

Refugee Sponsorship Training Program

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The Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program



BECOMING A SPONSORSHIP AGREEMENT HOLDER Information Brochure

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1. What is a Sponsorship Agreement Holder?

A Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) is an organization that has signed a sponsorship agreement with the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship which allows them to participate in the resettlement of refugees through the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program. The sponsorship agreement is a legal agreement between the organization and the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. After signing the agreement, the organization becomes a SAH and is permitted to sponsor a certain number of refugees each year through the PSR program.

Currently, there are more than 120 SAHs across Canada. SAHs differ in composition, type and organizational structure. In general, they have the following characteristics:

- They are [incorporated organizations](#).
- They are for-profit or not-for-profit organizations, such as charities, religious, ethno-cultural, educational or humanitarian organizations or businesses.
- They have signed a sponsorship agreement with the Minister of Immigration, Citizenship and Refugees Canada to facilitate the sponsorship process.
- They are responsible for managing sponsorships submitted under their agreement.
- They can identify the refugees they would like to sponsor.
- They can initiate sponsor-referred cases (e.g., specific refugees or refugee families in need of resettlement are brought to the attention of the SAH through overseas contacts or through friends or relatives in Canada) or they can sponsor refugees referred by UNHCR to Canada through the Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) and the Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS) programs.
- They can authorize Constituent Groups (CGs) or co-sponsors to sponsor under their agreement. SAHs have the right to set their own criteria to recognize a CG and manage their agreement. They may have many CGs or co-sponsors throughout Canada or only a few in a specific region or area.
- They are responsible for training, oversight and information sharing with their CGs and co-sponsors.
- They work with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) in partnership to sponsor refugees.
- They or their CGs and co-sponsors are located in the community where the refugee is expected to settle (i.e. the community of settlement).

2. The Requirements to Become a SAH

To become a SAH, an organization MUST:

1) Be Eligible

To be eligible to become a SAH, the organization must be:

- [Incorporated](#) (i.e. a legally created organization) for at least 2 years;
- Physically located in Canada; and,
- Interested in, and capable of, sponsoring more than 5 cases per year.

In addition, the head of the organization, the organization's main contacts and each person who will have signing authority must:

- Be 18 years of age or older;
- Be a Canadian citizen, a Registered Indian or a permanent resident of Canada;
- Have a permanent address in Canada; and,
- Not be ineligible to be a party to a sponsorship pursuant to Subsection 156 (1) of the [Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations \(IRPR\)](#).

2) Be Incorporated

Before applying to become a SAH, organizations should be [incorporated](#) and registered under the relevant [Federal](#) and [provincial](#) laws.

Organizations applying to become a SAH are expected to include a copy of their articles of incorporation (indicating the incorporation has been in effect for at least 2 years) with the application package.

3) Have the Necessary Financial Capacity

Organizations applying to become a SAH must include copies of audited financial statements for the most recent 1-year period with the application package.

Once an organization becomes a SAH, it needs to ensure that the necessary financial arrangements are made for each refugee or refugee family it sponsors.

SAHs, along with their CGs and co-sponsors, at a minimum, must provide financial support to sponsored refugees that is equivalent to the prevailing [Resettlement Assistance Program \(RAP\) rates](#) in the community where the refugee will live in Canada.

SAHs must properly [document, keep copies of receipts and be prepared to provide a financial paper-trail \(including substantiating any deductions to financial support\)](#) for each refugee being sponsored under their agreement.

4) Have Completed the Mandatory RSTP *Becoming a SAH* E-Training Course

Organizations applying to become SAHs must complete the mandatory RSTP *Becoming a SAH* e-training course and copies of individual certificates for the following persons must be included with the application package that is submitted to IRCC:

- The signatory to the Sponsorship Agreement (i.e. the head of the organization);
- Anyone at the organization that will have the authority to submit refugee sponsorship applications (i.e. a signing authority); and,
- Each of the main contacts who will be responsible for the organization's refugee sponsorship program.

The certificates are only valid for the application window they are issued in (e.g. certificates issued in 2021 are only valid for the 2021 application window).

Enrollment for the *Becoming a SAH* course opens during the [application window](#) each year.

Please email etraining@rstp.ca for further information about the mandatory RSTP *Becoming a SAH* e-training course.

5) Understand and Uphold the Objectives of the PSR Program

This includes recognizing that the PSR program exists for groups to sponsor refugees for resettlement to Canada and that sponsoring groups have a responsibility to ensure that adequate financial and settlement support is being provided to the sponsored refugees on arrival in accordance with the relevant IRCC standards and policies.

If an organization is approved to become a SAH, anyone involved in the SAH's refugee sponsorship program will be required to take additional mandatory RSTP training that will cover the objectives of the PSR program and a SAH's responsibilities in more detail.

The SAH is expected to uphold the objectives of the PSR program in the following ways:

- By not profiting from sponsoring refugees;
- By pre-screening and assessing requests for sponsorship to ensure that the refugees being sponsored meet the eligibility and admissibility criteria of the PSR program; and,
- By ensuring that the SAH and any of its CGs and co-sponsors are not a danger to the safety of the refugees and have the capacity and the ability to provide the required support when the refugees arrive in Canada.

6) Have a Volunteer Base and the Capacity to Sponsor more than Five Cases per Year:

SAHs will benefit immensely by having a reliable volunteer base that includes committed individuals who will assist the SAH with fulfilling its financial and settlement responsibilities and, if applicable, with the management of the SAH.

The onus is on the SAH to demonstrate that they have volunteers who are committed, willing and eligible to participate in the PSR program and assist with the support of refugees. Volunteers should be of diverse backgrounds, including former refugees or individuals with previous experience of refugee sponsorship, and must be [screened](#) by the SAH to ensure they are not a danger to the personal safety of the refugees.

7) Pass a Criminality Check

Members of the organization, including the head of the organization, the organization's main contacts and any signing authorities from the organization, must pass a criminality check and include a copy of a non-vulnerable criminal record check issued within 6 months of the application being submitted with the application package.

If an individual falls within one of the following categories, they cannot be a member of a SAH or a CG or a co-sponsor:

- Individuals convicted of serious criminal acts, if 5 years have not passed since the end of the completion of the sentence;
- Individuals who have not fulfilled the responsibilities of previous sponsorship undertakings or other court-ordered support payments (e.g. child support); and,
- Removable and incarcerated individuals or individuals subject to citizenship revocation proceedings.

8) Additional Considerations

When assessing an application from an organization to become a SAH, IRCC will also

consider the history of the organization engaging in humanitarian or charity work and any previous experience in sponsoring refugees.

In addition, IRCC may also take the following factors into consideration: the refugee population that the organization intends to focus its sponsorship activities on; and, the number of SAHs already in the town, city or region where the organization is located.

3. The Application Process to Become a SAH

Organizations may only apply to become a SAH during the [annual 3-month application window](#).

Applications are evaluated on several factors including the organization's financial viability, organizational capacity, security requirements, knowledge of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program and experience in refugee sponsorship and resettlement.

Before applying to become a SAH, please ensure your organization meets **all** the requirements outlined in Section 2 above.

Once you have ensured that your organization is eligible to become a SAH, you can obtain a copy of the application package on the IRCC website at:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders/apply.html>

4. What Kind of Information Is Required in the Application Package?

The application package will ask organizations applying to become SAHs to provide detailed information about their organization, namely:

- An organization profile;
- A list of the organization's leaders and representatives, along with their contact information;
- A description of the organization's structure, including a mission statement, information on how the organization is governed and its purpose and activities;
- Information on whether the organization intends on sponsoring with CGs and co-sponsors and how they will screen them;
- An outline of how the organization's plans to offer settlement assistance and financial support to the sponsored refugees;
- Details on the organization's projected sponsorship activities in their first year, such as the number of refugees they intend to sponsor;
- How the organization plans to screen applications and identify cases for sponsorship;
- Details of the organization's previous sponsorship activities (if applicable) and any other

humanitarian or charitable work;

- Proof of the organization's ability to support sponsored refugees;
- Details of any in-kind donations available to the organization, such as accommodation, furniture, clothing etc.; and,
- Any other relevant information or documents, such as copies of the organization's annual reports.

5. What Supporting Documents Must Be Included with the Application Package?

The organization is also expected to submit copies of the following mandatory documentation with the application package:

- A copy of the organization's articles of incorporation certificate issued in Canada by a [Federal](#) or [provincial](#) agency indicating that the incorporation has been in effect for at least 2 years;
- Copies of audited financial statements for the most recent 1-year period;
- Copies of completion certificates for the mandatory RSTP **Becoming a SAH** e-training course for the head of the organization, main contacts and signing authorities;
- A signed copy of the [Sponsor Assessment \[IMM 5492\]](#) form for each representative from the organization that will have signing authority to submit refugee sponsorship applications on behalf of the organization;
- Copies of documents to demonstrate proof of Canadian citizenship or registered Indian or permanent resident status for the head of the organization and for each representative from the organization that will have signing authority to submit refugee sponsorship applications; and,
- A copy of a non-vulnerable criminal record check issued within 6 months of the application being submitted for the head of the organization, the organization's main contacts and any representative from the organization that will have signing authority to submit refugee sponsorship applications.

6. Submitting the Application Package

The complete application package and all the supporting documentation must be sent to IRCC by email to IRCC.INPSR-PPPRRI.IRCC@cic.gc.ca

Applications can only be submitted during the annual 3-month application window. For information on when the annual application window is open, please visit:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders/apply.html>

7. What Happens Next?

Once the application package has been submitted, IRCC will assess the application to determine whether the organization meets the requirements to become a SAH. IRCC can and may request additional information, clarification, or documents relevant to the application.

If the application is approved, a delegate of the Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship will sign the Sponsorship Agreement with the organization. The newly approved SAH will then have to undergo additional mandatory training and orientation by RSTP before they are allocated spaces and permitted to sponsor the following year.

8. Need More Information?

For more information on the application process to become a SAH, please visit:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders/apply.html>

For further information about the mandatory RSTP ***Becoming a SAH*** e-training course, please email: etraining@rstp.ca

Useful Links and Resources

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

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

Sponsorship Agreement Holder Application Information:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders/apply.html>

Guide to the Private Sponsorship of Refugees program
www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/pub/ref-sponsor.pdf



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RSTP trainers are located in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and Nova Scotia. For contact information, visit our website:

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