

Frequently Asked Questions

Through the Welcome Corps, Americans work in groups of at least five to welcome refugee newcomers by securing and preparing initial housing, greeting refugee newcomers at the airport, enrolling children in school, and helping adults to find employment. Learn more about the role of private sponsors and eligibility requirements for the Welcome Corps.

Most importantly, sponsor groups offer a sense of welcome, belonging and inclusion for families that have left far more than their worldly goods behind—they've left behind friends, families, and the social networks that help us thrive. These shared acts of welcome bring communities together while making it easier for refugee newcomers to adjust to life in the United States.

Interested in learning more? [Watch a recent information session](#) to hear from sponsors who have already welcomed newcomers into their communities and members of the Welcome Corps team.

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1. What is the Welcome Corps?

The Welcome Corps is a new program that empowers everyday Americans to come together to privately sponsor refugees, building on our country's long tradition of providing refuge. Through the Welcome Corps, Americans can apply to form Private Sponsor Groups (PSGs) to welcome refugees into local communities and directly assist refugee newcomers as they build new lives in the United States. As a private sponsor in the Welcome Corps, you will work with other members of your PSG to take on tasks like securing and furnishing initial housing, greeting the refugee newcomers at the airport, enrolling children in school, and helping adults to find employment. These shared acts of welcome make it easier for refugee newcomers to adjust to life in the United States and strengthen all of our communities. While welcoming refugees through private sponsorship is a significant responsibility, you already have the most important skill you need to succeed—knowledge of your local community—and you will receive support from the Welcome Corps team throughout your sponsorship journey.

The Welcome Corps was launched on January 19, 2023, by the U.S. Department of State, in coordination with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Department of State is funding a consortium of non-profit organizations with expertise in refugee resettlement, protection, and welcome to implement the Welcome Corps. This consortium includes Church World Service/Refugee Welcome Collective, the Community Sponsorship Hub (CSH), Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services (IRIS), the International Refugee Assistance Project (IRAP), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), and Welcome.US.

2. Can you tell me a little more about the refugees who will be welcomed under this program?

Refugees are individuals outside of the United States who have been forced to flee their home countries due to persecution or a fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. They often live in refugee camps and cities outside of their home countries until they can either return home, locally integrate within the country to which they fled, or be permanently resettled to a third country like the United States.

Through the Welcome Corps, you will support individuals who have been found to be refugees by the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, and who the U.S. government has approved for resettlement to the United States through [the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program \(USRAP\)](#). Refugees are referred for resettlement when resettlement is their best possible durable solution—meaning they cannot return home and do not have any prospects for local integration in the country to which they fled. Before coming to the United States, all refugees admitted through the USRAP, including refugees supported through the Welcome Corps, will complete thorough security vetting and a health screening by the U.S. government. Only those refugee applicants who are cleared through an extensive security vetting process, including vetting by U.S. government law enforcement and intelligence agencies, are approved for resettlement to the United States.

Many of those who will be welcomed by private sponsors in the first few months of the Welcome Corps will come from Sub-Saharan Africa, where they have been waiting for years for a durable solution.

Beginning in mid-2023, the Welcome Corps will expand to allow private sponsors to identify refugees in need of protection whom they wish to sponsor and refer refugee applicants for consideration to the USRAP, subject to program criteria established by the U.S. government. Further information on this program expansion will be made available in the coming months.

WelcomeCorps.org

3. Can I sponsor a specific refugee family member, friend, or other individual that I know who is still overseas and I would like to help resettle in the United States?

No, not at this time. The Welcome Corps is not currently able to accept applications from private sponsors who identify specific refugees overseas they wish to support and help resettle in the United States. In the first and current phase of the program, private sponsors approved to participate in the Welcome Corps will be matched with refugees who have already been approved for resettlement to the United States through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP).

In mid-2023, the Welcome Corps will expand and roll out a second phase of the program that will allow private sponsors to identify a specific refugee individual or refugee family overseas whom they wish to sponsor and refer to the USRAP for consideration to be resettled in the United States, subject to program criteria established by the U.S. government. Further information on this expansion of the Welcome Corps will be made available in the coming months. To stay in touch and learn about further developments in the Welcome Corps program, you can join our email list [here](#).

All refugees referred to the USRAP by private sponsors will need to complete the same processing requirements as all other USRAP applicants to be approved for resettlement, including the determination of eligibility for refugee status through an interview overseas conducted by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, security vetting by U.S. government law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and a medical screening.

4. When the Welcome Corps program expands and introduces the second phase that will allow me to identify a specific refugee that I wish to privately sponsor, who is eligible to be identified and sponsored?

All refugees sponsored through the Welcome Corps must meet the eligibility and admissibility criteria to be approved for resettlement through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). There are several USRAP processing requirements including the determination of eligibility for refugee status through an interview overseas conducted by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, security vetting by U.S. government law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and a medical screening. For more information on the eligibility and admissibility criteria for the USRAP, please visit: [About Refugee Admissions – United States Department of State](#).

Additional criteria for who is eligible to be identified and privately sponsored through phase two of the Welcome Corps will be established by the U.S. government and announced in the coming months. To stay in touch and learn about further developments in the Welcome Corps program, you can join our email list [here](#).

5. Where is the Welcome Corps offered?

The Welcome Corps makes it possible for communities to welcome refugee newcomers across the United States, recognizing that every community is unique.

As part of your application to form a Private Sponsor Group (PSG) through the Welcome Corps, you will complete a [Welcome Plan](#) which is intended to help you consider how you will support refugee newcomers within the specific context of your local community. Once your application is approved, your PSG will be connected to virtual, ongoing support offered by Welcome Corps experts in refugee resettlement, protection and welcome, and additional tools and resources, including those focused on how to help refugees access local benefits and services in your community.

WelcomeCorps.org

6. Who can sponsor through the Welcome Corps?

Through the Welcome Corps, American citizens and lawful permanent residents can come together to form Private Sponsor Groups (PSGs). To qualify, groups must have a minimum of five members who are over the age of 18 and who live in or near the same community. Groups can be formed by friends, neighbors, work colleagues, members of faith groups, book club members—any group of adults who together meet the requirements. Collectively, PSG members must demonstrate that they have the capacity to welcome. Groups do not need to identify a particular refugee in their application; the Welcome Corps team will match sponsors to refugees selected for resettlement to the United States.

7. Will there be opportunities for colleges and universities to sponsor refugee students through the Welcome Corps?

It is expected that Welcome Corps will open opportunities for colleges and universities across the United States to sponsor refugee students on their campuses, providing critical financial, academic, and integration support to sponsored students. College and university sponsorship will allow diverse campus stakeholders, including staff, faculty, and students, to welcome refugee students, provide them with a softer landing, and set them up for academic and overall success. More information on college and university sponsorship of refugee students will be available in the coming months.

8. What are a Private Sponsor Group's responsibilities?

Private Sponsor Groups (PSGs) commit to providing welcoming services to arriving refugees for their first 90 days in the community. They secure and furnish initial housing, provide for initial basic needs, and make connections to relevant services, such as health care, education, and employment services. Most importantly, PSGs offer friendship and support to those adjusting to life in a new community. For a full list of core sponsorship services that Private Sponsor Groups commit to providing, [click here](#).

The Welcome Corps provides PSGs with access to tools and resources, including a budget template, fundraising support, an arrival checklist, and ongoing guidance throughout the sponsorship period.

9. What is the financial commitment to privately sponsor refugees?

Sponsors must raise a minimum of \$2,375 in cash and in-kind contributions per refugee newcomer being welcomed. This is used to secure and furnish housing and provide for the refugee's initial basic needs, until they secure employment.

Please note: the financial requirement has been updated to align with U.S. government funds provided to resettlement agencies for initial resettlement support of the refugees placed with them in FY 2023. Depending on the cost of living in your community, you may find that you need to raise more than the minimum per capita requirement of \$2,375 in cash and in-kind donations.

[The Sponsor Fund](#), which helps sponsors around the country defray costs of sponsorship by providing grants for initial needs and emergency expenses, can support groups, including diaspora, local faith communities, neighborhood groups, and others, in meeting these costs, ensuring they have the resources they need to welcome.

Upon arrival, refugees are eligible to apply for several mainstream benefits, including supplemental nutritional assistance, cash assistance, and medical assistance. These benefits combined with your support will help them stabilize in their new community.

10. How long is the commitment to privately sponsor refugees through the Welcome Corps?

Sponsors commit to providing friendship, guidance, and financial support for the refugees' initial 90 days in the United States. As it often takes longer for an individual to integrate in their new community, sponsors also commit to making connections to ongoing supports and services, available from local organizations.

Even as the sponsorship commitment is for just 90 days, the relationships built, both between the sponsors and refugee newcomers as well as among members of the sponsoring community, may last a lifetime.

11. What is the application process to become a private sponsor?

The application portal for the Welcome Corps is [now open](#). Here are some things you can do now to begin the application process:

- **Form a Private Sponsor Group.** Find 4 friends, neighbors, or colleagues or connections to join your group. They don't need to be experts in welcoming; they just need to be willing to share their time and knowledge of your community. Be creative about reaching out to various groups in your community as a first step. Members of local faith communities, rotary clubs, diaspora, book groups, veterans groups, neighbors, work colleagues, fellow students, and others may share your interest in forming a Private Sponsor Group.
- **Plan.** Begin outlining how you will welcome the refugees you will sponsor. You'll want to think about initial housing, essential furnishings, and connection to community services like schooling, language classes, and public benefits. The Welcome Plan is a critical piece of your Welcome Corps application and helps guide your group in identifying resources in your community.
- **Start fundraising.** Your Private Sponsor Group will need to fundraise at least \$2,275 in cash and in-kind contributions for each sponsored refugee newcomer. You can begin that work now by setting up a fundraising account and reaching out to members of your community to encourage them to donate. Access fundraising guidance [here](#).

For more information on navigating the application process, visit the [Get Started page](#).

To be alerted about new resources and to receive other updates on the program, [sign up for email updates](#).

12. My community doesn't have affordable housing. Should I apply to sponsor?

Finding affordable housing that provides the best start for refugee newcomers can be a challenge. The Welcome Corps has prepared some [Tips on Securing Housing](#) to guide you in your search and outreach to your Private Sponsor Group's network. Additionally, social service providers in your community may provide helpful housing referrals or provide advice on the quality of life for refugee newcomers in your community.

It is important that the refugee newcomers be able to afford to stay in the housing you have identified after the 90-day sponsorship period has ended. If you encounter difficulties in finding affordable housing in your community, you may consider welcoming a family to a more affordable community nearby where you can continue to commute during the sponsorship period.

13. How are approved Private Sponsor Groups connected to refugees they will welcome?

As part of your Welcome Corps application, your Private Sponsor Group (PSG) will indicate the family size you are able to welcome, along with information about your community's resources. This information, along with other information on your community, is used by Welcome Corps to identify a refugee family that can benefit from the support of your community. Once your application is approved, Welcome Corps team members will be in touch to inform you when they have identified a refugee family for your PSG to welcome.

14. When will privately sponsored refugee newcomers arrive?

The earliest privately sponsored refugees will begin arriving through the Welcome Corps is in April 2023. The application review process will take a few weeks. The sponsored refugees will arrive 1-2 months after your Private Sponsor Group (PSG)'s application is approved by Welcome Corps team members. Your PSG will receive updates throughout the process, including flight details, so that you can greet the refugee newcomer(s) at the airport and take them to their first home in the United States.

15. Will privately sponsored refugees supported through the Welcome Corps be able to come to the United States more quickly than other refugees?

No. All privately sponsored refugees who are supported through the Welcome Corps have been approved for resettlement through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). This means privately sponsored refugees are subject to all the same processing requirements as all other refugees approved for resettlement through the USRAP, including [the determination of eligibility for refugee status](#) through an interview overseas conducted by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), security vetting by U.S. government law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and a medical screening. Privately sponsored refugees will not be expedited or receive preferential treatment in completing USRAP processing requirements. The Welcome Corps operates separately from other humanitarian and immigration pathways, such as [humanitarian parole programs](#) managed by USCIS.

16. How is Welcome Corps different from other forms of sponsorship?

There are many exciting opportunities to help welcome newcomers in your community. Through the Welcome Corps, you can form a private sponsor group and take on direct responsibility for welcoming a refugee newcomer – and when Phase 2 of the Welcome Corps launches later this year, your private sponsor group can “identify” a specific refugee individual or family you would like to sponsor.

Since the formal inception of the US Refugee Admissions Program in 1980, the Department of State has partnered primarily with non-profit resettlement agencies to provide initial resettlement assistance to newly arriving refugees through the Reception and Placement (R&P) Program. These 10 resettlement agencies, through their extensive networks around the country, have a long history of partnering with individuals and groups in the community to resettle refugees. One of the ways they partner is through co-sponsorship whereby a group provides, or ensures the provision of, the majority or all of the R&P services in partnership with a local resettlement agency. By contrast, the Welcome Corps creates new opportunities for everyday Americans to engage directly in refugee resettlement through private sponsorship, independent of and complementary to existing avenues for volunteering with resettlement agencies.

Through humanitarian parole programs like [Uniting for Ukraine](#) or the [Process for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans and Venezuelans](#), you can apply as an individual to welcome a specific displaced person or family of the relevant nationality and agree to provide them with financial and other support after they arrive in the United States as a humanitarian parolee. Beneficiaries of these programs might be able to apply for asylum or adjust to another status once here, but do not enter with refugee status and a pathway to long-term status and citizenship.

17. Is the Welcome Corps hiring?

Thank you for your interest in joining the Welcome Corps team. The Welcome Corps is a program of the U.S. Department of State, administered by a consortium of non-profit organizations with expertise in welcoming, resettling, and integrating refugees into U.S. communities. This consortium is being led by the Community Sponsorship Hub, and includes Church World Service, IRIS – Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services, the International Refugee Assistance Project, the International Rescue Committee, and Welcome.US. Career and consulting opportunities can be found on consortium members' sites respective sites when available.