Building Better Relationships

Between Private Refugee Sponsors and
Sponsorship Agreement Holder Organizations

The *Private Refugee Sponsor Network Ontario (PRSN)* is an incorporated, not-for-profit organization that brings private refugee sponsor groups together to **connect, learn and share**.

The Network builds relationships with those in the sector, shares information, problem-solves and offers training programs to sponsors on **post-arrival** issues and topics they have identified.

Mission

To provide collective resources and support to private refugee sponsors in transforming the lives of those they sponsor through effective and efficient settlement in Canada.

Vision

To create a national network of private refugee sponsors to connect, learn and share "Best Practices" around post-arrival issues.

PRSN Partnership Committee

The PRSN Partnership Committee is responsible for building sponsor relationships with settlement and other agencies involved in refugee settlement and to collaborate on initiatives to improve settlement outcomes. The Committee consists of representatives from the sponsor community from urban and smaller communities, settlement agencies, SAHs, and RSTP. The focus of the work is on addressing issues of importance to sponsors in addressing post-arrival support needs.

PRSN Knowledge Exchange Committee

The PRSN Knowledge Exchange Committee is responsible for knowledge management, knowledge exchange and advocacy strategies. Through relationships with government, business, researchers, and other external stakeholders, the committee works collaboratively with other PRSN committees to facilitate the development of potential advocacy strategies to support private sponsors.

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1. Executive Summary

For over forty years, Canada has welcomed newcomers from areas of war, violence, famine, earthquakes, floods, among other challenges with private refugee sponsors playing a pivotal settlement role. There are a multitude of research studies conducted by Ontario universities that demonstrate the successful role of private sponsors in settling newcomers.

The Government of Canada signs **sponsorship agreements** with organizations that help refugees resettle in Canada. These organizations are called **Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs)**. These organizations are often religious, ethnic, community or humanitarian organizations.[1] SAHs support refugees they sponsor either on their own, or by working with other groups or individuals, called "constituent groups" (CGs) or "co-sponsors".

Building on the experience and insights gained by investigating Sponsor – Settlement Agency relationships (**Building Better Relationships: Between Private Refugee Sponsors and Settlement Organizations**), the **Partnership Committee** of PRSN, in collaboration with the **Knowledge Exchange Committee** sought to gain a better understanding of the relationships that exist between Sponsors and SAHs. This led to the development of another survey and the genesis for this report.

The goal of this research was to learn more about existing sponsor relationships with SAHs through wider engagement with both groups and to gain insights into how PRSN might be able to facilitate building better relationships between them. On the sponsor side, this would include those who have or are sponsoring refugee newcomers through private sponsorship as well as Blended Visa Office-Referred cases (BVOR).

What we hoped to find was:

- what challenges do sponsors and SAHs face
- what opportunities are there address post-arrival issues
- what promising practices and experiences are reflected in the current environment
- what opportunities are there for PRSN to partner more effectively on behalf of sponsors
- what opportunities are there for PRSN to fill some gaps in preparing sponsors to meet the challenges of sponsorship and to solidify the organization as a legitimate voice for sponsors in the refugee sponsorship space

A survey was conducted in two parts, one for sponsors and one for SAHs. Separate questionnaires were drafted to reflect the position of each group in these relationships,

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[1] https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/sponsor-refugee/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders.html

while at the same time maintaining close parallels in content in order to facilitate comparison of responses from each group.
Specific areas explored in the survey included:

For sponsors...
- their involvement of sponsorship
- their knowledge of sponsorship
- their perceptions of sponsorship
- their experience with SAH organizations
- their experience with PRSN, its programs and its role

For SAHs...
- the capacity of the SAH
- their experience with constituent groups
- their experience with PRSN, its programs and its role

The analysis of the responses reveals that while the sponsorship process is generally successful, there are areas for improvement to enhance the experience for both sponsors and SAHs. Key areas for improvement include communication, training, and resource allocation. Enhancing these areas can significantly improve the overall sponsorship experience and ensure that sponsors and SAHs are well-prepared to support newcomers.

Effective communication is critical in managing expectations and fostering collaborative relationships. Regular feedback sessions and digital platforms that facilitate real-time updates can enhance communication and ensure that both sponsors and SAHs are aligned in their responsibilities.

Standardized training programs are essential to ensure that all sponsors receive the necessary guidance and support. These programs should cover both pre-arrival and post-arrival phases, providing comprehensive training on financial management, application processes, and post-arrival support.

Additionally, leveraging experienced sponsors to mentor new sponsors can provide valuable peer support and share best practices. SAHs can provide ongoing support to mentorship programs to ensure that sponsors are well-prepared to manage the sponsorship process.

By addressing these challenges and leveraging the strengths of both sponsors and SAHs, PRSN can strengthen its role as a support network and advocate for private refugee sponsors. Enhancing communication, providing standardized training, and offering comprehensive support can significantly improve the experience for both sponsors and SAHs, ensuring successful newcomer settlement.

The data collected from this survey provides some key insights into the experiences of sponsors and Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs). The findings offer some guidance toward the formulation of recommendations that could enhance the sponsorship process, improve the support provided to sponsors, and ultimately aid the successful integration of refugees. Ultimately, the work toward improving the process will be achieved through dialogue, collaboration and partnerships between the various constituents.

The following six areas have been identified through this investigation to address specific issues related to the sponsorship process. These areas do not assign responsibility to any particular party, crafted specifically to reflect that the work should proceed as co-creation between the parties.

1. Enhance Communication
Objective: Improve communication between sponsors and SAHs to ensure timely and accurate information flow.
Recommendations:
- Establish clear expectations for communication
- Utilize multiple channels for communication
- Develop training on effective communication strategies

2. Develop Equitable and Robust Training Programs
Objective: Ensure that all sponsors receive comprehensive preparation for their roles and responsibilities in the process.
Recommendations:
- Develop comprehensive training opportunities
- Offer regular updates and refresher courses
- Enable training and feedback mechanisms

3. Improve Equitable Access to Resources
Objective: Ensure that all sponsors have equitable access to comprehensive and up-to-date resources, acknowledging limitations based on geography and other factors, like language and culture.
Recommendations:
- Centralized resource portals
- Develop resource libraries in multiple formats
- Translation and localization

4. Provide Financial and Fundraising Support
Objective: Alleviate some of the financial burdens on sponsors by making available the necessary resources to support their fundraising efforts effectively and helping sponsors with techniques to support financial literacy among newcomers.
Recommendations:
- Detailed fundraising guides
- Explore additional funding avenues

- Financial management training

5. Increase Emotional and Psychological Support

Objective: Ensure the well-being of both sponsors and refugees by providing access to emotional and psychological support services.

Recommendations:
- Access to mental health resources
- Support networks for sponsors
- Regular check-ins and monitoring

6. Strengthen Feedback Mechanisms

Objective: Ensure continuous improvement in sponsors' efforts toward the settlement of refugee newcomers.

Recommendations:
- Regular feedback mechanisms
- Transparent reporting and accountability
- Continuous improvement mechanisms

Implications and Directions for PRSN

The findings also provide guidance for PRSN to take steps of its own to enhance support for sponsors in their efforts to assist refugee newcomers to settle in Canada and to settle well.

While the focus of this research was on the interactions and relationships between sponsors and SAHs, overall improvements to the private refugee sponsorship process would be more broadly based. Sponsorship relies on interpersonal relationships involving a number of principal actors, namely refugees, sponsors, SAHs, settlement agencies, RSTP and IRCC. The recommendations focus on the actions that PRSN, acting for the benefit of sponsors, and SAHs could take to improve private sponsorship for the benefit of refugee newcomers' settlement in Canada. This requires a collaborative effort between sponsors and SAHs.

The timing of this report coincides with a changing landscape in Canada with respect to sponsorship and more broadly, immigration as a whole. Recent government policy announcements have seen a shift in the level of receptiveness to accept newcomers, with quota limits being reduced for several years. This includes refugees. Compounding this, there is change in the public's attitude generally towards newcomers. Whether this is justifiable or not, attitudes have shifted and may continue to shift. And a third factor is the likelihood of a change in government at the federal, creating further uncertainty about the sponsorship program.

While recent and upcoming events may indicate darker days for the private sponsorship program in Canada, they also provide an opportunity for PRSN to take a more active role in

promote the value and benefits of sponsorship, and through advocacy and training efforts, strengthen and possible grow a stronger cohort of sponsors in future.

2. Introduction

The 1976 Immigration Act was a milestone in Canada's response to refugees, establishing "refugees" as a class distinct from immigrants. The Viet Nam crisis of the late 70s and early 80s mobilized Canadians to respond. For the first time, ordinary people across the country became involved in assisting refugees to settle in Canada through private sponsorship, changing forever the way Canadians would view their role in Canada's resettlement program.

Private sponsor groups were established by churches and community organizations. These groups raised the necessary funds to support an individual or a family for a year, and provided psychological and social support. They were totally responsible for all elements of settlement. According to the Hon. Joe Clark, former Prime Minister of Canada, in recognition of the 40th anniversary of the Private Refugee Sponsorship Program, the program has become an enduring, vivid demonstration of who we are as Canadians.

For over forty years, Canada has welcomed newcomers from areas of war, violence, famine, earthquakes, floods, among other challenges with private refugee sponsors playing a pivotal settlement role. There are a multitude of research studies conducted by Ontario universities that demonstrate the successful role of private sponsors in settling newcomers.

The Government of Canada signs *sponsorship agreements* with organizations that help refugees resettle in Canada. These organizations are called ***Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs)***. These organizations are often religious, ethnic, community or humanitarian organizations.[2]

SAHs support refugees they sponsor either on their own, or by working with other groups or individuals, called "constituent groups" (CGs) or "co-sponsors". When working with CGs or co-sponsors, SAHs decide how the relationship should work and what criteria CGs and co-sponsors need to meet and must monitor the performance of CGs and co-sponsors and their sponsorship activities. SAHs are ultimately responsible for each refugee sponsored under their agreement.

In addition, settlement agencies, funded by the government, are mandated to help immigrants and government-assisted newcomers. As the name implies, the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP), also funded by the government, was established to provide training and support about the program to those interested in taking on the responsibility of sponsorship.

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[2] https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/sponsor-refugee/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders.html

The Government of Canada resettled more than 25,000 Syrian refugees between November 2015 and February 2016. By October 2020, that figure had swelled to 44,620 newcomers to Canada. Those figures include those who were government-assisted refugees (GARs) and those who were privately sponsored. 18,930 of those were privately sponsored refugees.[3]

Data as of 31 October 2020	
Refugee category	**Number of refugees**
Government-Assisted Refugee	21,745
Blended Visa Office-Referred Refugee	3,945
Privately Sponsored Refugee	**18,930**
TOTAL	**44,620**

In a February 2023 new release, the government signalled its intention to increase the numbers of people Canadians are able to sponsor through SAHs in 2023 to 13,500. This represented a 10-fold increase over 2012, when a cap was introduced.[4] The government has also signalled an intention to accept greater numbers of those sponsored under Groups-of-5 (G5s).

With the Syrian crisis acting as a catalyst driving an increased interest, Canadians again responded as they had in 1979 seeking to participate in the private refugee sponsorship program. Those wishing to participate wanted advice and counsel on how to establish a sponsor group, navigate the process and get a better understanding around post-arrival requirements and challenges. New sponsors began to connect with seasoned sponsors which has led to the creation of PRSN in an effort *to get the job done*.

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[3] https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/about-refugee-system/welcome-syrian-refugees/key-figures.html

[4] https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2023/02/government-of-canada-increases-sponsorship-opportunities-for-sponsorship-agreement-holders.html

3. Background / Context

In 2017, Eco-Ethonomics Inc. conducted a research project for a group of private refugee sponsors to identify the gaps in support around services. The research intended to reach out to the broader sponsor community to gather their impressions on what is needed to help sponsors manage newcomer settlement issues.

The report documented that increased support was needed for private refugee sponsors, especially in the areas of post-arrival and employment support, noting how few resources existed for sponsors seeking post-arrival supports in particular. It was found that many organizations did not have the capacity to extend into this area. At the time, the sector's leading provider, the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP), was highly focused on pre-arrival support.

The report went on to note that sponsors required support that was more individualized and "welcoming" than the services available to them by settlement agencies. Despite being told that sponsors were eligible to utilize settlement services, many sponsors did not feel comfortable accessing those services. It was generally known that settlement agencies are mandated to provide support directly to refugees and newcomers. This created the perception that sponsors were not included in that mandate. Agencies, overwhelmed responding to government-assisted newcomers, allowed the perception to continue.

Sponsors engaged by the researchers also reported that they did not feel comfortable discussing sensitive issues pertaining to the individuals and families they sponsored. This indicated the need for supports that were more private and individualized in nature.

The report recommended the need to develop services to support sponsors that were either under- or un-represented, such as:

- Training for sponsors through in-person workshops specialized in post-arrival support
- Formalized networking events
- A formalized mentorship program that matches new sponsors with experienced sponsors; it was felt that this could utilize an application (app) to allow sponsors to self-identify as mentors and express their interest in participation
- Related to the development of a formalized mentorship program, training of sponsors on best practices would be required to become effective mentors, along with continuing support throughout the mentorship process
- A free-of-charge membership to a sponsor network that would allow sponsors access to information, problem-solving and training, facilitate the ability to share experiences, and help sponsors understand how to connect to settlement services

Incorporation of the Private Refugee Sponsor Network (Ontario)

The Eco-Ethnomics report findings and recommendations became the basis for the establishment of the *Private Refugee Sponsor Network (Ontario)*. The Network was incorporated in 2021. The Network is governed by a Board representing sponsors, settlement agencies and individuals from the business community. At the time of writing this report, PRSN includes seven operational committees: Skills Development, Services, Knowledge Exchange, Partnership, Sustainability, Marketing/Communications, and Nominations.

Plans are currently underway to apply for Charitable Status for the organization. This will facilitate the Network in seeking funds to support its operation.

Building Better Relationships: Between Private Refugee Sponsors and Settlement Organizations

To address issues identified in the Eco-Ethnomics report related to sponsors' access to services from settlement agencies, PRSN, through its *Partnership Committee* and with the assistance of *Decision Point Research*, conducted its own investigation of those relationships. Between October 2022 and September 2023, private sponsors and settlement agencies were surveyed to identify possibilities for these two groups to work more effectively together. A report has been issued with findings from the research and recommendations for PRSN to strengthen those relations. The report is available on PRSN's website, at https://refugeesponsornet.ca[5].

Building Better Relationships: Between Private Refugee Sponsors and Sponsorship Agreement Holder Organizations

Building on the experience gained by investigating Sponsor – Settlement Agency relationships, the *Partnership Committee* of PRSN, in collaboration with the *Knowledge Exchange Committee* sought to gain a better understanding of the relationships that exist between Sponsors and SAHs. This led to the development of another survey and the genesis for this report.

In addition to the two research initiatives outlined above, PRSN has also been active in creating support opportunities *for sponsors by sponsors*:

- Offered over 30 training events since 2016 (since before PRSN was formally created) on topics identified by sponsors to meet their needs in effective newcomer settlement
- Developed and implemented a social media plan to increase visibility

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[5] https://refugeesponsornet.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/PRSN-Building-Relationships-with-Settlement-Agencies-research-report.pdf

- Developed and implemented a *Lunch & Learn* series
- Developed and launched *CONNECTIONS*, a quarterly newsletter
- Investigated developing a *Mentorship Program* (launch dependent on volunteers and resources)
- Established relationships with five Ontario universities undertaking research into sponsorship of refugees and supported three university research studies
- Partnered with close to 60 organizations in and outside the sector gather best practice information and tools to private refugee sponsors in settling newcomers in Ontario
- Attracted participation from four provinces in Canada
- Created an operational model that is transferable to other provincial jurisdictions
- Developed Theory of Change and Outcomes Measurement documents to be able to assess impact
- Is establishing an Advisory Council of current and former senior level political and business leaders, and other prominent individuals who are known within and supportive of the newcomer community in Canada

4. Goals and Objectives

The goals of this research, along with the previous PRSN study looking into the relationships between sponsors and settlement agencies, are distinct from the earlier 2017 Eco-Ethonomics study. The focus here is on relationships between sponsors and Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs). The prior PRSN study focussed on relationships between sponsors and settlement agencies. The Eco-Ethonomics study looked more generally at the impressions of sponsors about what is needed to help sponsors manage newcomer settlement issues.

Following from the experience gathering information about sponsors' relationships with settlement agencies, the Network conducted a sounding exercise to gather some preliminary insights into current environment that exists between sponsors and SAHs. The sounding was conducted in early 2023. This work was done informally and with selected SAHs and some targeted sponsors. This provided some useful insights into what some of the issues might be, for example:

- Lack of or inadequate communication
- Lack of understanding by sponsors of the requirements to be sponsors
- Lack of training opportunities and guidance
- Lengthy processing times

At the time, the SAH Navigation Unit (SNU), the administrative arm of the SAH Council, indicated that there were no issues between SAHs and Constituent Groups (CGs). SNU declared that there were issues between SAHs and IRCC (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada). Comments obtained through the sounding indicated that there were broader issues to be explored between sponsors and SAHs.

The goal of this research was to learn more about existing sponsor relationships with SAHs through wider engagement with both groups and to gain insights into how PRSN might be able to facilitate building better relationships between them. On the sponsor side, this would include those who have or are sponsoring refugee newcomers through private sponsorship as well as Blended Visa Office-Referred cases (BVOR).

What we hoped to find was:

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5. Methodology

The Knowledge Exchange Committee of PRSN accepted responsibility to undertake the survey to investigate the relationships between sponsors and SAHs on behalf of the Partnership Committee. Dr. Usha George, Toronto Metropolitan University, provided academic expertise for the initiative. Research assistance for the project was provided by an upper year, undergraduate student from the University of Waterloo; his area of study was Social Development and Social Work, with a minor in Sociology.

The survey was conducted in two parts, one for each group. Separate questionnaires were drafted to reflect the position of each group in these relationships, while at the same time maintaining close parallels in content in order to facilitate comparison of responses from each group.

A small working group of members from both sponsoring committees participated in discussion around content to be explored in the questionnaires. Initial drafts were prepared as Word™ documents. To ensure privacy and to receive candid responses, no personal identification was requested and responses were collected anonymously.

Partnership and Knowledge Exchange committee members reviewed the questionnaires for language, content and consistency. In particular, it was noted that the nature and capacity of SAHs varies significantly and there was an attempt to collect some information to acknowledge those differences. Final versions of the questionnaires were then created in Google Forms™ for online responses to facilitate data collection. The questionnaires have been provided in *__Appendix 9.a__*.

Specific areas explored in the survey included:

For sponsors...
- their involvement of sponsorship
- their knowledge of sponsorship
- their perceptions of sponsorship
- their experience with SAH organizations
- their experience with PRSN, its programs and its role

For SAHs...
- the capacity of the SAH
- their experience with constituent groups
- their experience with PRSN, its programs and its role

A notice to sponsors was sent to the general email distribution of PRSN to announce the survey and to provide a link to the sponsor questionnaire. PRSN approached RSTP to request support in reaching SAHs. RSTP offered to send out a notice through a regular

mailout to the Southern Ontario SAH Group (SOSG), including a link to the SAH questionnaire. Reminders were sent to both groups through PRSN's email list and through RSTP's SOSG email list to urge potential respondents to complete the questionnaires.

When it became apparent that responses from SAHs were lagging, RSTP invited the Knowledge Exchange Committee Chair to a regularly scheduled meeting of SOSG to make an appeal for additional responses. The plea resulted in no additional responses.

PRSN also reached out to the SAH Council and SAH Navigation Unit to request their assistance. It was indicated that SAHs are often asked to respond to queries and to complete surveys. Given this heavy burden of requests, we were told that SAHs would find it difficult to take the time to respond. No further action ensued.

With a continuing lag in responses from SAHs, PRSN attempted to gather direct contact information for each SAH operating in Ontario. Through email or by telephone, or both, a series of efforts was made to contact SAHs to encourage responses. This resulted in a modest increase in the number of SAH responses. A date was selected to cease efforts to contact SAHs in order to be able to begin analysis of the responses received.

Questionnaires were comprised of a mix of questions soliciting responses from a choice of predetermined options as well as open-ended questions for respondents to provide more detailed impressions. The analysis undertook to tabulate, and in some instances cross-tabulate, responses for questions where respondents were asked to select from the options provided. Open-ended questions were reviewed from a thematic perspective and in some instances cross-referenced with associated questions that had predetermined response options. Responses from each survey (sponsor and SAH) were analyzed separately. Subsequently, questions that aligned between the two groups were analyzed to compare similarities and differences of the patterns of response. Analysis of the responses was conducted in Google Forms™ and in Microsoft Excel™. Analyses included tabular and graphic exhibits as well as text-based summaries.

6. Thematic Observations and Findings

This section provides a high-level, thematic overview of the responses from each of the sponsor group and the SAH group of respondents. More detailed results have been included in Appendix (b) *Detailed Findings, Exhibits and Observations*, presenting tabulated summaries for each question posed in the survey.

The survey responses from both the sponsor group and from the SAH group provide valuable insights into each groups' roles and experiences within the private sponsorship program. Understanding these perceptions is essential for identifying both the strengths of the program and the areas that require improvement. The sponsors' feedback sheds light on their motivations, the challenges they face, and their overall satisfaction with the sponsorship process. The responses from SAH representatives reflect their experiences working with constituent groups and their responsibilities as recognized organizations in the private sponsorship of refugees program, and more specifically, their views on the roles that PRSN might play in this space.

Sponsor Responses

Fifty-five (55) responses were received from sponsors. All of those who completed the questionnaire gave an indication that they had worked with or through a SAH. It is acknowledged that this is a self-selected sample of sponsors and a relatively small proportion of the overall sponsor population, and a such, may not be representative of the full sponsor population. However, the responses give actual accounts of those who are involved in the process of sponsorship and provide valuable insights.

Sponsors Involvement with Sponsorship

Respondents were asked when their *first participation* on a private sponsorship team occurred. More than three quarters indicated that their first experience of sponsorship occurred in 2015 or later. 25% (14) gave 2016 as the year of their first sponsorship, corresponding with the Government of Canada's actions to respond to the Syrian crisis. It is noteworthy that 24% of respondents cited their first participation prior to that time, and as far back as 1979, in the early years following the introduction of the private sponsorship of refugees program. Time of most recent sponsorships ranged from 2016 to ongoing currently; 91% since 2022, indicating relatively active involvement.

Two-thirds (37) of those who responded have worked with only one SAH. 91% (50) have worked with a faith-based organization; 11% have worked with a community-based organization. Most teams were formed around people who know each other before (56%), as indicated in *Exhibit 1*, in Appendix (b). When asked to elaborate further on how their teams were formed, churches or groups of churches or faith-based groups was cited most often. Community connections or grassroots organizing were also given as explanations.

Complexity of the Process

The complexity of the process itself was another significant challenge. Sponsors, especially those new to the program, found the extensive documentation and legal requirements overwhelming. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that their SAHs had not connected them with RSTP to help them understand what is needed to successfully prepare application forms and answer questions about the process (Appendix b, Exhibit 13). This complexity can be a barrier to effective sponsorship, as it requires a considerable investment of time and effort to understand and comply with all the necessary procedures.

To address these challenges, improving communication protocols and simplifying the sponsorship process are critical. Regular, proactive communication from SAHs, coupled with clear, step-by-step guides and comprehensive training programs, could help alleviate these issues. Additionally, providing mentors or experienced sponsors to guide newer sponsors through the process could make a significant difference and improve the settlement journey for newcomers.

Resource Availability and Accessibility

The availability of and accessibility to comprehensive resources is critical for sponsors to perform their duties effectively throughout the sponsorship process. These resources cover various aspects of the sponsorship process, from legal requirements to cultural orientation and practical support tips. They include detailed guides, checklists and online portals addressing employment, education, healthcare, and social integration, as well as workshops and seminars on specific challenges faced by refugees.

The availability and accessibility of resources varied significantly among sponsors. Sponsors with access to detailed resource libraries, including guides, checklists, and online portals, reported higher levels of preparedness and confidence. One sponsor commented, "The resource library provided by our SAH was a lifesaver. It had everything we needed in one place, which made the entire process much more manageable."

While some reported having ample access to training materials, financial guidance, and support networks, a sizeable number felt inadequately equipped to handle their responsibilities, impacting the effectiveness of the sponsorship (Appendix b, Exhibit 10). One sponsor expressed, "We needed more guidance on how to help our newcomers with job applications and accessing healthcare. More training on these topics would have been beneficial."

Handling complex issues, like navigating the healthcare system or supporting newcomers in finding employment, are particularly challenging. The disparity in preparedness could suggest a greater role for peer support, and possibly a need for a more centralized source of information and supports.

Ensuring that all sponsors have adequate access to comprehensive, easily accessible resources is essential. Developing a centralized online portal that would house necessary materials and provide regular updates could be beneficial to keep sponsors informed. Offering resources in multiple languages and formats could also accommodate the diversity of the sponsor community as well as those sponsored. Developing and providing comprehensive post-arrival resource kits that cover a wide range of topics relevant to newcomer integration could also serve sponsors well.

Comprehensive Training and Preparation

Effective training and preparation are essential for sponsors to navigate the complexities of the sponsorship process. A large majority of sponsors indicated that their SAHs offered "excellent" or "good" support preparing application materials to address crucial aspects oif the application process (Appendix b, Exhibit 15). This support was instrumental in helping sponsors feel prepared and confident.

One sponsor noted, "The training provided by our SAH was incredibly thorough and practical. It covered everything from legal requirements to cultural nuances, which really helped us feel ready to welcome our newcomers."

However, the training quality and comprehensiveness varied among different SAHs. While some sponsors received extensive preparation, others reported minimal engagement, leading to uncertainty and gaps in knowledge. About one in five sponsors felt that the training was insufficient, highlighting the need for standardized and consistent training programs across all SAHs.

Offering regular and ongoing training sessions and creating opportunities for sponsors to network and share their experiences and best practices could enhance the overall support for sponsors.

Financial Burden

Financial burden was a notable concern for many sponsors. The requirement to raise significant funds to support refugees for a year can be daunting, particularly for those with limited fundraising experience or access to financial support networks. Around one third of respondents expressed difficulties in meeting the financial requirements of sponsorship (Appendix b, Exhibit 12). Sponsors expressed a need for more detailed fundraising guides and financial management training to help them meet these obligations effectively.

Exploring new possibilities for fundraising avenues, such as targeted events and activities or partnerships with local businesses and community organizations, could also help alleviate some of the financial strain on sponsors. Ensuring that all sponsors have access to these resources would be challenging. Networking and sharing experiences could play a role to support sponsor teams raise the necessary funds.

Challenges in Communication

Effective communication is a cornerstone of the sponsorship process, enabling sponsors to stay informed and address any issues promptly, both pre-arrival and post-arrival. Many sponsors praised their SAHs for maintaining regular, structured communication through scheduled check-ins, email updates, and accessible contact points. This proactive approach was vital in keeping sponsors informed and alleviating concerns.

While most sponsors felt the quality of the communication with their SAHs was "excellent" or "good" (Appendix b, Exhibit 7), over one third indicated that their SAHs did not receive adequate or prompt updates on the progress of applications (Appendix b, Exhibit 14). One sponsor mentioned, "We often had to chase our SAH for information. This created a lot of stress and uncertainty, especially as we got closer to the arrival date." These issues often led to frustration and uncertainty, making the sponsorship process more difficult to navigate.

Improving communication protocols to ensure timely and consistent updates from SAHs could significantly enhance the pre-arrival experience for sponsors. Clear expectations for communication and providing multiple channels for contact are essential steps in this direction.

Quality of Interaction

The quality of interaction between sponsors and SAHs also varied significantly. On the positive side, this was demonstrated in relation to the post-arrival phase where positive interactions were often described using terms such as "collaborative," "positive," and "engaging" (Appendix b, Exhibits 8 and 16). These interactions were characterized by regular communication, joint problem-solving, and shared responsibilities.

Conversely, substantial numbers of sponsors reported more negative interactions, using descriptors like "disengaged" and "absent." These sponsors felt that their SAHs were not adequately involved or supportive during the post-arrival phase, leading to frustration and a sense of isolation. One sponsor noted, "After the initial phase, our SAH became less responsive. We felt abandoned at times, which made it difficult to provide the level of support the newcomers needed."

Enhancing the quality of interaction requires SAHs to maintain consistent engagement throughout the entire sponsorship period. Regular check-ins, feedback sessions, and a clear commitment to ongoing support can help build stronger, more positive relationships between sponsors and SAHs.

Effectiveness of SAH Support

Nearly 80% of sponsors rated their pre and post arrival experience with SAHs as excellent or good (Appendix b, Exhibits 15 and 19), affirming the crucial role that effective SAHs play in the sponsorship process. Some sponsors praised the comprehensive training programs, timely communication, and practical assistance provided by their SAHs, which helped them navigate the complexities of the sponsorship process. For instance, one sponsor noted, "Our SAH was instrumental in guiding us through the entire process. Their support was invaluable, especially during the application phase." This sentiment was echoed by many sponsors who felt well-supported and prepared to meet their responsibilities.

Conversely, about one fifth of sponsors indicated that they faced challenges with the support provided by their SAHs. Issues such as insufficient guidance, delayed responses, and lack of clarity in communication were commonly cited. These challenges often led to frustration and hindered the effectiveness of the sponsorship process. One sponsor remarked, "We struggled with getting timely responses from our SAH, which made the process more stressful than it needed to be."

Emotional and Psychological Support

Sponsors also highlighted the importance of emotional and psychological support for both themselves and the newcomers. The post-arrival phase can be emotionally taxing, and having access to counseling services and support groups can significantly impact the well-being of everyone involved. Some sponsors mentioned the need for more robust emotional and psychological support mechanisms, noting that these services were often overlooked or underutilized.

Providing access to mental health resources, including counseling services and support groups, could help sponsors and newcomers navigate the emotional challenges of the integration process. SAHs can play a crucial role in connecting sponsors with these resources and ensuring they are aware of and can access the support available.

Sense of Fulfillment and Contribution

Written comments convey a sense that a significant number of sponsors have a profound sense of fulfillment and personal satisfaction derived from their involvement in the sponsorship program. This sense of contribution was a powerful motivator, driving many to participate in multiple sponsorships over the years. Most respondents feel that their involvement had a meaningful impact on the lives of the refugees they supported.

Sponsors emphasized the rewarding nature of seeing refugees integrate successfully into the community, achieve personal milestones, and build new lives in Canada. For instance, one respondent shared a story about attending a refugee's graduation, an event that symbolized a significant milestone and reinforced their commitment to the sponsorship

program. Another sponsor recounted their participation in a refugee's wedding, highlighting the deep personal connections that often develop through sponsorship.

However, this sense of fulfillment is not universal. Some sponsors felt that their contributions were not as impactful as they had hoped, primarily due to challenges in the sponsorship process or unmet expectations. Addressing these issues could help enhance the overall sense of satisfaction and fulfillment among all sponsors.

SAH Responses

Fifteen (15) responses were received from SAHs. IRCC provides a list of SAHs from across the country that the Department has recognized as organizations that have the capacity to support refugees once they arrive in Canada. IRCC evaluates the organization's structure, settlement and financial capacity, contingency plans and ability to monitor its constituent groups and co-sponsors, manage caseloads and solve problems.[6]

58 entries appear on the list for Ontario. The 15 responses received represent approximately 26% of those organizations. It is acknowledged that this is a self-selected sample of SAHs and also reflects those who were willing to provide responses based on significant follow up to capture additional information for this survey. As such, this group may not be representative of all SAHs. However, the responses are considered informative and give actual accounts of those who are involved in the process of sponsorship and provide valuable insights.

Nature and Capacity of the SAHs

Ten (10) of the organizations that responded identify as faith-based. Two (2) identified as community-based, further explaining that their focus is on sponsoring those who are able to integrate well into Canadian society. One agency is an NGO and two indicated they were also settlement agencies as well.

The number of refugees (individuals) supported by each agency varies widely, from 25 to 200. One organization stated that while their number varies widely by year, in 2023, they supported approximately 800 refugees. The number of applications prepared ranged from 10 to 100 and was uniformly spread across that range.

Twelve of the 15 SAHs that responded indicated they have paid staff. Two have a part-time staff person: 0.4 FTE and 0.5 FTE. The others have 2-4 FTEs. Overall, the group of respondents collectively have nearly 23 FTEs.

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[6] https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/sponsor-refugee/private-sponsorship-program/assessments/organizational-assessment.html

Five out of 15 SAHs indicated they only work with applications connected with established constituent groups (CGs). Faith based SAHs were evenly split. Other SAHs do not work with established CGs only. Twelve SAHs vet CGs that approach their organizations to undertake sponsorships; 4 SAHs create CGs.

All of the SAHs that responded indicated that they provide training and support services for sponsors to help guide them through the process, from the pre-arrival, application phase and for post-arrival settlement. SAHs were asked how those services were provided; responses appear in Appendix b, Exhibit 24.

Capacity

The capacity of SAHs to support sponsorship activities varies widely. Some SAHs have significant resources, including full-time staff dedicated to training and supporting sponsors, while others operate with limited personnel and rely on volunteer efforts. The survey responses indicate that SAHs with more resources can provide more comprehensive support, including regular training sessions, one-on-one guidance, and assistance with fundraising.

SAHs with limited resources often struggle to provide the same level of support, resulting in sponsors feeling unsupported and overwhelmed. This highlights a need for additional funding and resources to ensure that all SAHs can provide consistent and effective support to sponsors.

Managing Expectations and Responsibilities

Balancing expectations and responsibilities between SAHs and their constituent groups is vital for a smooth partnership. Two thirds of SAHs that responded felt their constituent groups had a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities (Appendix b, Exhibit 26). Conversely, one third faced challenges with managing expectations, leading to misunderstandings and friction. Implementing thorough orientation programs that clearly outline the roles and expectations, combined with regular feedback sessions, can help align expectations and improve collaboration.

Resource Allocation and Financial Management

Effective resource allocation and financial management are essential components of the sponsorship process. Most SAHs felt that their constituent groups understand their responsibilities, are able to raise the necessary funds, and are capable of managing resources. However, there are challenges, particularly regarding fundraising and financial management. Providing detailed financial management training and exploring partnerships with local businesses and community organizations can support fundraising efforts and enhance resource allocation.

Resources, Training and Ongoing Support

Providing thorough training and ongoing support to constituent groups is crucial for the success of the sponsorship process. The survey responses from SAH's reveal variability in their involvement levels and the support mechanisms they provide to sponsors with respect to training and availability of resources. This variability stems from the differences in organizational capacity, resources, and the specific needs of the constituent groups they support. Some SAHs have robust structures with multiple full-time staff dedicated to providing extensive training and resources, while others operate with minimal staff and rely heavily on volunteer efforts.

SAHs felt they were able to offer sufficient training and resources through various means: regular sessions, ad hoc sessions, on-demand and mentoring. Training often includes essential topics such as cultural sensitivity, legal obligations, and practical support strategies. However, SAHs also highlighted the need for more consistent and comprehensive training programs.

This disparity highlights a crucial need for standardized training and support protocols across all SAHs to ensure consistent and effective support for sponsors. While a uniform approach could mitigate some challenges faced by smaller SAHs with limited resources, this needs to be considered in relation to the resources available within each SAH. It is important to find ways to ensure that all sponsors are able to receive necessary guidance regardless of the SAH's capacity. Leveraging the experiences of more established constituent groups to mentor new ones could enhance the overall training and support processes.

Communication

As noted with sponsors' responses, communication quality between SAHs and sponsors varies significantly. Effective communication is paramount in managing expectations and fostering a collaborative relationship between SAHs and sponsors.

SAHs that maintain regular, proactive communication with their CGs tend to have more positive relationships. These SAHs often implement structured communication protocols, including regular check-ins, updates on application status, and prompt responses to queries. Conversely, SAHs that lack such structured communication protocols tend to receive lower ratings from sponsors, who report feeling unsupported and uninformed.

Fundraising

Fundraising is critical to the sponsorship process. Once again, the survey responses indicate that SAHs provide varying levels of support in these areas. Some SAHs offer direct financial assistance, access to fundraising platforms, and comprehensive training programs, while others expect sponsors to independently manage these aspects.

Developing comprehensive fundraising guides and providing access to platforms can ease the financial burden on sponsors and ensure that they are well-prepared to meet the financial requirements of sponsorship.

Comparing Sponsors' and SAHs' Responses

There is a notable distinction between sponsors' and SAHs' perceptions of the relationships between the two groups. While many sponsors feel they receive adequate guidance and support from their SAHs, some sponsors do not. Some SAHs believe that sponsors require more training and oversight. This discrepancy can be attributed to differences in expectations and communication between the two groups.

Sponsors generally expect comprehensive support from SAHs, including assistance with application processes, fundraising, and post-arrival support. However, SAHs may have limited capacity to provide such extensive support. Bridging this gap through regular feedback sessions and tailored training programs could align expectations and improve the overall sponsorship process.

Both sponsors and SAHs face challenges related to communication, training, and managing expectations. Sponsors often report delays in communication and lack of responsiveness from SAHs, while SAHs struggle with limited resources and high demands from sponsors. These challenges highlight the need for improved communication channels and structured collaboration protocols. Regular feedback sessions between sponsors and SAHs could address communication issues and ensure that both parties are aligned in their expectations and responsibilities. Additionally, digital platforms that provide real-time updates and facilitate better communication can enhance collaboration and support.

Training and resource allocation are critical areas demonstrating differences in experience between sponsors and SAHs. Sponsors often seek comprehensive training and resources to effectively manage the sponsorship process, while some SAHs may have limited capacity to provide such extensive support. This disparity highlights the need for additional standardized training programs that can be implemented or are accessible across all SAHs, ensuring that sponsors receive the necessary guidance regardless of the SAH's capacity.

Leveraging experienced sponsors to mentor new sponsors could provide valuable peer support and sharing of best practices. The facilitation of mentorship programs could be utilized to provide ongoing support to both new and more experienced sponsors to enable them to be well-prepared to manage the sponsorship process.

Despite the challenges, there are significant opportunities to enhance the sponsorship experience by leveraging the strengths of both sponsors and SAHs, and by working together toward the common purpose of newcomer settlement.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

Challenges and Solutions

The sponsorship relationship between SAHs and sponsors has challenges. These challenges can significantly impact the effectiveness of the sponsorship and the overall experience for both parties. Common challenges include communication, managing expectations, process and logistical issues, and resource constraints. Several quotes are presented below to illustrate some of the concerns.

Quotes	
Sponsors	
Quote	**Observation**
Quote 1: "We often had to chase our SAH for information. This created a lot of stress and uncertainty, especially as we got closer to the arrival date. The lack of transparency and timely updates made us feel unsupported and left in the dark."	This quote reflects a significant issue with communication between SAHs and sponsors. The need to "chase" for information indicates a reactive rather than proactive communication approach from SAHs. This leads to stress, uncertainty, and a feeling of being unsupported among sponsors. The sponsorship sector needs to address these communication gaps by implementing structured and proactive communication protocols, ensuring sponsors are regularly updated and informed without having to repeatedly seek out information.
Quote 2: "Fundraising was the most daunting part of the process. We felt incredibly underprepared and overwhelmed by the financial responsibilities. The guidance from our SAH was minimal, and we lacked access to effective fundraising resources. The financial strain overshadowed the entire sponsorship experience."	Fundraising is highlighted as a major challenge for sponsors. Minimal guidance from SAHs exacerbates the financial strain. This points to a need for more comprehensive and practical fundraising support, including workshops on effective strategies, access to professional fundraising consultants, and partnerships with local businesses and community organizations to expand fundraising opportunities.
Quote 3: "The emotional toll of waiting for the arrival of refugees, coupled with the stress of fundraising and navigating complex administrative procedures, was overwhelming. We often felt isolated and uncertain about how to address these challenges effectively."	The emotional and psychological burden on sponsors is a critical issue. This quote highlights the combined stress of fundraising, waiting for refugees to arrive, and dealing with complex administrative procedures, leading to feelings of isolation and uncertainty. The sponsorship sector needs to enhance emotional and psychological support mechanisms, including providing access to mental health resources, counseling services, and establishing peer support networks to help sponsors manage these challenges more effectively.

SAHs	
Quote	**Observation**
Quote 1: "Resource constraints limit our ability to offer the level of support we'd like to provide. We often struggle to balance the needs of sponsors with the regulatory requirements set by the government, and this can lead to sponsors feeling neglected or unsupported."	This quote underscores the significant resource constraints faced by SAH. Balancing regulatory requirements with sponsor needs is a persistent challenge. Addressing these resource constraints through increased funding, additional staffing, and improved administrative capacity is essential to ensure that SAHs can offer the necessary support to sponsors.
Quote 2: "Some sponsors have unrealistic expectations about the sponsorship process, which can lead to frustration and friction. Despite our efforts to manage these expectations through thorough orientation and regular check-ins, misunderstandings still occur."	This highlights the need for more effective strategies to align expectations, including clear, standardized guidelines from the outset and ongoing education to ensure that sponsors have a realistic understanding of the sponsorship process.
Quote 3: "The lack of consistent communication from constituent groups makes it difficult to coordinate effectively. When communication breaks down, it creates significant challenges in managing the sponsorship process and supporting the refugees adequately."	Effective communication is a two-way street, and this quote points to issues with consistent communication from constituent groups as well. Breakdowns in communication create significant challenges in managing the sponsorship process and providing adequate support to refugees. This indicates a need for improved communication protocols and more structured communication channels to ensure both SAHs and constituent groups are consistently informed and engaged.

Sponsors often enter the sponsorship process with high hopes and expectations, only to encounter bureaucratic hurdles, lengthy wait times, and unforeseen complications. These challenges can lead to frustration and disillusionment, particularly when sponsors feel unsupported or unprepared. For example, the emotional toll of waiting for the arrival of refugees, coupled with the stress of fundraising and navigating complex administrative procedures, can be overwhelming. Sponsors frequently report feeling isolated and uncertain about how to address these challenges effectively. Sponsors indicated that they felt overwhelmed by these responsibilities.

SAHs, on the other hand, face their own set of challenges. Maintaining consistent communication, providing comprehensive support, and managing the administrative aspects of multiple sponsorships can be daunting. Resource constraints, including limited funding and staffing, further exacerbate these challenges. SAHs must balance the needs of sponsors with the regulatory requirements set by the government, often with insufficient resources to meet these demands effectively. SAHs reported difficulties in managing resources and providing adequate support due to these constraints.

To address these challenges, both SAHs and sponsors advocate for better resource allocation and support mechanisms. This could include increased funding for SAHs to hire additional staff and improve their administrative capacity. Streamlining administrative

processes through the use of technology, such as case management software, could reduce the burden on SAHs and allow them to focus more on direct support for sponsors and refugees. For sponsors, establishing realistic expectations through transparent communication and providing emotional support through peer networks and counseling services could help manage the emotional demands of the sponsorship process.

Communication Quality

The quality of communication between Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) and sponsors is a cornerstone of the sponsorship process. Effective communication ensures that both parties are aligned, informed, and can navigate the complexities of refugee sponsorship collaboratively. However, the survey responses reveal distinct disparities in the perceived quality of communication between SAHs and sponsors.

SAHs often pride themselves on their communication protocols, which typically involve regular updates, scheduled meetings, and established channels for inquiries. These protocols are designed to keep sponsors informed about the progress of applications, changes in policies, and any issues that might arise. From the SAH perspective, maintaining open and structured communication channels helps build trust and ensures that sponsors are well-prepared for their responsibilities. For instance, most SAHs described their communication with sponsors as excellent or good, highlighting their efforts to maintain robust communication networks.

On the other hand, sponsor feedback paints a more varied picture. While some sponsors acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of their SAHs to maintain good communication, others report significant issues. Common complaints include delays in receiving critical updates, inconsistent responses to inquiries, and a lack of transparency during key stages of the sponsorship process. Sponsors experienced communication delays, which often led to frustration and uncertainty. Sponsors often feel left in the dark about the status of applications and any bureaucratic hurdles that may be causing delays. This lack of timely and transparent communication can lead to diminished trust in the SAH.

To address these discrepancies, both SAHs and sponsors suggest implementing more robust communication strategies. These could include the use of digital tools such as online portals or mobile apps that provide real-time updates and allow for more immediate and direct communication. Regular feedback mechanisms, such as monthly surveys or feedback forms, could help SAHs identify and address communication issues proactively. Ensuring that all communication is clear, consistent, and timely would go a long way in bridging the communication gap and fostering a more collaborative environment.

Support and Training Effectiveness

The effectiveness of support and training provided by SAHs is another critical area where sponsor and SAH perceptions differ. SAHs are responsible for preparing sponsors through

comprehensive training programs that cover various aspects of the sponsorship process, from cultural orientation and logistical planning to conflict resolution and administrative procedures.

SAHs generally believe that their training programs are thorough and effective. These programs often include pre-arrival training sessions, ongoing support during the sponsorship period, and resources such as manuals, online courses, and workshops. SAHs felt confident that their efforts are comprehensive training ensuring that sponsors are well-equipped to handle the challenges that may arise during the sponsorship process.

However, sponsor feedback indicates a more nuanced reality. While many sponsors appreciate the training and support provided by their SAHs, there are significant concerns about the consistency and accessibility of these programs. Some sponsors report feeling inadequately prepared, particularly in areas such as navigating the healthcare system, understanding cultural nuances, and managing financial aspects of sponsorship. Sponsors in remote or rural areas often face additional challenges due to limited access to in-person training sessions, relying instead on online resources that may not be as interactive or comprehensive. A sizeable number of sponsors felt that their training was insufficient or difficult to access.

To improve the effectiveness of training programs, sponsors suggest a more standardized approach that ensures consistency across different regions. This could involve the development of a core curriculum that all SAHs adhere to, supplemented by region-specific modules that address local challenges and resources. Additionally, providing a blend of in-person and online training options would cater to the diverse needs of sponsors, ensuring that everyone has access to the necessary resources and support. Ongoing mentorship programs, where experienced sponsors can guide newcomers, could also enhance the training experience and provide continuous support throughout the sponsorship period.

Fundraising and Resource Management

Fundraising is a crucial component of the sponsorship process, and both SAHs and sponsors highlight its importance and the challenges associated with it. SAHs typically provide technical assistance for fundraising, such as access to fundraising platforms, templates for fundraising campaigns, and guidance on financial management. However, the primary responsibility for raising the necessary funds usually falls on the sponsors.

Sponsors often find the fundraising process daunting and time-consuming, particularly if they lack experience or access to a broad network of potential donors. The pressure to meet fundraising targets can detract from their ability to focus on other essential aspects of sponsorship, such as preparing for the arrival of refugees and providing post-arrival support. In smaller communities, where fundraising opportunities may be limited, this

pressure can be even more pronounced. A sizeable number of sponsors indicated significant stress related to fundraising efforts.

To alleviate these challenges, sponsors suggest that SAHs provide more comprehensive support for fundraising efforts. This could include offering workshops on effective fundraising strategies, providing access to professional fundraising consultants, and facilitating partnerships with local businesses and community organizations to expand fundraising opportunities. Additionally, exploring alternative funding mechanisms, such as grants or matching funds from philanthropic organizations, could provide sponsors with the financial resources they need without placing the entire burden of fundraising on them.

Improving resource management is also critical. Both SAHs and sponsors emphasize the need for clear guidelines on how funds should be managed and allocated. Transparency in financial reporting and regular updates on the status of fundraising efforts can help build trust and ensure that all parties are on the same page. By working together to address these challenges, SAHs and sponsors can create a more supportive and effective fundraising environment.

Conclusions

The analysis reveals that while the sponsorship process is generally successful, there are areas for improvement to enhance the experience for both sponsors and SAHs. Key areas for improvement include communication, training, and resource allocation. Enhancing these areas can significantly improve the overall sponsorship experience and ensure that sponsors and SAHs are well-prepared to support newcomers.

Effective communication is critical in managing expectations and fostering collaborative relationships. Regular feedback sessions and digital platforms that facilitate real-time updates can enhance communication and ensure that both sponsors and SAHs are aligned in their responsibilities.

Standardized training programs are essential to ensure that all sponsors receive the necessary guidance and support. These programs should cover both pre-arrival and post-arrival phases, providing comprehensive training on financial management, application processes, and post-arrival support.

Additionally, leveraging experienced sponsors to mentor new sponsors can provide valuable peer support and share best practices. SAHs can provide ongoing support to mentorship programs to ensure that sponsors are well-prepared to manage the sponsorship process.

By addressing these challenges and leveraging the strengths of both sponsors and SAHs, PRSN can strengthen its role as a support network and advocate for private refugee sponsors. Enhancing communication, providing standardized training, and offering

comprehensive support can significantly improve the experience for both sponsors and SAHs, ensuring successful newcomer settlement.

8. Recommendations

The data collected from this survey provides some key insights into the experiences of sponsors and Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs). The findings offer some guidance toward the formulation of recommendations that could enhance the sponsorship process, improve the support provided to sponsors, and ultimately aid the successful integration of refugees. Ultimately, the work toward improving the process will be achieved through dialogue, collaboration and partnerships between the various constituents.

The following six areas have been identified through this investigation to address specific issues related to the sponsorship process. These areas do not assign responsibility to any particular party, crafted specifically to reflect that the work should proceed as co-creation between the parties.

Following the presentation of these recommendations, there will be a discussion about implications for PRSN and the role that it is pursuing as advocate for the voices of sponsors in the private refugee sponsorship space. It is recognized that, to date, sponsors have had little or no formal voice in this process. Other actors have assumed the responsibility to speak on behalf of private sponsors. These have generally been SAHs and settlement agencies. While their opinions are respected, they do not directly reflect the experiences and perceptions of sponsors.

3. Enhance Communication

Objective: Improve communication between sponsors and SAHs to ensure timely and accurate information flow.

Recommendations:
- **Establish Clear Expectations for Communication**: Implement a range of communication protocols outlining, for example, expectations for response times, regular check-ins, and updates.
- **Multiple Channels for Communication**: Provide multiple channels for communication, including scheduled check-ins, email updates, phone calls, online platforms and direct dialogue, to ensure accessibility and convenience.
- **Training**: Offer training on effective communication strategies would benefit sponsors and SAHs and enhance their ability to support newcomer settlement more effectively.

4. Develop Equitable and Robust Training Programs

Objective: Ensure that all sponsors receive comprehensive preparation for their roles and responsibilities in the process.

Recommendations:

- **Develop Comprehensive Training Opportunities**: Create equitable and robust training opportunities covering all aspects of the sponsorship process, including legal requirements, cultural orientation, and practical support strategies. These opportunities should be seen as more than just administrative, recognizing the mental and emotional needs of sponsors and the refugee newcomers they support. Acknowledging regional disparities, these modules should be accessible both in-person and virtually to accommodate different needs and accessibilities.
- **Regular Updates and Refresher Courses**: Provide regular updates and refresher courses to keep sponsors informed about any changes in policies, procedures, or best practices.
- **Training and Feedback Mechanisms**: Establish continuous monitoring mechanisms for sponsors and SAHs to provide feedback on the training opportunities and programs, ensuring continuous improvement based on their experiences, insights and suggestions.

3. Improve Equitable Access to Resources

Objective: Ensure that all sponsors have equitable access to comprehensive and up-to-date resources, acknowledging limitations based on geography and other factors, like language and culture.

Recommendations:
- **Centralized Resource Portals**: Develop centralized online portals where sponsors can access a wide range of resources, including guides, checklists, and practical support tips. Ensure these portals are regularly updated and user-friendly. Make these resources friendly across a number of cultures, where possible, and across languages corresponding to those of the newcomers.
- **Resource Libraries in Multiple Formats**: Provide resources in various formats (digital, print, multimedia) to cater to different preferences and needs. Ensure that materials are accessible to those with limited technological capabilities.
- **Translation and Localization**: Offer resources in multiple languages and that are culturally sensitive to accommodate the diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds of sponsors and the newcomers they support.

4. Provide Financial and Fundraising Support

Objective: Alleviate some of the financial burdens on sponsors by making available the necessary resources to support their fundraising efforts effectively and helping sponsors with techniques to support financial literacy among newcomers.

Recommendations:

- **Detailed Fundraising Guides**: Create comprehensive fundraising guides that offer practical advice on raising and managing funds, including strategies for engaging the community and leveraging online platforms. Where possible, connect sponsors with experienced or professional fundraisers who can share their experiences and expertise.
- **Explore Additional Funding Avenues**: Investigate and present additional fundraising opportunities, such as grants or partnerships with local businesses and community organizations, to provide financial support to sponsors.
- **Financial Management Training**: Offer training sessions on financial management to help sponsors effectively plan and allocate resources. Where possible, assist sponsors with techniques to help newcomers adapt to potentially new ways that finances are managed in Canada.

5. Increase Emotional and Psychological Support

Objective: Ensure the well-being of both sponsors and refugees by providing access to emotional and psychological support services.

Recommendations:
- **Access to Mental Health Resources**: Acknowledging an overall lack of mental health resources in Ontario and Canada, where possible, ensure that sponsors and refugees have access to mental health professionals and resources, including counseling services and support groups. Promote awareness of these services and encourage their use.
- **Support Networks for Sponsors**: Establish support networks and peer groups for sponsors to share experiences, provide mutual support, and discuss challenges.
- **Regular Check-ins and Monitoring**: Implement regular check-ins and monitoring to identify and address any emotional or psychological issues that may arise during the sponsorship process.

6. Strengthen Feedback Mechanisms

Objective: Ensure continuous improvement in sponsors' efforts toward the settlement of refugee newcomers.

Recommendations:
- **Regular Feedback Mechanisms**: Implement regular surveys and other feedback opportunities with sponsors to gather insights into their experiences and identify areas for improvement.
- **Transparent Reporting and Accountability**: Establish transparent reporting mechanisms to ensure that any issues are promptly addressed.
- **Continuous Improvement Mechanisms**: Implement continuous monitoring and improvement mechanisms from sponsors and SAHs to support ongoing enhancement of services and supports.

Implications and Directions for PRSN

The findings also provide guidance for PRSN to take steps of its own to enhance support for sponsors in their efforts to assist refugee newcomers to settle in Canada and to settle well.

While the focus of this research was on the interactions and relationships between sponsors and SAHs, overall improvements to the private refugee sponsorship process would be more broadly based. Sponsorship relies on interpersonal relationships involving a number of principal actors, namely refugees, sponsors, SAHs, settlement agencies, RSTP and IRCC. The recommendations focus on the actions that PRSN, acting for the benefit of sponsors, and SAHs could take to improve private sponsorship for the benefit of refugee newcomers' settlement in Canada. This requires a collaborative effort between sponsors and SAHs.

The timing of this report coincides with a changing landscape in Canada with respect to sponsorship and more broadly, immigration as a whole. Recent government policy announcements have seen a shift in the level of receptiveness to accept newcomers, with quota limits being reduced for several years. This includes refugees. Compounding this, there is change in the public's attitude generally towards newcomers. Whether this is justifiable or not, attitudes have shifted and may continue to shift. And a third factor is the likelihood of a change in government at the federal, creating further uncertainty about the sponsorship program.

While recent and upcoming events may indicate darker days for the private sponsorship program in Canada, they also provide an opportunity for PRSN to take a more active role in promote the value and benefits of sponsorship, and through advocacy and training efforts, strengthen and possible grow a stronger cohort of sponsors in future.

9. Appendices

a. Survey Questionnaires
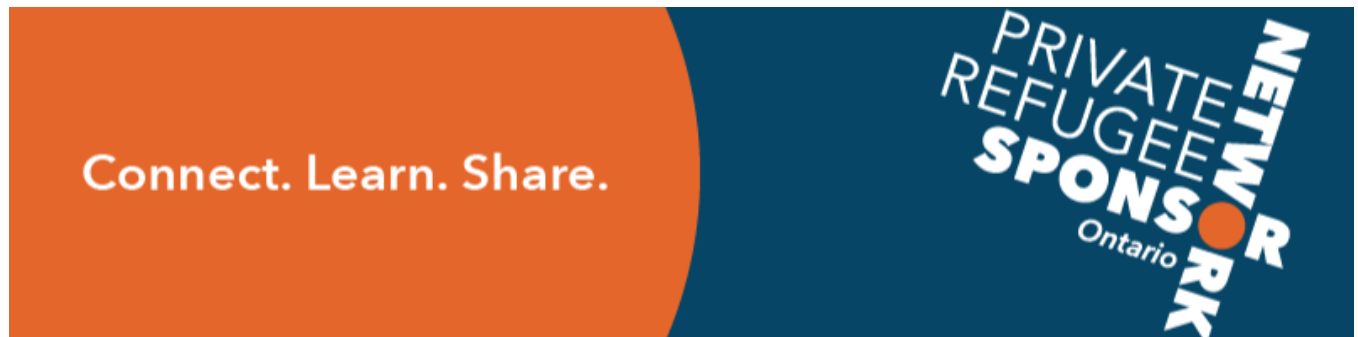
UNDERSTANDING SPONSOR-SAH RELATIONSHIPS
A Sponsor Survey to determine how to build more effective relationships with SAHs

The Private Refugee Sponsor Network Ontario (PRSN) is an incorporated, not-for-profit organization that brings private refugee sponsor groups together to **connect, learn and share**. It builds relationships with those in the sector, shares information, problem-solves and offers training programs to sponsors on post-arrival issues and topics they have identified.

You can help us by making your voice heard. We want to learn more about existing sponsor relationships with Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs), including those who sponsor through Blended Visa Office-Referred cases (BVOR). What are the challenges you face as sponsors? What are the opportunities and how might they be addressed around post-arrival issues? We want to capture promising practices and experiences that reflect the current environment in the sector to create new opportunities for PRSN to partner more effectively on behalf of sponsors. The goal is to improve relationships that would lead to more effective settlement of newcomers.

*A **Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH)** is an organization that has signed a Sponsorship Agreement with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) to resettle refugees from abroad and provide settlement support. These organizations are usually religious, ethnic, community or service organizations. SAHs can sponsor refugees themselves or work with other groups (Constituent groups) and/or co-sponsors. A **Constituent Group (CG)** is a group that sponsors refugees on behalf of a SAH. For this survey we use the term Constituent Group, sponsor(ship) group, and team interchangeably.*

<mark>This survey is NOT intended for those who have sponsored through Groups of Five (G5) only.</mark>

There are five sections in this survey:
1. Sponsors' Involvement with Sponsorship
2. Sponsors' Knowledge of Sponsorship
3. Sponsors' Perceptions of Sponsorship
4. Sponsors' Experience with SAH Organizations
5. Sponsors' Experience with PRSN, its Programs and its Role in Refugee Sponsorship

No personal identification is required. Your responses will remain anonymous. We estimate that it will take **15 minutes** to respond to this questionnaire. ***Please complete this survey by February 29, 2024.***

Thank you in advance for participating in this survey.

0. Has any of your sponsorship experience included working with or through a SAH?
    ☐ Yes
    ☐ No → At this time, we are engaging only with those who have worked with a SAH.
        Thank you for your interest. We hope we can count on your support in future.

Sponsors' Involvement with Sponsorship

Thinking about your participation on a sponsorship team or teams ….

1. When did you first participate on a private sponsorship team?   Year: ☐

2. Have you worked with one or more SAH organizations?
    ☐ Only one   ☐ More than one

3. Has any of your experience been in working with a faith-based SAH organization?
    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

4. Has any of your experience been in working with a community-based SAH organization?
    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

5. When was your most recent participation on a sponsorship team? Year: ☐

6. How was the sponsor team formed?
    ☐ The team knew each other personally but had not sponsored before
    ☐ The team knew each other personally and had sponsored before
    ☐ The team knew each other but were formed through the SAH
    ☐ The team did not know each other and were formed through the SAH
    ☐ Our team was formed in another way, and we are describing it in the space provided below.

Sponsors' Knowledge of Sponsorship

7. Are you aware that *Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)* requires that SAHs assume overall responsibility for the management of sponsorships under their agreement?

    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

8. Are you aware that sponsor groups often have a role in raising funds to support those who are sponsored for 12 months?

    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

9. Are you aware that sponsor groups agree to provide sponsored refugees with care, lodging, settlement assistance and support for 12 months starting from the newcomers' arrival in Canada.

    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

10. Based on what you understand are sponsors' responsibilities, what supports do sponsors provide?

[*Please check all that apply*]	
☐ helping to set up a bank account & apply for a credit card	☐ locating interpreters
☐ helping to get a sim card and possibly a new cellphone	☐ selecting a family physician and dentist
☐ assisting with applying for provincial healthcare coverage (i.e. getting an OHIP card)	☐ helping to find mental health support services
☐ assisting with getting a Social Insurance Number (SIN)	☐ enrolling children in school/adults in language training
☐ helping to get a transit card and navigating the local transit system	☐ introducing newcomers to people with similar personal interests
☐ helping to get a driver's licence, or convert an existing licence from another country	☐ orienting to the neigbourhood (e.g. where to find grocery stores and other home supplies)
☐ providing the cost of food, rent and household utilities and other expenses	☐ helping newcomers to socialize with others in the community
☐ providing clothing, furniture and other household goods	☐ helping in the search for employment
	☐ providing orientation with regard to other everyday activities, as needed

11. Newcomer services are available through a network of settlement agencies funded by IRCC to assist with, among other things, looking for a job, getting a language assessment and registering for classes for adults and children, finding a place to live, learning about community services.

    Select the statement that best describes your understanding of settlement agency services:
    ☐ I did not know these services are available through settlement agencies.
    ☐ I knew these services are available but not that they are available free to the newcomer.
    ☐ I knew these services are available and that they are available for free to the newcomer.
    ☐ I knew these services are available but not available for privately sponsored newcomers.
    ☐ Other, please elaborate. [   ]

Sponsors' Perceptions of Sponsorship

Thinking about your first participation on a sponsorship team and working with a SAH....

12. How much **work (time and effort)** did you expect being a sponsor would require? In relation to what you expected, *what is your impression* of how much work (time and effort) was actually required?

Pick the response that best reflects your perception for both	What I expected	Actual level of work
Very little time and effort	☐	☐
Some time and effort	☐	☐
A fair amount of time and effort	☐	☐
A great deal of time and effort	☐	☐

13. How much **time for the newcomer to arrive** did you expect it would take? How much time did it take for the newcomer to arrive?

Pick the response that best reflects your perception for both	What I expected	Actual time to arrive
Short period, say a few weeks or months	☐	☐
Maybe 6-12 months	☐	☐
More than a year	☐	☐
More than two years	☐	☐
More than three years	☐	☐

14. Having gone through the process or at the stage where you are, did / do you **feel discouraged** by:

	Yes	No
the amount of work (time and effort) that is required?	☐	☐
how long it actually takes for the newcomer(s) to arrive?	☐	☐

15. Select the statement that best describes your experience of **potentially or actually abandoning** a sponsorship after the process got underway?

☐ I have not and don't know others who considered abandoning or did abandon a sponsorship.
☐ I know a time when a team member(s) abandoned a sponsorship, but the team continued.
☐ I know a time when a team member(s) abandoned the process, but replacement(s) were found.
☐ I know a time when a team member(s) abandoned the process and the sponsorship failed.

Sponsors' Experience with SAH Organizations

We would like to know about the relationships between Sponsors and SAHs, *before and after arrival*.

Pre-Arrival: Your responses here will help guide PRSN to build stronger relationships with SAHs.

16. How would you characterize the quality of the **communication** between the sponsor group and the SAH for *your most recent sponsorship*?
    ☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor

    Please use the space below to explain the reason for your response.

    [ ]

17. From your experience, select the statement that best describes the **relationship** between your sponsor team and the SAH.
    ☐ Our relationship was collaborative.
    ☐ Our team worked independently of the SAH.
    ☐ Our team worked independently of the SAH but with support from the SAH as needed.
    ☐ Our team felt that the SAH saw us as less than equal partners in the sponsorship.
    ☐ There was friction between the sponsor team and the SAH.

    Please use the space below to elaborate your perception of the relationship.

    [ ]

18. From your experience, select the statement that best describes how you feel about the **guidance** your team received to prepare the materials required for the sponsorship.
    ☐ The SAH completed the forms for the application.
    ☐ We received excellent guidance and direct training for how to complete the application.
    ☐ We received some guidance but had to press the SAH for additional support.
    ☐ We received some guidance but had to seek out other resources for ourselves.
    ☐ We received almost no guidance at all; we were on our own.

    Please use the space below to elaborate your perception of the guidance provided.

    [ ]

19. From your experience, select the statement that best describes the level of **support for fundraising** provided by the SAH. The SAH…
    ☐ provided direct financial support to meet the funding requirements.
    ☐ provided access to a fundraising platform.
    ☐ facilitated access to tax receipts for donors.
    ☐ provided assistance with managing funds.
    ☐ The SAH's assistance was not needed.
    ☐ The SAH offered no support with fundraising.

20. The *Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP)* is a program, funded by IRCC, established to provide support to SAHs and their Constituent Groups. RSTP has produced a number of information and training resources that Constituent Groups can obtain through the SAH.

    (a) Did the SAH **connect your group with RSTP** to help you understand what is needed to successfully prepare the application forms and answer your questions about the process?
        ☐ Yes   ☐ No

    (b) Were you aware that RSTP also provides information and training to help with post-arrival activities for newcomers?
        ☐ Yes   ☐ No

    (c) Did the SAH tell you that RSTP could also offer support for post-arrival activities?
        ☐ Yes   ☐ No

21. Select the statement that best describes how the SAH **kept you up to date with the progress** of the application through IRCC and the local visa office.
    ☐ The SAH provided prompt updates on the progress of the application.
    ☐ The SAH provided updates but usually well after the information was received.
    ☐ We had to reach out to the SAH to ask about and get any updates.
    ☐ The SAH provided almost no updates at all.

22. Overall, how would you **rate the support** that you received from the SAH in preparing the materials required for the sponsorship application?

    ☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor   ☐ No real support

Post-Arrival: Your responses here will help guide PRSN's efforts to address post-arrival issues.

23. How would you characterize your group's interactions with the SAH during the year after the newcomer(s) arrived? [*Pick as many words as you feel would apply.*]

☐ Sympathetic	☐ Engaged	☐ Absent	☐ Critical
☐ Supportive	☐ Positive	☐ Disengaged	☐ Stressful
☐ Facilitating	☐ Energizing	☐ Oppressive	☐ Combative
☐ Responsive		☐ Directive	

24. You were previously asked if you were aware of IRCC-funded ***settlement agency services***.
    (a) Did the SAH make you aware of these agencies and services?
       ☐ Yes   ☐ No
    (b) Did the SAH connect you to these agencies and services?
       ☐ Yes   ☐ No
    (c) Were you able to access settlement agency services to meet your needs as a sponsor?
       ☐ Yes   ☐ No

25. Do you feel that the sponsor team created problems for the SAH through the sponsorship process?
    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

    Please use the space below to explain the reason for your response.

26. Do you feel that the SAH applied unnecessary pressure on the sponsor team through the process?
    ☐ Yes   ☐ No

    Please use the space below to explain the reason for your response.

27. Overall, how would you rate your experience with the SAH ***through your latest sponsorship***?
    ☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor   ☐ No real support

Sponsors' Experience with PRSN, its Programs and its Role in Refugee Sponsorship

PRSN provides opportunities for networking and training at no cost to network participants. PRSN offers workshops and Lunch and Learn sessions to support participants to assist newcomers' post-arrival settlement needs. PRSN is also developing a mentorship program.

28. Have you participated in any of PRSN's services to date?

Workshops	☐ Not aware of these services	☐ No	☐ Yes → Roughly how many?	
Lunch & Learn	☐ Not aware of these services	☐ No.	☐ Yes → Roughly how many?	

29. If you have participated in at least one of these, how would you rate these services?

Workshops ☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair. ☐ Poor ☐ Did not participate.
Lunch & Learn ☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor ☐ Did not participate.

30. Have you or would you recommend these services to other sponsors?
☐ Yes ☐ No

31. If you have participated in at least one of PRSN's services, how would you compare PRSN's services relative to other organizations?
☐ PRSN's services are better.
☐ PRSN's services are on par with other organizations.
☐ PRSN's services need to improve.
☐ I am unable to make a comparison; I have not participated in training offered by other organizations.

Please use the space below to elaborate on your response.
What did you like? What didn't you like? How could PRSN's programs be improved?

32. Do you have any suggestions for how PRSN can help to strengthen and improve the relationship between sponsor teams and SAHs? Please elaborate.

33. Given your knowledge of the refugee sponsorship sector, do you feel that PRSN can play a bigger role to provide supports and services for sponsors? If so, how would you see that happening? Please elaborate.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We appreciate that you took the time to do so. Your responses and the responses of other participants of the Network will provide valuable information to help PRSN gain a better understanding of the relationships between sponsors and SAHs. We hope to gather information from SAHs as well, and that this will help us to find ways that sponsors and SAHs can work more effectively together for the benefit of the refugees and newcomers that we jointly support.

UNDERSTANDING SAH-SPONSOR RELATIONSHIPS
A SAH Survey to determine how to build more effective relationships with Sponsors

The Private Refugee Sponsor Network Ontario (PRSN) is an incorporated, not-for-profit organization that brings private refugee constituent groups together to **connect, learn and share**. It builds relationships with those in the sector, shares information, problem-solves and offers training programs to sponsors on post-arrival issues and topics they have identified.

We want to learn more about existing sponsor relationships between Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs) and constituent groups, including those who sponsor through Blended Visa Office-Referred cases (BVOR). What are the challenges you face working with sponsors? What are the opportunities and how might they be addressed around post-arrival issues? We want to capture promising practices and experiences that reflect the current environment in the sector to create new opportunities for PRSN to partner more effectively on behalf of sponsors. The goal is to improve relationships that would lead to more effective settlement of newcomers.

==We suggest that this survey be completed by your Executive Director or their designate, like the person most responsible for sponsorship and settlement services at your organization.==

There are three sections in this survey:
6. Nature and Capacity of the SAH
7. SAHs' Experience with Constituent Groups
8. SAHs' Experience with PRSN, its Programs and its Role in Refugee Sponsorship

Your responses will remain anonymous. We estimate that it will take *15 minutes* to respond to this questionnaire. ***Please complete this survey by February 29, 2024.***

Thank you in advance for participating in this survey.

Nature and Capacity of the SAH

1. Your Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH) organization is:
    ☐ Faith-based ☐ Community-based ☐ Other (please describe): [_____]

2. Is your SAH also a settlement agency? ☐ Yes ☐ No

3. (a) Approximately how many refugees (individuals) does your SAH support each year? [_____]
    (b) On average, how many applications per year does your SAH prepare? [_____]

4. Does your sponsorship program have paid staff support?
    ☐ No ☐ Yes → How many full-time equivalents? [_____]

5. Does your SAH only deal with applications from established constituent groups? ☐ Yes ☐ No
    Please explain:
    [_____]

6. What role does your organization take in creating constituent groups? Select all that apply.
    ☐ Creates constituent groups based on knowledge of and experience with potential sponsors
    ☐ Vets constituent groups that approach our organization

7. Does your organization provide training and support services for sponsors to help guide them through the sponsorship process?

For the pre-arrival, application process		☐ Yes ☐ No
For post-arrival settlement		☐ Yes ☐ No

8. If training and support services are offered directly by your organization, how are those services provided? Please select as many as apply.

	Pre-arrival	Post-arrival
Regularly scheduled group training sessions	☐	☐
Ad hoc group training sessions	☐	☐
On-demand / upon request group sessions	☐	☐
On-demand / upon request individual training / guidance	☐	☐
Mentoring/connecting new sponsors with more experienced sponsors	☐	☐
Not applicable	☐	☐

9. Select the statements that best describe the ***support with fundraising*** your SAH offers to sponsors.
    [Check as many as apply.]
    ☐ Our SAH provides limited, direct financial support to meet IRCC's funding requirements.
    ☐ Our SAH connects constituent groups with other organizations that provide funding.
    ☐ Our constituent groups must raise the funds required for each sponsorship on their own.
    ☐ Our SAH provides access to a fundraising platform.
    ☐ Our SAH facilitates access to tax receipts for donors.
    ☐ Our SAH provides assistance with managing funds.
    ☐ Our SAH does not provide support with fundraising.

SAHs' Experience with Constituent Groups

10. Understanding that there is variation across different constituent groups, overall, how would you characterize your SAH's experience working with sponsors in the following areas?

Knowing what their responsibilities are in general	☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor ☐ Don't Know
Understanding that sponsors are responsible to complete application forms	☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor ☐ Don't Know
Understanding that sponsors are responsible to raise the necessary funds	☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor ☐ Don't Know
Understanding and carrying out necessary settlement functions	☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor ☐ Don't Know
How the constituent groups work together to provide the necessary support for newcomers	☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor ☐ Don't Know

11. How would you characterize the quality of the *communication* between your SAH and constituent groups you support, on average?

☐ Excellent ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

Please use the space below to explain the reason for your response.

12. Select the statement that best describes the *relationship* between your SAH and the sponsor teams.

☐ We encourage sponsors to work independently from our SAH.
☐ We expect to be highly involved and work in partnership with each sponsor group.
☐ We experience friction with constituent groups from time to time.

Please use the space below to elaborate your perception of the relationship.

13. Select the statement that best describes the *guidance* your SAH provides to constituent groups to prepare the materials required for the sponsorship?

☐ Our SAH is significantly involved in the work of every sponsor group.
☐ Our SAH provides some guidance when the SAH observes that it is needed
☐ Our SAH provides some guidance when sponsors ask for it
☐ Our SAH provides almost no guidance at all

Please use the space below to elaborate your perception of the guidance provided.

14. The *Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP)* is a program, funded by IRCC, established to provide support to SAHs and their Constituent Groups.

(c) Does your SAH work to connect constituent groups with RSTP to successfully prepare application forms and answer questions about the process (pre-arrival preparation)?

☐ Yes ☐ No

(d) Does your SAH work to connect constituent groups with RSTP about post-arrival issues?

☐ Yes ☐ No

(c) If you answered Yes in either (a) or (b), please describe further (e.g., sometimes, in special cases).

15. Select the statement that best describes how your SAH refers private sponsors to *settlement agencies* to gain information about whatever they might need to settle newcomers?

☐ Our SAH is also a settlement agency, and we provide direct supports.
☐ We refer sponsors to settlement agencies for services, but do not follow up on their experience.
☐ We refer sponsors to settlement agencies and confirm that agencies respond to queries.
☐ We refer sponsors to settlement agencies and confirm that agencies provide needed support.
☐ We do not refer sponsors to settlement agencies for services.

16. Select the statement that best describes how your SAH keeps constituent groups up to date with the progress of the application through IRCC and the local visa office?

☐ Our SAH communicates with sponsors as soon as we learn about updates.
☐ Our SAH provides updates that we feel are most important.
☐ Our SAH does not provide updates.

Please elaborate.

17. How would you describe your SAH's *involvement* with a sponsor group after newcomers arrive?

☐ Our SAH is actively involved throughout the sponsorship period.
☐ We ask for and get periodic updates to determine status of sponsorship.
☐ We only respond to crisis situations and help groups with problem-solving.
☐ We follow IRCC requirements for status reporting.

Please elaborate.

18. How would you characterize your SAH's interactions with sponsors during the year after the newcomer(s) arrived? [*Pick as many words as you feel would apply.*]

☐ Sympathetic	☐ Engaged	☐ Absent	☐ Critical
☐ Supportive	☐ Positive	☐ Disengaged	☐ Stressful
☐ Facilitating	☐ Energizing	☐ Oppressive	☐ Combative
☐ Responsive		☐ Directive	

19. Overall, how would you rate the support that your SAH gives to private sponsors for their needs?

Pre-arrival	☐ Excellent	☐ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Poor	☐ No real support
Post-arrival	☐ Excellent	☐ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Poor	☐ No real support

20. The demands on constituent groups can be quite significant, at times resulting in sponsor team breakdown of some constituent groups. How often would you say constituent groups have failed?
☐ Frequently (over 20%) ☐ Periodically (5%-20%) ☐ Seldom (less than 5%) ☐ Never (0%)

21. Thinking of the past 3-4 years since COVID-19 emerged, has sponsorship team failure increased?
☐ No ☐ Yes ☐ Not sure / Don't know

22. Select statements *(as many as apply)* that describe your SAH's experience when a sponsor or sponsor team abandoned the process after it got underway.
☐ We have not experienced a team member or the team abandoning the process.
☐ A team member(s) abandoned a sponsorship, but the team continued.
☐ A team member(s) abandoned the process, but replacement(s) were found.
☐ A team member(s) abandoned the process and the sponsorship failed.

23. What would you say are reasons for sponsor team breakdown? *[Select as many as apply.]*
☐ Length of time and delays for refugees to be able to travel.
☐ Interpersonal relationships among sponsor team members.
☐ Lack of understanding the demands of sponsorship.
☐ Other (please describe).

24. What reasons do sponsors groups give for abandoning a sponsorship?   What do sponsors tell you are their biggest challenges?

25. Do you feel that constituent groups pose difficulties for your SAH through the sponsorship process?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Please use the space below to explain the reason for your response.

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26. Do you feel that your SAH applies unnecessary pressure on constituent groups through the process?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Please use the space below to explain the reason for your response.

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27. Overall, how would you rate your SAH's experience with sponsors?

☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor

SAHs' Experience with PRSN, its Programs and its Role in Refugee Sponsorship

PRSN provides opportunities for networking and training at no cost to its members. PRSN offers workshops and Lunch and Learn sessions to support its members to assist newcomers' post-arrival settlement needs. PRSN is also developing a mentorship program.

28. Has your SAH referred private sponsors to PRSN for information-sharing, problem-solving and post-arrival training?

☐ Yes   ☐ No   ☐ We weren't aware of PRSN's services.

29. What feedback has your SAH received about PRSN's programs?

☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor   ☐ No feedback / not aware.

30. Would your SAH recommend PRSN's services to sponsors in future?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Please use the space below to explain the reason for your response. What did you like? What didn't you like? How could PRSN's programs be improved?

31. Do you have any suggestions for how PRSN can help to strengthen the relationship between SAHs and constituent groups? Please elaborate.

32. Do you feel that PRSN can play a bigger role to provide supports and services for sponsors?

☐ Yes   ☐ No

Please use the space below to explain the reason for your response.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. We appreciate that you took the time to do so. Your responses and the responses of other members of the Network will provide valuable information to help PRSN gain a better understanding of the relationships between SAHs and sponsors. We hope to gather information from SAHs as well, and that this will help us to find ways that SAHs and sponsors can work more effectively together for the benefit of the refugees and newcomers that we jointly support.

b. Detailed Findings, Exhibits and Observations

Private Sponsors

Fifty-five (55) responses were received from sponsors. All of those who completed the questionnaire gave an indication that they had worked with or through a SAH. It is acknowledged that this is a self-selected sample of sponsors and a relatively small proportion of the overall sponsor population, and a such, may not be representative of the full sponsor population. However, the responses give actual accounts of those who are involved in the process of sponsorship and provide valuable insights.

Sponsors Involvement with Sponsorship

Respondents were asked when their *first participation* on a private sponsorship team occurred. More than three quarters indicated that their first experience of sponsorship occurred in 2015 or later. 25% (14) gave 2016 as the year of their first sponsorship, corresponding with the Government of Canada's actions to respond to the Syrian crisis. It is noteworthy that 24% of respondents cited their first participation prior to that time, and as far back as 1979, in the early years following the introduction of the private sponsorship of refugees program. Time of most recent sponsorships ranged from 2016 to ongoing currently; 91% since 2022, indicating relatively active involvement.

Two-thirds (37) of those who responded have worked with only one SAH. 91% (50) have worked with a faith-based organization; 11% have worked with a community-based organization. Most teams were formed around people who know each other before (56%), as indicated in *Exhibit 1*. When asked to elaborate further on how their teams were formed, churches or groups of churches or faith-based groups was cited most often. Community connections or grassroots organizing were also given as explanations.

Exhibit 1		
How was the sponsor team formed?	**#**	**%**
The team knew each other personally and had sponsored before	17	30.9%
The team knew each other personally but had not sponsored before	10	18.2%
The team knew each other but were formed through the SAH	3	5.5%
The team knew each other personally and had sponsored before; our team was formed in another way	1	1.8%
The team did not know each other and were formed through the SAH	1	1.8%
Our team was formed in another way	23	41.8%
Total	55	100.0%

Sponsors' Knowledge of Sponsorship

With 2 exceptions, everyone who responded was aware that Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) requires that SAHs assume overall responsibility for the management of sponsorships under their agreement. Everyone was aware that sponsor groups often have a role in raising funds to support those who are sponsored for 12 months. Further, all those who responded are aware that sponsor groups agree to provide sponsored refugees with care, lodging, settlement assistance and support for 12 months starting from time of newcomers' arrival in Canada.

Based on their understanding of sponsors' responsibilities, respondents were asked to indicate what supports they provide for newcomers. *Exhibit 2* presents a summary of the frequencies of response in the 17 areas indicated in the survey. Only the search for employment was cited by all respondents. A number of other responsibilities were cited by everyone but one. Locating interpreters was cited least often, by 50 of the 55 respondents.

Exhibit 2	
Responsibilities	**Cited by...**
1. helping to set up a bank account & apply for a credit card	54
2. helping to get a sim card and possibly a new cellphone	54
3. assisting with applying for provincial healthcare coverage (i.e., getting an OHIP card)	54
4. assisting with getting a Social Insurance Number (SIN)	54
5. helping to get a transit card and navigating the local transit system	52
6. helping to get a driver's licence, or convert an existing licence from another country	52
7. providing the cost of food, rent and household utilities and other expenses	53
8. providing clothing, furniture and other household goods	54
9. locating interpreters	50
10. helping to find a family physician and dentist	53
11. helping to find mental health support services	52
12. enrolling children in school/adults in language training	54
13. introducing newcomers to people with similar personal interests	52
14. orienting to the neigbourhood (e.g. where to find grocery stores and other home supplies)	54
15. helping newcomers to socialize with others in the community	53
16. helping in the search for employment	55
17. providing orientation with regard to other everyday activities, as needed	54

Fifty respondents (91%) knew that newcomer services are available through a network of settlement agencies funded by IRCC. 47 knew that the services are available for free to newcomers (*Exhibit 3*). However, four felt these services were not available to privately sponsored newcomers. Further elaboration of their responses indicated that in smaller communities, settlement agencies may be far away and have limited capacity to provide services. Others were under the impression that sponsors "*were the settlement agents for the first year*", that the "*settlement agency [was] not inclined to work collaboratively with*

private sponsors to address resettlement needs", and that "*Settlement agencies take forever to return calls and do not like to interact with private sponsors*". Others felt more confident in not needing assistance provided by settlement agencies with one stating, "*We are aware of this help and would use it if needed*".

Exhibit 3		
Newcomer services are available through a network of settlement agencies funded by IRCC to assist with, among other things, looking for a job, getting a language assessment and registering for classes for adults and children, finding a place to live, and learning about community services. Select the statement that best describes your understanding of settlement agency services.	#	%
I knew these services are available and that they are available for free to the newcomer.	46	83.6%
I knew these services are available but not available for privately sponsored newcomers.	3	5.5%
I knew these services are available and that they are available for free to the newcomer., I knew these services are available but not available for privately sponsored newcomers.	1	1.8%
Other...	5	9.1%
TOTAL	55	100.0%

Sponsors' Perceptions of Sponsorship

When asked about their *first participation* on a sponsorship team and working with a SAH, sponsors were asked to indicate their expectation of the time and effort required to be a sponsor. Correspondingly, they were also asked to give their impression of how much time and effort was actually required. **Exhibit 4** indicates that at the time of their first sponsorship, most respondents felt that more time was actually required than they expected.

Exhibit 4				
Thinking about YOUR FIRST PARTICIPATION on a sponsorship team and working with a SAH.... How much work (time and effort) did you expect being a sponsor would require? In relation to what you expected, what is your impression of how much work (time and effort) was actually required?	What I expected		Actual level of work	
	#	%	#	%
Very little time and effort			1	1.8%
Some time and effort	11	20.0%	6.5	11.8%
A fair amount of time and effort	31	56.4%	15	27.3%
A great deal of time and effort	13	23.6%	32.5	59.1%
TOTAL	55	100.0%	55	100.0%

Respondents were also asked to indicate their expectation of the amount of time for the newcomer to arrive, again in relation to the actual amount of time it took. **Exhibit 5** presents those results. Again, the actual amount of time exceeded what was expected.

It should also be noted that this survey was undertaken at a time when most of the respondents would have participated in sponsorship that was or might have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, the processing of applications would have come to a halt for some time and been slow to start again, also contending with a backlog of applications that would have continued to be submitted during the pandemic. This would have affected actual wait times to arrival.

Exhibit 5				
	What I expected		**Actual time**	
How much time for the newcomer to arrive did you expect it would take? How much time did it take for the newcomer to arrive?	#	%	#	%
Short period, say a few weeks or months	10	18.2%	6	10.9%
Short period, say a few weeks or months, maybe 6-12 months	1	1.8%		
Maybe 6-12 months	20	36.4%	13	23.6%
More than a year	17	30.9%	7	12.7%
More than two years	5	9.1%	14	25.5%
More than three years	2	3.6%	15	27.3%
TOTAL	55	100.0%	55	100.0%

Despite the differences in perception and reality about the effort required of sponsors, only 6 (11%) felt discouraged by the process. On the other hand, 38 (69%) felt discouraged by the amount of time they waited for newcomers to arrive.

Sponsors were also asked to describe their experience of ***potentially or actually abandoning*** a sponsorship after the process got underway. The majority of respondents (32, 58%) had not nor did not know others who considered abandoning or actually abandoned a sponsorship. Only one person indicated that they knew of a time when a sponsorship failed.

Exhibit 6		
Select the statement that best describes your experience of potentially or actually abandoning a sponsorship after the process got underway?	#	%
I have not and don't know others who considered abandoning or did abandon a sponsorship.	32	58.2%
I know a time when a team member(s) abandoned a sponsorship, but the team continued.	13	23.6%
I know a time when a team member(s) abandoned the process, but replacement(s) were found.	7	12.7%
I know a time when a team member(s) abandoned a sponsorship, but the team continued., I know a time when a team member(s) abandoned the process, but replacement(s) were found.	2	3.6%
I know a time when a team member(s) abandoned the process and the sponsorship failed.	1	1.8%
TOTAL	55	100.0%

Sponsors' Experience with SAH Organizations

Respondents were asked to provide their impressions of the relationship they experienced with their SAH, *before and after arrival* of the newcomer(s).

Pre-Arrival

To begin, sponsors were asked to rate the quality of the **communication** between the sponsor group and the SAH for their *most recent sponsorship* during the *pre-arrival period*. 50 respondents (91%) described communication as excellent or good (***Exhibit 7***). When asked to elaborate, expressions like "responsive", "good support", "good training" and "hands on" were used. Those who were not as positive about the communication described their SAHs as non-responsive, unavailable after hours and experiencing communication gaps.

Exhibit 7		
How would you characterize the quality of the communication between the sponsor group and the SAH for YOUR MOST RECENT SPONSORSHIP?	#	%
Excellent	31	56.4%
Good	19	34.6%
Fair	4	7.3%
Poor	1	1.8%
TOTAL	55	100.0%

Exhibit 8 presents the results when sponsors rated the **relationship** between their team and the SAH. 31 (56%) said they worked independently of the SAH, getting support when needed. Most others described the relationship as collaborative (19, 35%). The rest worked independently.

Exhibit 8		
Pre-Arrival: From your experience, select the statement that best describes the relationship between your sponsor team and the SAH.	#	%
Our relationship was collaborative.	18	32.3%
Our relationship was collaborative., Our team worked independently of the SAH but with support from the SAH as needed.	1	1.2%
Our team worked independently of the SAH but with support from the SAH as needed.	31	56.4%
Our team worked independently of the SAH.	5	9.1%
TOTAL	55	100.0%

Exhibit 9 presents some selected comments that elaborated more on those relationships.

Exhibit 9	
• We have worked with this SAH for several years, through several sponsorships, and the relationship is honest and respectful. • We tend to work well in tandem. • Our SAH was excellent and treated us as valued and essential partners. • When we were starting out in 2015, we received more active support from our SAH rep. Now that we're a team with a fair bit of experience, our rep mostly just responds to questions, provides allocations and reviews and submits applications. • I worked very well with my SAH (I am the main contact person) during the application process. Once the newcomers arrive, the SAH is there as needed, for guidance, however I and my team work largely independently. • One SAH is new to our group but so far excellent with collaboration. The second SAH we work more independently. • We are doing the work ourselves.	• Relationship with SAH(s) early days was arm's length post-arrival. Pre-arrival there was a collaborative relationship and guidance offered. But then we were on our own to figure out plans, priorities, training, resources, issue management... • ... the SAH regularly passed on any new mandates from IRCC to our team, by creating new budget protocols and guidelines and by changing requirements for budget amounts and by creating new tracking sheets. Our perception is that they have been downloading expectations and accountability measures to our team, as a means of proving to IRCC that they are doing their job correctly, and thereby, keeping those jobs, in the event they are audited. We recognize that a large portion of this issue stems from IRCC. • The SAH provided direction and oversight, which was helpful. But, the process was too incremental. I expect this was needed to ensure the SAH was not responsible for errors, omissions, etc. in the applications. • Our work with the SAH in 2019 to 2022 was difficult due to under resourcing at the SAH. Changes at the SAH in 2023 have greatly improved the things and I am satisfied with the support they are giving. • We had absolutely nothing to do with them post arrival. Nor did we want it.

Sponsors were asked to characterize the **guidance** they received from their SAHs. Their responses are presented in *Exhibit 10*. Some respondents selected more than one response, so the counts exceed 55 and the percentages total greater than 100%.

Exhibit 10		
From your experience, select the statement that best describes how you feel about the guidance your team received to prepare the materials required for the sponsorship.	**#**	**%**
The SAH completed the forms for the application.	12	10.9%
We received excellent guidance and direct training for how to complete the application.	34	61.8%
We received some guidance but had to press the SAH for additional support.	3	5.5%
We received some guidance but had to seek out other resources for ourselves.	9	16.4%
We received almost no guidance at all; we were on our own.	4	7.3%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	55	

Exhibit 11 presents some selected comments that elaborated more on the guidance received from SAHs.

Exhibit 11

- Looking back to my first sponsorship application, my SAH walked me through it with baby steps! I was given one task at a time, and they were always there when I had questions. They leave more things up to me now, but I still know they're behind me and available whenever needed. And every sponsorship is different, sometimes new always pops up (that I haven't seen before, but they usually have).
- All organizations working this this SAH received comprehensive guidance and resources to help start and maintain a quality sponsorship.
- I found the government forms hard to complete. Once we got that done the SAH were helpful in identifying errors.
- Our SAH staff made themselves available to our team with each form, with budget guidance, checking over the facts, dates, evidence etc. related to the applicant's "story".
- Our SAH seems very well-resourced, although busy.
- Support, guidance and direction were provided as needed in completing the forms.
- The SAH used their experience with IRCC to help us anticipate application requirements.
- Excellent guidance; always there to answer any question or request for help even if it was on the weekend.

- We are all working hard to answer questions and solve problems. Haven't had much help.
- I did most of the paperwork with the applicants, but the SAH reviewed and edited.
- Our group filled out the forms. No teaching was provided but the SAH reviewed it.
- We received guidance when needed, but we completed the forms fairly independently
- Our team did 100% of the applications forms. The SAH returned the forms occasionally for revision. The SAH did none of the work. They did listen to our advocacy to keep some adult family members together that would normally be separated, so, a linked application was approved.
- I'm not certain of how frequently the SAH helped but think the applications were entirely filled out by our team leads with questions to the SAH answered when asked.
- With patience we got what we needed.
- We got more practical help from RSTP.
- Completion of required forms has never been an issue and are usually handled by one team member directly with the SAH.

Fundraising is a key component of the sponsorship process. Sponsors were asked to characterize the support they received from their SAHs. *Exhibit 12* presents the results. Some respondents provided more than one response. Most sponsors took responsibility for raising the funds needed to support newcomers during the first 12 months after arrival. In a few instances, SAHs provided direct financial support, but otherwise assisted with technical issues like providing access to a fundraising platform, issuing tax receipts or managing funds.

Exhibit 12		
From your experience, select the statement that best describes the level of support for fundraising provided by the SAH. The SAH...	#	%
Provided direct financial support to meet the funding requirements.	5	9.1%
Provided access to a fundraising platform.	7	12.7%
Facilitated access to tax receipts for donors.	9	16.4%
Provided assistance with managing funds.	8	14.5%
The SAH's assistance was not needed.	24	43.6%
The SAH offered no support with fundraising	19	34.5%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	55	

The *Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP)* is a program, funded by IRCC, established to provide support to SAHs and their Constituent Groups. RSTP has produced a number of information and training resources that Constituent Groups can obtain through the SAH. Sponsors were asked a series of questions aimed at understanding how they might be interacting with RSTP and the connections made through their SAHs. Results from these questions are presented in *Exhibit 13*. Over half of those who responded (29, 53%),

indicated that their SAH had connected them with RSTP to understand how the process works and how to prepare applications. Conversely, nearly half of the respondents were not connected with RSTP.

While there was an even split among respondents about whether their SAH told them that RSTP could offer support for post-arrival activities, three quarters of those who completed the survey are aware that RSTP provides information and training to help prepare sponsors with post-arrival activities.

Exhibit 13		
Did the SAH connect your group with RSTP to help you understand what is needed to successfully prepare the application forms and answer your questions about the process?	#	%
No	25	45.5%
Yes	29	52.7%
Yes and No	1	1.8%
Were you aware that RSTP also provides information and training to help with post-arrival activities for newcomers?	#	%
No	13	23.6%
Yes	42	76.4%
Did the SAH tell you that RSTP could also offer support for post-arrival activities?	#	%
No	28	50.9%
Yes	27	49.1%
TOTAL	55	100.0%

Waiting for information about an impending application requires patience, and the wait times can be long. Timely access to information is important to know the status of an application, but also to maintain morale of the person or people being sponsored and for the sponsor team as well. Sponsors were asked to characterize how the SAH kept them up to date with the progress of the application through IRCC and the local visa office. Results are presented in *Exhibit 14*.

Over 60% indicated that their SAH provided prompt updates. Conversely, this left over one third of those who responded without access to up-to-date information.

Exhibit 14		
Select the statement that best describes how the SAH kept you up to date with the progress of the application through IRCC and the local visa office.	#	%
The SAH provided prompt updates on the progress of the application.	34	61.8%
We had to reach out to the SAH to ask about and get any updates.	11	20.0%
The SAH provided almost no updates at all.	5	9.1%
The SAH provided updates but usually well after the information was received.	3	5.4%
We had to reach out to the SAH to ask about and get any updates., The SAH provided almost no updates at all.	2	3.6%
TOTAL	55	100.0%

In summary we asked sponsors to **rate the support** that they received from the SAH in preparing the materials required for the sponsorship application. Most were happy with the experience, as shown in **Exhibit 15**. Nearly 80% (43) felt the support was excellent or good. It was noteworthy that 11-12 people felt the support was fair or poor.

Exhibit 15		
Overall, how would you rate the support that you received from the SAH in preparing the materials required for the sponsorship application?	#	%
Excellent	31	56.4%
Good	12	21.8%
Good, Fair	1	1.8%
Fair	8	14.6%
Poor	3	5.5%
TOTAL	55	100.0%

Post-Arrival

Sponsors were asked to characterize their groups' interactions with their SAHs during the year after the newcomer(s) arrived. Respondents were asked to select the items form a list of descriptors to convey how they felt from their experiences. **Exhibit 16** presents a summary of the results. Descriptors on the left of the table indicate positive interactions; descriptors on the right are negative. Respondents selected more positive characterizations overall than negative one. No descriptor was selected by everyone who responded. Supportive, responsive and positive were chosen most often. Energizing was chosen least often among the positive descriptors. Disengaged and absent were select on the negative side; several other options (oppressive, critical and combative) were not selected at all.

Exhibit 16					
Descriptor	#	%	Descriptor	#	%
Sympathetic	15	27.3%	Absent	6	10.9%
Supportive	36	65.5%	Disengaged	8	14.5%
Facilitating	19	34.5%	Oppressive	0	0.0%
Responsive	31	56.4%	Directive	2	3.6%
Engaged	15	27.3%	Critical	0	0.0%
Positive	30	54.5%	Stressful	1	1.8%
Energizing	6	10.9%	Combative	0	0.0%

Referring back to an earlier question about their awareness of IRCC-funded settlement agencies, sponsors were asked to identify the SAH's involvement in making them aware of

these agencies and if they were helpful in connecting them to the agencies for supports for newcomers. ***Exhibit 17*** presents a summary of the responses to this series of questions.

More than half of respondents (31, 56%) indicated that their SAHs did make them aware of settlement agencies. However, only 7 (13%) said that their SAHs connected them with the settlement agencies. Yet, 47 (86%) of those said they were able to access settlement agency services to help with newcomers' settlement needs.

Exhibit 17		
(a) Did the SAH make you aware of these agencies and services?	**#**	**%**
No	24	43.6%
Yes	31	56.4%
TOTAL	**55**	**100.0%**
(b) Did the SAH connect you to these agencies and services?	**#**	**%**
No	48	87.3%
Yes	7	12.7%
TOTAL	**55**	**100.0%**
(c) Were you able to access settlement agency services to meet your needs as a sponsor?	**#**	**%**
No	8	14.6%
Yes	47	85.5%
TOTAL	55	100.0%

All but one of the respondents felt that their sponsor team had not created problems for their SAH through the sponsorship process. The one dissenting opinion who felt their team did create problems for their SAH characterized the situation in the following:

> "When our team faced several significant challenges in the timeframe between IRCC approval and NAT, our SAH was not helpful. We are definitely an engaged, active sponsorship team that expects interaction and answers from the SAH. Whenever challenges in the pre-arrival process arose and advocacy was necessary to get our sponsored family to safety, we were left on our own to navigate finding solutions. We were also given a 'slap on the wrist', that is, informed that we crossed a few lines in the system. However, we had no intention of giving up and our SAH was not finding any answers at all. In the end, we created our own solutions,

Sponsors were also asked if they felt that the SAH had applied unnecessary pressure on the sponsor team through the sponsorship process. Again, all but one of the respondents felt that the SAH had not applied unnecessary pressure on their sponsor team throughout the process. The one dissenting opinion explained their situation in the following:

> "I think that SAHs' model of 'one size fits all' when it comes to finance records/budgeting has limitations. There needs to be some flexibility in allowing sponsorship teams to record expenditures, etc. in a way that reflects the actual family structure. Our sponsorship was unique, with several families in a linked application, but there was no provision given for that. Also, the SAH changed their budget requirements and recording expectations multiple times during the process. Some of this has been understandable (post COVID cost of living and newly formed IRCC expectations) but some of it was just downloading extra unnecessary work to our volunteer team."

Sponsors were again asked to rate their experience with their SAHs during the post-arrival period *through their latest sponsorship*. **Exhibit 18** presents the results. 43 (78%) said their experience was excellent or good. Four respondents (7%) indicated that they received no real support.

Exhibit 18		
Overall, how would you rate your experience with the SAH through your latest sponsorship?	#	%
Excellent	30	54.6%
Good	13	23.6%
Fair	7	12.7%
Fair, No real support	1	1.8%
No real support	2	3.6%
Poor	1	1.8%
Poor, No real support	1	1.8%
TOTAL	55	100.0%

Sponsors' Experience with PRSN, its Programs and its Role in Refugee Sponsorship

In support of those affiliated with the Network, PRSN provides opportunities for networking and training at no cost to participants. PRSN offers Workshops and Lunch and Learn sessions to help sponsors assist newcomers' post-arrival settlement needs. PRSN is also developing and about to launch a mentorship program.

The survey sought to determine the level of participation in the workshops and Lunch and Learn sessions offered by PRSN and how participants felt about their experiences. **Exhibit 19** summarizes those results. More respondents said they had participated in Workshops than Lunch and Learn sessions (L&Ls), 41 (75%) versus 32 (58%). L&Ls are offered at lunch time during the week, whereas Workshops are offered Saturday mornings. The results may reflect sponsors availability to participate.

Exhibit 19

Have you participated in any of PRSN's services to date?								
Workshops	**#**	**%**	**Roughly how many?**					
			0	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4+**	**Responses**
Yes	41	74.6%	4 (10%)	9 (21%)	12 (29%)	5 (12%)	12 (29%)	42
No	11	20.0%						
Not aware of services	3	5.5%						
Lunch & Learn	**#**	**%**	**0**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4+**	**Responses**
Yes	32	58.2%	8 (20%)	11 (27%)	10 (24%)	4 (10%)	7 (17%)	40
No	20	36.4%						
Not aware of services	3	5.5%						
TOTAL	55	100.0%						

Sponsors were also asked to rate their experiences with these services. Their responses appear in *Exhibit 20*. Ratings were high for both service offerings: 73% as "excellent" or "good" for Workshops (95% among those who participated); 55% as "excellent" or "good" for L&Ls (88% among those who participated).

Exhibit 20

If you have participated in at least one of these, how would you rate these services?		
Workshops	**#**	**%**
Excellent	18	32.7%
Good	22	40.0%
Fair	2	3.6%
Did not participate	13	23.6%
Lunch & Learn	**#**	**%**
Excellent	15	27.3%
Good	15	27.3%
Fair	4	7.3%
Did not participate	21	38.2%
TOTAL	55	100.0%

Sponsors were asked to compare PRSN's services relative to other organizations. 30 were unable to draw comparison, not having participated in training by other organizations. For the 25 who did offer an opinion, all indicated that PRSN's services are on par or better. Elaborating on their responses, some of the comments offered appear in *Exhibit 21*.

Exhibit 21

- I appreciate the variety of topics, the format that allows discussion after the presentation and that seasoned speakers representing different organizations/issues are engaged.
- PRSN uses experienced professionals dealing with real situations, who are currently working in the various fields with newcomers. I like the shared knowledge and authenticity provided by presenters and the opportunity to interact with other sponsorship teams.
- The workshops and L&L sessions provide very practical resources and guidance to sponsor groups. Sometimes it feels as though the topics could be explored in more depth, or presenters given more time, but the range of presentations is also useful as are the Q&A sessions and the opportunity for networking and sharing experiences and ideas.
- Always room for improvement - but I like the zeroing in on real issues and real-life experiences. Facilitates good

Exhibit 21

- PRSN, by being on-line, were more accessible and represented a range of experience.
- The lunch and learn seminars were first rate. They identified excellent people with very valuable experience. I always knew that if we faced any real problems, which we did not, I could get help from these people.
- The power point presentation. The breakout sessions knowledge sharing
- The programs and services respond to sponsor need.
- Workshops were informative....participants could ask questions. Knowledgeable presenters.
- The speakers were excellent and informed, and the workshop topics were relevant. Notes and references were sent out after the workshops
- discussions, sharing lots of different perspectives (i.e. urban and rural/small communities).
- I appreciate the variety of topics and notice of the Lunch and Learns.
- I have only participated in 1 training session with another organization re: sponsorship and both were excellent.
- Knowledgeable guest speakers and enjoy the opportunity to connect with others in small group discussions.
- PRSN serves to supplement training offered elsewhere by covering certain topics each year. However, this can in no way supplant the individualized support SAHs provide to their groups, or the more comprehensive training RSTP offers.
- PRSN workshop was facilitated by an experienced and knowledgeable facilitator.

Respondents were asked if they had any suggestions for how PRSN could help to strengthen and improve the relationship between sponsor teams and SAHs. The following are selected responses (*Exhibit 22*).

Exhibit 22

- Advocate for IRCC to provide funding for SAH reps. Communicate with the SAH Council about what supports sponsor groups are looking for and would find helpful from SAHs.
- Advocate for SAHs to inform/educate Sponsor Teams about availability & encourage working with Settlement Services. Given the extreme scarcity of affordable housing in Toronto, it would be useful for SAHs to advocate & help coordinate Sponsorship Groups from Toronto to work with Sponsorship Groups from smaller communities -- I.e., Sponsorship Groups I'm Toronto seem to have strong FUNDRAISING capabilities, but newcomers coming to Toronto struggle for affordable housing & to get work that pays enough to do much more than survive. Toronto-based Sponsorship Groups could perhaps raise money which could be used by Sponsorship groups located in more-affordable communities where the newcomers could settle.
- Both the PRSN and the SAHs are in the unenviable position of having to explain the pitiful level of communications and information provided by IRCC.
- Develop a Code of Conduct for interactions between the SAH and CG. E.g., how often and when we will email or phone; transparency about wait list including CG place on wait list and how long it should take to submit to ROCO.
- Help new sponsor teams understand and engage with SAH needs. And help SAH's understand sponsor team development process.
- I don't think this is the PRSN's role at all.
- I think PRSN should recommend to all SAH organizations that they make clear parameters for using their services including timelines and pertinent sponsorship facts readily available on websites and other accessible information services. I have only worked with one SAH and that is primarily because most SAH organizations are very bad at responding to questions, making information readily available and clearly stating how and when sponsors can apply to work with them. Also, each SAH seems to have their own protocols and practices which makes access very challenging if not impossible.
- I would this they would be useful for inexperienced teams.
- No one wants to or should have to re-invent the wheel. There's always someone out there who's experienced the same issue I'm struggling with and has lessons or advice to pass on to me. I just need to make that connection. And these workshops help me to do this.
- SAHs could refer sponsors to PRSN for training and information-sharing.
- The SAH should be aware of PRSN resources and include them in initial communication with Sponsorship teams
- This is the first time I was involved in supporting a refugee family, so it is hard to make any suggestions beyond keep doing what you are doing. I was very impressed by the fact that there is PRSN. Psychologically, it was helpful to know, especially for novices like myself, that there is a whole network of knowledgeable people who could help in the event we needed help which we did not.

Lastly, sponsors were asked, given their knowledge of the refugee sponsorship sector, to suggest ways that PRSN could play a bigger role in providing supports and services for sponsors and how they might see that happening. The following are selected responses (*Exhibit 23*).

Exhibit 23

- Although SAHs are sponsorship teams' direct link to this sector, and although there are improvements necessary, I believe that a large piece of the puzzle lies with the unyieldy and overloaded IRCC system. SAHs need to have more autonomy and access to specific applications, for example, where they are in the process and why. So, perhaps PRSN can liaise with IRCC to strengthen those connections.
- I think more folks need to know about the supports and services provided by the PRSN.
- Let's not duplicate services. I see workshops and offerings by RSTP, PRSN and my SAH. are we talking to each other or coordinating? Sponsors often have a question that needs a reply immediately or within 1-2 days. Canadian Sponsors is a Facebook group doing this but in a haphazard way. They've helped me though. PRSN could have an FAQ for sponsor questions about things like health cards, cell plans, newcomer friendly banks, language testing at YMCA etc."
- What PRSN offers feels more personalized because of the discussions that follow presentations. Can your site be listed on the sites of other refugee support training organizations?
- Perhaps for new groups or less active SAHs.
- The mentoring program is a great initiative. If there was a way to network sponsor groups to develop relationships with property managers or developers to access affordable housing for sponsored refugees, that would be a huge help.
- Through a province-wide mentorship program for new sponsors.
- Portal for direct sponsor to sponsor communication to be able to support each other and disseminate information, share experiences. Work with SAH organizations to improve their communication and accessibility to sponsors.
- PRSN can continue to offer quality additional training on relevant topics.
- PRSN is meeting my needs. I especially appreciate the Newsletters and Lunch and Learns.
- Sharing of best practices - bringing together of different constituencies and different communities to collaborate, innovate, advocate and problem-solve. Continued education of sponsorship groups, including newcomers interested in family reunification.
- The fact that you are now recording sessions for later replay is fantastic. It would be a shame for these excellent sessions to be lost once they have happened. People should be able to benefit later from the insightful presenters and questions from participants. Perhaps compiling a list of resources, in different geographical and topic areas, mentioned in the presentations with periodic updating and additions. would be helpful. I am not sure how you make yourself and your services better known but that would also help.
- ... with appropriate operational funding it could expand its programs and services and share the network model across Canada.
- Repeat some of the sessions, split them out and not try to do everything in one session: have a "Part 1" and a "Part 2" and/or "Advanced" webinars for more experienced sponsors. Also, some webinars could be just "Problem Solving" or discussion sessions.

Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs)

Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) describes the relationship it establishes with SAHs as follows[7]:

> We sign **sponsorship agreements** with organizations that help refugees resettle in Canada. We call these organizations Sponsorship Agreement Holders (SAHs).
>
> They're often religious, ethnic, community or humanitarian organizations.
>
> SAHs support refugees they sponsor either
> - on their own
> - by working with other groups or individuals, called "constituent groups" (CGs) or "co-sponsors"
>
> When working with CGs or co-sponsors, SAHs
> - decide how the relationship should work and what criteria CGs and co-sponsors need to meet
> - must monitor the performance of CGs and co-sponsors and their sponsorship activities
>
> SAHs are ultimately responsible for each refugee sponsored under their agreement.
>
> SAHs have a number of financial and legal responsibilities. They must
> - be based in, or have representatives in, the community where they resettle refugees
> - oversee all sponsorships under their agreement, even if CGs or co-sponsors are participating
> - ensure the refugees they sponsor have what they need to live safely and independently in Canada
> - participate in ongoing training to stay up to date on program requirements

Fifteen (15) responses were received from SAHs. IRCC provides a list of SAHs from across the country that the Department has recognized as organizations that have the capacity to support refugees once they arrive in Canada. IRCC evaluates the organization's structure, settlement and financial capacity, contingency plans and ability to monitor its constituent groups and co-sponsors, manage caseloads and solve problems.[8]

58 entries appear on the list for Ontario. The 15 responses received represent approximately 26% of those organizations. It is acknowledged that this is a self-selected sample of SAHs and also reflects those who were willing to provide responses based on significant follow up to capture additional information for this survey. As such, this group may not be representative of all SAHs. However, the responses are considered informative and give actual accounts of those who are involved in the process of sponsorship and provide valuable insights.

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[7] https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/sponsor-refugee/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders.html

[8] https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/sponsor-refugee/private-sponsorship-program/assessments/organizational-assessment.html

Nature and Capacity of the SAHs

Ten (10) of the organizations that responded identify as faith-based. Two (2) identified as community-based, further explaining that their focus is on sponsoring those who are able to integrate well into Canadian society. One agency is an NGO and two indicated they were also settlement agencies as well.

The number of refugees (individuals) supported by each agency varies widely, from 25 to 200. One organization stated that while their number varies widely by year, in 2023, they supported approximately 800 refugees. The number of applications prepared ranged from 10 to 100 and was uniformly spread across that range.

Twelve of the 15 SAHs that responded indicated they have paid staff. Two have a part-time staff person: 0.4 FTE and 0.5 FTE. The others have 2-4 FTEs. Overall, the group of respondents collectively have nearly 23 FTEs.

Five out of 15 SAHs indicated they only work with applications connected with established constituent groups (CGs). Faith based SAHs were evenly split. Other SAHs do not work with established CGs only. Twelve SAHs vet CGs that approach their organizations to undertake sponsorships; 4 SAHs create CGs.

All of the SAHs that responded indicated that they provide training and support services for sponsors to help guide them through the process, from the pre-arrival, application phase and for post-arrival settlement. SAHs were asked how those services were provided; responses appear in *Exhibit 24*.

Exhibit 24								
If training and support services are offered directly by your organization, how are those services provided?								
	Pre-arrival		**Post-arrival**		**Pre- & Post-arrival**		**TOTAL**	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Regularly scheduled group training sessions	2	16.7%	5	41.7%	5	41.7%	12	100.0%
Ad hoc group training sessions	3	25.0%	3	25.0%	6	50.0%	12	100.0%
On-demand / upon request group sessions	2	14.3%	2	14.3%	10	71.4%	14	100.0%
On-demand / upon request individual training / guidance			1	6.7%	14	93.3%	15	100.0%
Mentoring/connecting new sponsors with more experienced sponsors	2	16.7%	3	25.0%	7	58.3%	12	100.0%

SAHs were asked to indicate the type of support with fundraising that their organization offers to sponsors. This is a key element of the sponsorship process. *Exhibit 25* presents a summary of the responses. The most frequently selected item states that CGs must raise the funds required for sponsorship on their own.

Exhibit 25

Support with fundraising	#	%
Our SAH provides limited, direct financial support to meet IRCC's funding requirements.	3	20.0%
Our SAH connects constituent groups with other organizations that provide funding.	3	20.0%
Our constituent groups must raise the funds required for each sponsorship on their own.	12	80.0%
Our SAH provides access to a fundraising platform.	4	26.7%
Our SAH facilitates access to tax receipts for donors.	7	46.7%
Our SAH provides assistance with managing funds.	10	66.7%
Our SAH does not provide support with fundraising	3	20.0%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	15	

Exhibit 26 summarize SAHs' characterization of their experience working with CGs. Understanding and carrying out necessary settlement functions was rated highest, with 93% indicating "excellent" or "good". Understanding the responsibility to raise funds and raising the funds were next with 87% giving positive responses. Responsibility for completing application forms and CGs working together to provide the necessary support for newcomers received positive responses from 67% of respondents.

SAHs' Experience with Constituent Groups

Exhibit 26

Understanding that there is variation across different constituent groups, overall, how would you characterize your SAH's experience working with sponsors in the following areas?

	Knowing what their responsibilities are in general		Understanding that sponsors are responsible to complete application forms		Understanding that sponsors are responsible to raise the necessary funds		To raise the necessary funds		Understanding and carrying out necessary settlement functions		How the CGs work together to provide the necessary support for newcomers	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Excellent	5	33.3%	2	13.3%	10	66.7%	9	60.0%	6	40.0%	4	26.7%
Good	7	46.7%	8	53.3%	3	20.0%	4	26.7%	8	53.3%	6	40.0%
Fair	3	20.0%	1	6.7%	2	13.3%	2	13.3%	1	6.7%	2	13.3%
Poor			2	13.3%								
Don't Know			2	13.3%							3	20.0%
TOTAL	15	100%	15	100%	15	100%	15	100%	15	100%	15	100%

When asked how they would characterize the quality of communication between the SAH and the CGs they support, all responses were positive: 4 (27%)said excellent and 11 (73%) said good.

When asked to elaborate on how they view the quality of communication, *Exhibit 27* provides comments received. Although respondents indicated their efforts to maintain

excellent communication with their CGs, some CGs required more than others and lags do occasionally occur. Building relationships is critical.

Exhibit 27
• Our SAH strives hard to maintain excellent communication and working relationships with all CGs to successfully meet financial and settlement requirements of the sponsored refugee(s) as per IRCC guidelines. • Our SAH's resettlement team regularly follows up with co-sponsors during pre-arrival and post-arrival phases of any family's sponsorship. This allows us to not only build a good relationship with the co-sponsors and the refugee family. It also allows us to pre-emptively solve problems before they arise and take an active stance in ensuring that both pre- and post-arrival phases take place as smoothly as possible. • Sometimes there is a lag in communication from the CG rep due to unforeseen circumstances such as health, trips, change in reps due to long arrival delays. • We are always available by email or by phone to talk as needed. We tell our people that we are only an email away. Email is better for us as we have tracking but if needed, we will meet either by zoom or on the phone. If needed, translators are available. • We take a personal approach and communicate quickly/as needed and we're always available.	• We have more communication with some CGs than others. • Providing support, training and information to our sponsoring CGs and co-sponsors is a high priority. Significant effort is made through both formal and informal mechanisms to ensure CGs and co-sponsors know their responsibilities and liabilities as well as IRCC program requirements. Our SAH is available by phone, email or Teams meetings to answer questions and provide guidance to sponsors. • Examples of Formal mechanisms to provide support, training and information-sharing to CGs and co-sponsors include: • Mandatory Initial Inquiry Teams meeting - Upon receipt of a sponsorship request, SAH will schedule an initial Teams meeting with the CG representative making the inquiry. This meeting will be scheduled to discuss all sponsorship inquiries even if the CG has previously sponsored with us. During the initial inquiry meeting there is an exchange of information. In addition, we have numerous resources that are sent to sponsors about our sponsorship process as well as their sponsorship responsibilities. Some of these documents must be reviewed and signed by the CG

Most respondents indicated that they expected to be highly involved and work in partnership with each sponsor group, cited 11 of 15 times 73%). Four respondents (27%) said they encourage sponsors to work independently. Three said they have experienced friction with CGs from time to time (*Exhibit 28*).

Exhibit 28		
Select the statement that best describes the <u>relationship</u> between your SAH and the sponsor teams		
	#	%
We encourage sponsors to work independently from our SAH.	4	26.7%
We expect to be highly involved and work in partnership with each sponsor group.	11	73.3%
We experience friction with constituent groups from time to time.	3	20.0%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	15	

SAHs were able to elaborate further about their assessments of the working relationships with their sponsor teams (*Exhibit 29*). Where responses indicated a high level of involvement, respondents chronicled their involvement throughout the process. Where responses indicated encouragement to work independently, respondents acknowledged differences in sponsors' experience, agency and specific circumstances (e.g., locations), the desire not to micro-manage, but also the need for more formal interactions to monitor the process. Friction between one SAH and some constituent groups was described as "CG reps going rogue and not acting like a partner..." Reporting requirements are also a source of friction.

Exhibit 29

Expect to be highly involved and work in partnership

- Since our SAH does not provide direct hands-on settlement support, we conduct settlement monitoring calls with the CGs and co-sponsors at various times throughout the sponsorship period. The CG must indicate on the settlement plan that they agree to participate in this monitoring program before the application is submitted.
- I require quarterly reporting both pre & post arrival, I host monthly mtgs online for all our teams, I share my cell number with all our teams. I'm in contact with all our teams on a regular basis.
- Our organization shares a symbiotic relationship with all of our co-sponsors. In essence, we explain the fundamental responsibilities to our co-sponsors in trust that they can handle the matter on their own, however, we regularly follow up with all co-sponsors and the newcomer families to ensure that their pre- or post-arrival needs are being met in a timely manner, and should they require any assistance we readily draw on our many years of experience in resettling refugees to offer them support.
- Right from 'Expression of Interest to sponsor' stage through the orientation, training and CG vetting process - our SAH ensures that all existing and new Constituent Groups are provided with required information about the entire sponsorship process. Through application review process, regular follow-ups and monitoring of the settlement process, our SAH is highly involved in partnership with each CG.
- Through our regular pre- and post-arrival meetings, our staff are constantly engaged with the CG members to help, guide and provide any support that they may require from time to time.
- We work directly with co-sponsors during the entire process from application submission to end of settlement year.
- We work very closely with our sponsors including completing forms, training, post-arrival we do regular check ins with sponsor and refugee. So far our relationship has been very good, sponsors have been responsive. The only difficulty has been completing the forms as sponsors are often lost and we put in a lot of time on these forms

Encourage sponsor to work independently

- Our constituent groups work independently but we have at least four meetings between the prearrival meeting and the final monitoring. Because our groups can live in a variety of circumstances, i.e., small towns, rural and cities we help out when called upon. Some of our groups are experienced but other times we can have up to ten interactions with our groups in order to assist them where needed.
- We allow our groups a lot of agency and independence and are there to support where needed and we check in according to a schedule. We do not micro-manage, but we remain available and do our best to help where we can.
- We expect the sponsor to manage their responsibilities independently.

Experience friction with constituent groups from time to time

- Some CGs do not like the follow-up and reporting requirements.
- Our SAH has experienced a small number of CG reps going rogue and not acting like a partner that does not communicate well with our office or follow the IRCC policy - these are usually legacy cases from the past or CG who were only BVOR and then move into PSR not understanding the different in programs and the responsibilities such as post monitoring and fund raising etc.
- I wouldn't say "highly involved", but "involved" for sure. Sponsors fill out paperwork and are responsible for settlement duties. Our SAH provides the necessary supports. Friction does happen when CGs don't fulfill their reporting responsibilities.

All respondents indicated that their SAHs provide guidance for their CGs. 12 of 15 (80%) indicated that they are significantly involved, some also indicating that guidance is provided when there is evidence of need or when requested. No respondent indicated that their SAH provided almost no guidance at all (*Exhibit 30*).

When asked to elaborate on their responses, SAH representatives made the following points:

- Explanations, training and guidance are provided throughout the process.
- Guidance required is variable across teams: new CGs require more help, with finances in particular; mature groups receive guidance upon request.
- A case managers is assigned to each group.
- Resources are made available at key points; some may offer financial support.
- Reviews of settlement plans, budgets, application forms.
- Monitoring of post-arrival activities is done through surveys and meetings.
- Specific weeks are allocated for each CG; calling once or twice a month with encouragement to ask questions.

Exhibit 30		
Select the statement that best describes the guidance your SAH provides to constituent groups to prepare the materials required for the sponsorship		
	#	%
Our SAH is significantly involved in the work of every sponsor group.	12	80.0%
Our SAH provides some guidance when the SAH observes that it is needed	5	33.3%
Our SAH provides some guidance when sponsors ask for it	5	33.3%
Our SAH provides almost no guidance at all	0	
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	15	

The **Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP)** is a program, funded by IRCC, established to provide support to SAHs and their CGs. Respondents were asked to indicate if their SAH works to connect CGs with RSTP to successfully prepare application forms and answer questions about the process (pre-arrival preparation) and, if their SAH works to connect CGs with RSTP about post-arrival issues? The results on each of these items was split. Eight of 15 respondents said their SAH does connect their CGs with RSTP to successfully prepare applications, and seven of the 15 respondents said they connect their CGs with RSTP about post-arrival issues.

The efforts to connect CGs with RSTP for assistance with preparing applications varies from sending groups links to workshops, to advising groups to attend webinars, to requiring groups to participate in RSTP's webinars. Some SAHs reach out to RSTP themselves directly for guidance and do not connect sponsors "to avoid any miscommunication or delay in process" or preferring to build relationship with CGs themselves. For post-arrival issues some SAHs refer people to settlement agencies and other service provider organizations.

Two SAHs are also settlement agencies and provide direct support themselves. Seven of 15 respondents (47%) indicated that they refer sponsors to settlement agencies and confirm that those agencies provide needed support. Four make the referrals and confirm that agencies respond to those queries but did not go as far as to confirm that the support needed was provided. Another four make the referrals but of not follow up on the experience. Three SAHs do not refer CGs to settlement agencies at all. (**Exhibit 31**) Every respondent indicated that their SAH communicates with sponsors as soon as they learn about updates for their applicants.

Exhibit 31

Select the statement that best describes how your SAH refers private sponsors to settlement agencies to gain information about whatever they might need to settle newcomers.	#	%
Our SAH is also a settlement agency, and we provide direct supports.	2	13.3%
We refer sponsors to settlement agencies for services, but do not follow up on their experience.	4	26.7%
We refer sponsors to settlement agencies and confirm that agencies respond to queries.	4	26.7%
We refer sponsors to settlement agencies and confirm that agencies provide needed support.	7	46.7%
We do not refer sponsors to settlement agencies for services.	3	20.0%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	15	

Addressing post-arrival issues is the main focus of PRSN's activities. SAH representatives were asked to describe their organization's involvement with a sponsor group after newcomers arrive. No one indicated that their SAH only responds to crisis situations. Eight (53%) said their SAH is actively involved throughout the sponsorship period. Nine (60%) said ask for periodic updates on applications. Seven follow IRCC reporting requirements.

Exhibit 32

How would you describe your SAH's *involvement* with a sponsor group after newcomers arrive?	#	%
Our SAH is actively involved throughout the sponsorship period.	8	53.3%
We ask for and get periodic updates to determine status of sponsorship.	9	60.0%
We only respond to crisis situations and help groups with problem-solving.	0	0.0%
We follow IRCC requirements for status reporting.	7	46.7%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	15	

A number of SAHs characterized their involvement through a series of check-ins, described as regular, bi-weekly, monthly, or quarterly, and at month 13. Check-ins take the form of surveys and meetings, including both newcomers and sponsors. In one case, home visits are conducted during year one. Any issues are raised, including the need for assistance. Crisis situations were mentioned several times, including one mention of having contingency plans. The circumstances can also vary from case to case.

> We are very active with post-arrival. However, we find in legacy cases where there has been no active CG, the communication from CS is challenging as once the family arrives, they are hard to get a hold of... Often the PA themselves becomes very busy and hits the ground running and gets employed almost from day 1. This is not something we as a SAH encourage. In some cases, they are choosing work over going to important doctor apt. We have tried to educate the CS and PA that this is not what is expected, and that sponsor funds are given so they can focus on language skills, health needs etc. However, at the end of the day, it is the decision of the PA and we can only control the message and not how they receive it and what they decide to do with it.

SAH representatives were asked to characterize their interactions with sponsors during the year after the newcomer(s) arrived, by selecting from a series of words. 93 words were selected altogether by the 15 respondents. Every SAH representative who responded selected *supportive* to describe their interactions with sponsors; three selected *critical*.

Exhibit 33					
Descriptor	**#**	**%**	**Descriptor**	**#**	**%**
Sympathetic	9	60.0%	Absent	2	13.3%
Supportive	15	100.0%	Disengaged	1	6.7%
Facilitating	14	93.3%	Oppressive	1	6.7%
Responsive	14	93.3%	Directive	0	0.0%
Engaged	12	80.0%	Critical	3	20.0%
Positive	14	93.3%	Stressful	1	6.7%
Energizing	6	40.0%	Combative	1	6.7%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS		15			

Respondents were asked to give an overall rating of how they see their SAH supporting private sponsors in response to their needs, pre-arrival and post-arrival. Options provided were: excellent, good, fair, poor and no real support. **Exhibit 34** summarizes the results. Responses were positive (excellent or good).

Exhibit 34				
Overall, how would you rate the support that your SAH gives to private sponsors for their needs?				
	Pre-Arrival		**Post-Arrival**	
	#	**%**	**#**	**%**
Excellent	9	60.0%	7	46.7%
Good / Fair		40.0%	8	53.3%
TOTAL	15	100.0%	15	100.0%

The demands on constituent groups can be quite significant, at times resulting in sponsor team breakdown of some constituent groups. Respondents were asked often they would you say constituent groups had failed. 87% reported that this occurred seldom (less than 5% of the time) or never. No one responded that this occurred frequently (over 20% of the time.

Exhibit 35		
The demands on constituent groups can be quite significant, at times resulting in sponsor team breakdown of some constituent groups. How often would you say constituent groups have failed?		
	#	**%**
Never (0%)	3	20.0%
Seldom (less than 5%)	10	66.7%
Periodically (5-20%)	2	13.3%
TOTAL	15	100.0%

When asked to think about whether sponsor team failure had increased over the past 3-4 years, since COVID-19 emerged, only one SAH representative said yes. The rest indicated that this had not occurred or were not sure or did not know.

Respondents were asked to describe their SAH's experience when a sponsor or sponsor team abandoned the process after it got underway. **Exhibit 36** presents the results. One third (5) had not experience a team member or team abandoning the process. While the rest had, the team was able to continue, mainly through recruitment of a replacement.

Exhibit 36		
Select statements (as many as apply) that describe your SAH's experience when a sponsor or sponsor team abandoned the process after it got underway.		
	#	**%**
A team member(s) abandoned a sponsorship, but the team continued.	1	6.7%
A team member(s) abandoned a sponsorship, but the team continued A team member(s) abandoned the process, but replacement(s) were found.	4	26.7%
A team member(s) abandoned the process, but replacement(s) were found.	5	33.3%
We have not experienced a team member or the team abandoning the process.	5	33.3%
TOTAL	15	100.0%

Although no complete collapse of a team was experienced, the reasons for team breakdowns are provided in **Exhibit 37**. Length of time and delays ranked first, followed by interpersonal relationships among team members and a lack of understanding of the demands of sponsorship. These three response categories were provided; the others were given by respondents.

Exhibit 37		
What would you say are reasons for sponsor team breakdown?		
	#	**%**
Length of time and delays for refugees to be able to travel.	8	53.33%
Interpersonal relationships among sponsor team members.	7	46.67%
Lack of understanding the demands of sponsorship.	7	46.67%
Co-sponsors that do not communicate/engage	1	6.67%
No collapse	2	13.33%
Difficulty but continued	1	6.67%
Sponsors moving	2	13.33%
Secondary migration	1	6.67%
NA	1	6.67%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	15	

SAH representatives were asked to offer their views on the reasons sponsors give for abandoning a sponsorship, what sponsors say are their biggest challenges. **Exhibit 38** gives their comments. Length of time (waiting and delays) figured prominently. Interpersonal issues and personal circumstances (life changes) were also mentioned. Newcomer

expectations (the challenges of adapting to their new home) and personal decisions (i.e., to another jurisdiction) play a role as well.

Exhibit 38
What reasons do sponsor groups give for abandoning a sponsorship? What do sponsors tell you are their biggest challenges?
• It can be years before the refugee family arrives, during that time the settlement team goes on with their live in Canada. Sometimes things change so much that they must step away for the settlement process. We have volunteers that are able to step into most sponsorship roles. Biggest challenge is the waiting.
• Although we have not had a breakdown yet, it seems the funds are the biggest challenge for people
• Change of life events Disconnected or too busy
• Interpersonal issues, other life priorities
• Managing expectations of the newcomers, motivating newcomers to adapt to Canadian lifestyle, conflicts among group members etc.
• Processing times; many years and months without hearing anything from IRCC regarding a case during the waiting period; proof of funds requirements; housing
• Secondary migration - when refugees choose to move away from the community of settlement and sponsors can no longer provide the needed support.
• The long delays, the expectations and responsibilities placed on sponsors, PA's wanting to move to another city (do not communicate this until they are in the country).

Two respondents felt that constituent groups pose difficulties for their SAH. One of those stated, "*Some of them bug us too much!!*". The other explained, "*Most CGs do not pose difficulties to our SAHs. There are only a few exceptions*, …".

Those who felt that CGs do not pose difficulties reinforced that most groups are cooperative, sympathetic and work very hard, but acknowledged that at times, there is friction. Changes in the PSR program have made it difficult for some long-time sponsors, in particular, requirements for documentation. One SAH representative "*believes that co-sponsors add a lot of value to the sponsorship process. Should there be difficulties in communicating sponsored individuals, …the co-sponsors play a role in facilitating that communication so that those families can better receive settlement support.*" Communication is a critical element.

Only one respondent felt that their SAH applies unnecessary pressure on constituent groups through the sponsorship process, stating, "*the reason being that IRCC's ever increasing requirements and monitoring puts the burden on the SAHs and CGs*." Among those who felt their SAHs do not apply unnecessary pressure, providing clarity about expectations from the outset, explaining everything co-sponsors need to know, maintaining open communication and staying involved throughout the process are key.

One respondent offered this: "*The government process is onerous, and the process itself puts pressure on CGs. One of our roles is to orient our CGs to the process, and get them as ready as possible for us. We may put pressure on them, but it is necessary in order for them to be successful.*"

SAH respondents were asked to provide an overall rating of their SAH's experience with sponsors: seven responded "excellent", seven responded "good" and one characterized their experience as "good / fair".

SAHs' Experience with PRSN, its Programs and its Role in Refugee Sponsorship

The last section of the questionnaire focused on SAH's experience with PRSN, its programs and its role in refugee sponsorship. A brief overview of PRSN's offerings was provided, referring to the Workshops and Lunch and Learn sessions and the development of a mentorship program for new sponsors.

Exhibit 39 illustrates that PRSN's service offerings are not being communicated by SAHs to their CGs, with 11 of the 15 respondents not referring to or unaware of those services.

Exhibit 39		
Has your SAH referred private sponsors to PRSN for information-sharing, problem-solving and post-arrival training?		
	#	%
Yes	4	26.7%
No	7	46.7%
We weren't aware of PRSN's services	4	26.7%
TOTAL	15	100.0%

When asked about any feedback that their SAH has received about PRSN's programs, three of the four who had referred sponsors to PRSN's services indicated that the feedback they had received was good; one was not aware of any feedback . As expected from those who had not referred any sponsors for were unaware of PRSN's services, no feedback had been received. There was one exception where one respondent who said they had not referred anyone indicated that feedback they had received was good.

Eleven of the 15 respondents indicated that they would recommend PRSN's services to their sponsors in future. Their comments express strong support ("*Love the lunch and learns and workshops – keep them up please!*"; "It is a good education tool and helps to manage expectations") but also signal the need for PRSN to broaden outreach ("*We would, if we knew more about them, and knew that they would make a difference to our sponsors*.")

Three were firm in stating that they would not refer sponsors to PRSN. One comment expresses the "*Need to see quality and usability of resources first*." Signifying the need to more firmly establish its place in the sponsorship space, another SAH representative states, "*We have things in place and we are encouraged to use the government Settlement Services. RSTP has worked hard to set these up for us. The relationship between SPO's and SAHs has improved since Covid*."

The fifteenth respondent equivocated, indicating yes and no, seeking more information before being certain.

Respondents were asked to provide suggestions for how PRSN could help to strengthen the relationship between SAHS and CGs. The responses provide some key insights, including clarity of roles, managing information flow and accessibility, tracking success and identification of local resources.

Exhibit 40
Do you have any suggestions for how PRSN can help to strengthen the relationship between SAHs and constituent groups?
• I think PRSN has done a great job in strengthening the relationship by finding out the challenges, the struggles and the best practices of the SAH program. • I think it would be helpful to make sure that everyone is on the same page with definitions of who is what. • Because of all the requirements, there is an information overload to our CGs throughout the whole process of sponsorship, which are helpful, but sponsors are overwhelmed with loads and loads information. For most, people don't bother to read everything. I wish for resources which are easy understand and easy to read, so that people are not bombarded with resources. • More tools for post arrival such as tracking successful settlement • Provide local resources specific to geographical communities

The final question posed to SAH representatives, asks if they feel that PRSN can play a bigger role in providing supports and services for sponsors. Seven respondents (47%) said yes, with one advising the Network to, "*Continue to promote PRSN as an opportunity for sponsors to meet and connect, exchange information, network, learn and grow from each other, etc., especially given the changes in the PSR program.*" Another counselled PRSN that, "*more info. session and workshops for those wanting to do sponsorship and what this means and the impact of doing such a large undertaking. The general public is not aware of the challenges of pre-arrival prep work. The misinformation about how easy it is.*"

One of the five respondents who felt PRSN could not play a bigger role explained that "*I really don't know how this group is relevant if we are properly using our RSTP and SPO services. We also have RSAT at immigration who are good at helping in difficult situations.*" Another stated, "*Most CGs want to get their info/communications from one source (i.e. SAH).*" Both of these responses speak again to PRSN establishing its place in the sponsorship space, as mentioned above, and could be received as a challenge rather than dissent.

Three respondents were uncertain about whether PRSN could take on a bigger role, offering these comments:

- *I think you should continue the good work. I think the best things you can offer are the sessions you are already working on - and continue to spread the word about them. These are the kinds of things that SAHs would do themselves if they had more resources.*
- *I think that what PRSN does for private sponsorship with BVOR is fantastic and is a great place for resources. This could also apply to Group of 5 and Community Sponsors. Our SAH has their own association that focuses on issues specific to SAH sponsorships and I believe they are doing a very good job at supporting SAHs.*

Comparing Sponsors' Responses to SAHs' Responses

There are a number of questions asked of Sponsors and SAHs that can be used as points of comparison to see if there is concordance of views between the two groups. Once again, it is acknowledged that samples from each group are not necessarily reflective of each of the populations overall. Particular caution should be exercised with the SAH responses, given its small sample size.

The response patterns indicate a level of divergence of views. The following bullet points identify how the cohorts align:

- When asked to characterize quality of **communication** between sponsors and SAHs, sponsors were more inclined to rate communication higher, saying "excellent" 56% if he time and "good" 35% of the time. SAHs rated communication as "excellent" 27% of the time and "good" 73% of the time.
- Asked about the **relationship** that exists, sponsors characterized it as collaborative 34% of the time; SAHs said they were highly involved 73% of the time. 66% of sponsors said they worked independently, whereas SAHs indicated independent that CGs work independently 27% of the time.
- Guidance from the SAH perspective seemed to favour significant involvement 80%. For sponsors, excellent guidance was the response for 62% of the group.
- 35% of sponsors indicated that SAHs offered no fundraising support; 20% of SAHs responded the same way. SAHs consistently signalled higher levels for direct financial supports, providing access to fundraising platforms and tax receipts, and providing assistance with managing funds by factors of two to four.
- The level of referrals to RSTP were reported similarly between the two groups at around 53-54%.
- SAHs report making referrals to settlement agencies more than sponsors indicated. Nearly 90% of sponsors said they were not connected by their SAHs.
- Neither group felt that they created problems for their counterparts or that SAHs had applied unnecessary pressure on the sponsor teams.
- In rating the overall experience with their counterparts, sponsors described it as excellent 55% of the time or good 24% of the time; SAHs rated the experience evenly between these choices, seven out of 15 (47%) each.