

GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE AT A GLANCE

Independent Evaluation of the United Kingdom's Sponsorship Program

As sponsorship programs move forward globally, many countries are beginning to evaluate their pilots. These offer shared learnings for community sponsorship around the world. Soon after New Zealand published its pilot [evaluation](#), an independent [evaluation](#) of the United Kingdom's community sponsorship pilot was released by the [Institute for Research into Superdiversity \(IRiS\)](#) at the [University of Birmingham](#).

While the UK pilot launched in 2016, the evaluation covers the period from January 2017 to January 2019, including over 100 interviews with sponsors and refugee adults. Professor Jenny Phillimore, Director of IRiS, [reflected on the findings](#), suggesting that sponsorship "has the potential to not only transform the lives of volunteers and refugees but also to change attitudes of populations."

Overall, IRiS found that the program is working well and benefitting sponsors and refugees as well as wider communities. The evaluation concludes that the sustainability of sponsorship in the UK depends on scaling the program, recruiting and retaining sponsors, and promoting the program based on positive sponsor testimonials.

According to those interviewed, sponsors were motivated to participate due to "personal values such as the desire to promote the common good or social justice, motivations to contribute to actions that bring communities together and the opportunity to find a new purpose in life." Practically, IRiS found that some of the challenges facing groups included raising funds, filling out paperwork, and finding housing. However, they noted that efforts to better support groups are already underway, including sponsor training and information developed by [Reset](#). The researchers also recommend arranging for peer-to-peer mentorship between sponsors to encourage groups throughout the application process and entire sponsorship experience.

While refugees were generally positive about their experience of sponsorship, they highlighted common challenges such as language learning, navigating institutions, building social networks, and moving toward independence. In general, the study identified that managing expectations was as a key factor of successful sponsorship, especially with regard to the process of integration.

The report ultimately affirms the potential of sponsorship to provide emotional and practical support to refugees throughout the resettlement process as well as its positive impact on communities.

The evaluation was officially launched on July 4 at a [Summit for sponsors](#) at the University of Birmingham.

UNHCR's Three-Year Strategy on Resettlement & Complementary Pathways

The [UNHCR's Three-Year Strategy \(2019-2021\)](#) was recently publicly released. Of note, the Strategy recognizes that sponsorship can have a positive effect on receiving societies:

Models which engage community members in welcoming newcomers, such as community-based sponsorship, can have a transformative impact on communities through promoting social cohesion and creating more welcoming societies. However this transformative impact is not yet fully harnessed.

The Strategy also highlights the value of partnerships like GRSI, describing it as a "multi-stakeholder multi-sectoral partnership model that has successfully built capacity and promoted community-based sponsorship of refugees."

NEW GRSI RESOURCE SHORT FILM



SPONSORING REFUGEES: WHAT TO EXPECT

Community Sponsorship Momentum in Australia and New Zealand

The **Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative** (CRSI) has **announced** significant funding over the next three years to support **community sponsorship** in Australia. The news comes after an inspiring series of meetings between GRSI representatives and sponsorship actors in New Zealand and Australia at the end of May, demonstrating the enthusiasm for sponsorship in the region. Also, in June, New Zealand's Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) presented the inaugural **process evaluation** of their own pilot at the **International Metropolis Conference** in Ottawa.

States Network: First Meeting in Geneva



On the margins of the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement (ATCR) meetings in Geneva in July, GRSI convened state representatives to mark the creation of a States Network that will focus on improving and expanding community sponsorship globally. The network came about as a result of states wanting opportunities to connect, strategize and share resources on a regular and predictable basis as they develop their programs.

Workplace Sponsorship Case Study An INGO and a Local Organization

A group of colleagues in London, UK, formed the first work-based community sponsorship group in the UK to receive Home Office approval, calling themselves "The Welcome Committee." They sponsored a family of six in 2018 and are currently beginning the process for a second sponsorship.

How did you engage colleagues at your workplace?

As a first step, we spoke with our manager to ensure there wasn't a conflict of interest with our work. From there, we started to gather information on how to become community sponsors and met with a representative from "Citizens UK," a civil society organization in the UK, who provided inspiration, encouragement and resources to help us on our way. With this in mind, we organized an all-staff event to gather interest from others in our organization. We put out 20 chairs and ended up with 100 people in the room! On a separate occasion, we invited Nick Coke from the Salvation Army, a member of one of the first community sponsorship groups in London, to visit the office and give an account of his experience as a sponsor. It was very inspiring! We ended up with 14 very committed people who turn up every week

for meetings, and a broader group who get behind everything we do.

How did you fundraise for your sponsorship?

Our fundraising target was £18,000 (the minimum requirement for two families), but we were able to raise an incredible £45,000! Fundraising was surprisingly quick and easy. One of the most successful strategies was fundraising by appealing to our colleagues' sugar cravings through bake sales... We also organized a craft fair, raffle and organized a way for people to donate online. Fundraising really brought people together, got them excited, busy, and engaged people outside of the organization, including local businesses. A neighboring barbershop even asked their customers if they'd like to contribute while they were getting their hair trimmed!

What challenges did you encounter and how did you resolve them?

Getting people to see their workplace as a community capable of sponsoring refugees [was a challenge]. One person from the business world said, "oh yes, refugee sponsorship is really interesting, but we're not really a community." Our group has demonstrated that community is not limited to neighbours, nor does it depend on geography. Communities grow organically when people come together with a shared passion around something they care about. Our group is comprised of people who used to work a floor apart but who had never met, of people who live inside and outside of the city, people from different backgrounds and so on, but we were brought together through the opportunity sponsorship has provided.

What has been the impact of workplace sponsorship on you and your colleagues?

Most people joined the sponsorship group driven by the opportunity to directly support refugees and ensure that people arriving in the UK had a positive experience integrating. In fact, they themselves have also benefitted from the sponsorship experience, gaining new skill sets, such as allyship, project management, event planning, leadership, etc.

What is GRSI?

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative is a partnership of five organizations – the Government of Canada, UNHCR, the Open Society Foundations, the Giustra Foundation and the University of Ottawa. It aims to help other countries set up their own community-based refugee sponsorship programs, strengthening local communities and improving the narrative on refugees in the process.

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