

Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) Program

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the BVOR Program?

The BVOR 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), Groups of Five (G5), and Community Sponsors (CS) contribute 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 BVOR program. 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 (BVOR Worker) was hired as part of the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP). The BVOR Worker is responsible for promoting the BVOR Program, addressing inquiries and matching refugees selected under this program with sponsors in Canada.

How does the “blended” model work?

Refugees resettled under the BVOR 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**

Populations sponsored in the BVOR Program includes but not limited to:

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

The Criteria used for selecting cases in 2017:

- BVORs are referred by UNHCR and will be travel ready
- Family configurations are generally to include smaller family sizes or larger families with younger children under 18
- Cases will generally have low settlement and health needs

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

Under the BVOR 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 BVOR 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 BVOR cases can be requested directly from the Refugee Resettlement Project Worker (BVOR 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 BVOR Worker accordingly. The BVOR Worker informs ROC-O 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 Resettlement Operations Centre – Ottawa

Electronically at:

Email: IRCC.INROCO-CORORI.IRCC@cic.gc.ca

Or mailed to:

Resettlement Operations Centre – Ottawa
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1L1

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

- ✓ Indicate “BVOR” 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 BVOR 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.

What is the process of sponsoring refugees under the BVOR Program?

Accessing the BVOR Profiles

Brief BVOR profiles are sent by ROC-O (an office within IRCC) to RSTP who in turn sends them out to the list of SAHs and registered G5s and Community Sponsors. Sponsors will have two weeks from the posting date to confirm interest in a profile, then 30 days from posting date to submit the Sponsorship Application to IRCC.



Choosing a Profile

1. RSTP will send an invitation email to the email address you provide us. It will contain a link to the RSTP BVOR Matching System.
2. In order to access the system, you will first need to register for a *Microsoft Account*. If the email address you register with RSTP is not linked to a Microsoft Account, you will be automatically prompted to create a Microsoft Account and password.
3. Use your Microsoft Account to login to the RSTP BVOR Matching System.
 - Once logged in you can review the available BVOR profiles and place a hold on one. (NOTE: If it is a cross-referenced case, the other case(s) will automatically also be placed on hold for you.)
 - Profiles will remain on hold for 3 days. During this hold period you can proceed with sponsoring the case by 'confirming' the profile using the confirm button.
 - If you decide not to proceed with sponsoring a profile on hold for you, the hold can be cancelled by using the cancel button.
 - If a held profile is not 'confirmed' within 3 days, the hold will automatically be cancelled and the profile will become available to other sponsoring groups.



Submitting the Application

Once a sponsorship is confirmed, ROC-O 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 electronically at: Email: IRCC.INROCO-CORORI.IRCC@cic.gc.ca
Or mailed to:

Resettlement Operations Centre – Ottawa
365 Laurier Avenue West
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1L1



Processing

Once ROC-O has approved the application, they will forward it to 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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For more information please
contact:

bvor@rstp.ca

416-290-1700 ext 403

Toll Free: 1-877-290-1701



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