

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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Immigration, Refugees
and Citizenship Canada

Immigration, Réfugiés
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1. What is a Sponsorship Agreement Holder?

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

Currently, there are more than 100 SAHs across Canada. SAHs differ in composition, type and organizational structure. In general, they have the following traits:

- They are incorporated organizations.
- They can be religious, ethno-cultural or humanitarian organizations.
- They have signed a sponsorship agreement with the Minister of Immigration, Citizenship and Refugees Canada (or delegate) to facilitate the sponsorship process.
- They are responsible for managing sponsorships submitted under their agreement.
- They have the prerogative to identify refugees whom 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) under the PSR program. They can sponsor referred cases through the Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) program and Joint Assistance Sponsorship (JAS) program.
- They can authorize Constituent Groups (CGs) 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 across Canada or only a few in a specific region or area.
- They are responsible for training and information sharing with their Constituent Groups.
- They may undertake sponsorships on an ongoing basis.
- Some have national agreements while others are regional.
- They work with the local Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) office in their community.
- They and their authorized CG is located in the community where the refugee is expected to settle.

2. How does a group qualify to be a SAH?

In order to be a SAH, an organization MUST:

1. Be incorporated and registered;
2. Have the necessary financial capacity;
3. Understand and uphold the objectives of the PSR Program;
4. Have a solid volunteer base; and,
5. Pass a security review.

2.1 Being incorporated and registered

The group should be incorporated and registered under the relevant federal and provincial laws.



2.2 Financial capacity

The group should demonstrate that it has the required financial capacity determined by IRCC. The minimum capital required is usually 10% of the total sponsorship cost, which is the amount of money needed to cover the settlement costs of all the sponsored refugees for a period of one year. For instance, if a group plans to sponsor 10 refugees per year, the minimum capital needed is \$13,500, which is 10% of the total sponsorship costs (\$135,000).

Table 1 below provides the minimum dollar amount required to be a SAH depending on the number of people whom the group wishes to sponsor.

Table 1: Minimum Capital Required for a SAH

Number of People to Be Sponsored	Total Sponsorship Costs	% of Funds Required	Funds Necessary
10	\$ 135,000	10%	\$ 13,500
20	\$ 252,000	10%	\$ 25,200
30	\$ 378,000	10%	\$ 37,800
40	\$ 504,000	10%	\$ 50,400
50	\$ 630,000	10%	\$ 63,000
60	\$ 756,000	10%	\$ 75,600
70	\$ 882,000	10%	\$ 88,200
80	\$ 1,008,000	10%	\$ 100,800
90	\$ 1,134,000	10%	\$ 113,400
100	\$ 1,260,000	10%	\$ 126,000

2.3 Understanding and upholding the objectives of the PSR Program

The sponsoring group must understand and uphold the objectives of the PSR program as stipulated in the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)* and its regulations. This includes recognizing that the refugee program is primarily about saving lives and offering protection to the displaced and persecuted and providing assistance to those in need of resettlement.

SAHs should not expect to receive money or any other kind of remuneration from the sponsored refugees, nor should they sponsor refugees because of other insincere motives. However, SAHs can collect a one-time payment of \$250 from a CG or co-sponsor to cover administrative costs.

The group is expected to uphold the objectives of the PSR program by pre-screening sponsorship requests and assessing them to ensure that they meet the eligibility and admissibility criteria of the PSR Program.

Some of the objectives of *IRPA* with respect to refugees are:

- To recognize that the refugee program is in the first instance about saving lives and offering protection to the displaced and persecuted;
- To affirm Canada's commitment to international efforts to provide assistance to those in need of resettlement;
- To offer safe haven to people with a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group, as well as those at risk of torture or cruel and unusual treatment or punishment;
- To support the self-sufficiency and the social and economic well-being of refugees by facilitating reunification with their family members in Canada;
- To protect the health and safety of Canadians and to maintain the security of Canadian society; and,
- To promote international justice and security by denying access to Canadian territory to people, including refugee claimants, who are security risks or serious criminals.

2.4 Volunteer base

Having a reliable volunteer base that includes a group of committed individuals who will participate actively in the settlement of newcomers and possibly in the management of the SAH is essential. The sponsoring group should demonstrate that it has volunteers who are committed, willing and eligible to participate in the PSR program and assist with support the refugee(s). Ideally, the volunteers could consist of people of various backgrounds, including former refugees or people who were previously involved in the PSR program.



2.5 Ineligibility to sponsor

Members of the SAH, including the Board of Directors, must pass a n IRCC security screening, and they must be eligible to be part of a sponsoring group.

The following people cannot be part of a Constituent Group or a SAH:

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

2.6 Additional considerations

When assessing SAH applications, IRCC may take into account the organization's previous sponsorship and settlement experience and past processing of sponsorship applications from the target refugee population, if any. To this end, IRCC might seek the input of the local IRCC office that worked with the organization.

3. How to apply to become a SAH

In order to become a SAH, a corporation must submit an application to become a Sponsorship Agreement Holder with supporting documents to IRCC.

The applicant is required to provide detailed reasons why they wish to become a SAH and why they would qualify as a SAH. The required information includes:

- The profile of the organization;
- The contact information for the organization's leaders and representatives;
- A copy of the articles of incorporation including the province and date of incorporation;

- The organization's structure, including a mission statement, and the governance structure;
- The number and location of the CGs (if any);
- A description of the organization's planned support for its CGs;
- An outline of plans to offer settlement assistance and financial support;
- The projected sponsorship activity, such as the number of refugees or refugee families the organization and CG expect to sponsor;
- Potential methods of identifying cases for sponsorship;
- An outline of the organization's previous sponsorship and humanitarian work;
- Proof of financial ability to support sponsored people which could include three years worth of audited financial statements;
- Details of any "in-kind" donations available (accommodation, furniture, clothing); and,
- Any other relevant information.

The Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (through his or her delegate) will assess the application and determine if an applicant organization will be granted authority to become a SAH under the PSR program on the basis of the information provided in the application form and supporting documents.

If the Minister determines (through his or her delegate) that the application meets the required criteria, the Minister will sign a sponsorship agreement with the organization and thereby confer the corporation with the authority to sponsor refugees. At that point, the organization becomes a SAH.

Where to get the application package to become a SAH?

The application form can be obtained by contacting the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) at info@rstp.ca

5. Where to send the application

A completed application form and all required document, including articles of incorporation, audited financial statements and other support documents, should be emailed to IRCC at: IRCC.INPSR-PPPRRI.IRCC@cic.gc.ca

6. Is there an application or a processing fee?

There is no application or processing fee to become a SAH.

7. Who can offer support to organizations who wish to become SAHs?

The RSTP is funded by IRCC to provide training, information and support to sponsorship groups, including organizations interested in becoming SAHs.

8. How long does the application process take?

Processing times when applying to become a SAH may vary from a couple of months to several months. Some of the reasons for the delay could include incomplete application forms, missing information, background checks and screening.

A SAH has an obligation to provide financial assistance to the sponsored refugees because they are not expected to access social assistance.

9. What are the responsibilities of a SAH?

When an organization signs a sponsorship agreement, it becomes fully accountable for the responsibilities that are detailed in the sponsorship agreement. These include:

1. Providing basic financial support (e.g., for housing and food) and care for the sponsored refugee during the sponsorship period (generally a period of one year), or until the sponsored refugee no longer requires assistance, whichever comes first;
2. Pre-screening of sponsorship applications to determine whether they meet Canada's sponsorship eligibility and admissibility criteria;
3. Being responsible for the selection and authorization of CGs;
4. Ensuring it has sufficient resources and expertise to carry out its responsibilities;
5. Remaining jointly or solely liable when the SAH or CG has signed a sponsorship undertaking;
6. Providing organizational assistance, advice, information and support to its CGs;
7. Being responsible for the monitoring of its CGs;
8. Advising IRCC of any changes in the signing authority of the organization; and
9. Submitting an annual report to IRCC.

10. What settlement assistance is required from a SAH?

At the outset of the sponsorship process, a SAH has an obligation to provide a settlement plan that outlines the settlement assistance it will offer to the sponsored refugee(s). During the sponsorship period, a SAH undertakes to:

1. Welcome the refugees at the airport, and provide an orientation to life in Canada;
2. Provide suitable accommodation, basic furniture and other household essentials;
3. Provide food, clothing, local transportation costs and other basic necessities of life; and,
4. Help the refugees:
 - Complete any required forms, including health insurance, social insurance and child tax benefits;
 - Learn English or French (e.g., help with getting into an English-as-a-second-language or French-as-a-second-language class);
 - Understand their rights and responsibilities and what they are entitled to as permanent residents of Canada;
 - Find a job and make friends;
 - Learn about and access services that are available in the community, including settlement agencies;
 - Register children in school and guide them in dealings with the school system;
 - Locate a family physician, dentist and any other required health services; and,
 - Become independent and self-sufficient.

A SAH is expected to prepare a settlement plan that outlines, in as much detail as possible, how it will divide the responsibilities of settling the newcomers; who will provide money; which in-kind support is available; and what the back-up plan is in case the original settlement plan does not work out.

11. How long will the SAH have to provide support?

The sponsoring group is responsible for financial and settlement assistance and support to the sponsored refugees for the duration of the sponsorship period. This is usually one year from the date of the arrival of the refugee, but can be up to three years in exceptional circumstances.



12. How much money does a SAH need to demonstrate they have when they apply to sponsor a refugee(s)?

SAHs are expected to provide financial support equivalent to the Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) rate for the province in which the refugee will be residing (please visit the RSTP website for the RAP rate for each province).

13. Who may be sponsored by a SAH?

To be eligible to be sponsored to Canada as a refugee under the PSR program, a person:

- Must be outside Canada and outside their country of nationality or their country of habitual residence;
- Must have a sponsoring group in Canada;
- Is unable or unwilling to return to their country of nationality or their country of habitual residence;
- Does not have a durable solution available to them (i.e. local integration, voluntary repatriation or an alternative offer of resettlement);
- Must be able to establish in Canada;
- Meets either the Convention Refugee Abroad class definition or Country of Asylum class definition; and,
- Must pass medical, security and criminality screenings.

14. Who may not be sponsored by a SAH?

The following persons cannot be sponsored as refugees under the PSR program:

- Persons who are still inside their country of origin or their country of habitual residence;
- Persons who are already in Canada;
- Individuals who were previously the subject of a sponsorship application and were refused, unless:
 - their circumstances have changed;
 - new information, which was not presented in the previous application, has come to light; or,
 - Canadian laws affecting the case have changed.
- Persons who have a durable solution, such as voluntary repatriation, local integration or an alternative offer of resettlement;

Useful links and resources

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

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

Application forms for a SAH
<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/private.asp>

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

Refugee
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