



Terms of the BVOR Fund

2nd May 2019

Background

The Canadian Blended Visa Officer Referral (BVOR) refugee sponsorship program is a uniquely Canadian program that enables citizens and permanent residents to directly engage in refugee resettlement efforts. Individuals can form groups to become sponsors who commit to providing financial, emotional, and resettlement support to help newly-arrived refugees integrate into life in a new country.

The BVOR program resettles refugees identified by UNHCR and submitted to Canadian visa offices; refugees have already met eligibility and admissibility criteria but must be matched with a sponsor before they can travel to Canada. This sponsorship model is one that connects strangers with one another.

In 2019, Canada has approved the resettlement of 1650 refugees from abroad through the BVOR program. All of these individuals receive full background checks and can arrive in Canada 2-4 months after matching with a sponsorship group. Upon arrival, the Canadian government pays for 50% of their settlement costs.

If we don't use all of Canada's BVOR spaces, we lose that spot in Canada's annual resettlement target and the number of refugees brought to safety around the world drops. Over the past two years, the number refugees resettled worldwide decreased significantly while at the same time the number of people in urgent need of a safe place to call home grows daily.

These refugees in need of protection can't come unless Canadians step up to provide practical support and the remaining settlement funds for the first year of their life in Canada.

2018 BVOR Fund

In 2018, the Refugee Hub and Jewish Family Services – in partnership with founding donors the Shapiro Foundation and the Giustra Foundation in Vancouver – launched a unique, time-limited fund to support the sponsorship of hundreds of refugees identified by the UNHCR.

The fund was created August 7, 2018 to encourage participation in sponsorship and ensure no spots in the BVOR program remained unused. The Canadian government offered 1,500 spaces in 2018 through the BVOR program and as of August there were over 1,000 spots still unclaimed. Unused sponsors would have disappeared at year's end without the quick action of the groups and people involved.

The UNCHR, the Refugee Sponsorship training Program, over 35 Sponsorship Agreement Holders, and many community organizations across Canada were also integral partners in this rapid mobilization.



The fund mobilized hundreds of Canadians across the country. From large centers such as Vancouver, B.C., to small towns like Antigonish, N.S., Canadians came forward to sponsor, ready and eager to volunteer their time support newcomers for their first year in Canada after generous donations we made possible by the fund.

BY THE NUMBERS:

- \$3,479,696.60 was donated by eight philanthropists to cover the costs of sponsorship.
- 685 refugees arrive in Canada in 2018 and early 2019 thanks to the 2018 BVOR Fund.
- 150 sponsorship groups from across Canada stepped up to sponsor refugees accessing the 2018 BVOR Fund.

The 2019 BVOR Fund

After the success of the 2018 BVOR Fund, the Refugee Hub, the Shapiro Foundation, G. Barrie Landry, and the Jewish Foundation of Greater Toronto are relaunching the **2019 BVOR Fund**. This fund is a time-bound funding source that will cover **the sponsor's portion** of the BVOR sponsorship costs. Groups will be responsible for securing funding or in-kind donations to cover start-up costs such as clothing and furniture.

Sponsors can **apply for the funds between May 2nd and August 31st** or until the fund is exhausted prior to the deadline.

Who is paying for this fund?

The 2019 BVOR Fund is housed at Toronto Jewish Foundation and administered by the Refugee Hub. Generous seed contributions have been made by the Shapiro Foundation and G. Barrie Landry.

The fund also welcomes donations from Canadians and international individuals and groups who would like to participate in the resettlement of refugees through the BVOR program.

Should you contribute the full amount needed to sponsor a family to the fund, you can choose to be matched to the sponsor group that receives your donated funds to learn more about the sponsoring group that is able to sponsor through your generosity.

Please note, only US and Canadian donors can be issued with a tax receipt for their donation.

What does the BVOR Fund cover?

Traditionally, the BVOR program is cost-shared between the government and sponsoring group. Sponsoring groups are responsible for providing 6 months of income support, in addition to the start-up costs such as furniture.

Sponsors will now be able to apply to the BVOR Fund to have the sponsor-side settlement costs subsidized (the start-up costs must still be raised by the sponsor group and can include in-kind donations).

In addition, in 2019, Sponsorship Agreement Holders can apply to the fund for a BVOR administrative fee of \$5000 per BVOR case submitted up to a maximum of \$50,000.

Who is eligible to apply to this fund?

Any Canadian sponsoring group that is working with a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) and who will submit an application to sponsor an individual or family through the BVOR program between May 2nd, 2019 and August 31st, 2019.

Note: Refugees on the BVOR list are UNHCR referred and cannot be 'named' by individuals in Canada.

The fund is open to experienced sponsoring groups as well as new sponsoring groups.

How can sponsor groups apply to the fund?

To be eligible for the fund, interested groups are encouraged to **submit a brief expression of interest (EOI)** to BVORfund@refugeehub.ca as soon as possible or **at least one week before submitting** their BVOR sponsorship application to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

This EOI can come to us in a simple email with subject line 'Expression of Interest' and should include:

- a. Confirmation of intention to submit a BVOR sponsorship application and desire to access the BVOR Fund as part of their application;
- b. If the sponsoring group is already working with a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH), or which SAH they are working with;
- c. Approximately how much funding they will require from the fund based on intended family size of the refugee family following the BVOR cost-table; and
- d. Number of people involved in their sponsoring group; contact information for their group.

Upon receipt of the letter of interest, the Refugee Hub will issue an application form, a blank invoice, fundraising tips, and establish a connection to a SAH, if not already connected. Among other things, the application form will ask if the funds will be disbursed to the SAH or to the sponsoring group (constituent group). In order to be disbursed to the constituent group, it must have charitable status. If the constituent group does not have charitable status, the SAH must be the recipient of the funds.

The constituent group and the SAH will then jointly submit the application to the BVOR Fund at BVORfund@refugeehub.ca after all other SAH criteria are satisfied.

Upon receipt and approval of the application and invoice, the Refugee Hub will issue a *Letter of Guarantee* to the SAH or the Constituent Group with charitable status, outlining the amount of funds confirmed for the sponsoring group and procedure for the transfer of the funds. Sponsor Groups must notify the Refugee Hub if they are approved or rejected by the IRCC. The funds will only be transferred once the sponsoring group has received the Notice of Arrival Transmission (NAT) for the family that they have sponsored through BVOR.

When will the funds arrive?

SAHs will submit the BVOR sponsorship application to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). If the application is approved by IRCC, then a proof the NAT is to be sent to the Refugee Hub by emailing BVORfund@refugeehub.ca.

The funds will be transferred to the SAH or the Constituent Group within two-three weeks of the receipt of the NAT. The SAH or the Constituent Group will then hold the funds in trust until the refugee family's arrival and will disburse to the refugees over the year of their settlement, depending on each SAH's unique procedures.

Can I ask for more money if the family grows over the year?

The BVOR fund will only transfer the amount of money that is requested on the application and reproduced on the *Letter of Guarantee*. The fund will close on August 31st. If the family has a baby during the year of sponsorship, the Constituent Group will be responsible for fundraising the amount required to support the additional family member.

In addition – the fund is not responsible for raising the amount of money necessary for any additional non-accompanying family members who were included on the refugee application and who are eligible to be sponsored under the one-year window.

How can SAHs apply to the fund?

In addition, qualifying Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) will, for the first time, be able to apply for funds to help with the administrative costs associated with supporting increased BVOR sponsorships.¹

To be eligible for the fund, interested SAHs are encouraged to **submit a brief expression of interest (EOI)** to BVORfund@refugeehub.ca once a BVOR application that has submitted an application for the BVOR fund has been submitted to IRCC.

¹ National SAHs can contact the BVOR Fund to discuss funding opportunities.



This EOI can come to us in a simple email with subject line 'Expression of Interest' and should include:

- a. Confirmation of date of application of BVOR funded case.
- b. Which group the SAH is working with.

Upon receipt of the letter of interest, the Refugee Hub will issue an application form and a blank invoice. The SAH must have charitable status to receive this funding.

The SAH will then submit the application to the BVOR Fund at BVORfund@refugeehub.ca.

Upon receipt and approval of the application, the Refugee Hub will issue a *Letter of Guarantee* outlining the amount of funds confirmed for the sponsoring group and procedure for the transfer of the funds. The funds will only be transferred once the Notice of Arrival Transmission (NAT) has been received by the Refugee Hub.

When will the funds arrive?

The funds will be transferred to the SAH within two weeks of confirmation of the arrival of the BVOR funded sponsored individual or family.