

GLOBAL REFUGEE SPONSORSHIP INITIATIVE

SPECIAL EDITION/ US LAUNCHES WELCOME CORPS PROGRAM

Ordinary Americans can now privately sponsor refugees through Welcome Corps, the US' new private sponsorship program.



US Secretary of State, Antony Blinken announcing the launch of the United States' Welcome Corps program in a [video address](#) on January 19, 2023.
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The US Department of State recently **announced** a new program called **Welcome Corps** that enables Americans to directly engage with refugee resettlement by forming Private Sponsor Groups. The target for the first year of the program is to mobilize 10,000 Americans to become refugee sponsors and offer support to at least 5,000 refugees.

Welcome Corps is modeled after other successful programs in a number of countries, including Canada. The first privately sponsored refugees are expected to arrive through the new program in April 2023. In the first few months of the program, sponsored refugees will arrive from sub-Saharan Africa.

Are you a policymaker or civil society leader designing a refugee sponsorship program?
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The program will be rolled out in two phases: matching and refugee identification. In the matching phase, which will take place in the first six months of 2023, private sponsors will be matched with refugees whose cases are already approved for resettlement under the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). In the second phase, starting in mid-2023, sponsors will be able to identify refugees whom they wish to sponsor and refer to the USRAP for resettlement through an innovative algorithm.



A refugee family sitting with a community member at their front steps.
© Welcome Corps

Private Sponsor Groups consisting of at least five individuals will provide support to refugees, in addition to those they would customarily receive from resettlement agencies. Groups are required to support the refugees for their first 90 days in their new community, including securing and furnishing initial housing, greeting the refugee newcomers at the airport, enrolling children in school, and helping adults find employment and access public benefits. According to a recent poll conducted by **YouGov** using a sample of 5,474 U.S. adults,, eight in ten Americans who indicated they personally knew someone who is a refugee to the US. were in favour of Welcome Corps.

A consortium of non-profit organizations with expertise in welcoming, resettling, and integrating refugees will be funded by the Department of State to support the Welcome Corps. The **Community Sponsorship Hub** will lead the consortium, which includes the **Church World Service**, **Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services**, **The International Refugee Assistance Project**, **The International Rescue Committee**, and **Welcome.US**. These organizations will provide guidance and support to Americans sponsoring through the program by overseeing sponsor vetting, providing training, and monitoring the program.

The consortium will also distribute funds to community organizations who apply to participate in the Welcome Corps as Private Sponsor Organizations (PSO). PSOs will be responsible for mobilizing and coaching Private Sponsor Groups throughout the application and sponsorship process. Since the launch of the program, a number of community organizations have already come forward as PSOs including **Alight**, **Every Campus A Refuge**, **HIAS**, **Home for Refugees USA**.

Check out the **Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative** on Twitter!

Follow **@theGRSI** on Twitter for more updates on **#communitysponsorship**

Responses to Welcome Corps

"In establishing the Welcome Corps, the United States sought to build on best practices on refugee private sponsorship around the world, including the successful private sponsorship program that Canada has operated for more than four decades."

Julieta Valls Noyes, Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, said in a statement covered by The Canadian Press.

In response to a question by Ann O'Brien, Director of Sponsorship at Integrated Refugee & Immigrant

Services, asking about the importance of the program for refugees in, Papy Sunga, a refugee sponsored by a community member in Boston, said **"Refugees come not because they want to visit but because they face a lot of challenges including war. When they are received by a community, they feel that they have someone who can heal what they went through in the past."**

© Welcome Corps YouTube Channel



An Afghan refugee family arriving at Dulles International Airport, Virginia. Photo by Kevin Lamarque / Reuters.

"[Welcome Corps] is a concrete step towards not just rebuilding, but also innovating US refugee resettlement to increase capacity and impact."

Elizabeth Foydel, Director of the Private Sponsorship Programme at the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), said in a statement published on IRAP website.

What is the GRSI?

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative is a partnership of six organizations – the Government of Canada, UNHCR, the Open Society Foundations, The Giustra Foundation, The Shapiro 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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