



Survey about Group of Five Sponsors and Community Sponsors: High level summary

Private refugee sponsorship is playing an increasingly important role as part of Canada's commitment to support the resettlement of refugees. In response to members' interest in learning more about the current situation facing Group of Five (G5) and Community Sponsors (CS) in particular, the Canadian Council for Refugees developed and distributed an online survey in the Fall of 2019 to identify the interests of these sponsors.

The goal of the survey was to identify the main sources of information for these sponsors, as well as to highlight the gaps, in terms of networking, advocacy and support for Groups of Five and Community Sponsors.

Survey Process

The survey was distributed across Canada by reaching out to individuals and groups who have experience with the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) program. The survey was open from October 18 to November 14, 2019. There were 82 responses from 7 provinces. 75 of the responses were found suitable for analysis and provide the basis for the results presented below. Over half of the responses (40) came from G5 or Community Sponsors. The other respondents included people working with community or settlement organizations, or with organization involved primarily in refugee sponsorship and newcomers who had been sponsored.

Highlights of Survey Results

The following are some of the highlights from the survey. Respondents were able to select multiple responses to each question. "G5" is used below to cover Group of Five (G5) and Community Sponsors (CS), as well as the equivalent programs in Quebec.

1. Sources of Information – where do G5 sponsors get information they need?

The primary sources of information were identified as:

- Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) website (61%)
- Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) (44%)
- Other experienced sponsors (43%)

Additional sources of information included: local community organizations, Sponsorship Agreement Holders and family members.

2. Main gaps – what information or support are G5 sponsors lacking?

The top concerns identified as far as a lack of information or support were:

- what to do if an application is rejected (47%)
- processing time and following up with IRCC (45%)

- completing the forms for both sponsors (40%) and the sponsored persons (31%)

There was also interest in getting information about how to handle ethical or complex situations and how to advocate on behalf of the refugee applicants.

3. Connection – how do G5 sponsors connect with one another?

When asked how G5 members connect with other G5 sponsors, the responses included:

- local community meetings (47%)
- training and networking events (40%)
- local settlement organizations (33%)

4. Top challenges – What are the main challenges G5 sponsors experience in sponsorship?

The main challenges that G5s experience were identified as:

- long processing times for applications in Canada (55%) and overseas (51%)
- issues related to providing proof of sponsorship funds (44%)
- lack of training and support for sponsors (40%).

Other issues included difficulties with completing applications forms, providing required documentation, and challenges due to language difficulties and computer literacy.

5. What initiatives are currently working for G5s to connect, share information, and advocate?

Respondents were asked to provide information about those initiatives which are working for them. Most common responses included:

- webinars, training sessions and information sessions, including those offered by RSTP, SAHs and settlement organizations
- networking events
- social media and online platforms – Facebook, WhatsApp and crowdfunding sites

6. New Initiatives to Improve Connection, Information Sharing and Advocacy

Respondents were eager for increased support and connection and provided many suggestions for improving the access to information and support for G5s. Some of the main ideas included:

- conferences, webinars, training sessions and workshops to distribute information and share best practices
- more RSTP training available in communities across Canada
- online resources – website, online form, email listserv
- assistance with documents such as completing forms, financial documents, and Refugee Status Determination

7. Quebec – what are the unique issues for sponsors in Quebec?

Sponsorship in Quebec is slightly different from the rest of Canada, as applications for sponsorship are administered by the Quebec government, which sets its own rules. These include Groups of Two, Three or Four people, as well as Groups of Five.

We had 21 respondents from Quebec, with some of the unique concerns listed including:

- Communication with federal and Quebec immigration departments.
- Uncertainty as to when the Quebec government will reopen the private sponsorship program.
- Delays in processing of applications by the Quebec government.
- Need for more networking, mentoring and training to help with information, advocacy and sharing best practices (in addition to existing networks of support, which are appreciated).
- Several needs identified for support for post-arrival settlement.

8. Feedback on the PSR program – regarding Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) processes

A substantial number of respondents expressed frustration with what they see as a lack of clarity and transparency from IRCC around G5 sponsorship processes. Sponsors cited a lack of consultation on the part of IRCC when making changes to the G5 sponsorship process, including increased pressures and expectations, particularly around new and stricter financial requirements and refugee status determination.

Sponsors were interested in improved communication and collaboration with IRCC to address issues in several areas including the rejection of applications, lengthy processing times and providing information about changes to forms and processes.

Thank you to those who participated in this survey.

Want to be added to an email list to learn more or get involved with CCR responses to this survey? Email G5@ccrweb.ca.

For detailed results of the survey, please go to ccrweb.ca/en/g5-survey-report

