

Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program



ENGAGING IN COMMUNITY SPONSORSHIP

Information Booklet

Funded by:

Financé par :



Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
et Citoyenneté Canada

1. What is the Private Sponsorship of Refugees?

Private Sponsorship is the resettlement of a refugee to Canada, in which financial costs and settlement support are provided by private groups or organizations. Sponsoring groups commit to provide basic financial support (for housing, food, etc.) and care for the sponsored refugee for the sponsorship period, or until the sponsored refugee no longer requires assistance, whichever comes first.

2. Who may be sponsored to come to Canada as a refugee?

To be eligible to be sponsored to Canada as a refugee, a person:

- must be outside Canada and outside their country of origin or habitual residence;
- must have a sponsoring group in Canada;
- cannot return to their home country;
- is unable to locally integrate in the country where they currently reside (i.e. are not able to live there permanently and does not have rights that are similar to the rights of citizens);
- must meet one of two definitions that Canada uses to determine who is a refugee (Convention Refugee Abroad class or Country of Asylum class);
- must pass medical, security and criminality screenings;
- must show that they can become self-sufficient in Canada within a reasonable period of time.



To sponsor refugees through a Community Sponsor, the Principal Applicant **MUST** already have **refugee status**. Having refugee status means that an authorized body has determined that an asylum seeker meets its refugee definition. This authorized body can either be the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) or the government of the country where the asylum seeker is currently living. **A document proving recognized refugee status that has been issued by the UNHCR or a government must accompany the refugee sponsorship application submitted to the Resettlement Operations Centre – Ottawa (ROC-O).** In some countries, the process of granting refugee status is not conducted. Principal Applicants without recognized refugee status can only be sponsored by a Sponsorship Agreement Holder.

3. Who may not be sponsored?

The following persons cannot be sponsored as refugees:

- Persons who are already in Canada
- Individuals who were previously the subject of a sponsorship application and were refused, unless:
 - their circumstances have changed;
 - new information, which was not presented in the previous application, has come to light; or
 - Canadian laws affecting the case have changed.
- Persons who have other durable solution, such as voluntary repatriation or local integration in the current country of residence;
- Persons who have not been recognized as refugees by either the UNHCR or state authorities in the country of asylum.

4. Who are Community Sponsors?

A Community Sponsor is an organization, association or corporation, based in the community where the refugees are expected to live, who has committed to provide emotional and financial support to sponsor refugee(s). *The organization, association or corporation does not have to be incorporated under federal or provincial law.*

5. How does a group become a Community Sponsor?

To become a Community Sponsor, it is not necessary for an organization, association or corporation to have an agreement with the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) (as is the case for Sponsorship Agreement Holders). Organizations, associations and/or corporations interested in becoming Community Sponsors need only submit the necessary application forms and fulfill the requirements. Each sponsorship undertaking represents a unique contract between the sponsors and IRCC that must be assessed on its own merit based on the requirements as identified below.

6. Requirements for Community Sponsors

Community Sponsors must:

- have the financial capacity to fulfill the obligations of the sponsorship;
- provide evidence of the ability to provide the necessary emotional/social support to the refugee(s);
- be based in the community where the refugee is expected to live; and
- not be in default of any previous sponsorship undertakings or barred from refugee sponsorship.

6.1 Financial capacity

The group should show that it has the financial capability to undertake refugee sponsorship and meet the requirements given the size of the family that they plan to sponsor. For instance, if a Community Sponsor wants to sponsor a single person, it must provide evidence that demonstrates that it has the capacity to cover the financial costs required to sponsor one person as set by IRCC. As the family size increases, the financial requirements also increase. See Appendix A – Sponsorship Cost Table at the end of this booklet.



Once an organization submits the application forms as a Community Sponsor, the **Resettlement Operations Centre – Ottawa (ROC-O)** will verify that the group has sufficient financial resources to partake in the sponsorship. A Community Sponsor can choose to set aside funds for the sponsorship in a trust fund or joint account, use the income from individual group members (including self-employment income), or provide corporate financial support. Regardless of the type of funds, ROC-O will require proof of finances in order to make an assessment.

6.2 Ability to provide support

Community Sponsors also need to create a settlement plan outlining how they will support the sponsored refugee(s) upon arrival. The Community Sponsor will need to provide evidence of a group of committed volunteers that will carry out the settlement plan. Given that Community Sponsors often have other commitments besides refugee sponsorship, they should provide evidence to ROC-O of sufficient human and material resources for the sponsorship.



6.3 Based in the community of resettlement

Community Sponsors need to provide the sponsored refugees with support upon arrival, therefore they must be located in the expected community of resettlement in order to be physically accessible to the newcomer. In the case of large corporations with smaller branch offices, either the main or branch office must be situated in the community of resettlement and should have enough individuals to fully execute the settlement responsibilities listed in the settlement plan.



6.4 Ineligibility to sponsor

Individuals forming the Community Sponsor group, including the organization's, association's or corporation's representative, must be eligible to participate in private sponsorship. Persons ineligible to sponsor refugees include:

- those convicted of serious criminal acts, if five years have not passed since the end of the sentence;
- those who have not fulfilled their responsibilities to all of their previous sponsorship undertakings or other court-ordered support payments (e.g., child support); or
- removable and incarcerated people or people subject to citizenship revocation proceedings.

Each person who signs the undertaking must sign the sponsor assessment form that lists circumstances that exclude a person from participating in the sponsorship of refugees.

7. How do Community Sponsors decide who to sponsor?

Community Sponsors may decide to sponsor a refugee when a member of the organization knows of a specific refugee, or has been approached by a particular refugee or refugee family in need of resettlement. In this case, Community Sponsors can submit the necessary application forms to sponsor a particular refugee(s) from abroad (sponsor-referred refugee).

For example, the Association of Canadian Secondary School Teachers can become a Community Sponsor and sponsor refugees who are referred to them by colleagues teaching overseas. To do so, they would need to submit the Refugee Sponsorship Application



UN Photo / JG

Package for Community Sponsors along with all of the necessary supporting documents that demonstrate their eligibility to sponsor refugees, and the refugees' eligibility to the program.

If an organization is interested in sponsoring a refugee, but does not know of a specific refugee, they can apply to sponsor refugees under the BVOR program. An RSTP worker will share refugee profiles with interested sponsors once they have gone through a simple orientation webinar. Contact bvor@rstp.ca for more information on how to participate. All BVOR refugees are travel-ready and pre-approved by the Canadian government.

8. Can a business become a Community Sponsor?

A business can engage in Community Sponsorship, provided its involvement is motivated by purely humanitarian concerns and not by making money. Before approving the sponsorship application of a Community Sponsor, the **Resettlement Operations Centre – Ottawa (ROC-O)** will review, among other things, the profile of the organization, its history, structure, income sources, previous involvement in refugee work (including refugee sponsorship) and other humanitarian activities, if any. The review is conducted to ensure that the intentions of the Community Sponsor are in line with the objectives of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program.

9. Differences between Community Sponsors & Sponsorship Agreement Holders

Community sponsors are similar to Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH) in many ways, but have some of the following unique characteristics:

- Community sponsors must pass a financial and settlement plan assessment by the ROC-O office each time they submit an application to sponsor refugees. (SAHs have already undergone a financial and eligibility determination prior to being awarded their agreements.)
- A Community Sponsor can be any organization, association or corporation and is not required to be incorporated under federal or provincial law. A SAH must be incorporated.

Groups may want to gain experience as a Community Sponsor in the PSR before they apply to become a SAH. Successful previous experiences in refugee sponsorship can add value to an application to become a SAH.

10. Are there any limits on the number of refugees Community Sponsors can sponsor?

There is no limit on the number of sponsorship applications that Community Sponsors can submit in a year, as long as they can demonstrate their financial and settlement capacity to fulfill their sponsorship responsibilities.

11. What are the responsibilities of a Community Sponsor?

A community sponsor is responsible for:

- providing basic financial support (for housing, food and so on) and care for the sponsored refugee during the sponsorship period (which is generally a period of one year), or until the sponsored refugee no longer requires assistance, whichever comes first;
- ensuring it has sufficient resources and expertise to carry out its responsibilities; and
- remaining liable for all signed sponsorship undertakings.

11.1 What settlement assistance is required from the Community Sponsor?

At the outset of the sponsorship process, the Community Sponsor has an obligation to provide a settlement plan that outlines the settlement assistance it will offer to the sponsored refugee(s). During the sponsorship period, a Community Sponsor will undertake a variety of settlement tasks. These include:

1. receiving the refugees at the airport, and providing an orientation to life in Canada
2. providing suitable accommodation, basic furniture, and other household essentials
3. providing food, clothing, local transportation costs and other basic necessities of life
4. helping the refugees:
 - complete required forms including health insurance, social insurance, and child tax benefits;
 - learn English or French (e.g. help with getting into a free ESL or FSL class, provide tutoring);
 - understand the rights and responsibilities of permanent residents;
 - find a job;
 - make friends;
 - learn about and access the services available in the community;
 - register children in school and guide them in dealings with the school system;
 - locate a family physician and dentist; and
 - become independent.

12. How long must the Community Sponsor provide support?

The sponsoring group is responsible for supporting the sponsored refugees financially and with settlement assistance, counselling and support for the **duration of the sponsorship period**, which is **usually for one year** from the date of the arrival of the refugee. In exceptional circumstances, sponsors may be asked by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) if they can provide more than one year of financial and settlement support (up to three years), but IRCC would ask sponsors if this would be possible before the arrival of the refugee(s).



13. How much does a sponsorship cost?

IRCC has created a **Sponsorship Cost Table** (see Appendix A) that is equivalent to an average of the social assistance rates across Canada. The Sponsorship Cost Table illustrates the minimum amount of money that the group has to prove to IRCC that they have for the sponsorship. However, a group should always take into account that the actual cost of the sponsorship may be higher than the amounts outlined in the sponsorship cost table. When the refugee arrives in Canada, the sponsor is expected to provide financial support equivalent to the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) rate for the province in which the refugee will be residing (visit the RSTP website for the RAP rate for each province). In calculating the overall budget, the group can factor in any in-kind donations they have received, such as furniture or housing. Please see the **in-kind deductions table** (Appendix B) for the amount of money that can be deducted for in-kind donations.

Note that sponsoring groups may not accept money from the refugee for the sponsorship. The financial resources that a refugee family brings with them to Canada could reduce the amount of financial support that a sponsoring group must provide if they are able to contribute to paying their expenses. However, please note that a contingency plan is still needed.

14. Co-sponsorship

Community Sponsors may also choose to formally partner with an individual (i.e., a family member of sponsored refugees living in Canada) or another organization to raise funds and/or carry out settlement duties. Such a partner is called a co-sponsor. Combining the efforts of different individuals and/or organizations can be an effective way of taking on a sponsorship. Formally recognizing co-sponsoring individuals or organizations is an official indication of shared responsibility. However, the ultimate

legal liability rests with the Community Sponsor which signs and submits the application forms.

15. Application package to sponsor refugees as a Community Sponsor

A complete application package to be submitted to the **Resettlement Operations Centre – Ottawa (ROC-O)** should include **two sets** of forms. Sponsors should use the Instruction Guide to prepare and submit their application.

1) Forms for the sponsor:

- Sponsorship Undertaking and Settlement Plan – Community Sponsor (IMM 5663))
- Sponsor Assessment (IMM5492)
- Financial Profile (IMM5373B)

2) Forms for the refugee applicant(s):

- Principal applicant's instruction guide
- Generic Application Form for Canada [IMM 0008]
- Schedule A – Background/Declaration [IMM 5669]
- Schedule 2: Refugees Outside Canada [IMM 0008/SCHEDULE 2]

3) Optional forms

- Use of a Representative [IMM 5476]
- Appointment of Representative(s) in Expected Community of Settlement (IMM5956)
- Request to process overseas family members under one-year window of opportunity provision
- Request to add a family member to a private sponsorship undertaking [IMM 5618]

All [application forms](#) are available on the IRCC website.

It is a responsibility of the sponsoring group to ensure that all application are completed and signed and all required supporting documents are enclosed, including proof of refugee status of the applicant(s). Please only submit copies of documents, and keep copies of your complete application on file in case you need to resubmit.

Appendix A – Sponsorship Cost Table

The following Sponsorship Cost Table is from Appendix A – Financial Guidelines of the Refugee Sponsorship Application Guide. The figures are accurate as of June 2018. Please consult the [website](#) of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada for the most current figures.

Family Size	12 Months of Income Support	Start-up Costs	Estimated Total Annual Settlement Cost (\$)
1	13,200	3,300	16,500
2	19,700	5,100	24,800
3	20,400	6,300	26,700
4	21,200	7,500	28,700
5	23,700	8,600	32,300
6	25,700	9,800	35,500
Additional member	1,600	1,100	2,700

Please note that these figures are estimates and represent a guideline for the minimum amount of funds required. The costs of housing, food and transportation can vary according to the age of dependants and locality.

Start-up Costs

Start-up costs include a one-time payment for:

- ❖ Household items, furniture, linens, food supplies, (winter) clothing, deposit for utilities, phone set-up, first month's rent.

Appendix B – In-kind Deduction Table

In-kind donations may also reduce the financial resources required. The following table below was provided by IRCC as an estimate of the value of a variety of in-kind donations according to family size. These approximate figures are based on annual costs, and may change over time. Please check the [IRCC website](#) for the most current rates.

Family Size	Shelter	Clothing	Furniture	Household Needs	Linens	School Start-up Costs	Food Staples
1	7,008	385	1085	300	80	-	105
2	9,984	770	1708	325	160	-	150
3	10,632	1033	2016	350	240	-	195
4	11,328	1295	2310	375	320	-	240
5	12,024	1558	2604	400	400	-	285
6	12,372	1820	2898	425	480	-	330
For additional member add	12,372 (for family of 7+)	263	294	25	80	75 per child aged 4 - 21	45

Useful links and resources

Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) website
www.rstp.ca

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada website
www.cic.gc.ca

[Application forms for Community Sponsors](#)

[Guide to the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program](#)

Refugee Sponsorship Training Program Catholic Crosscultural Services

55 Town Centre Court, Suite 401

Toronto, ON M1P 4X4

Tel: 416.290.1700

Toll-free: 1.877.290.1701

Email: info@rstp.ca

Website www.rstp.ca

**RSTP trainers are located in British
Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan,
Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia.**

**For contact information, visit our
website: www.rstp.ca**

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