

## What is the Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (CRSI)?

CRSI is an independent civil society initiative founded by a number of established not-for-profit organisations and funded principally by the Sidney Myer Fund.\*

CRSI is calling on the Australian government and community to adopt an affordable and inclusive refugee sponsorship program that actively engages the broader Australian community and draws on the most successful aspects of the Canadian private sponsorship experience, as well as emerging schemes in other parts of the world.

CRSI believes that the Australian community has the capacity and generosity to support the sponsorship of several thousand refugees per year, in addition to the long-standing government-funded humanitarian migration program.

\*A full list of members and affiliates is available on our website: [www.ausrefugeesponsorship.com.au](http://www.ausrefugeesponsorship.com.au)

## What does a successful program look like?

CRSI's vision for successful community sponsorship includes a program which:

- engages a broad cross-section of the Australian community
- is affordable and attractive to sponsors
- is accessible to refugees in most urgent need of resettlement
- is co-designed by government, community groups and refugees
- provides a way of expanding Australia's resettlement program

Sponsorship places the primary responsibility for assisting refugee newcomers in their first 12 months on local community members who are keen to help, rather than on professional settlement agencies. Professionals still play a key role training and supporting sponsor groups. Accordingly sponsorship provides refugee newcomers with holistic, individualised and intensive support even in locations where there are no professional settlement services. Sponsorship can also have a ripple effect, increasing community awareness of and support for all refugees in a local area, regardless of whether they are sponsored or not.

## What is needed to make this happen?

- Funding for national tools / capacity building / sponsor training and support
- Federal government cooperation / visas
- Engagement of community groups and volunteers
- Support from the professional settlement services
- Willingness of refugees to participate

## Who are sponsors and how are they supported?

A sponsor group would comprise at least five community volunteers who have been trained and vetted to sponsor and assist refugee newcomers. They must develop a settlement plan that meets certain criteria and be associated with a local not-for-profit entity (eg a faith group, school, charity or sporting club). This 'Supporting Community Organisation' or 'SCO' will lodge the sponsorship application and be the official point of contact with the federal government, which will need to approve the sponsorship. The SCO will agree to step in to assist the refugee family in the unlikely event that the sponsor group proves unable to fulfil its role.

Professional settlement agencies would help by training and supporting sponsor groups, utilising training guides and other resources developed at a national level and informed by lessons learned in Canada, the United Kingdom and other countries with sponsorship schemes.

Australia has a proud tradition of offering refugees the chance to rebuild their lives in safety throughout resettlement.

**Community refugee sponsorship can unlock the goodwill of ordinary Australians to help refugees successfully settle and integrate in their local communities and supplement the government-led resettlement program.**



## What is community refugee sponsorship?

Community refugee sponsorship is a practice that enables individuals in a local area to come together to form a sponsor group, which commits to providing financial, emotional and settlement support to refugee newcomers over a 12 month period. The sponsor group becomes deeply and directly involved in supporting refugees to apply their skills, realise their goals and ultimately contribute back to their new communities. **Sponsor groups help newcomers with:**

- local orientation, including meeting refugees at the airport
- enrolling children in school
- finding housing
- registering with government services
- accessing social opportunities and emotional support
- opening bank accounts
- learning English
- using public transport
- getting a drivers license
- finding a job or starting a business

Community refugee sponsorship has been working successfully in Canada for more than 40 years. Ordinary community members in Canada have sponsored and welcomed more than 300,000 refugees since the late 1970s, in addition to those entering under the government-funded resettlement program.

The practice is now spreading around the world with countries including the United Kingdom, Ireland, Germany, New Zealand, Spain and Argentina all having established community sponsorship schemes.

## What are the benefits of sponsorship?

Sponsorship is great for refugees, who can benefit from **personal connections** to help them find their feet in a new country. Refugees benefit from **intensive, individualised and holistic support** provided by committed **local volunteers**.

And sponsorship is great for sponsors, who develop new networks and relationships by coming together to pursue a **powerful shared purpose**. Through sponsorship, ordinary citizens uncover and **build capacities** and communities, and often develop lifelong friendships. Many former sponsors say that sponsoring a refugee is one of the most meaningful things have ever done and sponsored refugees often go on to become sponsors themselves.

Community sponsorship can **enrich civic life** and also **foster social cohesion** and the **full economic participation** of humanitarian migrants in Australia.

Sponsorship can **help regional communities attract and retain migrants** to boost their populations and expand their workforces. It can enable sustainable settlement in regional locations lacking professional settlement infrastructure.

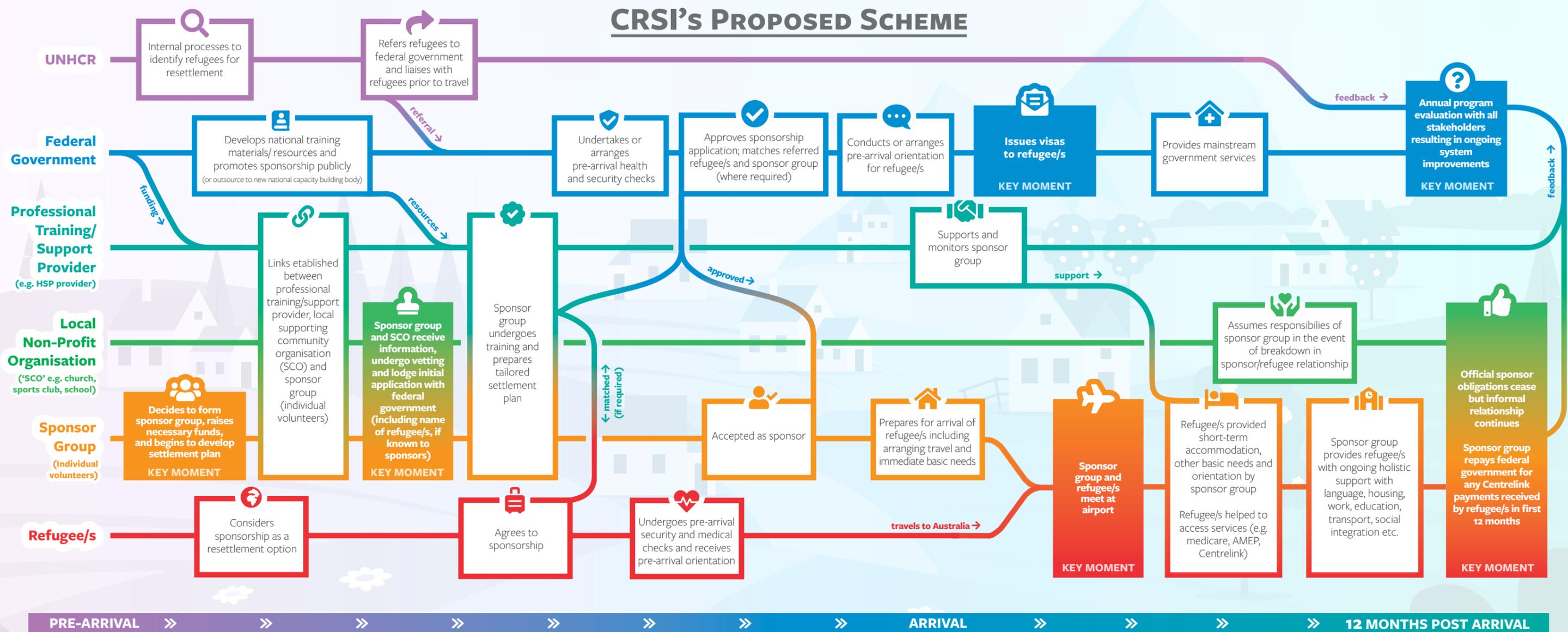
Sponsorship provides a **model for expanding Australia's refugee resettlement program** by drawing on the time and resources of compassionate Australians to supplement the long-standing government-funded resettlement program.

# Community sponsorship journey

The below timeline shows stakeholder actions across an 18 month timeframe, starting six months before arrival of refugee/s in Australia.

## Who can be sponsored?

Sponsored refugees would include refugees identified by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as in most urgent need of resettlement, or refugees who have family or a personal connection in Australia



## Facts at a glance



There are currently 1.4 million refugees around the world in need of a safe place to live, with less than 1% resettled each year

### Integration and regional settlement

In Canada, refugees have been settled in **over 400 locations**, well beyond the 34 metropolitan locations that support comprehensive government-funded settlement services.

In the UK, **about 50% of sponsored refugees have settled in non-metropolitan areas.**

In recent years more than 70% of refugees have been settled in Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane. The Australian government is now aiming to settle 50% of refugees in regional Australian communities.

Canadian research shows that sponsorship has a **very positive impact** on the social and economic integration of refugees with sponsors helping refugees learn English, find work and make local connections.

In Canada, the majority of community sponsored refugees **find employment within a year of arrival.** Sponsored refugees are often supported to **establish their own businesses and create jobs** in their new communities.



Canadian research indicates that private **sponsorship has long-lasting benefits for particularly disadvantaged refugees** including women without high-school level education



**Special sponsorship schemes** can be used to assist particular groups like **LGBTI refugees, women at risk and students.**



The Canadian government has **resettled 327,000 refugees** through its private sponsorship of refugees program since it was introduced in 1979



**Argentina, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Ireland and Spain** have established or are developing community refugee sponsorship schemes



An estimated **2 million** Canadians have been directly involved in sponsoring refugees **since 2017**, with a **further 7 million** estimated to know someone who has sponsored a refugee



Research in the UK found that **sponsors were often motivated to participate** in the scheme in order to **find purpose in their lives**