

U.S. State Department Unveils a New Refugee Program, ‘Welcome Corps’

Article By:

Kristin Bolayir

On Jan. 19, 2023, the U.S. State Department unveiled a new refugee program, “[Welcome Corps](#),” which enables private sponsorship of refugees. The Welcome Corps program follows [President Biden’s 2021 Executive Order on Rebuilding and Enhancing Programs to Resettle Refugees](#). Through the Welcome Corps program, private sponsors can help thousands of refugees transition to life in the United States. This new program is the most significant development in U.S. refugee immigration since its inception more than four decades ago, according to the press release.

Through Welcome Corps, Americans can apply to form Private Sponsor Organizations to welcome refugees. Each group must have a minimum of five members, and each member must be over the age of 18 and either a U.S. citizen or a lawful permanent resident. Sponsors are required to raise at least \$2,275 for each refugee and commit to providing welcoming services and essential services in the community, including housing, financial support, and guidance to healthcare, education and employment services, for 90 days.

Welcome Corps will be led through a consortium of nonprofit organizations with documented expertise in resettling refugees into U.S. communities. The consortium will be tasked with overseeing the private sponsor application process, providing sponsors with the necessary training, and monitoring the progress of the program to ensure privately sponsored refugees are getting the support they need.

The program seeks to enable 10,000 Americans to provide assistance as private sponsors in welcoming at least 5,000 refugees during the first year. During the first phase of the program, Welcome Corps will match sponsors to selected refugees who are already approved for resettlement under the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) after undergoing extensive security vetting and a health screening conducted by the federal government. The earliest privately sponsored refugees through Welcome Corps will begin arriving in April 2023. Once the program expands to the second phase in mid-2023, private sponsors will be able to identify refugees in need of protection for consideration to the USRAP. Refugees admitted under the Welcome Corps initiative will initially be eligible for employment authorization and will have a path to obtain permanent legal status and ultimately, U.S. citizenship.

National Law Review, Volume XIII, Number 24

Source URL: <https://natlawreview.com/article/us-state-department-unveils-new-refugee-program-welcome-corps>