

Communities for Refugees

Campaign evaluation

The Communities for Refugees campaign was launched by Reset in October 2020 and ran until April 2021. This was the first coordinated attempt at sponsor recruitment in the UK. For the first time, charities across the refugee protection sector and faith organisations promoted Community Sponsorship to their networks using consistent branding and messaging.

Our priority for this campaign was to increase the number of Community Sponsors rather than to raise general awareness of Community Sponsorship. Our communication was therefore targeted at people who, based on evidence from the UK¹ and Canada², were the most likely to set up Community Sponsorship groups. To reach our target audience, we connected with organisations whose audiences matched or heavily overlapped with ours, and encouraged them to share the campaign with their followers. This saw the campaign promoted widely within the refugee protection sector and by a number of faith organisations, as well as by existing Community Sponsors and Lead Sponsors.

We aimed to take prospective sponsors who engaged with the campaign on a journey that would inspire them to take part in Community Sponsorship while also communicating the level of commitment that this programme demands. The journey involved: registering interest by signing up to a mailing list; attending an introductory webinar; and speaking 1:1 to a member of the Reset team. Once a prospective sponsor completed these steps, they would be ready to connect with a Lead Sponsor and begin setting up a new Community Sponsorship group.

Key figures at a glance

- 1. 772 campaign sign ups and webinar registrations**
- 2. 43 new Community Sponsorship groups**
- 3. Average of 65% increase in social media followers across Facebook, Instagram & Twitter**
- 4. 2439 print materials requested and freely distributed to help others spread the word**

¹ Reset has gathered evidence on existing sponsors' ages, gender and employment status. The [University of Birmingham's evaluation of Community Sponsorship](#) also provides useful evidence.

² Macklin et al, A Preliminary Investigation into Private Refugee Sponsors, *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 50 no. 2, 2018.

Learnings

The Communities for Refugees campaign enabled us to test our ideas and has taught us lots about how to successfully recruit Community Sponsors.

Here are our 5 key learnings:

1. Actively recruiting new sponsors works when resourced sufficiently

It sounds like common sense, but the most important thing our campaign showed was that Community Sponsorship does have the potential to grow when sufficient resource is dedicated to recruiting sponsors. When thinking about resourcing sponsor recruitment, we must bear in mind the number of people we need to engage in order for a group to form. For the 43 groups developing through this campaign, 772 people signed up to the campaign mailing list or registered to attend a campaign webinar. In other words, we had to engage 17 to 18 people for each 1 person that took Community Sponsorship forward. Understanding this ratio will be useful for planning future recruitment campaigns.

2. There is potential for Community Sponsorship to grow with new audiences

In line with [general trends around volunteering](#) in the UK, Community Sponsors are more likely to be aged 50+ and semi or fully retired. Through the campaign, more people than we expected aged 35-44 began setting up Community Sponsorship groups. It looks possible that sponsors in this age category are particularly motivated to set up a Community Sponsorship group by the desire to foster or strengthen a sense of community. We will monitor this trend and bear it in mind when thinking about effective messages for recruiting sponsors in future.

3. Prospective sponsors want a lot of information up front and they like to receive this information interactively

Community Sponsorship is complex and it's a new concept to most people in the UK. Through this campaign, we learnt more about what information to give potential sponsors up front and how best to deliver this information. We found that people who were new to Community Sponsorship preferred to learn about the programme by registering for a webinar than by signing up to a mailing list. This suggests that prospective sponsors want to learn about the programme interactively, and that they are hesitant to make any ongoing commitment before they feel that they fully understand the programme.

4. The Lead Sponsor role gives prospective sponsors confidence to take on Community Sponsorship, but we need more varied Lead Sponsors

Across the 43 groups emerging from this campaign, it was notable that prospective sponsors were hugely reassured by the idea of partnering with a Lead Sponsor. However, it was not always straightforward to find a suitable Lead Sponsor for a new group. We are seeing demand for Lead Sponsors that are not faith-based and for Lead Sponsors that are embedded in their local communities. The latter appears to be particularly significant where groups are

set up by individuals who are not very well connected in their neighbourhoods, e.g. because they have only recently moved to the area. There may be a correlation between the demand for secular and/or local Lead Sponsors and the trend identified above towards increasing numbers of sponsors in the 35-44 age category.

5. A consistent visual identity for Community Sponsorship is important

Prior to this campaign, there was no consistent visual identity for Community Sponsorship. By developing a consistent brand and distributing branded materials for other organisations to share on social media, we were able to visually demonstrate support for Community Sponsorship across the refugee protection sector in a way that hadn't been seen before in the UK. We believe that the use of this branding on social media by highly reputable and trusted organisations within the refugee protection sector and by faith organisations will have improved the credibility of Community Sponsorship with our target audience as an important and worthwhile means of supporting refugees. When surveyed, members of the Lead Sponsor Network told us that they had found it useful to be able to access this shared branding.

Next steps

We're committed to building on what we've learnt through the Communities for Refugees campaign. Here are 3 ways that we're going to do that.

1. Launching online 'Introduction to Community Sponsorship' drop-ins

Building on the success of the campaign webinars in engaging prospective sponsors and inspiring them to take Community Sponsorship forward, we have set up monthly online 'Introduction to Community Sponsorship drop-ins'. Reset will be directing all volunteer enquiries to these drop-ins and encourages Lead Sponsors to make use of the drop-ins as well. The drop-ins follow the structure of our Communities for Refugees webinars.

2. Lead Sponsor campaign

Reset will be launching a campaign to recruit more organisations to act as Lead Sponsors for Community Sponsorship groups. As part of this, Reset will aim to ensure that there is a wider variety of new Lead Sponsor options, including organisations that are not faith based, and organisations that are rooted in their local communities.

3. Annual Communities for Refugees campaign week

Halfway through the campaign, we ran a 'Communities for Refugees Week of Action' in which we held events, released our second campaign video, and asked other organisations to share our campaign materials with suggested messaging. We saw a spike in engagement through this Week of Action and we are looking to coordinate a similar Week of Action focused on recruitment annually. We are considering holding this Week of Action in January because we found that this was an important time of year for sponsor recruitment.

For questions about our Communities for Refugees campaign, or to find out how you can get involved in growing Community Sponsorship, [contact our Communications and External Affairs Coordinator](#).