity of service to RCA participants. However, the opinions expressed in the focus groups and by the VOLAG administrators support the idea that the continuity and increased efficiency of the new model is valuable. We simply have no way of converting that benefit to a tangible dollar value.

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[13] In fact, the higher incomes received by workers in Period 2 might also have meant the other 324 workers who found early employment might have had some additional reduction in payments but we did not attempt to estimate that amount.

25. Benefit-cost analysis of PPP model versus previous delivery model

Net added earnings	$ 2,708,182
Reduced RCA payments because of early employment	$ 11,882
Reduced GA payment	$13,288
TOTAL BENEFITS	**$2,733,352**
Period 2 PPP Administrative costs	$674,538
Estimated costs using Period 1 model	$87,479
TOTAL NET COST	**$587,059**
Benefit/cost ratio	**4.66**

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services

The benefit-cost analysis shows that the major monetizable benefit of the PPP model is the more sustained and higher paying employment secured by the participants who received services from VOLAGs. This employment effect persisted after the cessation of RCA and, in fact, probably continues farther into the future than one year, but we have no data to support going further at this point.

Total benefits are estimated to be 4.66 times the total additional net costs of the PPP model. Thus, the new model returns an estimated $4.66 of benefit for every dollar of added administrative cost. The vast majority of that benefit is increased earnings of participants with some additional cost saving for RCA and GA.

Conclusion 5: On a benefit-cost basis, the PPP model is superior to the model it replaced. Moreover, we estimate that it returns $4.66 of benefits for each dollar of added cost when compared to the previous model.

Even though the PPP model has shown improved results over its predecessor, we believe it would be premature to term it a "best practice." In formal program evaluation, the term "best practice" is used to describe programs and methods that have been shown to produce results superior to other competing programs based on an accumulated, definitive body of evidence including multiple studies, often over a long period of time.

When there are some studies to suggest the superiority of a given program but a definitive body of evidence has not yet been amassed, that program may be deemed a "promising practice." The evidence considered in this report does point to the PPP model being a "promising practice." If more data and subsequent studies continue to support its superiority over alternatives, it may come to be viewed as a "best practice."

Conclusion 5A: At this time, we believe that the PPP model of RCA administration can be deemed a "promising practice." If subsequent studies confirm its effects over time, it may come to be considered a "best practice."

Group results by nationality: Period 1 and Period 2

In this section, we examine the attributes and outcomes of the five major refugee groups who participated in RCA during the study years. For each group, comparisons are made between the Period 1 and Period 2 participants and then the Period 2 participants for that group are compared with the overall statistics for all RCA participants in Period 2.

Somali participants

Somalis were the most numerous participants of RCA in both periods and their numbers more than tripled in Period 2. They represented over half of the refugees receiving RCA in Period 2.

When compared to the Somalis from the first period, the Somali RCA participants from Period 2 show some marked differences. The percentage of women decreased, 45.5 percent versus 55.6 percent; more Somalis were deemed to need interpreters, 84.9 percent versus 73.8 percent; and many fewer had graduated from high school, only 13.9 percent versus 27.5 percent in Period 1.

When compared to the overall population of RCA participants in Period 2, the Somali participants also showed relatively poor language skills and low educational attainment. Their need for interpreters was higher than average, 84.9 percent to 80.5 percent overall; their percentage of high school graduates was lower than the average, 13.9 percent versus 18.2 percent; and over half of them, 52.7 percent, were reported as having less than one year of schooling compared to 44.6 percent for all Period 2 RCA participants.

26. Somali RCA participants, attributes and outcomes

	Period 1	Period 2	All Groups Period 2
Attributes			
Total RCA participants	302	1,012	1,889
Gender: % female	55.6%	45.5%	45.8%
Marital Status: % married	28.8%	23.1%	28.0%
Age: % under 20 years old	20.5%	16.1%	16.3%
Age: % over 60 years old	8.0%	10.7%	13.9%
English: % needing interpreter	73.8%	84.9%	80.5%
Education: % less than one year	49.1%	52.7%	44.6%
Education: % graduated high school or more	27.5%	13.9%	18.2%
Outcomes			
early employment: % employed during RCA	8.2%	18.2%	23.7%
Average time to first job (for those employed)	178.5 days	121.9 days	143.8 days
Average time on RCA	152.6 days	163.1 days	156.6 days
General Assistance: % on GA within one year	23.2%	18.4%	18.1%

Source(s): *MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services,*

Even though they had poorer language skills and academic achievement than their Period 1 counterparts, the Somali RCA participants in Period 2 had greater success at getting jobs during their RCA tenure. A higher percentage of Somali were employed during their RCA eligibility, 8.2 percent rose to 18.2 percent. And the average time it took those workers to find jobs fell dramatically from 178 days to 122 days. Moreover, a smaller proportion of the Period 2 Somalis ended up utilizing GA in their first year after completing RCA, 18.4 percent compared to 23.2 percent for the Period 1 Somali participants.

When compared to the overall pool of Period RCA participants, the Somalis still were somewhat below average in the percentage who found early employment, 18.2 percent versus 23.7 percent overall. But those Somalis who found jobs found them faster than the average for all Period 2 workers by more than 22 days.

The qualitative data from interviews with Somali Period 2 RCA participants suggest that access to a network of established Somali refugees may play an important role in facilitating understanding of RCA and RES and finding early employment. The interview participants reported receiving assistance not just from Somali staff at VOLAGs and RES

providers, anchor relatives and extended family, but also from Somali staff working in county offices:

> I had family members to help me so I didn't need help with translation...I found a job quickly and didn't have any problem getting or keeping my benefit during that time (Somali interview participant, primary refugee).

> The Somali staff of [VOLAG] were wonderful. They helped my family (Somali interview participant, primary refugee).

> I got a job counselor, [VOLAG] sent me to [Somali RES provider]. I registered with them to look for a job. I went to school for some time, then looked for a job...It took me eight months to get it. I got a good job that paid for all my expenses (Somali interview participant, primary refugee).

> The Somali staff at the Multicultural Office [Hennepin County] explained to me the RCA program and what was required from me. [They] were a great help to me, very knowledgeable and efficient (Somali interview participant, secondary refugee).

Ethiopian participants

By nationality, Ethiopians were the second most numerous of RCA participants in both Periods. Their numbers more than doubled from 174 in Period 1 to 374 in Period 2.

The Ethiopians in the Period 2 sample differed from their Period 1 counterparts in several ways. Fewer were women and fewer were married. The percentage that needed an interpreter fell from 84.5 percent to 79.1 percent. And the distribution of educational backgrounds was somewhat different. Although a roughly similar percentage had graduated from high school, far fewer of the Period 2 group reported having less than one year of schooling, a drop of almost half from 40.8 percent to 22.7 percent.

When compared to the overall pool of Period 2 participants, the low proportion of Ethiopians reporting no schooling again stood out (only about half the overall Period 2 score) as did three other attributes. Again, fewer of the Ethiopians were women and fewer were married when compared to the entire Period 2 group. In addition, the Ethiopian RCA participants included far fewer people over 60 years old, only 3.2 percent versus 13.9 percent overall, as Table 27 indicates.

27. Ethiopian RCA participants, attributes and outcomes

	Period 1	Period 2	All Groups Period 2
Attributes			
Total RCA participants	174	374	1,889
Gender: % female	44.8%	37.7%	45.8%
Marital Status: % married	27.0%	20.9%	28.0%
Age: % under 20 years old	25.9%	20.3%	16.3%
Age: % over 60 years old	1.7%	3.2%	13.9%
English: % needing interpreter	84.5%	79.1%	80.5
Education: % less than one year	40.8%	22.7%	44.6%
Education: % graduated high school or more	18.3%	16.2%	18.2%
Outcomes			
early employment: % employed during RCA	14.7%	32.4%	23.7%
Average time to first job (for those employed)	125.0 days	133.6 days	143.8 days
Average time on RCA	181.7 days	172.6 days	156.6 days
General Assistance: % on GA within one year	34.7%	22.1%	18.1%

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services,

In Period 2, the Ethiopian RCA participants more than doubled the percentage who found jobs during their RCA eligibility, 32.4 percent versus 14.7 percent in Period 1. The average time to first job for those who got jobs during RCA rose slightly and the average time on RCA for the group was slightly higher than in Period 1. The usage of GA in the year following RCA completion was also much lower, 22.1 percent in Period 2 down from 34.7 percent in the earlier period.

The comparison of outcomes for the Period 2 Ethiopians to the overall outcomes for all Period 2 participants is somewhat paradoxical. On one hand, Ethiopians were the most successful of the subgroups studied when it came to getting jobs during their RCA tenure. And their early employment percentage of 32.4 percent far exceeded the overall score of 23.7 percent. Moreover, the Ethiopians who found work during RCA got jobs on the average of ten days faster than the Period 2 average.

On the other hand, the average time receiving RCA for all Period 2 Ethiopians was a full 16 days more than the average for the overall pool of Period 2 participants. This is surprising in light of the shorter time to first job for Ethiopians. There could be several

possible explanations for this pattern. For example, it could be that many Ethiopians secured low-wage jobs that offset part of their aid under RCA but did not make them ineligible. Or perhaps, some Ethiopians got early jobs but more of those Ethiopians who failed to get employment stayed on RCA to the end of the program than did the non-workers in other groups. We do not have the relevant data to investigate this seeming paradox. Moreover, while GA use among Ethiopians declined in the second period, it was still somewhat above the average of all Period 2 participants, 22.1 percent versus 18.1.

Similar to Somalis, the qualitative data suggest that Oromo, a subgroup of Ethiopians, may also benefit from established networks within their own communities in finding early employment. These are examples of comments made in the Oromo focus groups:

> Since I knew some people and also I found out my neighbor is some one who is my own people, I made appointments with him and this person took me to his job and introduced me to the supervisor and that day I went home. Another day, later on, when the job opening came available, the supervisor told him to bring back that person which was I. He came and informed me, I went with him, and I applied for the job, and after I came here four month[s] and 15 days I got a job at the same place (Oromo focus group participant).

> I think I was luck[y]. I got my job through an [African RES provider] I chose. [My job counselor], who speaks Oromo, helped me.

Liberian participants

As a group, the 93 Liberians who received RCA in Period 2 were pretty similar to the 41 Liberians who received aid in Period 1. The biggest differences were that the Period 2 group contained more women, 59.1 percent versus 43.9 percent, and that fewer of the group were married, 18.3 percent down from 26.8 percent earlier.

But the Liberians in Period 2 were quite different from others in the overall pool of RCA participants in the second period. In addition to more women and fewer married individuals, the Period 2 Liberians included many more adults under 20 years old, 25.8 percent compared to 16.3 percent for all participants in Period 2.

Even more important, perhaps, for their future job success, a majority of the Liberians spoke English well and had graduated from high school. Only 11.8 percent were seen to need an interpreter compared to 80.5 percent of the general population of RCA participants. And a full 51.7 percent had completed high school compared to 18.2 percent among all RCA participants.

28. Liberian RCA participants, attributes and outcomes

	Period 1	Period 2	All Groups Period 2
Attributes			
Total RCA participants	41	93	1,889
Gender: % female	43.9%	59.1%	45.8%
Marital Status: % married	26.8%	18.3%	28.0%
Age: % under 20 years old	29.3%	25.8%	16.3%
Age: % over 60 years old	7.3%	11.8%	13.9%
English: % needing interpreter	12.2%	11.8%	80.5%
Education: % less than one year	34.1%	22.6%	44.6%
Education: % graduated high school or more	48.7%	51.7%	18.2%
Outcomes			
early employment: % employed during RCA	22.2%	30.7%	23.7%
Average time to first job (for those employed)	101.3 days	148.1 days	143.8 days
Average time on RCA	127.5 days	141.3 days	156.6 days
General Assistance: % on GA within one year	5.6%	7.2%	18.1%

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services,

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Liberians did well in getting employment during their RCA tenure. Their score rose to 30.7 percent in Period 2 from 22.2 percent in Period 1 and exceeded the overall score for Period 2 by seven percentage points. Compared to the earlier period, the average length to first job for those who found work rose dramatically but was in line with the average for other participants in Period 2. Perhaps, there were just some unusual situations that led to early work for a few people in Period 1, which had a smaller sample.

Other measures also show the Liberians doing well in Period 2. Even though the average time in RCA rose from Period 1 among Liberians, it was still well below the average for all Period 2 participants, 141 days versus 156. Moreover, Liberians continued to show up on GA rolls in much lower numbers than their counterparts from other Period 2 groups. Only 7.2 percent used GA in the year after completing RCA in Period 2, compared to 18.1 percent for the whole Period 2 pool.

Some comments made by Liberian former RCA participants in the focus groups suggest that even though Liberians are English speakers, their Liberian dialect still presents a

challenge to employment. Several participants reported feeling discriminated against because they had an accent, and employers not understanding that even though they spoke English, they were still refugees. The following are examples of these comments:

> [Employers] say they can't understand us, we got [an] accent...when we go there the people make us to feel bad (Liberian focus group participant).

> With the job places now, then [they] say "Give me your job experience." Some children that are 18, 19 years old, and their first time working...Some of them, they were children when the war occurred and they ran to various refugee camps and different countries...They have not even worked before (Liberian focus group participant).

Russian participants

The Russian RCA participants are a smaller and very different group from the other groups studied here. The number of Russian participants declined from 55 in Period 1 to 34 in Period 2. About equally split between males and females, the Period 2 group included just over 70 percent married persons with over 40 percent being over the age of 60. These scores both represented increases over the Russian group in the first period. Also, the Period 2 group contained only 5.9 percent who were less than 20 years old compared to 14.5 percent of the Russians in Period 1. Perhaps, most strikingly, a full 23.5 of the Period 2 group had graduated from college or obtained a graduate degree, up from 5.4 percent in the earlier period.

The differences between the Period 2 Russians and other RCA participants were even more striking. More than seventy percent of the Russians were married compared to 28 percent overall; 41.2 percent were over 60 years old compared to 13.9 percent for the full group of RCA participants; and only 5.9 percent were under 20 years old compared to 16.3 percent for all Period 2 participants.

Large though these differences were, the contrasts in terms of educational achievement and language skills were even starker. Only 5.9 percent of the Russians in Period 2 reported less than one year of schooling compared to 44.6 percent in the whole Period 2 population. Conversely, the percentage of high school graduates among the Russians was more than three times that in the overall pool, 64.7 percent versus 18.2 percent. Moreover, 23.5 percent of the Russians had college degrees or better compared to a scant 1.7 percent among all Period 2 participants.

Even though the Russians were especially well-educated, few spoke English when they registered for RCA. A full 97.1 percent needed interpreters, much higher than the overall average of 80.5 percent in Period 2.

29. Russian RCA participants, attributes and outcomes

	Period 1	Period 2	All Groups Period 2
Attributes			
Total RCA participants	55	34	1,889
Gender: % female	56.4%	52.9%	45.8%
Marital Status: % married	54.5%	70.6%	28.0%
Age: % under 20 years old	14.5%	5.9%	16.3%
Age: % over 60 years old	34.5%	41.2%	13.9%
English: % needing interpreter	94.5%	97.1%	80.5
Education: % less than one year	16.4%	5.9%	44.6%
Education: % graduated high school or more	58.1%	64.7%	18.2%
Education: % graduated from college or holding graduate degree	5.4%	23.5%	1.7%
Outcomes			
early employment: % employed during RCA	6.1%	25.0%	23.7%
Average time to first job (for those employed)	145.0 days	129.8 days	143.8 days
Average time on RCA	191.4 days	176.7 days	156.6 days
General Assistance: % on GA within one year	33.3%	15.0%	18.1%

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services,

Outcomes data show that the Russians in Period 2 did much better at getting jobs during RCA than did their Period 1 counterparts, by 25.0 percent to 6.1 percent. Those who got jobs were employed quicker than the first period workers and a much lower percentage ended up using GA after completing their aid eligibility.

When the Period 2 Russians are compared to all Period 2 participants, data show that the percentage that got jobs during RCA was very close to the overall average for Period 2, 25.0 percent compared to 23.7. The average time to first job among the Russians who found employment was distinctly less than for all Period 2 participants by a full two weeks, 130 days compared to 144. Russians were also somewhat less likely to use GA in the year after leaving RCA, by 15.0 percent to 18.1 percent.

Finally, and perhaps somewhat paradoxically, the average time spent in RCA was longer for the Russian participants than for the larger group by just over 20 days, 176.7 to 156.6 days. We cannot trace exactly how this happened. It may be that the early job finders

were counterbalanced by a number of participants who used their full eight months to produce such a high group average.

No qualitative data were collected from Russian former RCA participants, so no explanation is available from that source.

Hmong participants

The Hmong were the third largest group of RCA participants in Period 2 but no Hmong participated in the program in Period 1. Thus, we can only compare the Hmong who received RCA to all Period 2 participants.

The measured attributes of the Hmong who received RCA differ sharply from those of other participants in Period 2 in a number of ways. Almost half of the Hmong participants were married when they registered for RCA compared to 28 percent of all Period 2 participants. The age distribution of the Hmong was also much different. Only 9.9 percent of the Hmong were under 20 years of age compared to 16.3 percent of the general RCA population. And almost half (46.5%) were over age 60 compared to only 13.9 percent among all Period 2 RCA participants.

The English language skills and educational attainment of the Hmong were also quite different from the overall RCA sample in Period 2. Fully 99.1 percent of the Hmong needed interpreters compared to 80.5 percent in the total Period 2 sample. More than four out of five Hmong (80.8%) were recorded as having less than one year of formal education compared to 44.6 percent for all Period 2 participants. And a scant 1.4 percent had graduated from high school, a sharp contrast from the 18.2 percent score for all Period 2 participants. The lack of education and English language skills may have posed a significant barrier to finding employment.

30. Hmong RCA participants, attributes and outcomes

	Period 1	Period 2	All Groups Period 2
Attributes			
Total RCA participants	0	213	1,889
Gender: % female	NA	49.8%	45.8%
Marital Status: % married	NA	49.3%	28.0%
Age: % under 20 years old	NA	9.9%	16.3%
Age: % over 60 years old	NA	46.5%	13.9%
English: % needing interpreter	NA	99.1%	80.5
Education: % less than one year	NA	80.8%	44.6%
Education: % graduated high school or more	NA	1.4%	18.2%
Outcomes			
early employment: % employed during RCA	NA	10.5%	23.7%
Average time to first job (for those employed)	NA	192.8 days	143.8 days
Average time on RCA	NA	179.0 days	156.6 days
General Assistance: % on GA within one year	NA	27.4%	18.1%

Source(s): *MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services,*

Indeed, the employment results confirm that Hmong participants found the local job markets challenging. Only 10.5 percent of the working-age Hmong men and women who received RCA in Period 2 found work during their tenure on RCA compared to more than twice that many in the complete pool of Period 2 RCA participants. Moreover, for those who did find work, the average time to first job was a full seven weeks longer than the average for all Period 2 participants, 192.8 days compared to 143.8 days.

Of course, the older Hmong were transferred to SSI and their RCA cases were then closed. Among the working age Hmong, it is perhaps not surprising that the average time on RCA was higher than the Period 2 average for all participants by more than three weeks, 179 days to 157. It is also not surprising that more Hmong would find the need to register for GA during their first year after RCA. The percentage of Hmong who received GA was 27.4 percent, more than half again as large as the proportion of all Period 2 participants who required such aid sometime in their first year post-RCA.

The qualitative data suggest that having been born in and having grown to adulthood in a refugee camp may have a very strong impact on refugees' understanding of the resources

and requirements attached to RCA. Though their comments cannot be considered at all representative of Hmong as a whole, the six young male participants in the Hmong focus group had almost no understanding of what had been expected of them when applying for and receiving RCA, especially the work requirement for continued eligibility. These are some of their comments:

> After 8 months [the VOLAG] sent me to [a Southeast Asian RES provider]. They asked if I wanted to work. They will help if I needed to find work. I said I didn't even have a car so what can they do to help me, and they said they didn't know how to help me get a car. It was hard. So then it just ended with that. (Hmong focus group participant)

> [Facilitator] Did [your RCA worker] tell you such things as the rules for looking for work, did they have time to answer your questions? (Hmong focus group participant) There weren't many questions to ask. They asked if we had any and we just say no.

> I asked if [the RES provider] would fill out the job application and then I would just go and do it. They said they would only fill out the paperwork and I would have to be interviewed. I knew that I didn't know English and would not be able to interview, so I just let it go. If they filled out the application and you just went to the job, then sure – but if you have to be interviewed and didn't know the language because you've just arrived, it wouldn't work (Hmong focus group. participant)

Results by VOLAG: Period 2

To provide additional insights into how RCA was administered under the PPP-RCA model, we analyzed disaggregated data from Period 2 to highlight differences between the VOLAGs. We have already compared the two RCA models by looking at the differences between periods. These additional data may give additional perspective on the PPP-RCA model. Our analysis here highlights the variability of outcomes between VOLAGs.

Because this is not an evaluation of different RCA service providers, we have elected not to identify the individual VOLAGs in this section and the next. We will refer to VOLAGs in each part of the analysis by different descriptors, e.g. "1,2,3,...," and the order of VOLAGs in each part varies.

The summary of selected outcome measures by VOLAG shows considerable variation in many of the measures. The range, maximum to minimum, of percentage of participants finding early employment is almost two to one. For those finding early employment, the range of time to first job is more than two to one. Interestingly, however, the VOLAG

with the lowest percentage also has the least time to first job. And the VOLAG with the highest percentage has the longest time to first job.

31. Period 2 RCA participants, selected outcome measures by VOLAG[1]

	% finding early jobs	Avg. no. of days to first job	Avg. no. of days on RCA	% using GA in first year after RCA	Avg. no. of days in U.S. at case opening
VOLAG 1	15.2% *	93.9 days**	162.2 days	13.0%**	40.9 days
VOLAG 2	19.4%	130.9 days	169.5 days	13.2%	28.5 days
VOLAG 3	20.2%	168.3 days	156.5 days	17.0%	52.9 days
VOLAG 4	29.0%**	201.7 days*	138.0 days**	14.5%	89.7 days*
VOLAG 5	28.4%	138.9 days	170.2 days*	15.7%	29.2 days
VOLAG 6	26.3%	138.8 days	169.4 days	21.3%*	22.8 days**
Total	23.7%	143.8 days	164.9 days	18.1%	36.4 days

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services

Note: For comparison purposes, this sample only includes working-age participants who are not exempt from RES and are not fulltime students.

* denotes least desirable score in column, ** denotes most desirable score in column

[1]   Only VOLAGs with 6 or more participants are included in individual line items. Total includes all participants in Period 2.

While the range of the percentage of participants using GA in the first year after RCA is not as great as other measures, the differences are significant statistically. We also note that the VOLAG with the longest average time-in-country at case open had the lowest average time in program. This is likely closely connected, since the overall participation time limit is measured from U.S. entry. However, we do not have an explanation for the wide range of three to one in the average time-in-country at case open.

Since the actual process of RCA distribution is so similar at the different VOLAGs, the amount of variation in outcomes among VOLAGs is somewhat surprising. It seems plausible that part of the variation could be generated by differences in the services provided by different RES providers and in the methods used by the VOLAGS to make referrals to them. Further data collection and examination of the specific programs and assistance rendered by each VOLAG and by providers of RES would be required to identify the sources and true significance of the differences shown here.

Experiences of nationality groups by VOLAG

Finally, we analyzed some data on selected nationality groups to see how the experience of those groups may have varied across the different VOLAGs that served them. Again, we are not attempting to evaluate VOLAGs here and we have elected not to identify them individually when presenting outcomes. Rather, we are interested in the variability of experiences.

The participants of different nationalities were not distributed equally across the VOLAGs and there is considerable missing data – for over 8 percent of participants, the VOLAG data is missing. The International Institute handled almost 10 times as many Ethiopian participants as any other VOLAG and twice as many Somali participants. Somalis were the majority of participants during this period; Catholic Charities of Rochester had almost exclusively Somali participants. On the other hand, for the International Institute and the MN Council of Churches, Somalis were fewer than half the participants.

32. Period 2 RCA participants by Nationality Group and by VOLAG

	Somali	Ethiopian	Liberian	Russian	Hmong	Other	Total
Cath. Charities – St. Paul/Mpls	188	25	10	0	19	16	258
Cath. Charities - Rochester	37	1	1	0	1	6	46
International Institute	299	262	6	1	43	36	647
Jewish Family Services	0	0	0	2	0	0	2
Lutheran Social Services	104	27	48	0	16	23	218
MN Council of Churches	34	5	6	2	3	19	69
World Relief	83	4	1	13	10	23	134
Missing records	85	24	3	2	3	9	126
Total	830	348	75	20	95	132	1500

Below we show the variability in outcomes experienced by Somalis, Ethiopians, and Hmong in different VOLAGs. We report only cells that have data for six or more participants and suppress reporting when it would identify the VOLAG.

Somali Experience by VOLAG

33. Somali RCA participants, selected outcome measures by VOLAG[1]

	% finding early jobs	Avg. no. of days to first job	Avg. no. of days on RCA	% using GA in first year after RCA	Avg. no. of days in U.S. at case opening
VOLAG 1	8.1%	88.0 days	165.3 days	13.5%	48.4 days
VOLAG 2	18.1%	116.3 days	166.1 days	14.4%	21.0 days
VOLAG 3	13.5%	170.2 days	162.0 days	22.1%	44.7 days
VOLAG 4	17.6%	134.3 days	138.9 days	17.6%	68.9 days
VOLAG 5	25.3%	118.2 days	167.0 days	20.5%	34.5 days
VOLAG 6	21.1%	119.3 days	167.1 days	21.4%	17.0 days
Total[1]	18.4%	121.9 days	163.0 days	18.4%	33.2 days

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services

Note: For comparison purposes, this sample only includes working-age participants who are not exempt from RES and are not fulltime students.

[1]   Only VOLAGs with 6 or more participants are included in individual line items. Total includes all Somali participants in Period 2.

There was a greater than three to one range, maximum to minimum, in the percentage of participants finding early jobs. And there was almost a two to one range in the average days to find first job for those who did find an early job. Interestingly, VOLAG 1 showed both the lowest percentage of Somali participants finding an early job and the lowest time to first job for those who did.

There was almost a three to one range in the average number of days in U.S. at case open. While the range in average days on RCA appears substantial, when the days in U.S. at case open are taken into account, this variation is accounted for.

While the range of percentage using GA in the first year after RCA is small compared to other measures, it is still statistically significant.

The Somalis who did find jobs found them relatively quickly compared to other RCA recipients in Period 2. One possible explanation is that they benefited from a network of Somalis who were already established in the region.

Ethiopian Experience by VOLAG

34. Ethiopian RCA participants, selected outcome measures by VOLAG[1]

	% finding early jobs	Avg. no. of days to first job	Avg. no. of days on RCA	% using GA in first year after RCA	Avg. no. of days in U.S. at case opening
VOLAG A	25.9%	116.6 days	165.4 days	29.6%	39.3 days
VOLAG B	32.8%	138.6 days	172.9 days	21.8%	18.0 days
VOLAG C	28.0%	96.3 days	165.2 days	12.0%	44.9 days
Total[1]	32.5%	133.6 days	172.6 days	22.1%	23.9 days

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services

Note: For comparison purposes, this sample only includes working-age participants who are not exempt from RES and are not fulltime students.

[1] *Only VOLAGs with 6 or more participants are included in individual line items. Total includes all Ethiopian participants in Period 2.*

Our results suggest that, in most respects, Ethiopian participants did not experience the same degree of variability across VOLAGs as Somali participants. Part of this difference may be due to the fact that only three VOLAGs had enough Ethiopians to be reported.

Ethiopians, as a group, had more success finding early jobs, as we have pointed out before. Their experience in VOLAG C suggests that, for those who found early jobs, they found them quickly and few of them used GA in the first year.

Hmong Experience (by VOLAG)

35. Hmong RCA participants, selected outcome measures (by VOLAG[1])

	% finding early jobs	Avg. no. of days to first job[1]	Avg. no. of days on RCA	% using GA in first year after RCA	Avg. no. of days in U.S. at case opening
VOLAG W	0.0%		207.4 days	10.0%	11.0 days
VOLAG X	14.0%		166.4 days	32.6%	16.0 days
VOLAG Y	10.5%		185.7 days	15.8%	20.4 days
VOLAG Z	12.5%		183.1 days	25.0%	22.4 days
Total[1]	10.5%	192.8 days	179.0 days	27.4%	17.8 days

Source(s): *MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services*

Note: For comparison purposes, this sample only includes working-age participants who are not exempt from RES and are not fulltime students.

[1]   *Only VOLAGs with 6 or more participants are included in individual line items. Total includes all Hmong participants in Period 2.*

As noted earlier, Hmong participants fared poorly across several outcome measures. Here, we see the percentage finding an early job was low with little variability. And the average time in U.S. at case open was also low with little variability across VOLAGs.

Unlike other nationality groups, the greatest variability was in the percentage using GA in the first year after RCA. Over a three to one range, maximum to minimum, was experienced across VOLAGs by the Hmong group. Explaining this and other differences across VOLAGs is beyond the scope of our work.

Test: Internal RES versus Contracted RES

One test that was requested by the client that can be made with existing data is to examine whether the effects of internal RES provided by a VOLAG and external RES provided by a non-VOLAG contractor were different. Four of the VOLAGs provided RES services themselves, (Catholic Charities St. Paul/Minneapolis, Lutheran Social Services, Minnesota Council of Churches, and World Relief), while Catholic Charities Rochester and the International Institute referred refugees to other providers. First, we compare the early employment results of the two groups.[14]

36. Period 2 Refugee Cash Assistance participants, early employment experience, internal RES v. external provider

	Internal RES	External provider*	Test of equality, significance level
% finding early employment	22.4%	25.6%	.005
Average days to first job	153.1	137.4	.036
Average number of quarterly wage record	4.27	4.57	.097
Average total earnings	$16,325	$16,866	.635

Source(s): MAXIS database, MN Department of Human Services and MN Dept of Employment and Economic Development (DEED)

As Table 36 indicates, the external providers produced a higher proportion of participants finding early employment, 25.6 percent versus 22.4 percent for the internal RES providers. Moreover this difference was highly significant statistically. RCA participants who got help from external providers also got jobs faster. The average days in the country for those job seekers were only 137.4 days compared to 153.1 days for participants serviced by internal RES providers. Again, this result was statistically significant.

Additional data from wage detail records shows that RCA participants who used external RES providers had a somewhat greater number of quarters of employment during their two years after RCA and slightly higher average total earnings. However, these differences were not statistically significant.

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[14] It should be noted that the four VOLAGs who provided RES services did not require RCA participants to use their RES services and did, in fact, refer some of their RCA clients to other RES providers. Lacking information about which RES provider was used for each individual, the comparison used here is the best that can be done at this time.

In further regression tests, the variable indicating internal RES was not statistically significant. The information we had on VOLAGs was not detailed enough to provide in-depth analysis of their operation and such analysis is beyond the scope of this study. However as stated above the variability in the results of the different VOLAGs does suggest that further inquiry into their provision and supervision of internal RES would be a fruitful line of investigation in order to increase the potential effectiveness of RCA.

At this stage, we can only conclude that the results for the external RES providers were significantly better than those for internal providers, but we cannot be sure whether the improvement was the result of better services or of other individual factors affecting employment outcomes.

Section V: Recommendations

In this section, we list our recommendations based on the evidence from the quantitative and qualitative data.

Continue the PPP model

The quantitative data show that the PPP model produced better outcomes than the previous model for RCA recipients in the eight counties of Minnesota using it. Therefore, we recommend that RCA continue to be distributed through the VOLAGs.

In general, we deem the PPP model as implemented in Minnesota to be a "promising practice," meaning that initial research supports its effectiveness but there is not a large accumulated body of evidence to support its superiority over alternatives.

Continue promising practices

As a whole, the PPP model produces better outcomes than the earlier model. Within the model, there are a number of distinct policy or procedural changes which appear to contribute to the success of the program and which may be considered "promising practices," in their own right. They are described below.

RCA application at the VOLAG

Having refugees file their CAF at the VOLAG providing R&P services appears to result in several benefits:

- The practice of having the R&P caseworker complete page 1 of the CAF with the refugee and their anchor relative, and then immediately faxing it to the county seems to establish an early application date for RCA.

- The practice of R&P caseworkers scheduling an appointment with the RCA EC, and providing the refugee and anchor relative with a list of documents they will need to establish RCA eligibility at that first meeting, appears to result in earlier applications for RCA and earlier approval.

Over-the-counter distribution of RCA payments

Distributing monthly RCA payments by check and having the recipient pick up those checks in person at the VOLAG appears to have several distinct benefits:

- The monthly appointments give ECs the opportunity to reinforce the expectation that refugees find early employment.

- The EC is able to discuss any life challenges or employment barriers that the RCA recipients have encountered, and to engage them in early resolution of those problems.

- Regular and supportive contact with the EC appears to result in more rapid and accurate reporting of changes in eligibility status.

Housing R&P and RCA within the same organization

The qualitative data suggest that VOLAGs' R&P and RCA workers work collaboratively to efficiently and effectively provide services to RCA recipients, which contributes to better continuity of services from initial resettlement to self-sufficiency. Some of the apparent benefits of this team approach include:

- Information-sharing across programs can help ECs locate RCA recipients they have been unable to contact, or become aware of the reasons that contact has been difficult.

- R&P caseworkers sometimes assist with translation for refugees who have no anchor relative or friend to translate for them, which contributes to refugees having a better understanding of what is expected of them.

- RCA recipients have relationships with several staff at the VOLAG, so if they encounter a problem and cannot reach their EC, they have someone to talk with who will convey the information to the EC and help with resolution if possible.

Economic incentives

Though not specific to PPP-RCA, the policies that increase economic incentives for RCA recipients in Period 2 appear to help them in their efforts to achieve self-sufficiency. These policies are:

- Eliminating prospective eligibility testing in favor of retrospective budgeting.

- Disregarding 50 percent of gross earned income when determining net monthly income for eligibility.

- Increasing the allowed assets to $5,000.

Half-time school with RES participation

A promising practice is VOLAGs' encouragement of part-time school in the first few months after arrival in the U.S., coupled with RES participation. The quantitative data indicate that English proficiency has a positive impact on early employment, and that developing language skills will almost certainly enhance long-term employability. The qualitative data suggest that RCA recipients consider schooling to be an essential step toward employment that supports self-sufficiency. For those refugees without high school diplomas and whose first language is not English, this option could potentially contribute to more long-term employment at higher rates of pay.

Consider possible changes

Quantitative data and qualitative information gathered for this study point to some other actions or issues that could be explored to potentially enhance the operation and effectiveness of RCA as it currently administered. These include:

- Provide refugees with more information about the distinctions between R&P, RCA, and RES programs, especially eligibility requirements and resources, so that they better understand the reasons that their grant amounts and access to specific resources have changed.

- When referring RCA recipients to RES, provide them with more information about the specific services offered by the various RES providers to help them choose the best provider for their needs or goals. The collection of more complete data on placement results of individual RES providers would enhance the ability of RCA service providers to make effective referrals.

- Find ways to ensure that refugees have transportation to meetings with the EC and other mandatory appointments, especially those who rely on employed relatives for transportation and those who live in areas without easy access to public transportation.

- Have translators available on site for RCA recipients' monthly appointments to accommodate the needs of those whose anchor relatives cannot take time off work.

Appendix

1. *Glossary of RCA-related terms*

2. *VOLAG interview*

3. *Hmong focus group recruitment script*

4. *Liberian focus group recruitment script*

5. *Oromo focus group recruitment script*

6. *Somali focus group recruitment script*

7. *Focus group questions*

8. *Questions for telephone interviews with Somali men and women*

9. *Interview guide – Community organizations serving Hmong, Liberian & Somali refugees*

10. *Glossary of statistical terms used in this report*

11. *List of person and case tests for continued RCA eligibility*

1. Glossary of terms

Applicant: A person who has submitted a request for assistance for whom no decision has been made regarding eligibility and whose application has not been acted upon or voluntarily withdrawn.

Application: A request for assistance made by submitting a signed and dated page 1 of the Combined Application Form (CAF).

Assets: Real property and personal property owned wholly or in part by the client.

Asset Limit: The maximum amount of net counted assets a client may own or have available and remain eligible for assistance.

Assistance Unit: A person or persons who live together and apply for and receive benefits together.

Asylee: A person who is already present in the United States and has established a well-founded fear of persecution if returned to their home country and who have been granted asylum status.

Best Practices: A strategy or program which is deemed research-based by scientists and researchers at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Before a sufficient body of research has been accumulated, a practice may be deemed a "promising practice." (see definition below)

Budgeting: Assigning income to a payment month. Using unit income to compute eligibility and benefit levels.
- **Budget Month:** The calendar month from which the county agency uses the income or circumstances of a unit to determine the amount of the benefit for the payment month.
- **Processing Month:** The month designated for processing an HRF.
- **Payment Month:** The calendar month for which assistance is paid.
- **Prospective Budgeting:** A method of anticipating income and determining benefit levels in which the budget month and payment month are the same. For example, use January income to determine January benefit levels.
- **Retrospective Budgeting:** Calculating benefit levels using income received two months before the payment month to determine benefit levels for the payment month. For example, use January income to determine March benefit levels.

Combined Application Form (CAF): Form DHS-3469 on which people apply for multiple assistance programs including: cash assistance, food support, emergency programs and health care.

Diversionary Work Program (DWP): A short-term, work focused program for families applying for cash benefits. It provides a maximum of 4 consecutive months in a 12-month period of necessary services and supports to families which will lead to unsubsidized employment, increase economic stability, and reduce the risk of needing longer term assistance under MFIP.

Earned Income: Cash or in-kind income earned in the form of salaries, wages, commissions, profit from employment activities, net profit from self-employment, payments made by an employer for regularly accrued vacation or sick leave, and any other profit earned through effort or labor. For all programs but MSA, the income must be in return for or as a result of legal activity.

Earned Income Disregard: (See **Work Expense** below.)

Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT): Process by which cash and/or food support benefits are deposited in the participant's account and are accessed via the participant's EBT card.

Full-Time Student: A person who is enrolled in a graded or ungraded primary, intermediate, secondary, GED preparatory, trade, technical, vocational, or post-secondary school, and who meets the school's standard for full-time attendance. Summer vacations and school holidays do not affect the student's full-time status.

General Assistance (GA): A state-funded program providing cash assistance and services to refugees who meet a basis of eligibility and are ineligible for RCA.

General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC): Minnesota's state-funded health care program authorized under Minnesota Statutes 256D.03 to provide medical care to people receiving GA, or ineligible for medical coverage through MSA or Medical Assistance as long as ineligibility for MA is not due to program non-compliance.

Household: People who live together but may not be in the same assistance unit.

Household Report Form (HRF): A form (DHS-2120) used by participants to report income and circumstance changes.

Immigrant: A person who leaves another country to settle permanently in the United States.

Institution of Higher Learning: Any institution which normally requires a high school diploma or equivalency certificate before enrollment. This includes, but is not limited to, colleges, universities, and vocational or technical schools at the post-high school level.

Matching Grant Program: An alternative program to public assistance designed to make refugees self-sufficient within 4 months from date of entry into the U.S. In-kind and cash donations raised by the local affiliate are matched by the government at a two-to-one ratio. Participants receive employment training and assistance and a cash stipend.

MAXIS: Minnesota's statewide automated eligibility system for public assistance programs.

Medical Assistance (MA): The federally funded program established under Title XIX of the Social Security Act and Minnesota Statutes 256B providing for health care to needy people.

Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP): Minnesota's Family Assistance program. The program is funded by both TANF (federal dollars) and state-funded. (See **TANF** below.)

Mutual Assistance Association (MAA): Community based organizations whose board consists of at least 51% of its members being former refugees, founded by these former refugees to assist their own communities.

Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR): A branch of the United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that assists refugees and other special populations in obtaining economic and social self-sufficiency in their new homes in the United States.

Outcomes: In formal program evaluation, outcomes refer to the measurable results identified by a formal logic model. In this report, the term "outcomes" is used to refer to a specific set of measured results for individual RCA participants and groups, including the securing of employment, the length of time to first job, and the use or non-use of GA after completing RCA.

Over-the-Counter Issuance (OTC): Method by which RCA checks are mailed to the VOLAG which requires the participant to pick up the check each month at the VOLAG.

Participant: A person who has been determined eligible for and receiving benefits from the RCA program.

Post-Secondary School: A school that serves students beyond the 12th grade, such as a community college, university, or technical college.

Promising Practice: A program or strategy that contains some quantitative data showing positive outcomes, but does not have enough research or replication to support generalization of outcomes.

Proration: An action in which initial benefits are calculated from the date of application or the date all eligibility factors are met, whichever is later.

Prospective Eligibility: A Period 1 test for RCA eligibility, in which the eligibility worker estimated the participant's income for the coming month and compares that amount to the assistance standard to determine if the participant is prospectively eligible for a grant.

Public/Private Partnership (PPP): The model instituted by the Minnesota Resettlement Programs Office under which the MN Voluntary Agencies administer RCA in 8 counties.

Prospective Net Income: See Budgeting.

Resettlement Grant: R&P one-time allowance given to newly arrived refugees by their resettlement agency (VOLAG) upon their arrival in the U.S. (Note: Asylees and Secondary Migrants usually do not receive a resettlement grant from a MN VOLAG.)

RCA Assistance Standards:
- $250 for a 1-person unit
- $437 for a 2-person unit (In Period 1, was $260)

RCA Assistance Unit: A single person or married couple without minor children who live together and whose needs, assets and income are considered together, and who receive a single benefit from RCA.

RCA Eligibility Coordinator (RCA-EC): A person located in a MN VOLAG who has the ability to process RCA eligibility through MAXIS and who maintains the cash assistance case during the months of RCA eligibility. Also described in this report as an EC.

RCA Employment Services (RCA-ES): Programs, activities, and services that help clients become employed and self-sufficient. Services may include job search, job placements, client assessments, and training. Also described in this report as RES.

RCA Employment Services provider (RCA-ESP): An agency or organization that operates under formal contract with the MN Office of Refugee Resettlement to provide employment services to RCA participants. Also described in this report as RES provider.

Reception and Placement Program (R&P): A program administered through the VOLAGs to welcome newly arriving refugees and to provide immediate essential services during their first 90 days in the U.S.

Refugee: Defined by the Immigration and Nationality Act as people who are:
- Admitted as refugees under section 207.
- Paroled as refugees or asylees under section 212(d)(5).
- Granted asylum under section 208.
- Cuban and Haitian entrants, in accordance with requirements in 45 CFR part 401.
- Admitted as Amerasian under the Amerasian Homecoming Act.
- Trafficking victims who have been certified by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). People under age 18 who are trafficking victims are not required to be certified but are issued letters of confirmation by ORR.

Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA): A program that provides financial help to refugees ineligible for SSI or MFIP for up to 8 months after arrival in the United States.

Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA): A federally authorized program providing Medical Assistance to refugees.

Refugee Resettlement Program: A program that reimburses state and county expenses of providing services to refugees.

Resettlement Programs Office (RPO): The Minnesota Department of Human Services office responsible for ensuring the effective coordination of the PPP-RCA program.

Sanctions: Actions taken against units who do not cooperate with assistance program requirements.

Secondary Migrants: Immigrants (including refugees and asylees) who are originally resettled in another state but choose to move to Minnesota after resettlement.

Self-sufficiency: The point at which a person's income is at a level that enables them to support themselves without receipt of a cash assistance grant.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI): A program operated by the Social Security Administration that provides monthly income to low income people who are aged, blind, or have a disability.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): A Federal cash assistance program that replaced the AFDC program in Minnesota.

Unit Members: People living together as part of an assistance unit.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS): Formerly named Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Service (BCIS).

Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGs): Voluntary agencies that are responsible, under contract with the U.S. Department of State, for providing refugees with initial housing, food, clothing and shelter immediately after arrival in the United States.

Work Expense/Earned Income Disregard: An amount of money allowed as a deduction from the earned income to determine the net counted earned income (Period 1 - $90, Period 2 -50% of gross earned income).

Working age: Ages 18 to 50 in this report, for the purposes of recruiting focus group participants.

2. VOLAG interview

Intro:

Thanks so much for taking the time to talk with me today. Hopefully, you've received a letter from DHS asking for your help in this project. I'm working with Paul Anton, Wilder Research's chief economist, on a cost-benefit analysis of the VOLAG approach to RCA versus the earlier county-based approach.

To give you a little background on the reason for this call, I'm talking with RCA eligibility coordinators and resettlement workers at VOLAGs to get a sense of how each VOLAG goes about working with refugees and asylees on resettlement and RCA, what kinds of resources you provide other than RCA and 30 days resettlement assistance (if any), and to hear about any particular challenges that refugees encounter as they try to negotiate the system and get acclimated to the workplace in the U.S.

I'll be using this information to develop some focus group questions for people who received RCA during specific time periods designated by DHS. All of my information will then go to Paul Anton, who will incorporate it into the statistical models he develops for the cost-benefits analysis. Since each VOLAG does things somewhat differently, he needs to control for those differences so that he can see what impact the different RCA distribution systems have on refugees' success in becoming self-sufficient, rather than what might be a result of the types of support you provide.

This is not at all an evaluation of the VOLAGs or their work. We're just trying to figure out the various types of resources that are provided during resettlement and RCA, how refugees' needs are being met, and the different types of limitations or challenges VOLAGs are trying to address.

REFUGEE CASH ASSISTANCE
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR VOLAG STAFF

Respondent(s): _____
_____

Date:_____

VOLAG:_____

Can you talk with me a little bit about how adult refugees without children become involved in RCA at <VOLAG name>? Start to end: Getting linked to the VOLAG Steps and stages	Response:
How do you handle the transition from resettlement to RCA? Does resettlement case manager help with application for RCA? Any language challenges? Collaboration/cooperation between resettlement case managers and RCA coordinators?	Response:
What types of resettlement and support services does <VOLAG> provide for adult refugees who don't have children? In-house, by referral, caseworker goes along? Finding housing Clothing and household needs Health needs English classes Assistance with immigration Orientation to life in the U.S. Everyone/certain criteria? Can people still come back for help after resettlement period is over? Limitations?	Response:
About how long does it take for a person to go through the eligibility process for RCA? Are there some common "bumps" in that process? Problems establishing eligibility: Getting documents together Time until first check comes Others?	Response:

What about a matching grant program? Do you have one? How does it work? Criteria for inclusion? Length of time, amount? Types of employment, how soon?	Response:
How does <VOLAG> pay for the different resources and programs you provide on top of resettlement and RCA? (Matching grant program, housing, etc.)	Response:
Does <VOLAG> also have a refugee employment program? Process and staff (English only?) Classroom or one-on-one? Types of jobs Preparing refugees for employment Difficulties in finding jobs for non-English speakers	Response:
Are there any particular problems or challenges that refugees frequently encounter, that <VOLAG> tries to help with?	Response:
Is there anything you want us to know about the benefits of the VOLAG system for RCA, compared to RCA done by counties?	Response:
Are there any particular challenges that you encounter as an organization in trying to help refugees become self sufficient?	Response:
Does <VOLAG> maintain resettlement case files that contain case plans and case notes for individuals? DHS has asked us to review a random sample of those, so who would I talk to, to set up a time to do that? Maybe 30 or so—will send staff in to review and complete a data collection form on services/challenges, won't ask to remove or copy files	Response:
Benefits of VOLAG system (if volunteered)	
VOLAG philosophy re: self-sufficiency (if volunteered)	
Specific challenges (if volunteered)	

3. Hmong focus group recruitment script

<Introduce yourself>. I am calling because the Southeast Asian Program is helping Wilder Research with a project. The MN Department of Human Resources has asked Wilder Research to evaluate the way that refugee cash assistance is distributed, and how it fits into other types of support and assistance that refugees use. Currently, RCA is distributed through Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGs): Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, World Relief, and International Institute. A few years ago, it was distributed by county workers. DHS would like to know which system worked best. The Department of Human Services gave Wilder Research lists of RCA participants' names and contact information to help us recruit people to participate in focus groups—group conversations—and that's how I got your name

SEA is helping to recruit Hmong people who received RCA during the second time period, to participate in a focus group—a group conversation that will be led by Bee Vang and Kao Lee, in Hmong, at the SEA office on Syndicate Street in St. Paul. The people that I recruit from the list will each receive $40 cash for their participation, paid at the end of the group. The state will not know that we called you, or whether or not you decided to participate. What you have to say will not be associated with your name in any kind of report or conversation with the State.

In the focus group, we will ask people to talk about their own process of resettlement in Minnesota, becoming eligible for RCA and receiving it. We'll be asking if you experienced any particular challenges as you tried to work with the system and become self-sufficient. We would also like to hear about the various types of resources that you found and used during the time you were receiving resettlement and RCA services.

The group is planned for Tuesday evening, November 7 at the Wilder Southeast Program office. Would you be willing to attend? (IF YES) Good! Either Lue Thao or Kao Lee will be calling you from Wilder Research to remind you of the group one or two days beforehand. Should they call this number?

Do you know where the SEA office is located? (IF NO, GIVE INSTRUCTIONS).

Thank you for being willing to help!

4. Liberian focus group recruitment script

Wilder Research has been contracted by the MN Department of Human Resources to evaluate the way that refugee cash assistance is distributed, and how it fits into other types of support and assistance that refugees use. Currently, RCA is distributed through Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGs): Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, World Relief, and International Institute. A few years ago, it was distributed by county workers. DHS would like to know which system worked best.

I am helping Wilder Research recruit Liberian people who received RCA during these two time periods to participate in a focus group—a group conversation that I will lead at my offices in Brooklyn Park. The people that I recruit will receive $35 cash for their participation, paid at the end of the group. The Department of Human Services gave Wilder Research lists of RCA participants' names and contact information to help us with recruitment because they want people from two specific time periods—but they will not know that we called you, or whether or not you decided to participate. What you have to say will not be associated with your name in any kind of report or conversation with DHS.

In the focus group, we will ask people to talk about their own process of resettlement in Minnesota, becoming eligible for RCA and receiving it. We'll be asking if you experienced any particular challenges as you tried to work with the system and become self-sufficient. We would also like to hear about the various types of resources that you found and used during the time you were receiving resettlement and RCA services.

The group is planned for Friday evening, October 27 at the Brooklyn Park offices of the African Consortium. Would you be willing to attend? (IF YES) Good! Thalia Cooper will be calling you to remind you of the group one or two days beforehand. Should she call this number?

5. Oromo focus group recruitment script

<Introduce yourself>. I am calling because <I am/organization is> helping Wilder Research with a project. The MN Department of Human Resources has asked Wilder Research to evaluate the way that refugee cash assistance is distributed, and how it fits into other types of support and assistance that refugees use. Currently, RCA is distributed through Voluntary Agencies (VOLAGs): Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, World Relief, and International Institute. A few years ago, it was distributed by county workers. DHS would like to know which system worked best. The Department of Human Services gave Wilder Research lists of RCA participants' names and contact information to help us recruit people to participate in focus groups—group conversations—and that's how I got your name

<I am/we are> helping to recruit Oromo men and women who received RCA during the two time periods, to participate in focus groups—group conversations. We would like you to participate in an Oromo focus group that will be led by <facilitator's name> in Oromo, at <insert location/site for focus group>. The people that I recruit from the DHS list of RCA participants will each receive $35 cash for their participation and will be paid at the end of the group. The State will not know that we called you, or whether or not you decided to participate. What you say will not be associated with your name in any kind of report or conversation with the State.

In the focus group, we will ask people to talk about their own process of resettlement in Minnesota, becoming eligible for RCA and receiving it. We'll be asking if you experienced any particular challenges as you tried to work with the system and become self-sufficient. We would also like to hear about the various types of resources that you found and used during the time you were receiving resettlement and RCA services.

The group is planned for <insert date and time > at <insert location>. Would you be willing to attend? (IF YES) Good! Someone will call you to remind you of the group one or two days beforehand. Should they call this number?

Do you know where <focus group site> is located? (IF NO, GIVE INSTRUCTIONS).

Thank you for being willing to help!

RECORD THE NAME AND TELEPHONE NUMBER OF THE PEOPLE WHO ARE RECRUITED

6. Somali focus group recruitment script

<Introduce yourself>. I am calling because Somali Success is helping Wilder Research with a project. The MN Department of Human Resources has asked Wilder Research to evaluate the way that refugee cash assistance (RCA) is distributed, and how it fits into other types of support and assistance that refugees use. Currently, RCA is distributed through Voluntary Agencies like Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, World Relief, and International Institute. A few years ago, refugee cash assistance payments were distributed by county workers. DHS would like to know which system worked best. The Department of Human Services gave Wilder Research lists of RCA participants' names and contact information to help us recruit people to participate in focus groups—group conversations—and that's how I got your name

We are helping to recruit Somali men and women who received RCA during the two time periods to participate in focus groups—group conversations—that will be led by Huda Farah and Mamoud Wali in Somali, at Somali Success in Minneapolis. The people that I recruit from the DHS list will each receive $35 cash for their participation and will be paid at the end of the group. The State will not know that we called you, or whether or not you decided to participate. What you say will not be associated with your name in any kind of report or conversation with the State.

In the men's/women's focus group, we will ask people to talk about their own process of resettlement in Minnesota, becoming eligible for RCA and receiving it. We'll be asking if you experienced any particular challenges as you tried to work with the system and become self-sufficient. We would also like to hear about the various types of resources that you found and used during the time you were receiving resettlement and RCA services.

The group is planned for <date and time > at Somali Success. You must be on time for the group, to get paid. Would you be willing to attend? (IF YES) Good! Someone will call you to remind you of the group one or two days beforehand. Should they call this number?

Do you know where Somali Success office is located? (IF NO, GIVE INSTRUCTIONS).

Thank you for being willing to help!

RECORD THE NAME AND TELEPHONE NUMBER OF THE PEOPLE WHO ARE RECRUITED

7. Focus group questions

Facilitator: Introduce yourself, then say: Thank you all for coming to this group to talk about your experiences with resettlement and refugee cash assistance. Your name will not be shared with anyone or connected to anything you say in any kind of report, and no one at your refugee services agency or at State or federal offices will know that you participated in this group. We will ask you to sign for the cash you will receive at the end of the group, but that document is only for Wilder Research financial records and will not be given to anyone else. What you have to say about your own experiences is very important, so I encourage you to be open and honest. The main goal for this discussion is to understand what your experience was like as a refugee settling in the U.S. and trying to become self-sufficient.

Facilitator say: Would you each please introduce yourselves by your first name only, and tell us when you first arrived in the U.S., and when you came to Minnesota?

Facilitator instruction: After everyone has introduced themselves, state for the recording how many came straight to Minnesota from their home country or the refugee camp, and how many lived in another state first. Then, begin questions:

1. This first question is for those of you who came straight to Minnesota from your home country, not those who spent their first month or more in another state, then came to Minnesota.

   Please tell us a little bit about the resettlement services you received during your first 3 months in the U.S.—how did you get linked to the organization that helped you, and how much help did you get with the application for assistance? (Catholic Charities, Lutheran Social Services, International Institute, MN Council of Churches, or World Relief)

   PROBES: ONLY ASK THE THINGS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN MENTIONED

       a. Filling out the application

       b. Help translating or explaining the application questions

       c. Explaining what documents are needed, where to get them, and when you need them

       d. Explaining the rules, the process, your responsibilities and your rights

       e. Specific things received from the resettlement agency during the first month

   - Resettlement money or gift cards (usually $425 or a combination of cash and a Target gift card)
   - Help getting housing (referrals, help with applications, going along)
   - Furniture, bedding and household goods (did you have to pay?)
   - Clothing (did you have to pay?)
   - Food—directly, through vouchers, through gift certificates, etc.)
   - Other types of help

2. Did the resettlement agency send you to other organizations for things you needed? Who, and what did they give you?

    PROBES: ONLY ASK THE THINGS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN MENTIONED

    - Help completing applications and explaining everything you had to do
    - Help getting housing
    - Furniture, bedding and household goods
    - Clothing
    - Food
    - Other types of help

3. How much did the resettlement services help you, overall?

    PROBES: ONLY ASK THE THINGS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN MENTIONED

    a. Resettlement case manager's helpfulness and availability for explaining what to do, answering questions, helping resolve problems
    b. Needs or challenges during resettlement that were not addressed

Facilitator say: Now I'd like to hear from those of you who came to Minnesota from another state, and who began receiving Refugee Cash Assistance here--$250 a month during your second to your eighth month in the U.S.

4. How did you get linked to the organization that gave you Refugee Cash Assistance, and how much help did you get there?

    PROBES: ONLY ASK THE THINGS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN MENTIONED

    a. Explaining the application questions
    b. Explaining what papers you needed
    c. Explaining what to expect and what you were entitled to
    d. Translation assistance for these things
    e. Help getting required documents

5. The rest of my questions are for everyone who is here—How well did the person working with you on Refugee Cash Assistance help you understand what you needed to do to get and keep getting your payments?

    PROBES: ONLY ASK THE THINGS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN MENTIONED

    a. Explaining the rules for what you needed to report, and when
    b. Explaining the rules about finding a job
    c. Having someone available to answer your questions and help solve problems

6. Did you have any problems getting or keeping your RCA payments ($250), and if you did, did the refugee services agency help you correct those problems?

    PROBES: ONLY ASK THE THINGS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN MENTIONED

    a. Problems filling out the application
    b. Problems getting the necessary documents
    c. Problems finding or keeping employment

   d. Legal or immigration issues

7. Did the refugee services agency send you to other places to get help meeting your needs? (Who/where, what did they help you with?)

8. How well did the Refugee Cash Assistance process work for you, overall?

  PROBES: ONLY ASK THE THINGS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN MENTIONED

   a. Smoothness of transition from resettlement to RCA (same agency, different?)

   b. RCA eligibility worker's helpfulness and availability for explaining what to do, answering questions, helping resolve problems

   c. Needs or challenges that were not addressed

9. My next question is about Refugee Employment Services—everyone who is on refugee cash assistance is supposed to get help finding a job that will pay for their living expenses. Who did you go to for these services, and what kinds of help did you get?

  PROBES: ONLY ASK THE THINGS THAT HAVE NOT BEEN MENTIONED

   a. Orientation to employment services and RCA work requirements

   b. Individual job counseling, help understanding U.S. workplaces

   c. Job training

   d. Help finding and applying for a job that could pay for living expenses

   e. Length of time until first employment

   f. Problems finding or keeping a job (discrimination, lack of jobs, other problems)

10. How much did the employment assistance you received help you, overall?

11. This is our last question. Is there anything else you think we should know about the kinds of refugee services that you received, and how they well they helped you get to the point where you could support yourself?

  PROBES:

   a. Feeling supported and respected by the resettlement agency and employment assistance staff

   b. Meeting the demands of the system

   c. Experiences with discrimination and bias not mentioned earlier

8. Questions for telephone interviews with Somali men & women

These questions are about the kinds of help you received when you arrived in Minnesota as a refugee.

1. Did you come straight to Minnesota, or did you live in another state for a short time? (If they lived in another state first, do not ask questions #4.

2. When you arrived in Minnesota, which organization helped you get settled at the very beginning? (Catholic Charities in St. Paul or Rochester, International Institute, Lutheran Social Services, or World Relief)

When people come straight to Minnesota, they have to complete a big application right away, bring in certain documents, and apply for a Social Security card. If people come here from another state, they still have to complete the application, and sometimes have to go to the County.

3. Did anyone at <the VOLAG> help you with the application, getting the documents or applying for your Social Security card? Did you have any difficulties? (Probe for language/translation problems, not understanding the process, timeline or what was needed)

The help that refugees receive during their first month in the U.S. is a specific program you have to apply for called "resettlement". If you came straight to Minnesota, you were in the resettlement program during your first 30 days, but if you came from another state you went straight into the Refugee Cash Assistance Program.

THIS SECTION ONLY FOR PRIMARY REFUGEES. IF SECONDARY, SKIP TO THE NEXT SECTION.
In the resettlement program, adult refugees without children usually get some cash (up to $425, depending on the other help they get), help getting furniture and clothing, and help getting a permanent place to live—but they can only get this kind of help for their first 30 days.

4. What kinds of help did you receive from the resettlement program in the first 30 days? (Probe for language barriers, not understanding/no one would explain the process or what was needed, problems getting transportation to required classes/appointments)

EVERYONE GETS ASKED THE REST OF THE QUESTIONS.
After the big application goes in to the state, refugees that qualify are placed in a second program called Refugee Cash Assistance—RCA. In this program, refugees get about $250 a month to pay for living expenses and medical care. Some also get food assistance if they are living alone. They are required to look for work and to give their RCA counselor information every month. Refugees can only receive RCA for 7 months, and then the money stops. The State lists you as someone who received RCA, so the next questions are about that time.

5. ·Did you understand that you were in a different program, and what you were required to do? Did you have any problems getting and keeping your payments and medical care?

Refugees on RCA are expected to go to work as quickly as possible. They are supposed to get help from a job counselor who teaches them what employers expect, how to apply for jobs, and helps them find a job that can pay all of their expenses.

6.   Did you get any help from a job counselor? (If yes) What did the counselor do to help? Did the job counselor work at the VOLAG? (If not) What was the name of the organization?

7. Did you have any problems finding a job that could pay all of your expenses? (Probe to get details, how long it took, quality of job)

8. After the first 30 days, if you needed help with housing, clothing, or other things while you were on RCA, did <VOLAG> send you to someone who would help you? (Probe for details)

9. How long did you receive the RCA payments? (Probe to see if they went the entire 7 months, and if they understood why the payments stopped).

10. Overall, how were you treated at <VOLAG>? (If they also got food assistance, ask how they were treated at the County). (Probe for things that helped, problems)

9. Interview guide – Community organizations serving Hmong, Liberian & Somali refugees

Introduce yourself.

Intro: Before I ask you any questions, let me give you a little background on the project, okay?

As Sandi mentioned when she arranged for this interview, we are talking with refugee community leaders and community agencies to get a sense of how well _____ refugees understand the whole process of Refugee Cash Assistance, the money that they receive from Catholic Charities, International Institute, Lutheran Social Services, Minnesota Council of Churches, or World Relief. The state calls these organizations VOLAGs, Voluntary Agencies.

The first three months in the United States, refugees receive help with resettlement. They fill out a big application that includes an application for food assistance (an EBT card) and medical assistance, and the application for the different kinds of cash assistance programs.

The only ones that are eligible for Refugee Cash Assistance (we call it RCA) are single adults 18 and older, married couples without any children under the age of 18, pregnant women and their spouses (until they qualify for MFIP), elderly or disabled people (until they qualify for SSI), and people under 18 who are considered emancipated minors, or that are living with a guardian that is not on MFIP.

Usually, the people that end up receiving RCA get either a cash grant between $350 and $425 in the first month to find housing, buy furniture, bedding, and household items, or the VOLAG pays those things and they get less or possibly no money, depending on what has to be purchased. The VOLAG's resettlement program helps people learn how to get around on the bus system, helps with setting up medical appointments, tells them where to get warm clothing, and generally helps them get settled.

Then, starting in their second month, single people that qualify for refugee cash assistance begin to receive payments of $250 (2-person households get $437, and larger follow MFIP guidelines). Refugees can receive payments up until their 8th month in the United States, but to stay eligible, they have to be trying to find work, and when they get a job, the RCA payments stop. They can re-apply for RCA as long as they're within their first eight months in the United States.

There are a number of organizations that have been contracted by the state to help them find jobs during the periods of time we are studying. Refugees are supposed to receive help searching for jobs, learning how to apply, creating resumes, and assistance getting to job interviews. The state calls these Refugee Employment Services. Some of the organizations that have done this are:

Lutheran Social Services   Minnesota Council of Churches
World Relief of Minnesota   Oromo Community of Minnesota
African Assistance Program   African Community Services
Center for Asians & Pacific Islanders   Lao Family Community
Hmong American Partnership   Employment Action Center
Confederation of Somali Community in MN (CSCM)   Lifetrack
Vietnamese Social Services   Pillsbury United Communities
Southeast Asian Refugee Community Home (SEARCH)

Okay, now that you have the background, I have a few questions for you about how well refugees from your community have been doing in this system. Okay?

1. Adults 18 and over that <u>do not</u> speak English and <u>do not</u> have a high school diploma are supposed to be allowed to go to high school full-time, and get General Assistance instead of RCA. Is that happening?	Response:
2. Do the VOLAGs do a good enough job in telling refugees what they have to do to keep receiving Refugee Cash Assistance? Do refugees in your community understand the rules, the paperwork they have to send in?	Response:
3. Are some VOLAGs doing a better job for your community than others? Why is that?	Response:
4. Are they receiving the kinds of help they need from the employment assistance providers, to find jobs?	Response:
5. Are people finding jobs in their first 8 months, and keeping them?	Response:
6. What kinds of jobs are they getting? What is the pay for these jobs?	Response:
7. Are they regular jobs, or temp jobs?	Response:
8. Are they having any trouble keeping their eligibility for Refugee Cash Assistance? (IF YES) What's going on?	Response:
9. Do the VOLAGs work cooperatively with your community agencies, to meet the needs of refugees in their first 8 months in the United States?	Response:
10. What kinds of assistance and resources are your community agencies having to provide during a refugee's first 8 months in the United States, that the VOLAGs and Refugee Employment Services providers should be doing?	Response:
11. Is there anything else we should know about any problems that refugees in your community are having, getting their RCA payments or help finding jobs?	Response:

10. Glossary of statistical terms used in this report

Chi-square Statistic:

The *chi-square* statistic is used to measure the agreement between two sets of categorical data or between a set of categorical data and a multinomial model that predicts the relative frequency of outcomes in each possible category.

The *chi-squared statistic* summarizes the discrepancies between the expected number of times each outcome occurs (assuming that the model is true) and the observed number of times each outcome occurs, by summing the squares of the discrepancies, normalized by the expected numbers, over all the categories.

When we use a chi-square test, we use the Pearson chi-square statistic. We report the significance level of the test – the probability that the two samples come from the same distribution given the chi-square statistic value calculated.

Cross-tabulation Tables:

A cross-tabulation table represents the joint frequency distribution of two or more categorical variables, such as nationality or gender. In a 2-variable cross-tabulation table, rows correspond to the possible values of the first variable (e.g., nationality), and columns correspond to the possible values of the second variable (e.g., gender). The cells of the table contain frequencies (numbers) of occurrence of the corresponding pairs of values of the first and second variable (e.g., Somali - females).

Multiple Regression:

The general purpose of *multiple regression* (the term was first used by Pearson, 1908) is to analyze the relationship between several independent or predictor variables and a dependent variable.

Regression analysis provides a "best-fit" mathematical equation for the relationship between the dependent variable (response) and independent variables. Linear regression, in which a linear relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables is posited, is an example. The aim of linear regression is to find the values of parameters in the linear relationship which provide the best fit to the data.

Regression coefficients, the "best-fit" parameters, can then be used to determine the effect of a change in the corresponding independent variable on the dependent variable. In this way, we can see the effect of a particular variable when all other variables (i.e., the other ones in the regression) are held constant. This is often called "controlling for" the effects of other variables. In our analysis, we use regression to control for individual and demographic attributes (such as nationality) and economic conditions (such as unemployment rates) when testing the effect of the change in program model from Period 1 to Period 2.

Statistical significance (p-value):

The statistical significance of a result is the probability that an observed relationship or a difference in a sample occurred by pure chance, and that in the population from which the sample was drawn, no such relationship or differences exist.

The numeric value of the p-value represents a decreasing index of the reliability of a result. The higher the p-value, the less we can believe that the observed relation between variables in the sample is a reliable indicator of the relation between the respective variables in the population.

Specifically, the p-value represents the probability of error that is involved in accepting our observed result as valid, that is, as "representative of the population." For example, a p-value of .05 (i.e., 1/20) indicates that there is a 5% probability that the relation between the variables found in our sample is a "fluke" – if there were no underlying relation between the variables, we would expect that one time in twenty replications of the experiment the relation between the variables would be as strong or stronger than in ours.

The acceptable p-value for an analysis varies and is somewhat arbitrary. Often, we consider $p \leq .05$ a weak, but acceptable, significance level. When $p \leq .01$, we generally consider it an acceptable result.

t-test (for independent samples):

The *t-test* is the most commonly used method to evaluate the differences in means between two groups. The actual test is whether the means of the two groups are equal. A larger t-statistic means a lower chance that the two samples come from distributions with equal means. The significance level reported indicates the probability of rejecting the "equal means" hypothesis when it is actually true. We report a significance level of $p \leq .05$ and consider this result weak but acceptable.

In all of our work for this report, we used the "two-tailed" version of the t-test, assuming unequal variances. This is a relatively conservative version of the t-test, giving us more confidence when we do find significant results.

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11. Tests for RCA eligibility: Participant fails the test if...*

Person tests	Case tests
App withdrawn/closed: The person in the process of applying for RCA withdrew their application. Absence: The RCA participant left the state or no longer in the RCA unit.	Residence: The entire RCA unit left the state. Resident of VOLAG county: The RCA unit moved from a non-VOLAG county to a VOLAG, so the case closes and then re-opens after the initial interview with a VOLAG.
RES cooperation: The RCA participant failed to comply with Refugee Employment Services requirements. SSN cooperation: The RCA participant failed to provide the verification that they applied for a Social Security card.	Fail to cooperate: General lack of cooperation with program requirements Fail to file HRF: The RCA unit did not report earned income on their Household Report Form as required. Fail to file review: RCA unit was set for an eligibility review and did not appear. Verification: RCA unit failed to provide any required verification, usually earned income but including any other required documents.
Eligible other program: The RCA participant is eligible for another cash assistance program, usually MFIP. SSI: The RCA participant is eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI).	Eligible other program: The unit is eligible for another cash assistance program, usually MFIP.
Unit member: The person listed in MAXIS is not part of the RCA unit. Their name appears in MAXIS because the Common Application Form requires all people in household to be listed and entered into MAXIS, but they only reside in the household and are not part of any assistance unit. Student status: The RCA participant went to school full-time. 8 month: The eligible person reached the end of their RCA eligibility, which automatically causes them to fail the case test. The MAXIS system auto-closes any case that reaches the end of its eligibility period.	Eligible person: The RCA unit's eligible person failed a person test, which automatically causes them to fail the case test. Resources: The RCA unit's resources are over the limit for RCA eligibility (usually a refugee joining their spouse, whose resources are over the limit for RCA eligibility.
Duplicate assistance: RCA participant received benefits from another cash assistance program (MFIP, or has come to Minnesota from another state and received cash assistance from their previous state of residence for the month of application.	Prospective net income: Is only calculated for the first two months of RCA, based on best information. If the refugee receives less actual income, VOLAG will review the application to see if refugee would have been eligible. Retrospective net income: Is calculated after the refugee's first 2 months on RCA, based on actual verified pay stubs.

* In both periods, state regulations required two types of eligibility tests: person tests (individual requirements) and case tests (RCA unit requirements). For one-person RCA units, both tests must be applied; for two-person RCA units, if one adult left the household or became ineligible, the case could remain open if the second RCA participant was still eligible (Information source: March 27, 2007 meeting with DHS staff Dana DeMaster and MariAnne Young and a series of telephone calls on May 1, 2007 with MariAnne Young).