

Report to the Board – Collaboration between California State University East Bay – CSUEB and Afghan Coalition

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Overview

In Spring 2025, Afghan Coalition partnered with California State University, East Bay (CSUEB) through Dr. Valerie Smith's Public Health course. This collaboration is part of our broader strategy to engage academic institutions and leverage their research, innovation, and student energy to benefit Afghan communities across Northern California.

This initiative provided mutual value: students gained real-world experience working with a community-based nonprofit, while Afghan Coalition received timely, research-informed resources to strengthen our refugee support work—especially in response to recent reductions in federal funding through the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR).

The guiding question for the project was:

“How can state, local, and community-based solutions replace lost federal refugee services and advance Afghan refugee health, resilience, and integration in the face of the ORR defunding crisis?”

Student Focus Areas and Deliverables

Student teams were divided into four key focus areas based on core needs in the Afghan community:

- **Legal and Immigration Access**
- **Housing and Neighborhood Stability**
- **Economic Mobility and Workforce Integration**
- **Mental Health and Social Well-Being**

Each team produced three main deliverables, which can be adapted for use by Afghan Coalition:

1. **Web-Based Toolkit**

A practical, user-friendly toolkit compiling essential information and resources related to the team's focus area. These toolkits are intended for Afghan clients who may access support online, easing the demand on our case managers. Though currently in English, future versions may be translated into Dari and Pashto for broader accessibility and cultural relevance.

2. **EPIC Laser Talk (Advocacy Speech)**

Students created short, persuasive speeches using the EPIC (Engage, Problem, Inform, Call-to-Action) model to advocate for specific policy solutions. These speeches are structured to be delivered to elected officials at the city, county, or state level. They can be used by Afghan Coalition leadership or community members to support advocacy around refugee integration, housing, mental health, and workforce development.

3. **Program Proposal**

Each team developed a program concept for Afghan Coalition's consideration, grounded in research and field insights. These proposals offer fresh, actionable ideas for expanding our impact in the community and improving service delivery in each of the four focus areas.

Strategic Significance

This partnership strengthens Afghan Coalition's role as a bridge between academia and the community by:

- Providing **evidence-based tools and strategies** for program development;
- Supporting our **advocacy and policy efforts** with actionable language and frameworks;
- Creating opportunities for **youth and emerging professionals** to become involved in refugee support work;
- Enhancing our **visibility and credibility** as a leader in Afghan refugee resettlement and community health.

In the face of shrinking federal resources, this model of collaboration is both timely and forward-thinking, positioning Afghan Coalition as a central hub for community-based innovation.

Next Steps

1. **Internal Review:** Afghan Coalition will review all student deliverables for relevance, quality, and potential integration into our website and programs.
 2. **Advocacy Use:** Selected EPIC talks may be used in upcoming meetings with legislators and stakeholders.
 3. **Sustaining the Partnership:** We aim to formalize ongoing collaboration with CSU East Bay and explore similar partnerships with other regional universities for research, internships, and public health initiatives.
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Attachments

Sample deliverables—including the web-based toolkits, EPIC laser talks, and program proposals—can be shared upon request. These materials will also be used to inform future programming and advocacy planning.