

Refugee Sponsorship: Financial Support Information for AURA Sponsors

Introduction

Sponsored refugees are entitled to receive adequate and effective support. Your sponsorship is a contractual agreement between you (the sponsors), AURA (your Sponsorship Agreement Holder or SAH) and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). This contract comes with minimum financial obligations determined by the government of Canada's Private Sponsorship Program rules and AURA requires sponsors be prepared to cover additional expenses.

Financial support is a major component of your responsibilities. It gives sponsored refugees the chance to develop language and other work-related skills to help them find meaningful, well-paid work in the longer term as well as integrate well into their community and Canadian society. These guidelines are also in place to make sure and refugee newcomers have agency and financial independence during their sponsorship.

For sponsored refugees, the sponsorship period is an opportunity to dedicate time and energy towards learning (or improving) their English and making Canada their new home.

The information in the following pages will help you understand and plan your financial responsibilities.

- Section 1: Total Funds Required
- Section 2: Funds Required in Advance
- Section 3: Start-Up Support
- Section 4: Monthly Financial Support
- Section 5: Creating a Budget

Information related to finances post-arrival can be found in your AURA Handbook for Refugee Sponsorship (provided during training sessions and available online, www.auraforrefugees.org, in our Sponsor Toolbox).

Note: When we refer to “you” in this document, we are referring to the sponsor group as a whole.

The Government of Canada's rules around minimum financial support can get very complex, particularly when sponsoring multiple family units, adult children, or providing significant in-kind support.

Please feel free to contact us at any time for assistance or with questions. We'd also be glad to mail you print versions of our materials if you are accessing them online.

Please contact marin@auraforrefugees.org or 416-588-1612 x0.

Section 1: Total Funds Required

The table below provides AURA's general estimate of the total cost of sponsorship. However, only you can calculate an accurate estimate for your situation.

The financial support required to fulfil your responsibilities will vary based on the real cost of living in your community, any available supports from the community and/or the refugees' family members, in-kind donations, the composition of the family, and their unique circumstances and needs.

Your financial commitment will last for **1 year** from the date of arrival.

During this time, you will be responsible to provide enough money or in-kind support to cover each family member's:

- Start-up costs (e.g. furnishings, clothing),
- Housing,
- Basic needs (e.g. food, personal care),
- Transportation,
- Communication.

AURA sponsors **must** also:

- Ensure a reasonable standard of living,
- Repay the immigration/travel loan (approx. \$1,200-\$1,500/person) to the government of Canada before the end of the sponsorship.

| # | Family Composition | Estimated Total Cost |
|---|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Single Adult | \$20,000.00 |
| 2 | Couple | \$30,000.00 |
| 2 | Adult + Child | \$30,000.00 |
| 3 | Adult + 2 Children | \$35,000.00 |
| 3 | Couple + Child | \$35,000.00 |
| 4 | Adult + 3 Children | \$40,000.00 |
| 4 | Couple + 2 Children | \$40,000.00 |
| 5 | Adult + 4 Children | \$45,000.00 |
| 5 | Couple + 3 Children | \$45,000.00 |
| 6 | Adult + 5 Children | \$50,000.00 |
| 6 | Couple + 4 Children | \$50,000.00 |

We strongly encourage you to raise additional money to cover further supports that will allow the newcomers to make the most of their first year here. Here are some examples of things sponsors can provide or pay for, over and above the minimum requirements:

- Renters insurance (highly recommended!)
- Dental costs, medical devices that are not covered by provincial/federal coverage,
- Emergencies, unforeseen circumstances,
- Educational costs such as university applications, language proficiency tests, specialized courses, certified translations,
- Recreation programs, bicycles, children's camps, excursions,
- Computer, other technology helpful for employment/education.

The items listed above are not mandatory for sponsors to provide. However, since sponsorship is about setting newcomers up for success, if your group can afford to provide/pay for something that will have a long term benefit, you should certainly consider it.

Section 2: Funds Required in Advance

AURA will tell you how much money you need to raise/provide *before* we can submit your sponsorship application to the government of Canada. We generally use the Government Cost Table amounts as a guide (see table).

| # | Family Composition | Required Before Submission (Cost Table) | Estimated Total Cost |
|---|---------------------|---|----------------------|
| 1 | Single Adult | \$16,500.00 | \$20,000.00 |
| 2 | Couple | \$24,800.00 | \$30,000.00 |
| 2 | Adult + Child | \$26,700.00 | \$30,000.00 |
| 3 | Adult + 2 Children | \$26,700.00 | \$35,000.00 |
| 3 | Couple + Child | \$26,700.00 | \$35,000.00 |
| 4 | Adult + 3 Children | \$28,700.00 | \$40,000.00 |
| 4 | Couple + 2 Children | \$28,700.00 | \$40,000.00 |
| 5 | Adult + 4 Children | \$32,300.00 | \$45,000.00 |
| 5 | Couple + 3 Children | \$32,300.00 | \$45,000.00 |
| 6 | Adult + 5 Children | \$35,500.00 | \$50,000.00 |
| 6 | Couple + 4 Children | \$35,500.00 | \$50,000.00 |

Funds are required prior to submission because the signatories to the application become financially liable as soon as an application is submitted. At AURA, we are responsible for ensuring all sponsored newcomers receive adequate financial support, and therefore require a large portion of the money be provided in advance.

Location of Funds: Most AURA sponsorships involve an Anglican Church, which holds/dischurses the funds on behalf of the sponsors. In some cases, AURA holds/dischurses the funds. Sponsors will coordinate disbursements with the Church/AURA to ensure newcomers receive timely payments.

In-Kind Support: Even if there will be significant in-kind support, the Government Cost Table amounts are required before submission. In some special circumstances, AURA *may* submit an application before this amount is reached, and these exceptions will be determined by AURA on a case-by-case basis.

Adult Children:

- IRCC considers each child over the age of 18 an adult. They must receive their own money monthly for basic needs, transportation and communication even if they are dependents residing with the rest of the family.
- Additional funds will therefore be required for each child over the age of 18.
- Be aware of children turning 18 while the application is in process, or during the sponsorship year.

For Blended Visa Office Referred (BVOR) Sponsors: Refugees sponsored through the BVOR Program will receive 6 months of financial support directly from the government. The amount required before submission is approximately 50% of the Estimated Total Cost.

Additional Information:

More information about the Government Cost Table: http://www.rstp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Sponsorship-Cost-Table_May-2018.pdf

Section 3: Start-Up Support

Start-up refers to the material support required at the beginning of a sponsorship so that newcomers can get established.

The amount of start-up support provided ranges depending on the resources of the sponsor group. IRCC provides a minimum dollar value in the table below.

For start-up, sponsors purchase and/or provide:

- household items
- kitchenware
- basic furniture
- linens and towels
- food staples
- clothing/winter clothing
- deposit for utilities
- internet installation
- last month's rent
- school supplies
- cell phone
- (if possible) computer

- Start-up costs can be reduced by in-kind donations, **but can never be replaced entirely.**
- Newcomers must receive some money directly to purchase a few new items of their choice.
- Some items such as mattresses, personal clothing, shoes and boots must be purchased **new**, not donated second hand.

| Start-Up Costs Minimum | |
|------------------------|------------|
| Family Size | Amount |
| 1 | \$3,300.00 |
| 2 | \$5,100.00 |
| 3 | \$6,300.00 |
| 4 | \$7,500.00 |
| 5 | \$8,600.00 |
| 6 | \$9,800.00 |
| Plus 1 | \$1,100.00 |

Additional Information:

The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) has created an online calculator which includes start-up: <http://www.rstp.ca/calc/?lang=en>

IRCC's Information about start-up (click "Start-Up Costs" top right): <http://www.rstp.ca/en/sponsorship-responsibilities/resettlement-assistance-program-rap-rates/>

Section 4: Monthly Financial Support

From the funds raised, the sponsored newcomer(s) must receive money each month to cover:

- Housing (rent and utilities)
- Basic needs (food, personal care)
- Transportation (1 transit pass/person)
- Communication (cell phone)

You must determine what the appropriate monthly amount will be for your sponsorship. All sponsors must provide, at minimum, the equivalent of Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) rates, as shown in the table below.

RAP is the government program that provides support to government assisted refugees. RAP rates are the minimum standard for all private sponsorships. If you do not provide at least RAP rates monthly, you are in breach of your contractual agreement.

In most circumstances it would be impossible for a newcomer/family to live on these monthly amounts, and sponsors will need to provide more in order to ensure a reasonable standard of living. RAP rates are only enough in very particular situations (e.g. free housing).

| RAP RATES (Minimum Monthly Financial Support) | | | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------|-------------|----------|--------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| # | Family Composition | Basic Needs | Shelter | Housing Supplement | Transportation | Communication | Total monthly | Monthly x12 |
| 1 | Adult | \$343.00 | \$390.00 | \$200.00 | \$151.50 | \$30.00 | \$1,114.50 | \$13,374.00 |
| 2 | Couple | \$494.00 | \$642.00 | \$200.00 | \$303.00 | \$30.00 | \$1,669.00 | \$20,028.00 |
| 2 | Adult + Child | \$360.00 | \$642.00 | \$200.00 | \$151.50 | \$30.00 | \$1,383.50 | \$16,602.00 |
| 3 | Adult + 2 Children | \$360.00 | \$697.00 | \$200.00 | \$151.50 | \$30.00 | \$1,438.50 | \$17,262.00 |
| 3 | Couple + Child | \$494.00 | \$697.00 | \$200.00 | \$303.00 | \$30.00 | \$1,724.00 | \$20,688.00 |
| 4 | Adult + 3 Children | \$360.00 | \$756.00 | \$200.00 | \$151.50 | \$30.00 | \$1,497.50 | \$17,970.00 |
| 4 | Couple + 2 Children | \$494.00 | \$756.00 | \$200.00 | \$303.00 | \$30.00 | \$1,783.00 | \$21,396.00 |
| 5 | Adult + 4 Children | \$360.00 | \$815.00 | \$200.00 | \$151.50 | \$30.00 | \$1,556.50 | \$18,678.00 |
| 5 | Couple + 3 Children | \$494.00 | \$815.00 | \$200.00 | \$303.00 | \$30.00 | \$1,842.00 | \$22,104.00 |
| 6 | Adult + 5 Children | \$360.00 | \$844.00 | \$200.00 | \$151.50 | \$30.00 | \$1,585.50 | \$19,026.00 |
| 6 | Couple + 4 Children | \$494.00 | \$844.00 | \$200.00 | \$303.00 | \$30.00 | \$1,871.00 | \$22,452.00 |

- RAP rates do not increase much with the number of children, because families with children under 18 also receive the monthly Canada Child Benefit (CCB) directly from the government.
- Family composition is important when calculating minimum monthly financial support:
 - The government of Canada considers anyone over 18 years of age to be an adult and therefore a separate family unit.
 - Adult children must receive their own money every month for basic needs, transportation and communication even if they are dependents residing with the rest of the family.
- RAP provides allowances for maternity food, clothing, newborns and special dietary needs. If these are relevant to your sponsorship, you must provide, at minimum, the same amounts.

Additional Information:

Complete info on RAP Rates:

<http://www.rstp.ca/en/bvor/rap-resettlement-assistance-program-rates/>

The Refugee Sponsorship Training Program (RSTP) RAP rate calculator:

<http://www.rstp.ca/calc/?lang=en>

Section 5: Creating a Budget

Sponsors must complete a budget document that reflects your financial support plan. A draft must be submitted for approval by AURA before AURA can submit the sponsorship application to the government of Canada.

Around the time of arrival, AURA will ask you for an updated copy. As your SAH, AURA is required to keep a final copy on file.

You have options:

- 1- AURA Simple Budget
- 2- AURA Detailed Budget
- 3- Create your own document

See AURA's Website > Sponsor Toolbox > Financial Support > Section 5: Creating a Budget (www.auraforrefugees/budgets)

Budgeting Considerations:

- Each sponsorship is unique, there is no “one size fits all” budget.
- Sponsorship is a contractual obligation with rules around the minimum financial requirements, but your job is to ensure the newcomer's basic needs are met.
- Be careful not to provide too much financial support that will set newcomers up for a difficult post-sponsorship transition.
- Avoid creating a relationship of dependency by providing a monthly amount that far exceeds what they might earn/receive after the sponsorship. If you have enough money, consider paying for certain specific additional programs/expenses that will benefit them in the long term.
- Families with children will receive Canada Child Benefit Payments (\$450-\$550/child/month). However, CCB cannot be counted in your budget as sponsor support.
- Families with many children will receive a large CCB, which may enable you to provide a monthly amount closer to RAP rates. However, you can never go below RAP Rates because of CCB.
- CCB applications can take a few months to process and the first payment will be retroactive. Budget and explain accordingly.
- Newcomers should know how much money they will get, when, how and from whom. Avoid surprises!
- AURA sponsors are required to repay the Immigration Travel Loan to the Government of Canada on behalf of newcomers. Budget \$1,200-\$1,500 per person.
- BVORs will receive 6 months of financial support from RAP.
- Many start-up items can be provided in-kind instead of purchased new, such as furniture, clothing, household items etc.
- Personal items (mattresses, footwear, personal clothing) should not be provided second hand.
- Regardless of how many donations your group can get, newcomers must be provided with some start-up money so they can choose and buy new items.
- Sponsored refugees have the right to self-determination, including in finances. This means that while you must provide financial support – you cannot control or micro-manage how they use it.
- Strive for a structure where newcomers receive the same amount every month, and pay their rent, expenses etc. directly, themselves.
- The financial structures you develop will depend on the financial literacy and experience of the people/person you sponsor – every case is different.
- Shortly after arrival, meet to discuss the budget with the newcomers, including where funds came from, how you determined the monthly amounts, ensuring bills are paid, and how you can best work together to balance financial support with supporting self-sufficiency and independence.
- When a child turns 18, CCB payments end. Children over 18 must receive their own financial support for basic needs and communication. Plan and budget accordingly.
- Be prepared if a child will turn 18 before arrival or during the sponsorship. Ensure the parent knows well in advance how much their monthly support will decrease or change.