



Survey about Group of Five Sponsors and Community Sponsors: Detailed results

Background

In the fall of 2019, the Canadian Council for Refugees invited responses to a survey in order to learn more about how Groups of Five (G5) and Community Sponsors connect to relevant information and networks – and whether there are gaps. We wanted to know if the CCR could do more to support G5s in networking, sharing information and doing advocacy.

Sponsorship of refugees through a **Group of Five or a Community Sponsorship** is quite similar to, and distinct from sponsorship through a Sponsorship Agreement Holder. In Quebec, sponsorship can be through a Group of Two to Five. For simplicity, in the survey we used G5 to include Community Sponsors and Quebec Groups of Two to Five.

We invited responses from people who:

- Are, have been or are considering becoming a G5 sponsor, OR
- Have information or ideas to share about G5s based on their experience (for example, people who have been sponsored by a G5, or people who work for an organization that supports G5s).

The survey was open from 18 October to 14 November 2019.

Overview of respondents

A total of 82 responses were received. Seven responses were excluded from analysis because they did not seem to be answering the survey questions, leaving 75 responses.

Province (optional field)	G5 sponsor	Community or settlement organization	Newcomer who has been sponsored	Organization involved primarily in refugee sponsorship	Other	Total
AB		2				2
BC	3		1	1		5
MB	7	1		3		11
NS				1	1	2
ON	10	1	1	1	3	16
QC	12	3	1	1	1	18
SK	2	2		3		7
Undeclared	6	3		2	3	14
TOTAL	40	12	3	12	8	75

Those who chose “Other” as the category to describe themselves identified as:

- Private firm
- Faith-based groups (3 Christian, 1 Jewish)
- Immigration consultant
- Private sponsored PR

The survey included a mandatory question on whether the respondent was in Quebec (since Quebec has a distinct program for the private sponsorship of refugees).

Not in Quebec	54	72%
In Quebec	21	28%

Summary of responses

For a high level summary of responses, please see ccrweb.ca/en/g5-survey-report.

Detailed survey responses

1. How do G5s mostly get the information they need for their sponsorship?

Government website	46
RSTP (website and training)	33
Other experienced sponsors	32
Local community organizations	26
Sponsorship Agreement Holders	25
Family members	21
Social Media	12
Other (please explain below)	9

Those who chose “Other” explained as follows:

- RRLIP (Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership)
- It is extremely difficult to get accurate information. We hunt down info mostly by talking to others. Very time consuming.
- (Quebec respondent) Bureau de notre député fédéral et agent du MIFI [Quebec immigration department]

2. Are there some types of information or support that G5s lack?

What to do if the sponsorship application is rejected	35
Follow up with IRCC / length of the process	34
Filling out forms (as sponsor)	30
Ethical questions / how to handle complex situations	27
What to do if the refugees' application is rejected by the visa office	27
How to advocate or get help	26

Filling out forms (sponsored person)	23
Connecting to other sponsors	22
Sponsor training	21
Support during the sponsorship	19
Sponsor responsibilities	19
Information about how to sponsor	16
Information about who can be sponsored	16
Access to settlement services	15
Information about who qualifies as a sponsor	15
Other (please explain below)	9

Those who chose “Other” explained as follows:

- Clear and accurate information about financial requirements/what qualifies as in kind, etc.
- Clarity of what IRCC expectations are in terms of monthly payments to the PA and if there is a need to keep receipts etc for proof
- (Quebec respondent) La rencontre et la communication interculturelle, gestion des attentes et des compréhensions mutuelles.

3. How do G5s connect with other G5 sponsors?

Local community meetings	33
Trainings or networking events	30
Local settlement organization	25
Through a Sponsorship Agreement Holder	19
Facebook groups	11
Other (please explain below)	10
Whatsapp groups	8

Those who chose “Other” explained as follows:

- Families and friends
- Word of mouth
- Known people in community who help to fill out the forms
- RRLIP (Regina Region Local Immigration Partnership) holds meetings several times per year.

4. What are the main challenges that G5s experience that need more advocacy?

Long wait times (in Canada) for processing of the sponsorship application	41
Long wait times for processing overseas of sponsored person	38
Issues related to proving funds available	33
Lack of training and support for sponsors	30
Sponsorship forms and application process	23
Mandatory refugee status determination document	23

Rejection of sponsorship applications (in Canada)	22
Difficulty in understanding things due to limited English/French	21
Rejection of applications of the person sponsored (at visa office overseas)	19
Lack of information about sponsoring	19
(For Quebec respondents) Knowing when the government will reopen the private sponsorship program	14
Getting services for sponsored persons from settlement organizations	10
Other (please explain below)	9

Those who chose “Other” explained as follows:

- Too much information on IRCC + RSTP websites
- The biggest obstacle to G5 sponsorship are constant changes (to the paperwork + additional procedural changes and documents) which confuse both sponsors and refugees.
- Lack of transparency from government regarding changes to program and requirements that they hide then surprise us with
- Unclear process / people get confused about eligibility, SAH, and community group
- Clarification on what is accepted as "source of funds"
- Banks are unable to produce documents required by IRCC.
- A huge gap exists in help with filling in the forms. G5 sponsors with lower levels of English and/or computer literacy really struggle to complete the forms. The forms and the process continue to get more complicated every few months.
- IRCC refusing applications for typos not connected to checklist or for minor things that could be fixed easily (eg. missing email)
- Usually no appeal for refugee sponsorship
- Ways to know how to contact the Group of Five sponsors for education, or networking
- Advocacy with Service Ontario on the rights of sponsored refugees (i.e. for receiving OHIP right away)

Québec:

- Délais de traitements au provincial - évaluation de la capacité financière et délivrance du CSQ après l’approbation de IRCC.
- La date de dépôt des dossiers de parrainage varie suite au recul du MIFI: PEQ, métiers favorisés

5. Please tell us about initiatives for G5s to connect, share information or do advocacy that are working well for you:

- Webinars, trainings, information sessions
- RSTP Information sessions, training programs, conferences, seminars + RSTP website, listserv
- Workshop on G5s (where you can get help with applications); workshops through SAH
- Networking events through Local Immigration Partnerships and Umbrella Organizations for Settlement Serving Agencies.
- Community involvement and training
- Help offered by settlement agencies including meetings they organize; Settlement services groups and settlement agencies near the community

- Facebook groups – works well for questions, sharing resources, support (but one quit Facebook due to concerns). Eg. of FB group: Hand to hand supporting newcomers
- To share info – WhatsApp + through direct connections with other sponsors and refugees
- My area has excellent settlement resources with little wait times including mentorships.
- Crowdfunding platforms (to help with fundraising)
- Online information from IRCC

Québec:

- Groupe géré par la TCRI
- Excellent soutien de la part du Service jésuite des réfugiés Canada. Contact avec d'autres groupes de parrainage de la région via un membre du groupe impliqué dans son église.
- Le responsable de la Justice sociale du Diocèse de St-Jean/Longueuil a mis en relation tous les groupes de parrainage paroissiaux. Bons échanges entre les groupes

6. **What new initiatives would you like to see to improve connection, information sharing and advocacy among G5s? (For example, a G5 sponsors network, webinars, email lists, a website forum, etc)**

- Having conferences, webinars, email listerv, or other methods to distribute updates + best practices
- G5 sponsor training sessions (in person so people can meet and network)
- Workshops (rather than webinars)
- Increase availability of RSTP trainers in the communities (eg. in Saskatchewan)
- RSTP webinars must be available outside of business hours or at different times of the day and to account for time zones and those that work during the day.
- More information sessions/sponsorship presentations are needed in Regina. It is a good idea to ensure the presentations represent a multicultural team
- Website forum
- Email or information support center where G5 could inquire about specific issues case by case. The RSTP representatives have become inaccessible for example in Winnipeg.
- G5 Sponsor network / create some kind of sponsor advocate role that works with IRCC and sponsors to identify and reduce barriers to achieving common goals / creation of an organization of any kind
- Develop a sharable list of G5s (who give permission) so we can reach out and try to support further.
- (Free) support across Canada in helping people fill in the forms.
- Have better considerations for issues facing certain nationality groups (e.g. Eritreans)
- Improving connection between communities
- Meetup opportunities organized by the SAH; peer mentorship for new sponsorship groups
- Meeting gatherings
- Remove the liability if sponsored refugee moves out of province. This is such a fear and deterrent among sponsoring groups lately.
- A "cost calculator" that can be used to input expenses/income, so exact accurate financial information can be captured and shared. An online platform for uploading receipts, etc. would also be a huge help!
- Mandatory Proof of Refugee Status document is a huge, tragic barrier for Syrians trying to sponsor family to Canada. They have the support and the money, but can't get them here because it is impossible to get the RST in many camps currently.

- Raising the allotted number for local SAHs would help families to be reunited. They have such long waitlists..in many cases several years before you would even be considered
- Contacts and cooperation in ROC-O.
- It would greatly help if there could be more Immigration offices who can help in processing the G5 or other sponsorship, and faster way of filling the forms
- More discussion about supporting the sponsored families once they arrive and how to better make them feel part of the community

Québec:

- Un réseau de parrains G5
- Mettre en relation les G5 qui ont déjà parrainé des réfugiés avec ceux qui veulent en parrainer, pour le partage des expériences et éviter les pertes de temps et les démarches inutiles
- Un **guide écrit** pour les groupes de parrainage serait souhaitable pour détailler toutes les démarches administratives à faire une fois les réfugiés arrivés (ex: demande de carte d'assurance maladie, assurance sociale, carte de résidence permanente, francisation, ouverture d'un compte bancaire, ouverture d'un compte avec Hydro Québec, transport en commun, obtention d'un médecin de famille, etc.)
- Encadrement pour les parrains pour éviter certaines erreurs
- Consultations lorsque problèmes avec les accueillis
- Travailler en collaboration avec les organismes communautaires qui ont une expertise qui reflète les réalités et spécificités provinciales - comme par exemple la TCRI au QC.
- Établir un contact avec les ministères tant au fédéral qu'au Québec / Forum d'échange et pouvoir parler à quelqu'un au niveau gouvernemental lorsque les délais s'éternisent pour une mise à jour
- Plus de membres sur le Groupe facebook parrainage de réfugiés syriens, publicité
- Plus d'info de la part du gouvernement
- Formation "comment remplir les formulaires de parrainage", notamment suite aux changements d'orientation des ministères de l'immigration

IRCC

- Need more transparency
- IRCC does not have any input from CSs and G5s about the program; they should open up channel of communication
- There is no client satisfaction feedback mechanism, regardless of the extremely high rejection rate at ROCO: Case Management should proactively overview ROCO rejections. CIC promised to keep 30 days processing for the in-Canada processing before the centralization; now it is 4-16 months... - **it requires review**. No remedies against ROCO's unsubstantiated rejections. They know judicial review is much more expensive than just to re-submit a file. Reconsideration request procedures are meaningless. **Stats should be published**
- IRCC should post updated expectation of the sponsorship for G5 in terms of availability, review time, changes in business process etc.
- IRCC should send sponsors letters when minor information needs to be corrected; otherwise the entirety of the forms need to be redone

7. Any other comments?

- A lot of G5 applications are being rejected but applicants don't know why
- Funds not being accepted as proof

- Once the application is refused – even though sometimes it is by error – IRCC does not re-open the application (e.g. they only communicate with one or two members then refuse applications)
- Lack of transparency from IRCC: We feel as if changes are being implemented without consultation and designed to impede and discourage private sponsorship. In essence we as sponsors (and ultimately the refugee) are being punished for the errors in judgment or sponsor mismanagement of a few. Instead corrective measures should be taken against those that misused funds or did not live up to settlement plans. Most G5s want to fulfill the requirements and honour the expectations. Changes to the application process by constantly putting up roadblocks is ineffective and undermines the Private Sponsorship program and alienates sponsors from coming forward (...)
- IRCC should have an allocation method that is transparent and fair for all aspiring refugees and their sponsors. The current system that mainly looks into a reason to reject a file is not sustainable, and it is cruel to say the least for the entire sponsor and refugee community who eagerly await for the outcome. Making the G5s fragile and untrustworthy creates false hope for the refugee who probably spent the processing time learning and preparing to live in Canada. To the sponsors and refugee families and friends, it is embarrassing to at time can even cause family break downs due to a perceived lack of care by the sponsors.
- More difficulties compared to SAHs: There should not be the restrictions on G-5s eg. RSD. SAH sponsorships do not have to have RSDs. With the RSDs, police record checks, minimum of 3 working etc, it seems that IRCC is doing what they can to frustrate people from submitting G-5 sponsorships.
- I feel like so few G5s are doing advocacy, but let me just say that the requirement of a UNHCR card or something similar really limits who can do something through a G5. I want to see advocacy for Community Sponsorships and G5s being able to sponsor at the same level as SAHs. There is so much variability with SAHs, and even some terrible actions by some SAHs -- and yet SAHs have a wider class of people they can sponsor? Doesn't seem fair.
- The whole program has been turned into money oriented financial mechanism. It became tool for the rich only. Barriers should be identified to make program more accessible for marginalised - refugee communities. Financial requirement became outrageous, it should be revisited. Program integrity is jeopardized by IRCC's lack of transparency and accountability in the in Canada processing. After CPOW's failure it is time to audit ROCCO and dramatically simplify and speed up processing. Some of the latest 'rules' in the Guide are violating privacy (re: source of funds, financial background, etc.) It should be investigated and legally challenged.
- The recent financial requirements and controls (for co sponsors through Constituent groups (SAHs)) make the process more difficult
- Should be more awareness about the program among the Canadian population / difficult to get 5 people to sponsor a refugee / more people should get involved
- Discontinuation of the program – With the current state I am on the opinion that may be better to discontinue both the G5 sponsorship and Community sponsorship until a better solution that considers the lives of refugees and the sponsors and the stressful processing times they have to go through is found
- G5s should be reduced to G3
- Why can the person who completes the documents for a G5 not charge for time and expenses?
- Some issues with settlement agencies

Québec:

- Il serait dommage de dédoubler les expertises plutôt que de travailler en complémentarité avec les autres groupes mobilisés par la question

- Que le gouvernement donne accès à plus de parrainage privé pour aider plus des réfugiés dans le camp des réfugiés

Follow up

A significant number of respondents expressed interest in participating in follow up discussions.

Would you like to discuss possible future initiatives for G5s to connect, share information and do advocacy?

	Not in Quebec	In Quebec	Total	
Yes	32	6	38	51%
No	22	15	37	49%
Total	54	21	75	

The CCR is proposing to follow up on the survey in the following ways:

- Share the survey results with respondents who requested the report.
- Share the survey results with CCR members and others involved in supporting private sponsors and invite input on possible ways forward.
- Share the survey results with IRCC.
- Plan a virtual meeting with respondents who indicated an interest in future discussions to explore possible ways forward.

