

Blended VOR Program

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Blended VOR Program?

The Blended Visa Office-Referred Program is designed to resettle refugees identified by the *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees* (UNHCR) and submitted to Canadian visa offices abroad. It is referred to as a “blended” program because it is a cost-sharing arrangement whereby *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada* (IRCC) and *Sponsorship Agreement Holders* (SAHs) both contribute to financially supporting the refugees.

Refugees under this program have already met eligibility and admissibility criteria, making them travel-ready. However, they must be matched with a sponsor before they can travel to Canada.

Why did IRCC introduce this program?

As a result of a decision made in the 2012 budget, IRCC shifted 1,000 Government Assisted Refugee (GAR) resettlement spaces to the Blended VOR program. This has been further increased to 5,000 in 2016. The intent is to maintain the overall number of refugees being referred by UNHCR to Canada and provide further opportunities for involvement by the private sector. As such, the project is implemented by UNHCR, IRCC and private sponsors. To assist in the coordination of the project, a Refugee Resettlement Project Worker was hired as part of the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP). The Project Worker is responsible for promoting the Blended VOR Program, addressing inquiries and matching refugees selected under this program with sponsors in Canada.

How does the “blended” model work?

Refugees resettled under the Blended VOR Program receive income support through the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) for 6 months after their arrival (during months 2-7). They are also fully covered under the Interim Federal Health Program (IFHP) for the duration of the sponsorship, in addition to provincial health coverage.

For the duration of the sponsorship period, sponsors are required to provide:

- **Reception** (refugees are not be taken to the Reception Centre like GAR/JAS cases)
- **Housing & basic necessities** (this is covered for 6 months through RAP income support, but sponsors cover start-up costs)
- **Settlement assistance** (including language classes, enrollment in school, finding health care provider, job search, etc.)
- **Emotional & moral support**

Who will be sponsored under this program?

The focus for 2016 will be on various populations, including:

- **Syrian, Iraqi, Iranian**
- **Eritrean, Ethiopian**
- **Congolese, Burundian**
- **Ugandan, Somali**
- **Burmese, Colombian**

The BVOR program has grown steadily since it was implemented:

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016
# of persons	200-300	400-500	800-1000	5000

How is this different from the regular Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program?

Under the Blended VOR Program, refugees are referred to Canadian visa offices abroad directly by the UNHCR. The refugees sponsored under this program are already travel-ready and thus arrive in Canada sooner, normally within 1-4 months. IRCC provides RAP income support for 6 months of the sponsorship period and sponsors are responsible for the remaining costs (*including start-up*) as well as settlement assistance throughout the sponsorship period (usually 12 months).

Under the PSR Program, sponsors are able to submit a sponsorship application on behalf of a Convention Refugee Abroad or a member of the Country of Asylum Class. These persons are assessed under those specific criteria and for eligibility and admissibility under Canadian law before their sponsorship is approved. Once it is approved by a Canadian visa officer and the refugees travel to Canada, the sponsors assume all costs associated with the sponsorship, as well as the responsibilities of settlement over the sponsorship period.

Can refugees be referred to the Blended VOR Program by sponsoring groups?

No. Refugees chosen under this program can only be referred by Canadian visa offices.

Where can sponsors view the available profiles?

Information about available Blended VOR cases can be viewed on the secured IRCC website and requested directly from the Refugee Resettlement Project Worker.

What happens after a profile has been chosen?

If a private sponsor is successful in placing a hold on a profile, the sponsor is provided with additional information about the case. The sponsoring group is given a time period within which to decide whether or not to proceed with the sponsorship. If the sponsor decides to proceed, they advise the Project Worker accordingly. The Project Worker informs the Matching Centre which sends the sponsoring group the information they need to complete the Undertaking and other forms. For more information about the BVOR matching process, see below.

Which forms must be submitted?

In order to proceed with the sponsorship, the private sponsor must submit the following forms:

- ✚ Undertaking/Application to Sponsor
- ✚ Sponsor Assessment (if applicable)
- ✚ Settlement Plan (if applicable)
- ✚ Financial Profile (if applicable)

These forms and the Document Checklist (which must also be included) can be found on the IRCC website:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/private.asp>

Where should the application be submitted?

The completed forms are submitted to the Centralized Processing Office – Winnipeg (CPO-W) electronically at: CPOW-BTCW@cic.gc.ca or mailed to:

Centralized Processing Office – Winnipeg (CPO-W)
269 Main Street, Suite 400
Winnipeg, MB
R3C 1B2

Note: In order to ensure faster processing, please follow these steps:

- ✓ Indicate “Blended VOR” on the envelope
- ✓ At the top of the Undertaking, check the box for a “visa office referred sponsorship” and indicate the profile numbers provided by IRCC
- ✓ Make sure to check mark the first box in section G of the Undertaking, as instructed.

How soon will the refugees arrive?

Visa office-referred cases are normally ready to travel to Canada within 1 to 4 months of being matched with a sponsor. However, delays may occur in some “travel-ready” cases because of problems in arranging exit permits, travel documents, etc. Once travel arrangements have been arranged through the visa office overseas, IRCC will provide the sponsor with information regarding departure and arrival dates, as well as any particular settlement needs that might exist in transit and in the first few weeks after the refugees have arrived in Canada. Sponsoring groups are encouraged to send a welcome letter to the sponsored refugees and establish contact prior to arrival. This can be arranged through the Project Worker.

What happens after the refugees arrive?

Refugees sponsored under this program are permanent residents once they arrive in Canada. This means that they are legally entitled to work, go to school, receive health care and access free services for newcomers to Canada, such as language classes, employment counseling and other support services. Sponsored refugees are eligible for provincial health care coverage right away. For information on services available in each province:

Visit www.rstp.ca → Under the Sponsorship Responsibility tab across the top, click on Settlement Services → Find a Settlement Service

How can refugees access RAP and IFH support?

Once they receive the Notice of Arrival Transmission (NAT), the local IRCC office will email the sponsor to make arrangements for issuing RAP and IFH. Depending on the location of the sponsor, an in-person intake interview might be conducted, or the IFH and RAP documents may be mailed to the sponsor for completion, and returned back to the local IRCC office.

What happens after the 6 months of RAP are over?

RAP income support will not be provided for more than 6 months, therefore sponsors will assume the costs for the remainder of the sponsorship period. This includes start-up costs and income support for months 1 & 8-12. All other services, including IFH coverage, remain the same for the duration of the sponsorship period (usually 12 months).

What are the expected costs of sponsorship under this program?

The sponsorship application kit provides details of the minimum financial support needed to meet the sponsorship obligations. RAP income support provided by IRCC is intended to cover the basic costs of shelter, food and transportation for the refugees for 6 months, so expected costs can be reduced accordingly. RAP rates are roughly equivalent to prevailing social assistance rates in the expected community of settlement.

What is expected of refugees under this program?

Sponsored refugees are expected to work with their sponsors to develop a detailed plan with the goal of becoming independent and self-sufficient by the end of the sponsorship period. It is expected that sponsored refugees will not access social assistance during the sponsorship period. If this occurs, IRCC will look to the sponsoring group to reimburse the Government. In order to continue receiving support from their sponsors, sponsored refugees are expected to remain in their sponsorship community for the duration of the sponsorship period.

For more information please contact:

bvor@rstp.ca

416-290-1700

Toll Free: 1-877-290-1701

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What is the process of sponsoring refugees under the Blended VOR Program?

Accessing the Blended VOR Profiles

Brief BVOR profiles are sent by the Matching Centre (an office within IRCC) to RSTP who in turn sends them out to the list of SAHs and registered G5s and Community Sponsors. Each case is available to all sponsoring groups for 3 weeks.

Choosing a Profile

1. A group requests a hold be placed on a profile of interest by emailing bvor@rstp.ca.
2. RSTP sends an expanded profile to the sponsoring group. The sponsoring group has a maximum of 3 days to inform RSTP at bvor@rstp.ca whether the group will proceed or not.
3. If the sponsorship is confirmed by the sponsoring group to RSTP, RSTP informs the Matching Centre. If the sponsoring group decides not to proceed, the case is shared with all sponsoring groups again and the process repeats. If RSTP receives no response from a sponsoring group after 3 days, the case is automatically made available to all sponsoring groups again.
4. If profiles are not chosen within 3 weeks of being referred by the Matching Centre to RSTP, they are cancelled and are no longer available for sponsorship.

Submitting the Application

Once a sponsorship is confirmed, the Matching Centre sends the names and dates of birth to the sponsoring group and sponsors complete the following documents:

- *Document Checklist (all sponsors);*
- *Undertaking/Application to Sponsor (all sponsors);*
- *Sponsor Assessment (G5s and Community Sponsors)*
- *Settlement Plan (G5s, Community Sponsors and some SAHs)*
- *Financial Profile (G5s)*

The sponsorship application kit with these forms can be found on the RSTP website at:

<http://www.rstp.ca/en/processing/the-refugee-sponsorship-application-forms/>

The application is submitted to CPO-W electronically at: CPOW-BTCW@cic.gc.ca or mailed to: 269 Main Street, Suite 400, Winnipeg, MB R3C 1B2

Processing

Once CPO-W has approved the application, they will forward it to the Matching Centre and the appropriate visa office abroad. Sponsors receive a Notice of Arrival Transmission (NAT) with detailed information about the refugees' departure and arrival dates. Refugees are ready to travel within 1 to 4 months of the application being received by the visa office.

Travel and Arrival

Refugees board a plane to Canada, and are given permanent residency upon arrival. Sponsors are responsible for reception, housing & basic necessities including start-up costs (RAP income support provided for 6 months), settlement assistance and emotional & moral support. After receipt of NAT, sponsors will be contacted by the local IRCC office to schedule an intake interview for RAP and IFH registration, or to make arrangements for completing and mailing these documents

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