



**Refugee Welcome  
Collective**

# Co-sponsorship in Practice: Refugee Newcomer Feedback FY23

## Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

## Refugee Welcome Collective

Refugee Welcome Collective (RWC) is a national community sponsorship (CS) technical assistance (TA) and training provider building capacity for community engagement in the refugee resettlement program and expanding community sponsorship to improve outcomes for refugees resettled through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). With funding from the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) and others, RWC collaborates with partners, including all 10 national refugee resettlement agencies (RAs) and Private Sponsor Organizations (PSO) to provide in-depth training programs, weekly learning sessions, learning resources, and on-demand technical assistance for sponsors, community sponsorship staff, refugees paired with sponsors, and community and institutional partners across the United States.

RWC training, technical assistance, learning sessions, and resources are designed based on input from national and local resettlement agencies, sponsors, and refugees paired with sponsors. RWC works closely with a network of national and local community sponsorship experts to identify priority areas. An example of this network is the RWC Membership. The RWC Membership is a group of community sponsorship experts (RWC Members) working at local and national offices who collaborate to share their knowledge and expertise to establish best practices for CS programs across the United States. This refugee feedback report is an example of such collaboration to understand the resettlement journey of recently resettled refugees in the U.S. through co-sponsorship.

## Definition of terminologies

### Who is a refugee?

A refugee<sup>1</sup> is an individual who has fled their home country and cannot return due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on religion, race, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

### What is community sponsorship?

Community sponsorship (CS) is a collaborative effort between groups of people who work together to prepare for and welcome refugees they are paired with<sup>2</sup>. Community sponsorship allows community members to unite and offer personalized, sustained integration support to individuals or families seeking refuge in the United States<sup>3</sup>.

### What is co-sponsorship?

Co-sponsorship is a form of community sponsorship where an organized group of community members partners with a local resettlement agency to provide essential services as well as financial and/or in-kind support over a period of time to a refugee/ refugee family resettling in a community to assist them with integration and self-sufficiency.

### Who are the co-sponsors?

Co-sponsors are a group of people who work together to prepare for and welcome refugee newcomers. Co-sponsors provide key services as well as in-kind or financial support during newcomers' first months in the U.S.

### Scope of work

Following the research objectives and priorities of the Refugee Welcome Collective (RWC) in collecting refugee feedback in FY23, the present project was conducted by RWC through Communication Essentials LLC (CEL), with the main goal of understanding

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1 What is a Refugee? Definition & Meaning (UNHCR)

2 Community Sponsorship Explainer (Refugee Welcome Collective)

3 Community Sponsorship (Church World Service)

if the new and expanded co-sponsorship programs deepen refugee's connection to community members and local resources through co-sponsorship.

Identifying participants' personal information, collecting, and reporting on RWC Members' needs, and outreach to RWC audiences were considered out of scope in this project and communicated as such to the participants when relevant. However, contact information for RWC technical assistance was provided to any participant to facilitate responses to any questions or concerns about their resettlement.

It is pertinent to note two important motivations for this project. The first was informed by the [baseline survey](#) which RWC conducted in December 2022, and the second was deduced from concerns raised at the quarterly RWC membership meeting held in June 2023.

The baseline survey was a survey administered to national and local resettlement agency staff to understand their work, model of community sponsorship programs, agency structure, and numbers of population served, among others. Two questions in the survey asked national and local resettlement

agency staff the following questions: (a) do you collect feedback from sponsors on their experience in your sponsorship program? and (b) do you collect feedback from clients (refugee newcomers) on their experience in your sponsorship program? Responses from seventy-three (73) respondents indicated that staff collected feedback from sponsors more than they did from the refugee newcomers. Figure 1 shows the response to question (a) and Figure 2 shows the response to question (b).

Figure 2: Do you collect feedback from clients on their experience in your sponsorship program?

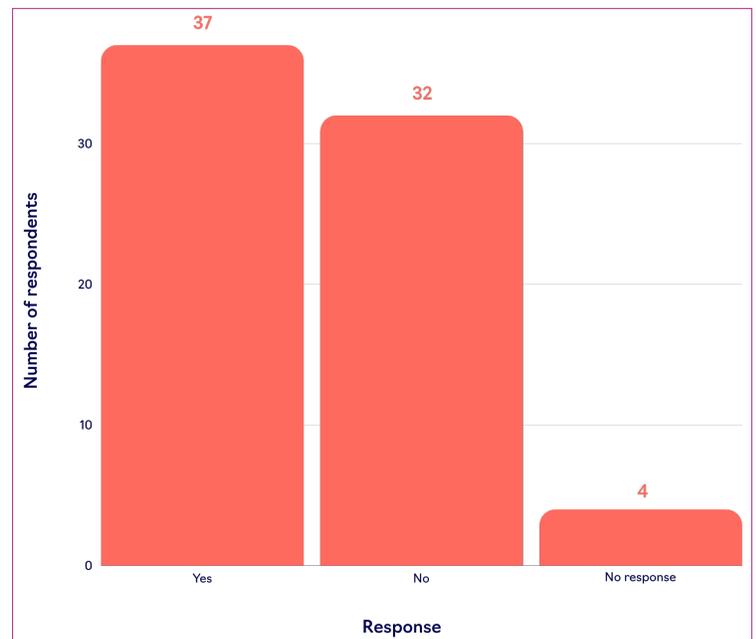
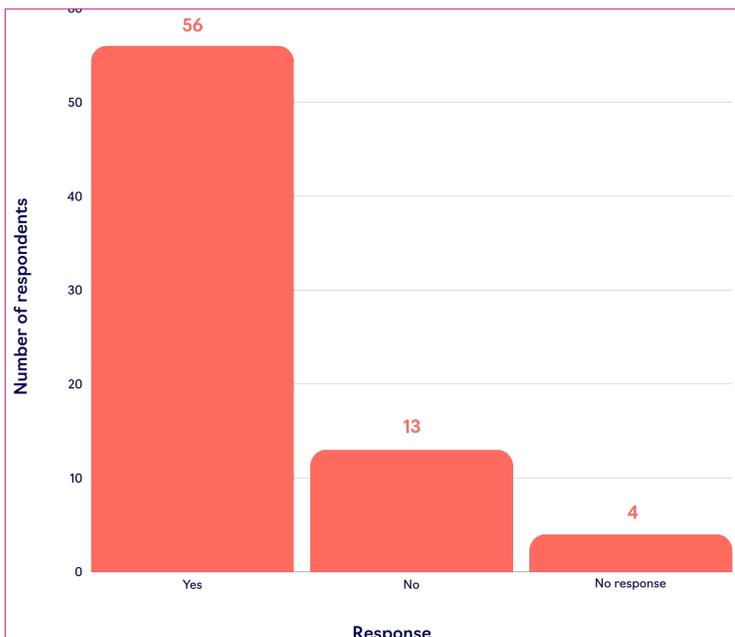


Figure 1: Do you collect feedback from sponsors on their experience in your sponsorship program?



At the quarterly RWC Membership meeting held in June 2023, Members expressed various concerns about collecting feedback from refugee newcomers. Some of these concerns bordered on participant selection, requesting refugee feedback would amount to adding more responsibilities for the already swamped resettlement staff, and methodology. The following two comments helped put this motivation for the project succinctly:

**“We are trying to collect feedback from refugees and [are] struggling; trying to identify who is the best person to solicit feedback; nervous about contributing affecting services.”**

**“[RA] does sample outcomes assessment and will collect for co-sponsorship resettlement assessment, over the phone . . . we asked them to provide a “pre and post survey” to clients who participated in co-sponsorship.”**

Keeping these concerns in mind drove RWC's commitment to this project, and our hope is that our work in this regard will help pilot how refugee feedback can be collected to advance learning in resettlement and provide the necessary education to advance community sponsorship.

The project was guided by indicators identified by RWC. The indicators below are part of the RWC's three-year Capacity Building Project, funded by PRM. Therefore, to facilitate the analysis of research questions, those indicators were used. They are:

**Indicator 1:** percent of paired refugee respondents to report likely to recommend participating in co-sponsorship programs.

**Indicator 2:** percent of paired refugee respondents to report they visited key places in their locality with sponsors such as stores, parks, or doctor's offices, indicating increased community connection.

**Indicator 3:** percent of paired refugee respondents to report that their co-sponsor connected them with ongoing local community resources such as employment, transportation, or English language learning opportunities, indicating an ongoing community connection.

Our interest in these indicators and how they might help us understand our welcoming work lies in the fact that they provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the co-sponsorship program in refugee resettlement. Indicator 1 helps gauge overall participant satisfaction and the perceived value of our initiatives. Indicator 2 indicates increased community connection and integration which is a crucial aspect of successful resettlement.

Indicator 3 demonstrates the sustainability of these connections and their potential to support refugees' long-term integration and self-sufficiency. Overall, these indicators collectively inform our efforts to enhance the impact and quality of the co-sponsorship program and ensure a positive and lasting impact on the lives of refugees in our community.

In addition to these indicators, feedback was more broadly collected to address additional objectives of this project. The project addressed the second objective of informing Refugee Welcome Collective's resource development such as training, program support, and knowledge sharing.

Lastly, it is hoped that this project will contribute to the advancement of refugee newcomer feedback methodology and mechanisms in community sponsorship to improve the efficacy, accountability, quality, and sustainability of community sponsorship programs.

## Methodology

RWC and CEL identified 15 feedback project participants through the RWC Membership across the country, with the criteria that each participant should be a refugee newcomer who had been resettled in the U.S. within the last 12 months through co-sponsorship, specifically where refugees connect with support from community sponsors as well as a local resettlement agency. These participants were contacted by CEL and scheduled for a 45-minute phone interview. Each participant was interviewed by a CEL representative in the participant's preferred language. Interviews were conducted privately and individually, even when participants were part of the same household. Each participant was also sent an honorarium of \$75. Community connectors who assisted in sharing the project information with project participants thereby securing their participation received a \$25 honorarium per connection.

CEL translated and edited the responses (for clarity only), and then proceeded to compile and analyze them to generate the present report.

The interview consisted of a qualitative interview section, lasting approximately 35 minutes, and a survey section, scheduled for 10 minutes. The qualitative interview consisted of 23 main questions that requested open-ended answers, with 8 additional questions prepared to guide further discussion if time permitted. Each participant's response was assigned a random identifier and compiled.

The survey completion section relied on the Jotform online platform, where interviewers would record the participants' answers to nineteen (19) questions which included asking the participant if they would be available and willing to participate in further research efforts. There was also the option for the participants to provide their names to be recorded along these section answers, however, it is of note that only one out of the fifteen (15) participants elected to disclose that information. No participants' names were used in this report.

## Limitations and Challenges

### Participants' difficulties identifying community sponsors

The first common challenge in collecting meaningful qualitative responses arises from the fact that 60% of the respondents did not know what the term *community sponsorship* or *co-sponsorship* means and were initially unable to identify the sponsors who had worked with them throughout the program. In such cases, the interviewer offered a variation of the following brief explanation:

*Through community sponsorship, a group of people work together to prepare for and welcome refugee newcomers. As a community sponsor, one provides key services as well as in-kind or financial support during newcomers' first months*

*in the U.S. Most importantly, community sponsorship provides a sense of belonging, welcome, and inclusion to newcomers – while building stronger communities.*

Even when learning the definition of community sponsorship, either through the interviewer's explanation or by other means, almost 47% of the respondents still had difficulties with the identification of their sponsors. Part of the confusion seems to be the different terms used for the variety of people who interacted with the participants; descriptors often included "volunteers," "my team," "helpers," and "the church people/volunteers." This problem is compounded if we consider language translation and interpretation. A term such as "sponsor" might have several equally valid translations in other languages, and without prior standardized guidance or the availability of a style guide, different linguists will utilize different terms for the same role, adding to the inconsistency and confusion.

### Cultural, social, and individual biases

In any research or feedback project, self-reported data must be seen through the lens of the specific context in which it was collected, as it can be susceptible to various cultural, social, and individual biases. This is especially important when dealing with intercultural communication and refugees, as respondents may have different backgrounds and perceptions regarding data collection through interviews.

Other factors that might compel participants to omit or alter information may be that their culture and/or language encourages indirect responses and communication, which can also play a role within the larger social pressure of conformity or acceptance. Participants may also experience a need or desire for approval from interviewers, authority figures, family members, and other entities which would include the desire to not appear ungrateful

by complaining. Some participants were also keen on praising sponsors, especially after reporting negative experiences. This is generally known as *Social Desirability Bias*<sup>4</sup> or *Response Bias*<sup>5</sup>. Social desirability bias occurs when research participants tend to provide responses that they believe are socially acceptable or favorable, rather than expressing their true feelings, experiences, or opinions. This bias can lead to respondents downplaying negative experiences, exaggerating positive ones, or modifying their answers to align with perceived societal norms and expectations. We can therefore surmise that the participants desire to avoid having the sponsors get into any trouble or difficulty because of their feedback, despite assurance to participants of confidentiality.

On the other hand, participants might feel mistrust towards the interviewer, organization, or other authority figures. Sometimes this is fueled by prior trauma or experiences with providing honest feedback to organizations and individuals in their home country. This feeling is called *Researcher or Interviewer Bias* or *Participant Distrust*<sup>6</sup>. This can impact the participant's willingness to disclose certain information, potentially resulting in incomplete or guarded responses. Researchers must be cognizant of such biases and take steps to establish rapport, build trust, and ensure the participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences and perspectives openly during the research process.

This is not an exhaustive list of possible biases and limitations but offers valuable context to consider when reviewing the responses and utilizing this report.

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4 What is Social Desirability Bias? (Scribbr)

5 What is Response Bias? (Scribbr)

6 An example of participant mistrust can be found in the article "[More than Tuskegee: Understanding mistrust about research participation](#)" (core.ac.uk). The article explores the historical context and various factors contributing to mistrust among minority populations and vulnerable communities when it comes to engaging in research studies.

# Results

## General demographics

Participants were almost equally split between male and female genders, with eight (8) males and seven (7) females. The average age of the participants was thirty-eight (38) years, with a minimum of twenty-nine (29) and a maximum of fifty-five (55). The average time of participants since their arrival to the U.S. was 4.5 months, with a minimum of one (1) and a maximum of twelve (12).

Syria was the country of origin for 46% of the participants, with 40% from El Salvador, 7% from Afghanistan, and 7% from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

## Indicators

### Indicator 1

*Percent of paired refugee respondents to report likely to recommend participating in co-sponsorship programs*

This question was asked to see if the refugee newcomers found participating in co-

sponsorship programs important in their resettlement and to see if they would want their close relatives and friends to participate in the programs. Of the participants, 87% would recommend the co-sponsorship programs. One of the participants noted: "I would. They treated us well." Another one remarked on their sponsors that "All they

Figure 4: "Would you recommend a community sponsorship program?"

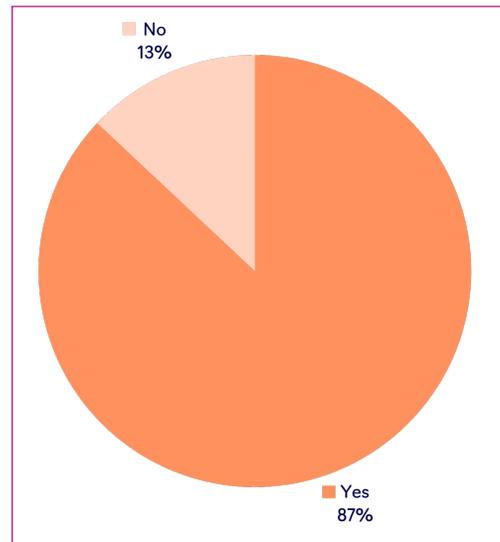
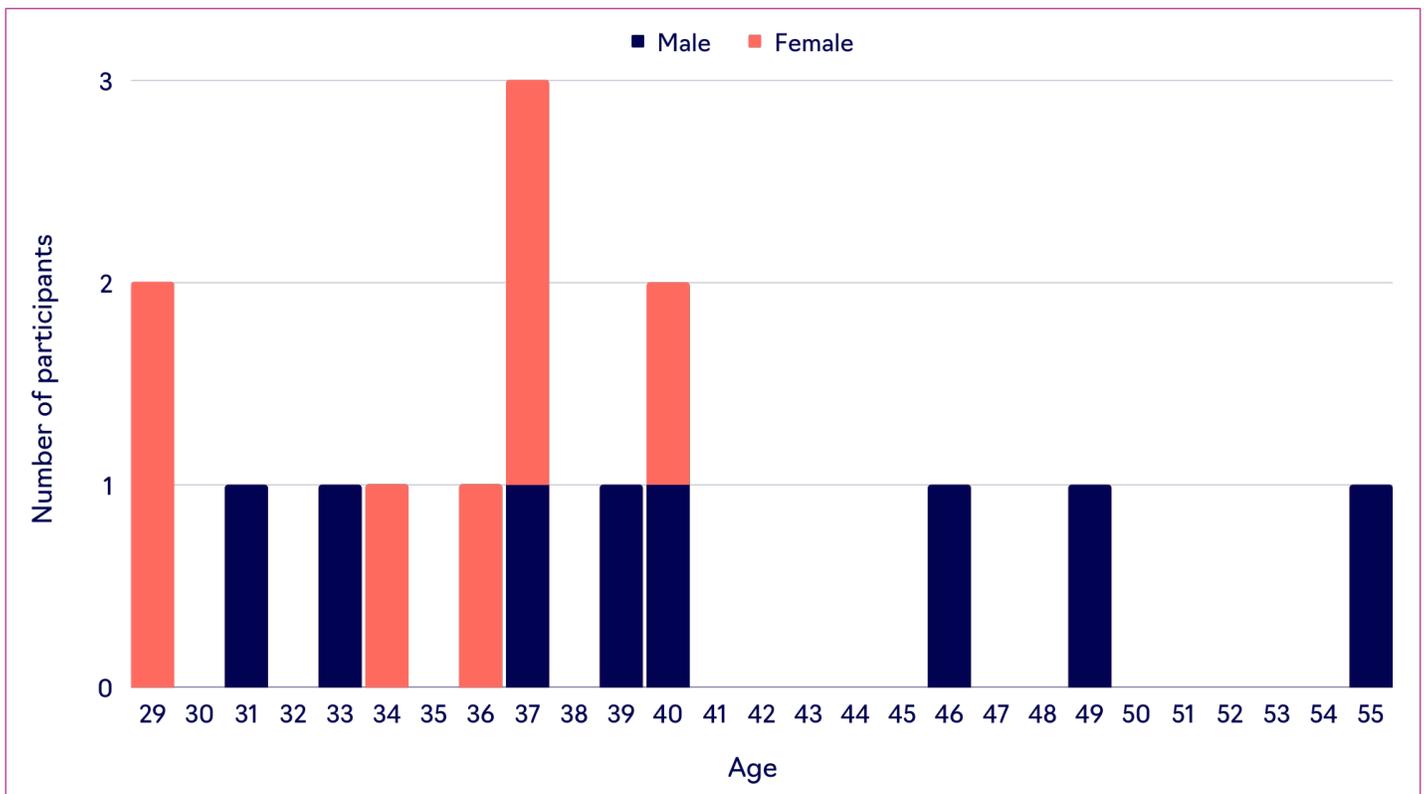


Figure 3: Feedback survey participants by demographic



did was good. They are like our friends up to now.” This also corresponds to the qualitative interview responses, as most participants reported some kind of positive interaction with at least one of their sponsors, crediting their sponsors with them settling successfully in their communities. It is of note, however, that there is a serious inconsistency with the quality of interactions and results depending on individual sponsors, and this contributed to why some of the participants would not recommend co-sponsorship programs to their families and friends. This is addressed in the Refugee Feedback section of this report.

**Indicator 2**

*Percent of paired refugee respondents to report they visited key places in their locality with sponsors such as stores, parks, or doctor’s offices, indicating increased community connection*

All participants (100%) reported that they visited at least one key location in their community alongside their sponsors, with all of them including “grocery stores” as one of the reported visits. 93% of participants also mentioned the “doctor’s office.”

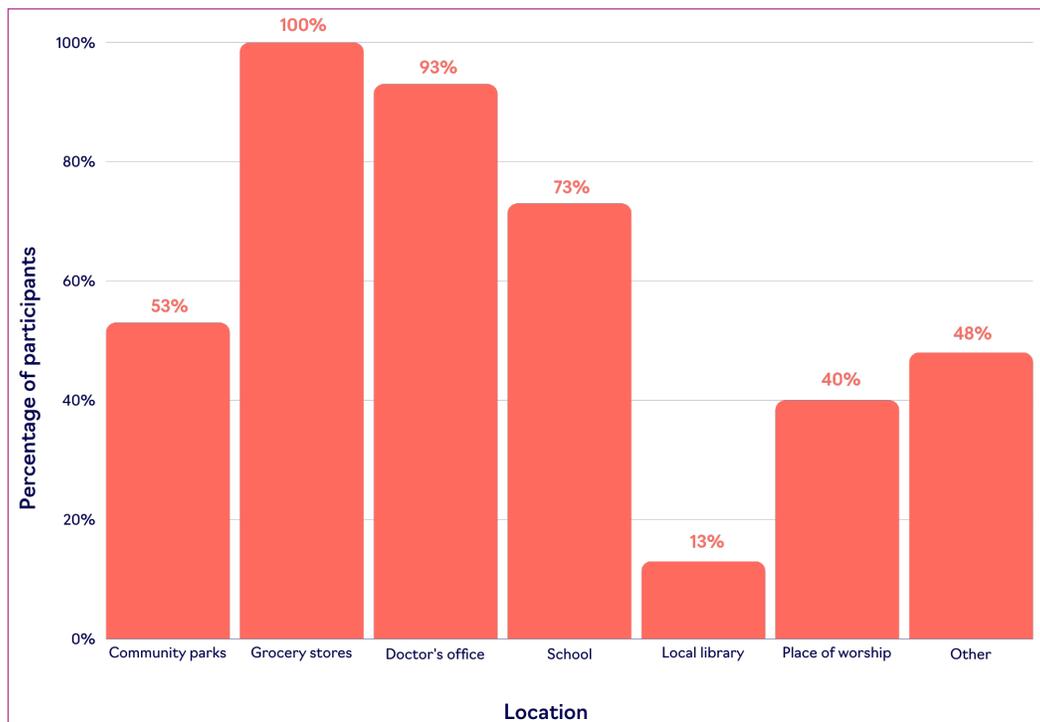
Other locations included sponsors’ homes, museums, aquariums, and physical locations of community resources (food pantry, furniture store, etc.). One participant reported that their sponsors helped them organize a trip to the aquarium for their child’s birthday. Another participant stated that their sponsors helped them visit a medical institution that specialized in their child’s special needs.

**Indicator 3**

*Percent of paired refugee respondents to report that their co-sponsor connected them with ongoing local community resources such as employment, transportation, or English language learning opportunities, indicating an ongoing community connection*

100% of participants indicated that their sponsors connected them with at least two resources. However, there is a variation in judging the effectiveness of such connections, as well as satisfaction arising from these resources aligning with participants’ goals and priorities, which will be addressed in the next section.

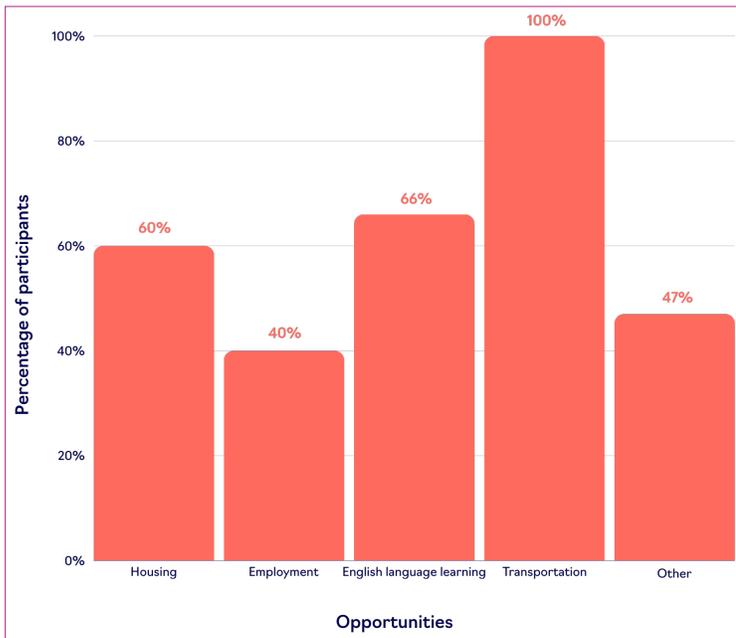
Figure 5: Locations visited with sponsors



Transportation was the most common resource connection, followed by English learning opportunities. There is a largely positive perception regarding these resources, with dissatisfaction arising from the need for more resources related to those areas, or a different approach to the same resources. Other resources included those related to the acquisition of food, furniture, and household items. One participant reported being connected to specific resources about their child's special needs.

There was a largely positive response to sponsors' connections, with several participants indicating their sponsors were largely their main point of contact and reference for questions and concerns arising from adapting and integrating into their new communities.

Figure 6: Connections made by sponsors to community resources

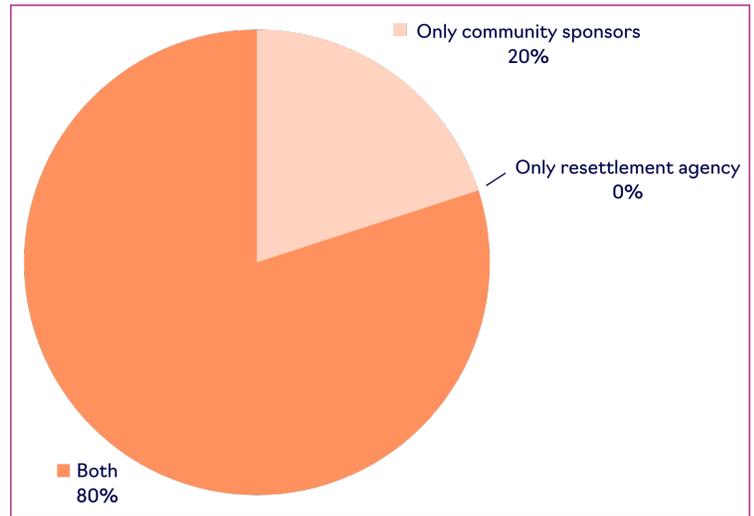


## Refugee Feedback

Participants were asked their opinion on the optimal method of welcoming refugees, among the choices of having only the resettlement agency work with new arrivals, having only community sponsors welcome new

refugees, or having both entities involved. It is of note that 100% of participants believe that community sponsors should be involved, either as sole actors or in tandem with the agencies. This is an opinion shared even by participants who would not recommend the program to others or had a marked negative experience in the program.

Figure 7: "Who should welcome refugees?"



From these results and the larger context of the individual responses, it can be safely concluded that participants share an understanding of the importance and potential positive impact of the community sponsorship program. Participants who would not recommend the program seem to state an opinion related to the current conditions of the program or the specific sponsors that they have had experience with, rather than generalizing negative experiences as an integral flaw of the program itself. Participants who reported negative experiences or challenges with sponsors were also generally able to offer suggestions or identification of areas of opportunity and growth.

Some of the suggestions, reported here verbatim, included (a) "They also should give more training to the volunteers (sponsors). They did everything they could, but they needed more support," (b) "They are super helpful but what I wish for is finding a good

house. Organizations find housing that is not good and I wish my team will advocate for me and my family. The organizations typically don't have time for you, and they might visit you every now and then. The welcome team is there always for you," (c) "It will be great to know what the team is responsible for, so we don't ask them for things that are outside the scope of their work. We don't want to embarrass them. The team did not know anything about important dates in the resettlement process," (d) "It would be nice for them to have the (refugee newcomer's country) or some other distinctive thing when they welcomed us at the airport, so we could identify them easily," and (e) "To have someone trained and prepared who spoke our language. It would have facilitated communication. They should have been prepared for our specific case, as they actually triggered a trauma response in my children when they – a bunch of strangers speaking an unknown language – physically approached them, hugged them and touched their heads. They should have been aware of our trauma or acted in a trauma-informed manner, instead of triggering it."

The quoted suggestions, which spanned all core activities, indicated that while participants' experiences with sponsors varied, adequate training for sponsors should be prioritized.

### **Lack of details, an abundance of information**

As stated in the limitations section of this report, one of the main challenges for feedback itself was the difficulties in identifying community sponsors. Having a diverse and broad range of volunteers and organizations function as community sponsors as well as project participants being from different localities with different community sponsorship programs presently results in a lack of consistency in how different individuals are introduced and identified. This

is further complicated by the experiences of refugee newcomers before their arrival to the U.S., as there is a long chain of different organizations and agents that interact with an application process that was identified by 100% of the participants as long and overly involved. 40% of the participants explicitly identified feelings of distress, hopelessness, and similar negative feelings arising from the length of the process and the little to no certainty of success.

In addition to this, all participants reported the training and information provided before the journey was either not sufficient, basic, or too general, with a marked lack of details for each case. Several participants raised the point that they understand safety, security, and the difficulties of coordinating such a great volume of applications play an important role in this lack of clarity, but this still resulted in most of the participants not being provided with information that could have been useful, from clear expectations to specific details on who to meet at the airport, for example.

It is worth noting, however, that some participants mentioned the existence of social media groups on platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp that are actively managed by refugees themselves, and that were a better resource for valuable and relevant information, being that it came from people who had undergone the process themselves.

Although the uncertainty and challenges of the process before refugee newcomers' arrival in the U.S. could be categorized as out of the purview of U.S.-based organizations and sponsors, understanding the context and reality is an important factor in how the approach to welcoming should be constructed.

One such instance would be the first meeting, as several participants reported they had no information on who to expect at the airport,

which puts them in a vulnerable position. Likewise, a participant explicitly mentioned that sponsors did not wear uniforms, IDs, or other distinctive and legitimizing items that could have made identification quicker, especially in situations of long trips where participants were tired, hungry, fearful, etc. Some participants stated that sponsors held signs or flags, but it might be valuable to establish a certain baseline and visible mode of identification that can be communicated in advance to participants, considering that not all refugees are literate, for example.

Six (6) participants reported issues during the first meeting that could be resolved with cultural orientation and trauma-informed training for sponsors; this will be discussed below.

### **Sponsor-refugee relationship**

All participants reported having more than one individual as a community sponsor, and all of them stated that they had positive interactions with at least one of the members of their “welcome team.” Throughout the responses and feedback, there is a generalized sense of gratitude toward sponsors who are generally perceived as volunteers who want to help in a sincere way. Even when their personal experiences seem to contradict this perception, participants were quick to reflect that other families and other sponsors had positive and valuable experiences.

Descriptors such as “warm,” “sincere,” “respectful,” “kind,” and “patient” were often used by grateful participants, with one of them describing sponsors as “they are perfect.” In the best of cases, participants reported that sponsors were willing and able to offer sincere support and had built ongoing friendships with them. Although there are different opinions on which action, resource, or connection is most helpful and valuable, most of the participants identified their community sponsors as important points of contact and reference for resettling

in their new communities.

As previously mentioned, however, the efficacy of the sponsors in this role seems to be inconsistent, with issues arising from, among other things, a lack of training and support for sponsors. This inconsistency was summed up by a participant who, while reporting a very negative experience in which the sponsor team lied to another organization to the participant’s detriment, stated: “. . . they are different from one family to another. I talked to my relatives and their team did different things for them.”

It is also of note that even in some cases where the experience and results were markedly positive, this inconsistency arising from miscommunication and lack of clear limits and roles still appears throughout the responses.

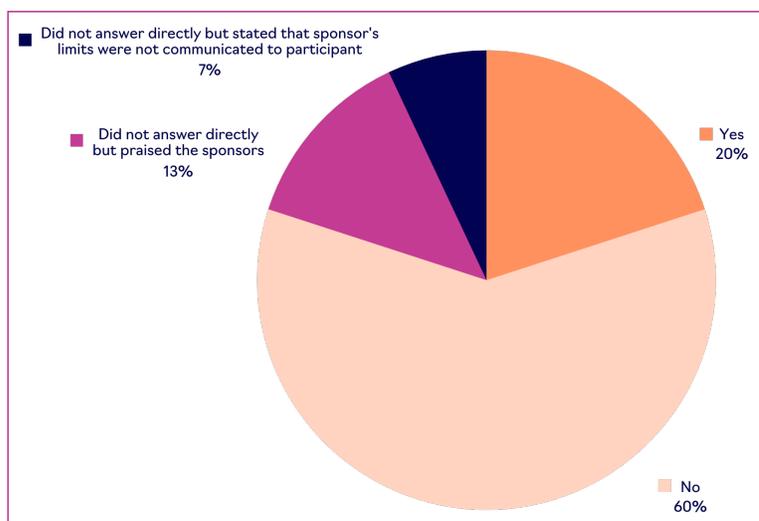
### **Support for sponsors**

Difficulties, challenges, and general efficacy of sponsors were often correlated by the participants to a lack of enough training and/or support for sponsors. As a particularly important example, one participant reported that sponsors accidentally triggered a trauma response in her and her children. Sponsors seem to have acted with the intention of being warm and friendly, but physically approaching the children, especially when speaking in an unknown language, triggered the response. The participant who reported the incident went on to state that this issue most likely arose from sponsors not being cognizant of the trauma that had played a large role in them fleeing their home country.

Five (5) other participants also reported, for example, having to instruct sponsors on how to greet them in a culturally respectful way; that is to say, avoiding males touching females with a handshake or other such gestures. Participants go on to mention, however, that sponsors were respectful to their culture and religion, once they were aware of such guidelines.

Although there might be an argument for the difficulties of pairing refugees with sponsors who have had more than basic training and/or experience in cultural awareness and trauma-informed approaches, it is worth noting that the lack of preparation for sponsors was also reflected in a more general level, as only 20% of participants explicitly stated that their sponsors truly understood their sponsorship roles. Conversely, 60% of participants explicitly stated that their sponsors did not understand the limits and responsibilities of their sponsorship role. It must be kept in mind, however, that several participants added that sponsors tried their best, but either had to constantly ask about their limits and roles or had challenges and issues arising from the lack of clarity.

*Figure 8: "Did sponsors understand their own role as sponsors?"*



### Goals and priorities

Among the stated goals and priorities of the participants, work/financial situation and English acquisition appear in some form or another in each interview. This aligns with the expected results, and there was no major deviation arising from a participant stating their goals or priorities were wildly different than employment, housing, English language learning opportunities, transportation, etcetera.

Even if the participants' general priorities aligned, however, 60% of participants

explicitly stated that their sponsors did not understand their goals and priorities. Some participants offered the opinion that it seemed sponsors did not understand that refugees and refugee families are diverse and have different needs and approaches, with some participants stating that sponsors were either inexperienced or compared them with other families they had worked with that did not share the same background. One participant stated that sponsors "have a specific structure and idea of what they are going to do, regardless of what the family needs."

There were several mentions of sponsors explicitly or implicitly establishing certain goals or expectations – identified as "promises" in some cases – and then having to shy away from them when either it proved to be unachievable in the short-term that is the duration of the program or because it crossed limits and responsibilities that hadn't been clearly communicated.

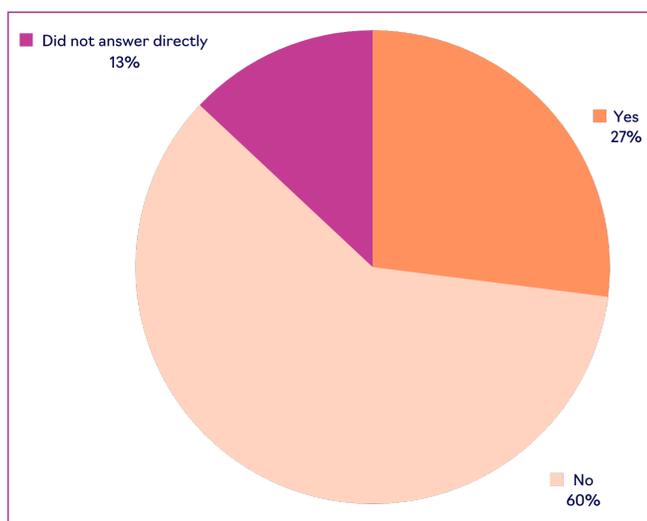
One common frustration was employment. Participants generally commented and showed awareness of the financial needs of their families, and as such placed job acquisition as a major goal and necessity. However, several of the challenges and frustrations arose from either unclear expectations (for example, having sponsors first talk about possible opportunities due to sponsors' connections in the community, only for it to not be available to refugees), or from not discussing job opportunities in the context of short-term and long-term career plans.

The latter conclusion comes from the fact that five participants explicitly stated their desire to work in their field of studies, with one participant being distressed that sponsors seemed to think it was not possible. Again, this situation might be addressed by establishing goals within a time spectrum, by emphasizing the necessity of acquiring a paying job that might not be the best fit

at first, but the possibility of, for example, revalidating professional credentials in the future to acquire better employment.

Both the unclear roles and the misunderstanding of priorities and goals are challenges that become barriers in harnessing the full potential of the community sponsorship program, by impacting how effective the sponsors' support becomes, and how it develops the relationship with the refugee families in the community. Mentioning participants' perception of these issues, it is of note that at best, it is seen as inexperience and lack of organization, and at worst, creates antagonistic relationships where trust is breached. As example of this, one participant stated that they wanted to know exactly what the responsibilities of the sponsors were, as they did not want to embarrass them (the sponsors) by asking for something that was outside of their scope of work. On the other hand, one participant reported being suspicious that sponsors benefit financially in some way with the program, to the detriment of refugees.

Figure 9: "Did sponsors understand participants' goals/priorities?"



## Communication

Woven throughout both the challenges and successes reported in the responses, the issue of communication and language is constantly relevant to the experience of the

participants. Almost all participants reported that lack of English skills is one of the major barriers in their resettlement, and that they lacked consistent interpretation.

Apart from the general unavailability of either interpreters or bilingual sponsors/staff, further issues were reported by participants when they stated that some of the provided interpreters did not have enough command of the participant's language, or that they were inexperienced or untrained in how to handle uncomfortable situations such as having to interpret rude answers. For example, one participant stated that, while she prefers people being nice to her and thus values the interpreter's attempts at softening some communications, it is very important to have a clear and accurate impression of the intention behind people's words. There was also a report of an interpreter summarizing and/or changing what had been said by the participant.

It was also stated by most participants that they often had to rely on automatic translation – usually with smartphones – which was an invaluable tool, but also had limitations in understanding dialects and other components of natural speech, making communication more difficult.

Nevertheless, sponsors were commonly identified as a crucial element in communicating with landlords, hospitals and other services and resources that had no reliable interpretation or language access protocol, even if required by law. In such cases, sponsors became advocates, with a couple of participants reporting, for example, that it was only when a sponsor got involved that the landlord made critical repairs to their dwelling – the justification for not doing it before had been lack of interpretation capabilities.

Perhaps a pertinent statement by one participant would be, "We were told we have the right to interpretation, but it is not respected." As such, sponsors become the

point of contact to resolve some situations.

As for feedback on communication channels that could be effective for the RWC to utilize, there was support for YouTube videos, video calls, WhatsApp channels and other similar platforms. Common benefits stated included the need to have information in the refugees' preferred language(s), and bypassing literacy differences.

There was also support for in-person meetings with sponsors and case workers, with one participant even stating that was what they had expected. There was also a mention of the value of refugees and other peers who had had similar experiences to reach out to new arrivals. This is further supported by the WhatsApp/Facebook groups that were reported by participants, as well as comments such as "they should recruit and involve more Latino people, people who have actually gone through the process and understands what the experience is really like."

## Summary and Conclusion

The community sponsorship program is largely viewed by participants as a positive resource for refugees, even despite individual negative experiences. Sponsorship is perceived as an activity that positively impacts the community connection of refugees who are being resettled. All participants agree and recognize the positive impact of sponsors and their activities, even if they identify challenges or issues.

Even with all the participants agreeing on community sponsorship as being a preferred component to welcome new arrivals, they also identified several areas of opportunity that, by being addressed, would improve the experience for other refugees.

Communication is crucial. Clear communication should include realistic and collaborative setting of expectations, priorities, and goals that directly impact the roles and responsibilities of all key

stakeholders involved in the community sponsorship programs. This communication then allows for important adaption of activities and resources to each family's needs. Identification and connection to effective language access strategies also facilitate communication.

Additionally, more support is needed for sponsors, namely: how to greet at the airport, trauma-informed and cultural awareness training, clearly delimitation of community sponsor roles, and feedback and other mechanisms or systems that allow sponsors to learn and grow in their role.

Overall, the areas for improvement that this project has helped expose include the provision of support for sponsors by RAs, training for sponsors on their core services, roles and responsibilities, boundaries, and refugee goals and priorities. It is important that this training include cultural orientation and trauma-informed care.

Community sponsorship is, at present, an impactful and valuable tool for refugees who wish to integrate into their new community and has the potential to greatly improve and offer a more consistently positive experience and results to each new arrival that goes through the program.

# RWC Resources & Technical Assistance

## Training

- [Lunch and Learn Webinars](#)
- [RWC Online Learning](#)
- [Ready, Set, Launch! A Training for Designing and Managing a Co-Sponsorship Program](#)
- [Documentation and Benefits Video Series for Newcomers and Sponsors](#)
- [Community Sponsorship Essentials](#)

## Resources/Tools

- [Resource Library](#)
- [Community Sponsorship Manual](#)
- [State-by-State Resource Map](#)
- [WelcomeWorks](#)
- [Monthly Budget Tool](#)
- [Community Sponsorship Explainer](#)
- [Baseline Survey Report](#)

## Technical Assistance

