



# **Faith & Settlement Partnerships: Setting Immigrants & Canada up for Success**

World Renew Case Study Report  
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*Faith and Settlement Partnerships: Setting Immigrants and Canada up for Success* is a research partnership intended to explore partnerships between faith-based and government-funded settlement organizations in Ontario. This two-year project is led by the Centre for Community Based Research (CCBR) and funded by the **Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)**. More information about this project can be found at:

[www.communitybasedresearch.ca/Page/View/Faith & Settlement Partnerships](http://www.communitybasedresearch.ca/Page/View/Faith%20&%20Settlement%20Partnerships)

The project used multiple methods. Case studies were held within the local study sites (Toronto, Peel, Waterloo Region, London). Other methods included a literature review and a cross-site organizational survey. Reports were written for each method.

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# Context

In order to provide context for the results that will be outlined in this report, we will first offer a brief description of World Renew’s vision, mandate, and organizational structure. World Renew is one of the community partners of the “Faith and Settlement Partnerships” research project, acting as the community lead for the data collection of this case study and providing its Refugee Sponsorship Program as an object of analysis. As a development and relief agency, World Renew’s social justice commitments emerge out of its faith-informed mandate to serve communities without distinctions<sup>1</sup>.

Members of World Renew, mobilized by their Christian values, “join communities around the world to renew hope, reconcile lives, and restore creation” (<https://worldrenew.net/about-us>). This aspect of World Renew’s mandate is necessary to understand the motivations behind its work in the area of refugee settlement. The restoration of the lives of newcomers in Canada – through a successful settlement process that dynamically involves newcomers, their sponsors, and the larger community – is the ultimate goal of World Renew’s role as a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH).

In its capacity of SAH, World Renew is located at the heart of a network of relationships between diverse settlement-related bodies. In the following pages, we will provide an overview of the vision, structure, and processes of World Renew’s Refugee Settlement Program. By directing our attention to World Renew’s vision, structure, and processes, we will assess this organization’s disposition to be in partnership with sponsoring groups, governments, and settlement agencies.

Before beginning our overview of its Refugee Settlement Program, we should clarify that as a SAH World Renew is one of many community organizations that “have signed sponsorship agreements with the Government of Canada to help support refugees from abroad when they resettle in Canada” (<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders.html>). Therefore, SAHs are private organizations that have entered into partnership with the Canadian government to help administer the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program (PSR), by which private citizens/groups or private organizations take the responsibility of settling newcomers within communities across Canada. In virtue of this unique role in the settlement sector, SAHs are simultaneously in contact with government bodies and sponsoring groups.

In addition to their significance in the development of partnerships, many of the SAHs are faith-informed, thus offering particular relevance to our research.<sup>2</sup> In fact, as a faith-informed organization, World Renew boasts one of the longest SAH track records in the country dating back to the Canadian response to the Indochinese refugee crisis in the 1970s. In addition, World Renew was one of the first

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<sup>1</sup> In an attempt to include a broad variety of initiatives, we will refer to organizations inspired by a faith tradition, such as World Renew, as faith-informed.

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive list of the SAHs across Canada, see: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/refugees/help-outside-canada/private-sponsorship-program/agreement-holders/holders-list.html>.

groups to sign the Master Agreement with the Government of Canada (now referred to as Sponsorship Agreement) at the inception of the Private Sponsorship of Refugees Program in 1979. Indeed, World Renew's experience and positioning in the landscape of refugee-settlement through private sponsorship was key to the success of this case study.

Participants in our interviews confirm the key role that SAHs play in refugee settlement. This is, in fact, one of the emergent themes highlighted in our research results. In most cases, respondents were emphatic about the commitment of World Renew to their sponsoring mission, identifying that, from beginning to end, its staff members serve as companions to refugees and sponsors in the complex settlement process. It is poignant to end this section with the words of one key informant in which World Renew is described:

*"They're a great organization. If there's anything you're stuck on, they're willing to actually go the extra mile and provide that for you. Filling in forms, they actually had a good booklet, we'd been working on a new booklet across Canada to actually help newer sponsors. So they're constantly seeking more information but also they're there to help us if we get stuck and frustrated. They've been a wealth of information."*

*–Private Sponsor*

## **Private Sponsorship Refugee Program at World Renew**

- ***PSR Structure and History:*** The PSR enables Canadians to extend protection to a larger number of refugees and to expand the number of resettlement spaces available to refugees above and beyond that which the government resettles through the Government Assisted Refugees Program (GAR). Through the inclusion of private citizens/organizations in the settlement process, the PSR gives Canadians the unique opportunity to play a meaningful role in the welcome and integration of refugees to Canada. Since its implementation in 1979, the PSR program has allowed Canadians to offer protection and a new home to more than 275,000 refugees.

The PSR program was first introduced in the 1976 Immigration Act (which took effect in 1978). This program allowed individuals to be involved in resettling refugees outside of the GAR Program. The Government of Canada developed and signed Master Agreements with incorporated organizations interested in sponsoring refugees through their constituent groups. These changes in the legal framework took place as the Indochinese refugee crisis was unfolding. The outpouring of public concern and interest to support the Indochinese refugees, combined with the 1976 Immigration Act, effectively launched the PSR. In addition, the Government initiated a one-to-one matching program whereby each private sponsorship was matched by a Government of Canada sponsorship.

- ***World Renew's Motivation:*** World Renew views its involvement with the PSR program as a direct response to a number of passages in the Christian scriptures that highlight the themes of justice, hospitality, and service. Of particular importance is the gospel's call to "welcome the stranger." The scriptural text Micah 6:8 informs World Renew's organizational mandate of "Living Justice, Loving Mercy, Serving Christ" and the Lord's Prayer, "Your Kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven," mobilize World Renew to social action in the construction of a better world.

World Renew is convinced that one tangible way in which the church can participate in the call to action embedded in the Christian scriptures is by helping refugees arrive and settle safely in Canada. The Mission of World Renew's Refugee Office is to partner with churches, individuals, and refugee organizations to facilitate the process of refugee sponsorship to Canada in collaborative activities of love, mercy, justice, and compassion as well as to advocate for refugee rights globally.

- ***World Renew's History with PSR:*** Many Christian Reformed churches, out of which World Renew emerged as an organization, were involved in the Indochinese resettlement movement. As a post-World War II Dutch immigrant community, many remembered the suffering experienced under the Nazi regime, how many tried to protect Jewish people, and the challenges and blessings of moving to a new country. Their experiences made them open and compassionate to the suffering of others and many sought to reach out and provide protection for others in need. Many of the church volunteers involved in responding to the Indochinese refugee crisis have remained active in resettlement and with refugee issues.
- ***Other Involvement:*** Since the inception of the PSR program, World Renew has worked with

churches to respond to the many and diverse needs of refugees from around the world, providing them with hospitality, friendship, support, and encouragement. World Renew has sponsored refugees through various government initiatives over the years such as the Visa Office Referred Program (VOR), the Joint Assisted Sponsorship Program (JAS), the Karen Project, and the Blended Visa Office Referred Program (BVOR). World Renew has sought to be fair and equitable in its resettlement objectives by supporting and resettling refugees no matter their faith or country of origin. It has sponsored refugees of diverse nationalities and from many different countries of asylum. During the recent Syrian crisis, many Christian Reformed churches across the country sponsored Syrians and there was also a large number sought to sponsor the many other refugees in need.

World Renew has been active in the broader sponsorship community through membership in the SAH Association and the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR). World Renew staff members have served on the SAH Council, the NGO-Government Committee, the Sponsorship Agreement Holder Secretariat, as well as the Overseas Protection Working Group of the CCR. Also, for many years World Renew chaired the meetings of the Southern Ontario Sponsorship Group (SOSG) and continues to be an active participant in it.

World Renew has had a history of advocating for policy changes that would be of benefit to refugees and their integration to a new life in Canada. World Renew works in cooperation with advocacy agencies such as the Centre for Public Dialogue, Citizens for Public Justice and the CCR. Lastly, World Renew promotes and provides resources to churches about refugee justice and policy issues and encourages churches to be actively engaged in advocating for the rights of refugees.

## **World Renew (Description and Staffing)**

The staff involved with the Refugee Program has grown since its inception in 1979. Initially, the refugee office was staffed by one part-time position; this grew to two part-time positions, equivalent to just over one full time position. In 2015, with the Syrian crisis, World Renew increased one staff, initially part time and later full time. Then another full time person was hired, for a total of three full time positions (two of these positions will be funded until June 30, 2018). The current staff of World Renew's Refugee Program consists of one Refugee Coordinator and two Program Associates.

World Renew's *Refugee Coordinator* is responsible for supervising all activities of the Refugee Program. Additionally, the *Refugee Coordinator* oversees the approval of refugee sponsoring groups that partner with World Renew, the development of all refugee sponsorship applications, and the development of all communication and advocacy materials and resources. The *Refugee Coordinator* liaises regularly with key program partners such as Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Canadian Council for Refugees and the Sponsorship Agreement Holder's Association. This staff member also manages all special projects and provides presentations to churches and community groups interested in refugee sponsorship.

World Renew's *Program Associates* are responsible for reviewing and assessing refugee sponsorship applications, and providing written and verbal feedback to sponsors and applicants. They offer guidance to sponsors from their initial inquiry about the program to the final submission of a sponsorship application. In addition, the *Program Associates* provide regular application status updates to sponsors as information becomes available to World Renew. They ensure all sponsors receive arrival information in a timely fashion and ensure that all information management spreadsheets of the Refugee office are kept up to date.

Additionally, the *Program Associates* develop communications materials to promote the refugee program through research, interviews, and story writing, and provide support and guidance to sponsors as they welcome and resettle sponsored newcomers. They are active in developing and updating sponsorship resource materials as well as in monitoring settlement with sponsoring churches.

# Methodology

In this case study we have traced the successes, challenges, enablers and barriers of some of the partnerships that have historically emerged out of the PSR program. In order to accomplish this, we collated a number of narratives of SAHs representatives, World Renew staff, and Private Sponsors, attempting to build a cohesive portrayal of the impact of partnerships (particularly faith-settlement partnerships) in refugee settlement. We have also surveyed a number of documents produced by World Renew to guide different constituencies through the PSR program over the years.

The juxtaposition of the perspectives of Private Sponsors, SAHs, and some literature on the topic have allowed us to identify: (1) some of the contributions of SAHs to partnerships that lead to successful newcomer-settlement outcomes; and, (2) the advantages of pursuing greater collaboration between the faith and settlement sectors – as seen in the PSR program – for the overall landscape of newcomer-settlement in Canada.

Given the structure of PSR, stories of success in settlement within this program usually take place through partnerships between private individuals (or collectives) and government-supported agencies, community initiatives, and local businesses. Therefore, our goal was to effectively describe the ways in which the faith and settlement partnerships that have emerged within the PSR program can further the integration and settlement of refugees, identifying exemplary models, helpful resources, and best practices. As a Sponsorship Agreement Holder (SAH), our partner World Renew has a unique vantage point, possessing a wealth of experiential knowledge of PSRs.

Our three-tiered research combined two research methods: Focus Groups, and Key Informant Interviews. Through this approach we were successful in obtaining narrative/qualitative data from (1) selected representatives from faith-informed SAHs, (2) World Renew staff, all of whom have experienced the interaction/collaboration between government and faith-informed organizations in the PSR program, and (3) selected private sponsors.

In the first tier of this case study, three Key Informants from faith-informed SAHs were interviewed. We specifically chose individuals from faith-informed SAHs because of their first-hand knowledge of the collaboration between government and faith-informed organizations in the type of resettlement process that takes place through the PSR program. We undertook these KI interviews in order to trace already-existent practices, their benefits, pitfalls, and their historical development within diverse communities. Through these interviews, we also attempted to provide alternative accounts to that of World Renew of faith and settlement partnerships.

In the second tier, we conducted a Focus Group with World Renew staff members. Given their experience dealing with organizations and individuals on both sides of the faith-settlement divide, through this Focus Group we gained insight into the vision, structure, and outcomes of their own experience of partnership with both types of organizations. Additionally, we were able to outline their

experience facilitating this type of partnership amongst third parties. Given the fact that the private sponsors interviewed in this case study used World Renew as their SAH, it was important for us to build the narrative from both angles (that of the private sponsors and that of their SAH), which was guaranteed by including the voices of the World Renew staff in our data.

In the last tier of our case study we conducted eight Key Informant Interviews with private sponsors. Selected from World Renew's database, we were careful to select private sponsors who are both long-term sponsors (some of them involved in the program since its inception, in response to the Indochinese refugee crisis) and recent ones (some of them from organizations/communities responding to the Syrian crisis). All of these interviews took place with individuals belonging to faith congregations or connected to faith-informed groups. The goal of this part of the process was to identify elements distinctive to PSR settlement, tracing the immediate and long-term impact of the partnerships proper to the PSR program in the successful the settlement of newcomers in Canada.

# Overall findings

## Main themes

### **Vision: To what extent are faith/settlement partnerships viewed positively?**

Prior to presenting the results of this case study, it is necessary to clarify that the word ‘partnership’ failed to adequately describe the spectrum of exchanges operative in the PSR world. For most of the private sponsors, SAH representatives, and World Renew staff interviewed in the context of this case study, the word partnership only responds to one type of exchange. In light of such experiences, the diverse connections between community-based initiatives, government bodies, private persons, and faith-informed organizations that take place in the context of PSR explains for the unique success of this program and should be accounted for. Hence, our retelling of most of their stories of success relies on our ability to account for the ways in which SAHs and private sponsors hold different levels/formats of exchange in creative tension with one another, facilitating both long-term planning and immediate response to local, emerging needs.

Interviewees frequently voiced a great concern about the possible exclusion of informal exchanges from our interview discussions given that our object of study was ‘partnership.’ Although the “Faith and Settlement Partnerships” research outline defines ‘partnership’ as a broad concept that can include not-formalized interactions between parties (a definition that was shared with all participants at the beginning of our interviews), private sponsors, SAH representatives, and World Renew staff felt that grouping such a diverse set of practices under one umbrella term would be, in itself, a barrier. Hence, it is our duty to report this concern and make it one of our main research findings.

Having said that, while ‘partnership’ was not necessarily identified as the operative word in most of our interviews, there were a number of interactions amongst organizations that do fall under the concept of ‘partnership’ as defined by this research. In addition, there are a number of terms that can illustrate the effective exchanges between the faith and settlement sectors that this research attempted to explore, which we will explore. These experiences vary from informal, occasional interactions between members of different groups to fully structured, ongoing exchanges at the organizational level. For the sake of this case study, and responding to the concern of our interviewees, all of these experiences have space in our reporting. Of particular importance are the ways in which these diverse exchanges interact and complement one another, producing what ultimately could be considered successful settlement processes. Therefore, we will begin our description of main themes with an in-depth consideration of this point.

1. **Collaboration, Cooperation, Referral, Relationship:** In light of the aforementioned concern, we have grouped the diverse experiences of formal and informal exchanges that this case study has revealed under the terms ‘cooperation’, ‘collaboration’, ‘referral’, and ‘relationship.’ These terms correspond to the expressions utilized by interviewees to describe their own experiences of

exchange and they can be grouped in two categories. On the one hand, it was evident that some of these terms constituted ways for private sponsors or SAH representatives/staff to get at the specific nature of the exchange (cooperation and referral). In some cases, the organizations came together for specific tasks in which both parties cooperated for a determinate period of time. In other cases, the exchange was based on an ongoing chain of referrals of newcomers in both directions (toward settlement and toward faith), an exchange that did not entail them working on the same project.

On the other hand, interviewees were looking for ways to express the perception of the organizations involved in a given exchange about one another (collaboration and relationship). For private sponsors particularly, one of the most palpable concerns about the term 'partnership' was that it made themselves a 'partner' (perhaps heightening their ongoing responsibility in the sponsorship process). This characterization, they felt, did not describe their situation, as most private sponsors are groups of individuals or ad-hoc committees coming together for the specific task of responding to a situation of crisis. Words like 'collaboration' and 'relationship' fit better within the private sponsors' own vernacular whilst allowing them to develop ongoing interactions with the settlement sector that resemble partnerships in the sense outlined by this research. These terms also enable them to describe the ways in which connections first emerge across the faith and settlement sectors. Here are the words of a private sponsor regarding this particular item:

*"Everybody's experience is probably different, a lot of people, I think, didn't know that they could access the immigration services. But it's building a relationship and I think that was a gift to me." – Private Sponsor*

Even when describing their exchange with World Renew (their SAH), the private sponsors clarified that their connection was not necessarily an official link beyond the agreement itself. It is important to mention here that SAHs constitute the single most important interlocutor of private sponsors throughout the sponsorship process and that the private sponsors' perception of their SAHs is key to understanding their take on partnership.

*"Our church is actually non-denominational, so also we're not officially tied to World Renew. But we needed a sponsorship agreement holder, and I had spoken to some other people, North Park Church in London does a lot of that." – Private Sponsor*

To conclude this subheading we decided to include the following quote from our interview with one of the SAH representatives. In this person's account, SAHs serve as brokers of relationships, encouraging private sponsors to establish connections with settlement agencies and other community organizations, and providing the tools needed to turn these connections into a successful settlement outcome. Echoing the language utilized by private sponsors, this SAH representative discussed the importance of relationships for successful sponsorship experiences:

*"We encourage the sponsoring groups to build up connections with the settlement agencies so that they have good working relationships, so that they're known entities,*

*and that they know that they can go to the settlement agencies with particular issues or just ongoing sharing of information and support of the newcomers. We always encourage development of ongoing relationship with the settlement agencies. Not just the settlement agencies, but collaboration with community groups or in the cases where there's particular ethno-cultural groups or communities that they really pursue active engagement and relationship building with those groups or communities. If there's a cultural association or just a community. We may begin by making the introductions and giving them contact info -" – SAH Representative*

2. **National vs. Local:** Two sets of concerns – and respective responses – underline the collaborations emerging in the resettlement of refugees under the PSR program. For the sake of conceptual clarity, we have grouped these concerns under the terms 'national' and 'local.' The reason for including this interaction of national and global, in the section entitled "Vision," is that the exchange between these two levels speaks to the overall vision, objectives, and unfolding of the PSR program. Whereas the high level of partnership between SAHs and government bodies aims to preserve the integrity of the PSR program as a whole, the interactions between private sponsors and local community organizations allow particular sponsorships to take place.

In light of this information, we can certainly say that one of the most relevant themes in our Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group was related to the importance of a feedback loop that develops between national and local partnerships. Local collaborative processes, which for the most part respond to the specific needs of a particular situation, are necessary to ensure the flexibility of the response of the private sponsors to the specific needs of a particular sponsorship case. These collaborations, furthermore, raise awareness amongst the SAHs about the emerging situations, needs, and possibilities of private sponsorship.

Through their interaction with each other and with government bodies (through the Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association/Council, a nation-wide organization with SAHs representation), SAHs report on the changes they have witnessed in their sponsors' experiences thus forging a path for adequate adjustments in national practice and policy. Such adjustments, in turn, affect the reality of private sponsors on the ground, and have the potential to facilitate the process of resettlement in their response to the ever-changing realities of refugees and other newcomers. Although not perfect, this can be a helpful dynamism between the local and the national, which is only possible by virtue of a series of collaborations and partnerships that extend all the way from the sponsoring groups to the Federal Government.

3. **A Model of Emerging Expectations:** Another recurring theme in the Key Informant Interviews and Focus Group was that of the diversity of expectations of all settlement stakeholders. The government bodies, SAHs, private sponsors, and newcomers who enter into the highly relational activity of settlement at times profess radically differing expectations about the process, the partners, and the outcomes. The multiple sets of expectations that each stakeholder brings to the process amplify the complex practical realities proper to newcomers and their host communities.

The dilemmas that generate such complexity emerge out of concerns about logistics, implementation, personal involvement, vision, etc. Some of the questions mentioned by our interviewees regarding differing expectations were:

- a. What is the ultimate goal of the settlement process?
- b. When should sponsors stop their involvement?
- c. Who should be involved in the process?
- d. What are the most appropriate settlement practices for private sponsors?
- e. What does an ideal settlement process look like?

However, the role of expectations in settlement is not entirely negative, particularly in contexts where there are healthy partnerships of collaborations at work. Perhaps of most importance here is that such expectations only emerge when stakeholders are invested in the process, when they are motivated to deliver successful outcomes. Expectations, therefore, emerge out of the motivations that a group has to actively participate in settlement, whether it be scriptural passages, the mandate of a given SAH, or the government guidelines for practice. Where there are expectations, there are motivations. And where there are motivations, societal transformation is possible.

Our main conclusion under this subheading is that, even if the diversity of expectations of a number of stakeholders is not completely positive, it does not have to be completely corrosive to settlement partnerships. In the context of our case study, expectations are perceived as a double-edged sword that can either facilitate needed partnerships and collaborations or create challenges along the way. For those who have encountered challenges, transparency and awareness of difference between organizations are needed for any collaboration to succeed. The best practices related to us in this regard included constructive relationships and information-sharing, in which there were clear channels of communication regarding expectations amongst stakeholders. One of our SAH representatives summarized it in the following quotes:

*“And I think at the outset, having the constituent group talk about what their expectations are and try and figure out how realistic they are, and try and make sure that they have realistic expectations. And on the other side, you know, having a conversation early on with the newcomers and saying, ‘Here’s what you can expect from us. Here’s what we ... Our role is in this.’ And in that context, I always say to people, when we do run into conflict, ‘Always come back to the point that our common goal is to work at integration and resettlement.’ And so that’s what we are working at together. And so, let’s ... as we look at what the challenges are ... let’s look at that as our goal. So that’s one of the things that I suggest to groups as they’re working at challenges.” – SAH Representative*

*“It really helps to have clear, transparent communication with the government on what can and cannot be changed.” – SAH Representative*

From the perspective of this private sponsor, who has dealt with settlement agencies throughout the process, knowing clearly what to expect from the settlement sector was pivotal in creating a positive experience:

*“I think in general, our relationship with settlement organizations was a positive one, where we knew what was available and had contact information, and if we needed help or whatever, they were there to help and assist us or take over things like responsibilities for us, if the settlement organizations needed to. So I felt like overall it was a positive experience. I think for the team, it was learning as you go type of thing, especially because it was the first time that we had done something like this. So I'm sure there are ways that if we do it again, we can make the communication better, or we'll know who's around and available and that kind of stuff. If that makes sense.”*  
– Private Sponsor

## **Structure: What types of partnerships presently exist and how could they be improved?**

As mentioned in previous sections, there are a number of collaborations and partnerships already at work in and around the PSR program. These relationships emerge out of the primary partnership needed to keep the program afloat, that is, the partnership between the sponsorship groups and their respective SAH. Since our case study explores the partnerships developed around World Renew, a faith-informed SAH, and the faith-informed groups that seek sponsorship through this organization, our primary object of study is not a faith-settlement partnership. However, it will become evident that this exchange between faith-informed private sponsors and SAHs generates, structurally speaking, a number of faith-settlement collaborations. In fact, this partnership gives rise to several faith-government lasting exchanges that are not limited to the settlement sector.

The following observations about partnership attend to the overall structural elements of organizations, or interactions between organizations, that facilitate a successful settlement process. We will also attend to those organizational and partnership structures that facilitate other partnerships that will, in turn, benefit resettlement.

1. **SAHs as Partnership Models:** The SAHs' strategic place (in conversation with both government and private organizations) and their success in brokering relationships between the faith and settlement sectors is one of the most significant findings of this research. Firstly, SAHs are partnering organizations by definition, mandated to establishing and facilitating exchanges between volunteers at the ground level, supervisory organizations, and policy makers. Secondly, SAHs can navigate the challenges caused by the encounter between the flexible (and sometimes new) sponsoring groups and the rigidity of governmental structures. Finally, SAHs possess the ability to communicate in "languages" that are meaningful to both government bodies and sponsoring groups. In fact, a significant aspect of the SAH's work can be defined as "translation," consisting in making government documents understandable (accessible) to regular citizens and, in turn, communicating to the government the challenges and needs experienced by private sponsors.

As mentioned in the context, a large number of SAHs have historically emerged from faith communities or faith-informed organizations. This enables SAHs to have a greater understanding of the motivations, processes, and structures proper to the faith-informed sponsoring groups. This knowledge allows SAHs to make faith-informed sponsors meaningful contributors to the secular system that does not always respond to the same concerns and motivations that emerge from faith commitments.

Every private sponsor interviewed in this study characterized their relationship with World Renew as that which made their sponsorship possible. In other words, these sponsors were only able to participate in the PSR program because of the assistance of their SAH. This does not only relate to the sponsoring agreement but to the overall assistance, encouragement, and follow-up throughout

the sponsorship process. The work done by World Renew prior to and after the arrival of those sponsored allows the sponsoring groups to feel safe and helps them move through any challenges. The SAH's mediation increases trust on both sides of the faith-settlement divide and minimizes misconceptions. We will close this section with a private sponsor's description of the sponsoring group's collaboration with World Renew:

*"They were mainly ... they were very heavily involved in the beginning, because they had the, were the sponsorship agreement holder with the government. So the fact of choosing a family and everything had to go through them. Mainly an advisory role for us. They ... In our preparation phase, we had [a World Renew staff member] come to our church and do a little bit of a presentation and information night for volunteers and people who are interested. I was the main contact with them through email, just questions about ..., they have a handbook, a refugee sponsoring handbook which gave us the structure for how to form our committee and what we should be focusing on in our meetings. They were helpful in helping us figure out were the finances that we had, what size of a family could we support. Basically, especially in the early stages, lots of back-and-forth about some of the more administrative details. Once the family arrived, and then it started getting down to the on-the-ground stuff, again they were ... They'd check in on us regularly." – Private Sponsor*

2. **SAHs Facilitate Multiple Partnerships:** One of the most significant findings of this case study relates to the multiple levels of exchange that exist between the different settlement stakeholders and government bodies. Although the SAH-private sponsors partnership is primary to the PSR, it does not place the SAH as the only cross-sectoral bridge. Our case study shows that portraying the SAHs as the only points of exchange between sectors is incorrect and counterproductive, and that the SAHs work best as facilitators of multi-layered exchanges between different community organizations, government bodies, and the sponsoring groups.

We are not denying here that, to a certain extent, the role of the SAH is to mediate interactions between government bodies and private sponsors in the SAH's capacity of official agreement holder. More importantly, we are not denying that SAHs continue to moderate a number of the interactions between private sponsors and government bodies throughout the entire sponsorship process. However, these regulated exchanges do not constitute the only occasions in which private sponsors interact with government bodies and, certainly, they are not the only opportunity for both sides of the faith-settlement divide to benefit from each other's contributions.

The SAH representatives interviewed in our case study affirm that SAHs greatly benefit from generating multiple, autonomous channels of communication between the private sponsors and government organizations (such as settlement agencies). From their perspectives, making the private sponsors less dependent on the SAH intervention is beneficial to the entire system, as SAHs often experience great volumes of work. The following quotes show the progress in a particular

sponsorship experience. The private sponsor interviewed here first interacted with their SAH, in this case World Renew, as they processed the sponsorship agreement. The sponsor says,

*“It is a two-way relationship because we are, when we sign the paper saying we’re ready for a family, then they provide a list of names that we can choose from, and then once we choose a name to sponsor then they’re the ones that then send the paperwork, and they guide us through what to do.” – Private Sponsor*

This quote highlights the partnership that is generated between the sponsorship group and World Renew, which is, as we have previously mentioned, the first experience of partnership around settlement for many sponsors. Through World Renew’s facilitation, this sponsor was then able to identify a local government office that provided further help in the sponsorship process, building a second relationship of trust:

*“In the very beginning, just setting up was with World Renew, then I was introduced to a lady who heads the ISS in our area, and I pursued that relationship with ISS with this lady, and kept that contact until our refugees, our Syrian refugees arrived, and she became a huge wealth of information.” – Private Sponsor*

However, the story does not end there. In light of this sponsor’s positive experience interacting with government organizations directly, other cross-sectoral relationships were built, continuing to benefit the resettlement process. The private sponsor says,

*“But when I was introduced to this lady from the other immigrant services, I went and spoke to her and she was great help so actually I stayed working with that group because in the beginning there’s a lot of paperwork and because we were a blended sponsorship before, we could access their offices and they were amazing because there was a lot of paperwork. So they helped us through that. I have sent, many of the refugees have come and asked me, and I have actually emailed and again they’ve been very open to help others in their community.” – Private Sponsor*

Although not all partnership/collaboration experiences are as positive, they tend to provide solutions outside the scope of action of the private sponsors themselves. With this in mind, the information exchange that takes place when a partnership is effective is key to the success of the settlement process precisely because it facilitates the complex work in which the private sponsor is involved.

- 3. High-level partnership between Ministry and SAHs Council:** As mentioned under “Vision,” SAHs interact with government bodies at different levels, for diverse reasons, and in multiple contexts. This case study revealed that one of the most significant ways in which SAHs contribute to settlement is through their interaction with high-level government bodies (by this we mean institutions in charge of practice-outlining and policy-making). Such an exchange takes place through

*Sponsorship Agreement Holders Council*, a nationwide organization representing Sponsorship Agreement Holders Association.

Although the interaction between the SAH Council and the government bodies is limited to information-sharing practices, SAH representatives interviewed here perceive it to have significant impact in the trajectory of sponsorship and resettlement processes. The practice of dialogue with government officials generates trust among SAHs and enables them to openly share the successes and challenges they experience with the PSR program. Also, hearing explanations for the limits and possibilities of the structures/supports provided by the government enables SAHs to generate open and transparent lines of communication with their sponsors. Through information sharing, the interaction between the SAH Council and the Federal Government shape the national landscape of PSR partnerships and effectively influences the emergence of collaboration at other levels. The trust generated in these high-level discussions permeates other partnerships, as SAHs feel empowered to share the possibilities and limitations inherent to the program.

The following quotes, taken from our interviews with SAH representatives, describe their perception of the role of the SAH Association and its Council in the PSR program:

*“So all the sponsorship agreement holders, or SAHs, can join this association and we act as a kind of an umbrella organization for the sponsorship agreement holders. And, in particular, the council... which is eight members who are elected annually... one of our key roles is to be on what is called the NGO government committee. And that's a meeting... between SAH council and people from immigration, refugee, and citizenship Canada. So we meet with them two, three times a year face-to-face, and we also meet with them on the phone, typically monthly, to talk about issues. So, that's what that does. We also try and ... We're just working on our strategic plan going forward... And so there are a number of things. One, is this liaison work with the government ... with the refugee branch in IRCC. But there are other things, like trying to support SAHs as they work together regionally, work at making sure that there's training, working at the message that the general public has about refugees, in general, and resettle refugees, in particular. And so those are just some of the things that we focus on as an association and the council that guides that.” – SAH Representative*

The description provided here outlines the general areas of work of these organizations. It gives the reader a sense of the multiple fronts of action that can be affected by the exchanges allowed by these partnerships. The following quote, with which we will close the present section, articulates the benefits of successful partnerships, where practical exchanges allow the parties to generate trust, making it more likely for other partnerships to emerge. It also speaks to the challenges in achieving balanced exchanges that will benefit all stakeholders. The SAH representative says:

*“More specifically, the work on the council ... there's definitely the official information*

*that is provided within the context of the NGO government working committee. But in the efforts of that, the council is also trying to foster a good working relationship. They have gone above and beyond multiple times in trying to provide context for understanding, especially if it was a decision around something that we'd asked for that we weren't happy with the outcome ... it wasn't the outcome we were hoping. They have really tried to explain it, and in some situations we've been able to give feedback and found that things have changed. It's definitely a delicate balance,"*  
– SAH Representative

4. **Multi-sector cooperation (community partners around the PSR program):** PSR calls for, and results in, partnerships beyond faith-settlement. In some cases, it extends beyond the limits of the sponsoring bodies, the SAHs, and other government agencies. The possibilities and limitations of the private sponsorship program lead communities to seek help from other community groups, generating collaborative groups to sponsor, to assist those who they are sponsoring, and to provide ongoing support beyond the limits of the program. Although interview participants only mentioned these structures in passing, it is key for us to report that this is an outgrowth of the partnership frame developed within PSR and something to attend to in future research.

## Process: How can effective partnerships be better facilitated?

The information we gathered on the theme of Process is less detailed than the information obtained regarding the other two major themes of this research. We attribute this to the fact that PSR stakeholders share perspectives around the vision and structure with greater ease. Of those partnerships developed through the PSR program, many involve radically diverse views of and approaches to the processes needed to enable the flourishing of new partnerships and the success of settlement. In other words, elements like trust and common organizational language, which respond to vision and structure, are easily identifiable by sponsors, SAHs, and government bodies as common goals. Contrary to that result, the interviews and focus group revealed that specific processes could be counterproductive –in light of the particularity of every sponsorship case and of the complex reality of partnerships between organizations with completely different organizational cultures, motivations, and expectations.

The following is a summary of the process-related items that we were able to trace through this case study, drawing the reader's attention to the themes that emerged within sponsor and SAH representative interviews alike. However, we have decided to highlight under the subheading "Walking Alongside Refugees" a theme of great importance to private sponsors, perhaps the principle that most effectively shapes their participation in the PSR program.

1. **Walking Alongside Refugees:** From the perspective of private sponsors, perhaps the most significant aspect of the settlement process under the PSR program is companionship. Although most private sponsors interviewed in this case study claim that it cannot be properly documented, they also argue that the unfolding of the life of a community in which newcomers are meaningfully integrated depends on developing proper practices of companionship. Many of our interviewees coincided in labelling this contribution as private sponsors "walking alongside refugees," describing it as the process through which the sponsors get to become companions of the newcomers in their path to culturally meaningful integration. Although some of these private sponsors have dedicated years to prepare their communities financially and organizationally for the arrival of the newcomers, what they perceive as the most transformational time is their ability to be there for them as needed, providing a timely network of support as new challenges arise:

*"Our main goal is to create a network around our refugees, a network that allows us to walk with them through the hardships they experience in this country. As Private Sponsors we are responsible... sometimes we work with broken hearts, but working together with others alleviates some of the pain." –Private Sponsor*

Private sponsors not only see this as one of their fundamental contributions to settlement in Canada but as the marker of the PSR program, a marker that makes this model qualitatively superior to other avenues of settlement. Because of their proximity to the newcomers, private sponsors sustain that they can provide an effective network of support, which evolves according to the newcomers'

needs, setting them up for success. In fact, many groups who have been involved in sponsorship continue to “walk with newcomers” informally after the end of the program. One of our respondents explains,

*“So she figured out how to get a church to walk alongside them, to start teaching them English because it helps to get them in the community, to get other people involved in some of the government-sponsored families. So that's another thing that sort of developed here, a number of churches, instead of sponsoring, they came alongside to help them English, and to become friends with them.” – Private Sponsor*

Whether informally or within the PSR program, this “walking alongside” newcomers is key to understanding the number of collaborations and partnerships that can work in favour of the newcomers through the mediation of private sponsors. Setting up a network of support such as the one mentioned here naturally evolves in the establishment of partnerships and collaborations between long-term sponsors, community-organizations, government agencies, and local businesses. These networks benefit both the newcomers and the private sponsors as they undertake new sponsorships.

- 2. Importance of the figure of cultural/cross-sectoral bridge-builders:** One of the most significant challenges in developing working faith-settlement partnerships is the “linguistic clashes” between the two sectors. Building trust and developing lasting relationships can only be done if there are proper channels of communication. Such channels, nonetheless, do not depend exclusively on the structures that facilitate encounters between organizations; they also depend on developing processes that will effectively generate understanding of the language used by their respective partners. While faith-informed partners speak about the settlement process in terms of “welcoming” and “walking alongside”, settlement partners will usually refer to it as “resettlement” and “integration.” This is only the most obvious of a number of linguistic differences. In light of such differences, partnerships within these sectors are more likely to succeed because of a shared language. One of the SAH representatives describes this phenomenon as follows:

*“...we've had groups... who aren't church-based, they just want to be involved, and we do that. But when we're working with faith groups, it gives us a ... We have a certain language that we can use in terms of ... this is a mission, this is a calling, we are called to do this and we can use that sort of language and put it in the context of our faith, but also the faith of the people who are going to be directly involved in the resettlement. So I think that's one thing to ... that helps us. Our executive director said something once about ... what did he say? He said that our faith informs what we do, it doesn't inform who we work with. So we will work with where we are, but it informs what we do. And so that's, I think, something I try and remember.” – SAH Representative*

The ease of working with groups that have a common goal and language diminishes when faith and settlement partnerships emerge. A shared goal and defined structure are not enough to ensure the sustainability of cross-sectoral relationships, particularly in the context of sectors like faith and government –both of them with somewhat rigid internal nomenclatures. One of the SAH representatives interviewed identified this linguistic challenge in the context of motivations, as faith and settlement organizations struggle in effectively communicating their motivations to each other:

*“And his basic point was, there is kind of a disconnect between government people and people of faith because for faith communities that are involved in refugee work, their faith really informs why they're involved in this. But government people, they tend not to ... I mean, they may not be a part of the faith community and so they don't quite understand that motivation.” – SAH Representative*

Later in the interview, this SAH representative highlights that meaningful conversation is key to overcome the challenge around motivations. The SAH representative says:

*“In terms of working with the government, it's really about building long-term relationships and conversations, going together and meeting, and having a mutual respect sort-of thing. I understand where you, as in government people, are coming from and I want to make sure that you understand where I'm coming from. So mutual respect and being able to have frank and open discussions about this is what we need to deal with.” – SAH Representative*

According to most of our interviewees, a practice that helps develop meaningful conversations is the appointment/election of bridge builders. This is, in fact, a figure that has emerged from the partners' experience in settlement. Given the cultural difference that often exists between newcomers and sponsors/settlement workers, cultural bridge builders are contacted to assist in the interaction with the newcomers. Cultural bridge-builders facilitate communication and increase trust. Here is a short description of their role:

*“The other is to find a cultural bridge builder. Someone who has ... who's maybe been in Canada for a number of years and has a sense of the context, but also comes from the place where the newcomer is from and can say, ‘Okay, here's what it's like here, and I know it sounds crazy from your perspective. I know, I felt that way too. But here's ... I will try and help you understand why Canadians are this way.’ And so somebody who has a different voice and can ... Is maybe trusted in a new way ... or in a way that somebody who's not from their culture might be trusted. And so those are a couple of the ways...” – SAH Representative*

Extrapolating this idea to the context of faith-settlement partnerships has proven very effective, as the cultural and linguistic difference between these sectors follows the same pattern as the relationship between newcomers and those welcoming them.

- 3. Blended programs appear as creative solutions:** A brief final note should be added in relation to blended programs in the context of partnership. Sponsors and SAH Representatives coincide in affirming the benefits of blended programs, particularly as such combined initiatives further the collaboration that is currently emerging amongst a number of settlement and community stakeholders. Blended programs offer a platform for further collaboration, outlining processes in which both faith and settlement sectors have a more defined role. This helps clarify direction thus facilitating conversations. One of the private sponsors interviewed, who followed the Blended Visa Office-Referral program, described its benefits as follow:

*“And the Blended Visa Office-Referral was that way for us, because the ... So a success was that we didn't need to really have super long conversations about who are we gonna support and what's this gonna look like. We just knew that there are these people that need to be supported, and they've already got a lot of things done and they're just waiting for sponsors. So that was very appealing to our group, just so we can just get right to business and try to get them over here and start sponsoring. And it was also helpful to know that there was some sort of income support from the government. I think we had raised enough money, but then it allowed us to either ... well we still need to have this conversation, but to be ... any of the excess money that we have, either generous to the refugee family, or designate it to another refugee initiative or something like that. So it provided us a bit of overpay, and financially we weren't as tight as we would be.” – Private Sponsor*

The blended program allowed this sponsor to avoid some of the pitfalls encountered by other sponsors in their interaction with government partners, holding great promise for the future of faith-settlement partnerships.

## Conclusions

Private sponsorship in itself is a partnership between government and not-for-profit organizations. A significant amount of these not-for-profit organizations are faith-based or faith-informed. This is why private sponsorship is a significant area of emerging faith-settlement partnerships. Therefore, the recommendations regarding best practices for the PSR program that can be surmised from this case study can be extrapolated as recommendations for faith-settlement partnerships.

In an attempt to clearly outline this report's conclusions, we will divide these into Recommendations for Sponsorship Agreement Holders, private sponsoring groups, settlement and settlement-related agencies, and other government bodies. As we have outlined throughout this study, SAHs are in themselves the point of contact between the faith and settlement sectors. In most instances, their role establishes connections between organizations on both sides of the state-settlement divide, 'translating'

information, providing stakeholder's data, and accompanying private sponsors through government channels. Our recommendation for these organizations is to be vigilant and clear about the limitations and expectations on both sides of the aforementioned divide. We believe this will foster an attitude of trust among private sponsors and greater awareness of the private sponsors' reliability for the government partners. The following two quotes from our interviews illustrate this recommendation with great clarity:

*“So I think the recommendation would be that settlement organizations should make it a huge priority to, if they're dealing with a private sponsorship or a community group sponsorship or something, is to be reaching out to the sponsoring group. Because we don't have all the information and may miss things, basically.” – Private Sponsor*

*“I think that the key point I mentioned before, is mutual respect. I've seen some people who, on both sides, who don't have that and so it's ... you can tell that the relationship is strained and it's harder to get things done. Not impossible, but more difficult. So making sure that that mutual respect is there. And, again, another thing I said before, is making sure that there are frank, open conversations and at times saying, ‘Look, this is just between you and me. We are going to ... This is the way I see the situation.’”  
– SAH Representative*

Private sponsors constitute a significant Canadian contribution to the refugee settlement landscape of the world. Perhaps no other program empowers communities to facilitate integration the way in which PSR achieves this. However, private sponsors continue to struggle with the rigidity of government forms in the face of the ever-changing challenges of those whom they sponsor. Our case study identified a number of cases where partnerships with local settlement agencies help alleviate this challenge. Henceforth, our recommendation is for private sponsors to identify and approach settlement agencies in their area, independently from their interaction with the SAHs.

Finally, our case study illustrated the importance of the high-level interaction between government bodies and the SAH council. The regular encounters between SAH and government representatives have generated an atmosphere of trust, open communication channels, and effective policy. This partnership must be fostered and made widely-known as it will help avoid misperceptions, building effective bridges that are easily replicated at other levels of faith-settlement exchange. The following comment from one of our interviews helps illustrate this point:

*“Just basically broadening the circle of mutual respect and conversation. And once a year, we do have a meeting with the Refugee Sponsorship Training Program and they ... The goal is training, but you have people from IRCC there who are doing part of the training and that's been a great opportunity for some informal conversations to happen. It's been a great way for people to ask directly, you know, say a visa officer or someone who's been a visa officer in the past, you know, so, ‘What is it like?’ And I've seen in those meetings, how people say, ‘Oh, I never thought of it from that perspective.’ And so that's both sides I think. So yeah, more opportunities for this*

*discussion and dialogue, so that we understand each other's worlds better, is the big thing.” – SAH Representative*

We can confidently conclude that faith- settlement partnerships are valued and, in many cases, sought after within the PSR program. Private sponsors often yearn for a more active participation of government-funded organizations in the settlement of their sponsored refugees. Government often learns new, emerging trends in integration of newcomers through the first-hand experience of private sponsors. It is our hope that the current mechanism of exchange between government and faith organizations is not only maintained but enhanced through the active support of the Sponsorship Agreement Holders.