



Rainbow Refugee Assistance Program

The Rainbow Refugee Assistance Program was created to address the distinct risks and settlement challenges faced by refugees who have fled persecution related to sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or sex characteristics by encouraging LGBTQ2I+ civil society to engage in refugee sponsorship.

The RRAP is a cost-sharing agreement with Immigration, Refugees Citizenship Canada (IRCC), stewarded by Rainbow Refugee since 2011. Through the collaboration of partners in the Rainbow Coalition for Refuge (RC4R) and Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAH), over 25 communities across Canada have received and supported LGBTQ2I+ refugees. On June 1 2019, Immigration Refugees Citizenship Canada, extended and expanded the initiative.

Eligibility Criteria Under the agreement, Rainbow Refugee encourages groups to organize sponsorships for individuals who:

1. face persecution related to their sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, sex characteristics (SOGIESC)
2. are outside their country of origin and unable to return because of their fear of persecution
3. remain at high risk of criminalization, violence, homelessness or other harms in the country of asylum. i.e. Do not have a durable solution in the country of asylum

Cost Sharing IRCC will provide funding for cost-sharing for fifty individuals per year between 2020-2024. IRCC's contribution is equivalent to three months of income support at provincial social assistance rates and start-up support (furniture, household items, etc.) Sponsorship groups are responsible for raising the additional funds to the equivalent of 12 months of living income in the community of arrival. (for more details see rainbowrefugee.ca/sponsorship)

The 2020-2024 RRAP agreement does not place a cap or limit on the number of sponsorships that can be submitted. Fifty individuals are eligible for cost-sharing funds, but more applications can be submitted. RRAP sponsorships do not count against the cap of the partnering Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH).

The guidelines and process below describe how to prepare a Sponsorship Group that will be eligible for the Rainbow Refugee Assistance Program and apply for the one of the fifty cost-sharing spaces.

A note on terminology. Diversity of Gender, sexuality and sex characteristics exists across all cultures in many forms. Working with this diversity across languages and geographies is challenging—and no term is perfect. We use SOGIESC -Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Expression and Sex Characteristics to describe the grounds for persecution or protection. So, SOGIESC refugees or SOGIESC protection. We also use the more recognized acronym LGBTQI+, meaning Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex and HIV positive. When we talk about communities in Canada, we include 2 for Two-Spirit, as in LGBTQ2I+, respecting that Two-Spirit is a distinct Indigenous way-of-being used by some First Nations, Inuit and Metis.



Are you ready to sponsor an LGBTQI+ refugee?

Guidelines for Sponsoring Groups

Form a Sponsoring Group

1. Form a group. Groups of 7-10 people work well. We can provide materials on group recruitment and formation. Contact coordinator@rainbowrefugee.ca. There are also excellent materials on the Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative website. <http://refugeesponsorship.org/>
2. Mix it up! We have found creating intentionally diverse groups, with a mix of ages, genders, LGBTQ2+ identities and allies, racial/ethnocultural backgrounds, languages and skill sets works best. Aim to include as part of your group 1) people with day-time availability or flexible schedules 2) people with good fundraising know-how and contacts 3) people who arrived as newcomers (who are feeling established enough) 4) people with social work, mental health or social service backgrounds
3. Allies welcome! Please work WITH us. We are very happy that many allies want to act in solidarity and support with LGBTQI+ refugees. Because Rainbow RAP sponsorship groups will be helping newcomers connect with local LGBTQ2+ communities and services, it is important that RRAP groups include a *minimum* of two members who are open, active members of their local LGBTQ2I+ communities. We find Sponsorship Groups work best when at least half of their membership is part of local LGBTQ2I+ communities. Having good social networks within local LGBTQ2+ communities is critical to success.
4. Consider the diversity within LGBTQ2I+. LGBTQ2I+ is a big umbrella that refers to a diverse range of identities and communities. Think about the social networks of your group members. Will your group be able to help people connect with local community and services? Finding and connecting to local LGBTQ2+ communities or services is often much harder for Trans or gender diverse people. For groups sponsoring Trans or gender diverse individuals, it is essential to have at least one member of the group who has lived expertise as Trans and/or is very knowledgeable of Trans issues so that they can have informed conversations about navigating some of the distinct settlement challenges for Trans individuals. Similarly, racialized LGBTQ2I+ people face distinct challenges during settlement. Creating a group that includes People of Colour, ready to have conversations about equality rights and realities of racism is helpful.



Connect with Collaborators

1. Partner with a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH). Rainbow RAP sponsorship groups must work with an established Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH). Working with a SAH that is active in your region often works best. Rainbow Refugee has enjoyed good collaborations with SAHs of many faiths and denominations as well as non-religious SAHs. We are happy to make introductions.
2. Sponsorship groups must be linked with an established organization within their region that is familiar with sponsorship. Members of the Rainbow Coalition for Refuge can serve as local collaborators. We encourage you to reach out before submitting your expression of interest, but are also happy to make introductions.
3. Identify local LGBTQ2I+ and newcomer resources that you can refer people to.

Complete an Expression of Interest

1. Contact coordinator@rainbowrefugee.ca to ask for an Expression of Interest form. The form asks about your Sponsorship Groups' membership, plans and collaborators (SAH, constituent group, other local resources).
2. Provide a copy of the Code of Ethics or Community Agreement your Sponsorship Group will use. SAHs have Codes of Ethics for Sponsorship Groups or Rainbow Refugee can provide one for your group to discuss and adopt.
3. Indicate whether you plan to sponsor an individual identified by Rainbow Refugee or plan to sponsor an individual you have identified.
4. Once Rainbow Refugee receives your Expression of Interest, it will be reviewed by members of our Sponsorship Committee to assess your Sponsoring Group's readiness using the guidelines above.

Within two weeks you will receive a response:

- a) *Recommendations for readiness.* Groups that do not align with guidelines will be given feedback on how to improve their groups' readiness.
- b) *Proceed to a Match.* Groups that align well with the guidelines and plan to sponsor an individual identified by Rainbow Refugee will be invited to proceed to an application. Rainbow Refugee will provide 2-3 profiles for the group to select from. We work with Sponsoring Groups to identify individuals based on the capacities of the group and local LGBTQ2I+ resources.

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- c) *Proceed to name an individual for Sponsorship.* Sponsoring Groups that align well with the guidelines and plan to name an individual will be asked to provide more details about the individual and the referral source. Groups should be prepared to submit the sponsorship application for review by Rainbow Refugee.

How Rainbow Refugee Assesses Individuals for Sponsorship

When the Sponsorship Committee reviews applications to name an individual to sponsor, they consider both *program integrity* and *equity*.

Program integrity. To maintain program integrity, individuals must meet program criteria above. The facts of the case must be verified to the satisfaction of Rainbow Refugee using a combination of documentation, independent referrals, and interviewing. All individuals sponsored through the RRAP must meet program integrity criteria.

Equity. Rainbow Refugee has a commitment and responsibility to strive for equity and fairness. We recognize that among LGBTQ2+ asylum seekers, some people face greater obstacles to accessing protection and reaching safety. Women, trans and gender diverse people, youth (18-25), and people with disabilities face additional legal, financial and social barriers to mobility. In countries of asylum, parents with their children, intersex children and their families, transpeople, women, youth, and people with disabilities face additional barriers to accessing protection.

We use an intersectional assessment of risks and access to screen applications for the RRAP. This screening helps us prioritize individuals we have identified for matching. The screening will be used to allocate the 50 cost-sharing spaces.

We strongly encourage Sponsorship Groups to consider factors that may place individuals at heightened risk of harm in countries of asylum or reduce their ability to cross borders and sustain themselves in a country of asylum.

Based on the risk and access assessment, your Sponsoring Group may be either:

- a) allocated one of the 50 spaces for cost-sharing funding and invited to proceed with a RRAP application.
- b) invited to proceed with a RRAP application which remains outside of the SAHs cap, but not allocated blended funding

Please do not hesitate to reach out to sponsorship@rainbowrefugee.ca if you have questions. We look forward to working with you to create safer pathways to communities where LGBTQI+ refugee newcomers can thrive.



Rainbow Refugee, founded in 2000 in Vancouver, BC, we support and advocate with refugees facing persecution related to sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, sex characteristics or HIV. We are proud stewards of the Rainbow Refugee Assistance Partnership. To date, 25 arrival communities in Canada have eased and supported the arrival of LGBTQI refugees from over 52 countries.

As co-chairs of the Rainbow Coalition for Refuge, we are building a national network aimed at protecting the right to refuge, creating safer migration pathways and fostering responsive communities for LGBTQI+ refugees.

www.rainbowrefugee.ca

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