

iris

INTEGRATED REFUGEE
& IMMIGRANT SERVICES

IRIS Seeks New Executive Director

Integrated Refugee and Immigration Services (IRIS) based in New Haven, CT seeks an Executive Director (ED) who has an understanding of and passion for refugee and immigrant issues and a background in global humanitarian assistance to lead this well-established, innovative, and dynamic organization during an exciting time of growth and expanding impact. The successful candidate will be a seasoned leader and manager with exceptional communication skills who leads with courage, compassion, vision, and humility, and is unflappable in a fast-paced, complex environment.

About IRIS

Since 1982, IRIS has resettled over 7,000 refugees in Connecticut, first in New Haven and now in communities around the state and across the country. Using a strengths-based approach to resettlement that emphasizes long-term support for successful integration, IRIS supports refugees and other displaced people to establish new lives, contribute to the vitality of their communities, and advocate for themselves. Over its 40-year service, IRIS has grown from Connecticut's smallest refugee resettlement agency to become the state's largest and most innovative, with programs that serve as national models.

IRIS's place and excellent reputation in the New Haven community is strong and deep-rooted, and in recent years it has established a strong presence across the state of Connecticut and the nation. In 2021, IRIS opened a second office in Hartford to meet the growing demand for resettlement services; that office has grown exponentially in response to recent refugee crises. IRIS has also emerged as a leader on the national stage, spearheading the development of an innovative and forward-thinking community co-sponsorship model with demonstrated success in Connecticut. Due to this expertise, IRIS was selected to be one of five founding organizations working with the U.S. State Department in creating and implementing [Welcome Corps](#), a program aimed at developing private sponsorship across the country.

IRIS uses a strength-based assessment model that provides long-term support for successful integration and targeted wrap-around services for all clients. It supports clients with case management, health and wellness services and programs, basic needs, employment assistance, English instruction, education and youth services, and immigration legal services. IRIS serves a large number of refugees who come through the federal resettlement program – nearly 600 have been assigned to IRIS in 2023. In 2019, IRIS added services for asylum seekers and other displaced people. In 2021-22 IRIS resettled over 400 Afghan Humanitarian Parolees and since 2022, IRIS has provided a wide range of assistance to more than 700 Ukrainians who have found refuge in Connecticut.

IRIS's growth and impact is powered by a highly skilled and dedicated staff of 150 – 112 full-time and 38 part-time – and a committed 11-member Board of Directors who bring skills in refugee resettlement, organizational development and management, finance, law, and health care. The Board and staff reflect the diversity and lived experiences of the refugees and immigrants IRIS serves and bring a wealth of

knowledge and expertise about refugee and immigrant affairs. IRIS also has a dedicated corps of nearly 1,500 volunteers in New Haven and across the state who assist in the multi-step process of settling and supporting immigrants and refugees. IRIS has an annual operating budget of close to \$12,000,000, net assets of approximately \$5,000,000, and an endowment of just over \$1,000,000. In addition to central offices in New Haven and Hartford, IRIS leases two spaces in New Haven for literacy and youth programs and for donations storage, and it operates a food pantry that serves nearly 500 individuals per week. IRIS has grown and flourished under the exceptional leadership of Chris George who is retiring after nearly 20 years of service.

Opportunity Going Forward

IRIS's new Executive Director will take the reins at a time of great opportunity. The tumultuous geopolitical landscape in recent years has resulted in many more refugees and immigrants; IRIS has deftly evolved to welcome and resettle increasing numbers of refugees from Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine, along with refugees and immigrants from many other countries. In just the last four years, IRIS has grown from a staff of 40 engaged mainly in traditional refugee resettlement to a staff of 150 engaged in several new and expanded programs including legal assistance, services to undocumented immigrants, and national sponsorship initiatives. Federal dollars as well as strong community support have grown the budget exponentially in support of this expansion. The new leader will build on IRIS's strong financial position, solid funder relationships, strong reputation, and skilled staff and Board to further expand revenue and enhance its firm foundation of operations to support this tremendous growth. They will also leverage IRIS's pioneering sponsorship work to become a stronger, more visible leader on the national stage and a stronger advocacy voice for refugee rights and support.

As the new Executive Director takes the reins, key priorities in the first 12-18 months will be to:

- Gain a solid understanding of the refugee and immigrant resettlement environment in Connecticut and nationally, and develop a thorough understanding of the needs of immigrants in Connecticut.
- Learn, experience, and appreciate the diverse and challenging work of the organization and build trusting relationships with community and staff members. Support a team of highly skilled and committed professionals to maximize their impact and encourage creative approaches to be heard and implemented.
- Continue to cultivate IRIS's impressive base of support with local and regional donors; ensure that existing relationships with donors and partners are transitioned, maintained, and grown.
- Maintain IRIS's strong relationships with officials and elected leaders at all levels and branches of municipal, state, and federal government to continue its important advocacy work.
- Continue to respond agilely to the evolving geo-political landscape and emerging needs from global migration.
- Assess the effectiveness of IRIS's current organizational structure and operational systems, make improvements to support IRIS's growing size and scope, and support cross-departmental efforts to deliver holistic high-quality services to clients.
- Spearhead a process to find and move into a new office space in New Haven.
- Implement an organization-wide database system to allow every department to properly collect data and monitor its activities to ensure optimal efficiency and evaluate impact.
- Begin a strategic planning process that engages both Board and staff members.

Position Duties and Responsibilities

The Executive Director has overall responsibility for ensuring that IRIS fulfills its mission by providing the highest quality services for refugees and immigrants, engaging the community to the greatest extent possible, elevating IRIS's profile, continuing to build public support for refugees and immigrants, diversifying and increasing public and private funding, and working to improve state and national refugee resettlement and immigration policies. The Executive Director works closely with the Board of Directors to set the overall strategic direction of the organization and to support an organizational culture of respect, civility, kindness, and creativity.

Core duties include:

- Providing guidance and supervision to the Department Directors to ensure smooth and efficient operations, inter-departmental collaboration, program integration, and team building.
- Upholding the integrity and positive reputation of IRIS, serving as the primary spokesperson, and speaking at gatherings and public events to share IRIS's mission, client stories, and best practices.
- Ensuring accurate, timely, and transparent budgeting and reporting, and that funds are spent responsibly, equitably, in accordance with donor requirements, and in support of IRIS's mission.
- Cultivating and sustaining relationships with individual donors, government supporters, and foundation representatives to continually increase and diversify funding.
- Establishing and modeling a strong culture of hospitality and respect for all IRIS clients; meeting with clients of all nationalities and immigration status on a regular basis, especially when there are unusual situations that warrant special communications.
- Tracking relevant legislation and policy issues to improve immigration policies at local and national levels and taking action when necessary.
- Collaborating with community partners and other Connecticut refugee resettlement and immigrant service organizations; developing and maintaining good relations with key stakeholders and with elected officials at all levels and all branches of government.
- Maintaining a good working relationship with IRIS's primary national resettlement partner, *Church World Service*, and the *Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration* in the US Department of State, as well as other national partners.
- Overseeing IRIS's involvement in national sponsorship programs in collaboration with the Community Sponsorship Hub and Welcome Corps.
- Proactively monitoring the changing political and cultural environment to anticipate and respond to changes in funding, service delivery options, and shifts in community needs.
- Providing regular reports to the Board to keep members informed of organizational financial status, program progress, internal and external events, field trends, and strategic issues of importance.

Profile of the Ideal Candidate

The ideal candidate will demonstrate the following capacities:

Passion For and Understanding of Refugee Resettlement and Immigrant Services

- Knowledge of immigration and migration with an understanding of the complexities inherent in this field. Lived experience or personal connection to the cause is a plus.

Exceptional Communication Skills

- Skillful communicator with a high level of cultural competency who can pivot quickly between different groups and styles of communication – clients, supporters, media, etc.
- Compelling and dynamic speaker and skillful storyteller, able to inspire a crowd, capture the room, and inspire people to act.
- Collaborative and patient leader, with the ability to consider diverse opinions and perspectives, perform under pressure, and move others toward consensus.

A Relationship Builder, Networker, and Collaborator

- Has strong emotional intelligence, leads with empathy, listens well, and can relate to people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds.
- Participatory management approach with the ability to bring people together around conflicts and key decisions.
- Passionate, persuasive leader who excels at serving as the face of an organization and is driven and excited to expand IRIS's support in the community.
- Track record of building and maintaining strategic partnerships.
- Deep understanding of race dynamics and commitment to advancing a climate of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion to support IRIS's mission.

Entrepreneurial Leader, Skilled Manager, and Resource Developer

- Minimum of 10 years of senior leadership and management, or equivalent experience, preferably at an organization with a humanitarian mission.
- Thoughtful, level-headed leader who can juggle competing priorities, is continuously open to creative solutions, and is able to pivot in response to rapidly emerging needs/realities.
- Background in organizational management and in strategically managing an organization through growth.
- Experience reporting to and collaborating with a nonprofit board of directors.
- Financial acumen with the ability to oversee budgeting and reporting.
- Solid understanding of fundraising strategies and the ability to procure major gifts from high-wealth donors.
- Solid understanding of federal grants and contracts.

Compensation and Benefits: This is a full-time, salaried, exempt position with a salary range of \$180,000-\$200,000, commensurate with experience and qualifications. IRIS also offers a comprehensive and generous benefits package which includes health insurance (77% of employee premium paid by IRIS), vision and dental, life and disability insurance, 403b plan after one year of employment with 5% base and up to 4% match, and significant paid time off (3 weeks' vacation, 3 personal days, 12 paid holidays, and sick time). The Executive Director will be required to be in-office during work hours except

for when attending in-person meetings and events. A limited amount of remote work will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Application Process and Additional Information

IRIS is an equal opportunity employer and views diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence as vital guiding principles in its work. IRIS welcomes and encourages applications from visible minority group members, Indigenous persons, members of the LGBTQ+ community, persons with disabilities and others who may contribute to the diversity of the organization and reflect the diversity of the communities it serves.

A candidate must include a resume and a cover letter that describes how their qualifications and experience match the needs and mission of IRIS. Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. Upload required documents to: <https://eostransitions.applicantpool.com/jobs/>.

This executive search is being conducted by Eos Transition Partners consultant Catherine Bradshaw. All submissions will be acknowledged and are confidential, and any questions can be submitted to Catherine at: cbradshaw@eostransitions.com.

