

PSRP Overview – Initial Inquiry

Thank you for your interest in sponsoring refugees with World Renew and for taking the time to have a conversation with us. This document will provide you with key points about private refugee sponsorship, an outline of the three ways refugee(s) can come to Canada under the Private Sponsorship Program, as well as important planning considerations to assist your church or group with its sponsorship.

1. **Key points** for your church or group to know before beginning a refugee sponsorship:

- The sponsored person or family must be resettled to your community.
- The sponsorship period is for one year, effective from the date the refugees land in Canada (with the exception of Joint Assistance Sponsorships).
- All privately sponsored refugees arrive in Canada as Permanent Residents.
- The main responsibility of the sponsoring group is to assist the family with the many activities involved in resettlement. The primary objective of sponsorship is to facilitate a successful adjustment to life in Canada.
- Sponsorship requires a significant investment of resources, time, energy, and emotion. Before you undertake a sponsorship, you should ensure that you understand what this commitment entails.

2. **Different ways refugees can come to Canada through a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) under the Private Sponsorship Program (PSP):**

A. Sponsor-Referred/Family Linked: Sponsor-referred refugees are refugees that have been referred to IRCC for sponsorship by a sponsoring group via a SAH. Generally these are cases in which someone in Canada approaches your church/group and asks you to sponsor their family member(s) from overseas. In these cases, often referred to as “family-linked,” the family members in Canada typically assist with the settlement activities and costs.

B. Blended Visa Office Referred Program (BVOR): The Blended Visa Office-Referred (BVOR) Program matches refugees identified for resettlement by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with private sponsors

in Canada. It is referred to as “blended” because it is a cost-sharing arrangement between Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) and private sponsors. The BVOR Program is particularly suitable for churches that have not been approached by a family in Canada to sponsor their relative(s).

Refugees resettled under the BVOR program receive income support from IRCC through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for 6 months after their arrival, during months 2-7. Private sponsors pay the other 6 months of support, months 1 and 8-12, plus all of the start up costs. The sponsoring group is also responsible for providing the hands-on settlement support throughout the sponsorship year.

Matching Process: The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP), a program responsible for organizing a matching database of refugee profiles, coordinates the BVOR program. Profiles are added to the matching database on a monthly basis. These profiles contain basic details about refugee(s) such as their age, country of origin, country of asylum, as well as their level of medical needs. When profiles become available, World Renew is able to select and put on hold up to two profiles that match the specifications of sponsors on its BVOR waiting list. After World Renew places the profile on hold, we will receive an extended profile that contains further details about the refugee or refugee family.

If your church is interested in sponsoring through the BVOR program, we ask that you answer the following questions in order to help us make a suitable match with a profile in the matching database:

1. What is the maximum number of people you are willing to sponsor?
2. Are you okay with individuals with medical needs?
3. Would you sponsor a female-headed household?
4. Would you sponsor an individual (male, female, or either)?
5. Do you have any nationality of preference? Are you willing to consider other nationalities?

If we are successful in identifying a case that matches the specifications you have sent us, we will forward a profile of the family to your church or group sponsorship primary contact who will have 48 hours to confirm whether the church would like to proceed with the sponsorship. If your church chooses to

proceed, we confirm with RSTP and then work and begin the process of filling out the necessary paperwork (Undertaking to Sponsor, Sponsor Assessment and Settlement Plan). Once the paper work is finalized, World Renew will submit the application.

Please note that estimating arrival time for BVOR cases is difficult. BVORs generally arrive anywhere from two months to one year after the undertaking is approved. However, there are many factors such as security screening or medical concerns, that can slow the estimated arrival time.

Differences between Sponsor-Referred and BVOR Sponsorships

- BVOR refugees have already been assessed and have met the Canadian government's resettlement criteria. This means that they are travel-ready. Sponsor-referred refugees must go through the refugee determination process and pass an interview with a visa officer before being accepted. Sponsor-referred refugees must also go through security and medical screening before being declared travel-ready.
- Because BVOR sponsorships are travel-ready, they have faster processing times than sponsor-referred sponsorships.
- BVOR sponsorships do not require the sponsoring group to have knowledge of a refugee, while sponsor-referred cases are those in which a sponsoring group has knowledge of a refugee or refugee family overseas.
- Sponsoring through the BVOR program costs less than a sponsor-referred application because the Government of Canada provides six months of income support. In both sponsor-referred and BVOR sponsorships, the sponsoring group is responsible for all start-up costs.

C. Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS): Refugees sponsored under the JAS program are identified as having special needs that will likely result in a longer or more challenging period of integration. Because of this, most refugees under the JAS program are provided settlement support by their sponsoring group for 24 months after arrival. In exceptional circumstances, the government will request that the sponsoring group provide 36 months of settlement support. In this program, the government covers the full cost of sponsorship for the full duration of the sponsorship period while the sponsoring groups are required to provide orientation, community and emotional support as well as ensure access to appropriate services. We recommend that groups have significant refugee settlement experience before undertaking a JAS case. If you are interested in the JAS program, please contact us for more information about the program.

3. Important Planning Considerations

The following list of important planning considerations will assist your sponsoring group with decision-making regarding to sponsorship and help to prepare your sponsoring group to welcome and settle sponsored refugees to Canada and your community. A World Renew staff member will review these steps with you before moving forward with a refugee sponsorship application.

- I. **Council Approval:** The sponsoring group Council/Board must pass a motion approving refugee sponsorship. It is important that the sponsoring group Board has approved refugee sponsorship as a mission of the congregation. This must be documented in a motion of the sponsoring group Board.

- II. **Refugee Sponsorship Committee:** The church must have a Refugee Sponsorship Committee in place, with different members covering various pre- and post-arrival tasks, including, but not limited to, designated representative, treasurer, housing coordinator, transportation coordinator, in-kind donation coordinator, refugee finance coordinator, education coordinator, and English-language training coordinator. See **APPENDIX: “[Guidelines for Forming a Refugee Sponsorship Committee](#).”**

- III. Finance Guidelines:** World Renew’s sponsorship agreement with IRCC provides information on a variety of financial rules for refugee sponsorship by which sponsoring groups must abide. **ONLINE**, you can find a document entitled “[Finance Guidelines](#).” The document provides guidance on a wide variety of topics related to your refugee sponsorship finances, including, but not limited to, managing donations, transferring funds to the sponsored newcomers, working with co-sponsors, and introducing sponsored newcomers to Canada’s tax system.

The guidelines are organized in a question and answer format. Please ensure you read the document carefully. Do not hesitate to contact the Refugee Program with any questions or concerns.

- IV. Safe Church / Vulnerable Persons Policy:** The sponsoring group must have an active Safe Church or Vulnerable Persons Policy (different churches/groups will have different names for this policy). Newcomers to Canada are considered “vulnerable persons,” therefore it is important that members of the Refugee Sponsorship Committee and volunteers who will be regularly interacting with the sponsored individual/family members have completed a thorough screening, including a Vulnerable Sector check by the police. All volunteers must be trained in accordance with the church policy concerned with protecting vulnerable people. Plan to Protect (www.plantoprotect.com/en/training) offers helpful training opportunities, both in person and online, specific to protecting refugees newly arrived to Canada as vulnerable people. Please do not hesitate to contact them for further information and training opportunities.

- V. Raising and Managing Funds:** While World Renew does not require that your sponsoring group raise a specific amount of money before submitting a sponsorship application, you do need to demonstrate to World Renew that you have a plan to raise the necessary funds. For some groups this will mean holding several church offerings. For others this may involve fundraising events.

The sponsoring group and the co-sponsor(s) must work together to develop a budget based on rates specified in the Resettlement Assistance Program. It is expected that financial support under private sponsorship is equivalent to RAP

rates. This means that the sponsoring group and co-sponsor should provide income support at least equivalent to the amount of the RAP rate in the community of settlement in order to fulfill your responsibility as a sponsor.

Please note that for privately sponsored refugees, BVORs, and JAS cases, the sponsoring group and co-sponsor are responsible all start up costs. For a detailed overview of RAP rates for your area, please visit:

www.rstp.ca/en/sponsorship-responsibilities/resettlement-assistance-program-rap-rates. Please ensure to read the 'Start-Up Costs' under the Documents sidebar on the website.

If you are considering the BVOR Program, please note that although it is a cost-shared program, the cost sharing is not typically 50:50 between your group and the government. The sponsoring group has to cover all the start-up costs and there are additional costs in sponsorship that the government does not cover. The ratio is closer to 30:70 or 40:60. Therefore, when using the cost table to get an estimate for a BVOR sponsorship, please consider that the costs for the sponsoring group will include more than just half of the 12 months of Income Support as listed on the cost table. Please pay special attention to the details about in-kind donations, which may be used to lower the start-up costs of the sponsorship.

The sponsoring group budget must have a separate line item for refugee sponsorship funds. It is important that the line item have a name other than the name of the refugee family to be sponsored. For example, the line item could be named 'Refugee Fund.' Where there is a separate Refugee fund, the sponsoring group raises funds and gives charitable tax receipts to those who donate. It is important to note that family members of the refugees cannot contribute financially to the sponsorship and receive an income tax receipt. In addition, refugees cannot contribute financially to their own sponsorship while their case is being processed and before their arrival to Canada. *This is a violation of World Renew's agreement with the government.*

- VI. Confidentiality and Privacy:** It is very important to recognize and respect the privacy of the refugee(s) you are sponsoring. For privacy and safety reasons, the

names and personal circumstances of the refugee(s) should not be shared outside of the Refugee Committee. Please ensure that the refugee(s) names, photos, or personal details are not shared on social media or in the church. Once the refugee(s) arrive in Canada, please consult with them and get their permission to share any of their information or details. Please see **APPENDIX: “[Confidentiality and Privacy](#)”** for more details.

- VII. Transportation Loan:** Most refugees must take out a loan from the Canadian government in order to cover travel costs. The loan is to be repaid by the refugee(s) after their arrival to Canada. Churches/groups often do help with the loan but it is not required that they do so. It is up to the sponsoring group to what extent, if any, they want to assist in repaying the loan. Please see **APPENDIX: “[The Transportation Loan](#)”** for more details.
- VIII. Settlement Planning:** The main role and responsibility of the sponsoring group is to greet the newcomers at the airport, to welcome them to their new home, and to assist them on their journey of settling and integrating into Canada. Please note that the sponsorship period is for one year. This is a very important role and one that requires planning for the many different activities involved with settlement. A copy of [the Settlement Plan](#) can be found in the **APPENDIX**. Completing the Settlement Plan will help sponsoring groups identify and assign the various sponsorship tasks. In addition to the settlement plan, the sponsoring group should develop a sponsorship budget. The settlement plan document is helpful in itemizing the many activities necessary for settlement that will have costs. The RAP rates are a helpful resource in developing the budget.

For assistance developing the settlement plan, please contact your local settlement service agencies to learn of services and resources available for privately sponsored refugees. We also recommend that you inquire about what newcomer populations are already settled in your community, and what populations are currently being settled. Having the support and community of their local ethnic diaspora can really help newcomers feel at home in Canada. For information about settlement services across Canada, please visit:

www.rstp.ca/en/sponsorship-responsibilities/settlement-services

Participating and supporting refugee(s) in their settlement to Canada is a very important role, one that can bring rich blessings to the newcomers as well as to the sponsoring group.

- IX. RSTP Trainings:** World Renew requires that all members of a group's refugee sponsorship committee review the online training webinar, 'Overview of Private Refugee Sponsorship,' offered by the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP). Committee members are also encouraged to review other on-line training webinars offered by RSTP www.rstp.ca/en/resources/videos
- X. Interim Federal Health Program:** This program provides health coverage and benefits that all privately sponsored refugees are entitled to upon arrival in Canada. Please note that Basic Coverage is in place until provincial health coverage begins, while Supplemental Coverage is offered for the duration of the formal sponsorship period. Please also note that IFHP dental coverage only provides for emergency care for dental conditions involving pain, infection, or trauma. It does not cover ongoing, regular, or routine dental care. Please see the **APPENDIX** for the "[Interim Federal Health Program Fact Sheet](#)" and "[IFHP Dental Benefits Grid](#)" for more details.
- XI. Code of Ethics:** We encourage your sponsoring group to adapt the "[Code of Ethics for Groups involved in the Private Sponsorship of Refugees](#)," developed by the Canadian Council for Refugees (see **APPENDIX**). The Code of Ethics provides an excellent foundation of guiding principles with which you can plan and carry out a sponsorship.