



Summary of the Community Sponsorship Recruitment, Training, and Technical Assistance Survey

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AUGUST 2022

A photograph of two women, one with light brown hair and one with dark hair, both smiling and looking towards the right. They are wearing light blue t-shirts. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor space.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the following contributors for their work on this report:

- Jessica Ashcraft (Refugee Welcome Collective)
- Jessica Chapman (Refugee Welcome Collective)
- Grace Cunningham (Refugee Welcome Collective)
- Aubrey Grant (Community Sponsorship Hub)
- Lucretia Keenan (Community Sponsorship Hub)

Background

Over the past year, community sponsorship (CS) programs across the United States have expanded significantly. New and enhanced programs at the local, regional, and national level were rapidly launched in part as a response to the Biden Administration's prioritization of rebuilding and enhancing refugee resettlement through community sponsorship. In addition, new organizations and initiatives, such as the Community Sponsorship Hub (CSH) and Refugee Welcome Collective (RWC), were established to support this expansion and accelerate the development and innovation of community sponsorship in the U.S.

In January, CSH and RWC co-designed the Community Sponsorship Recruitment, Training, and Technical Assistance Survey to assess and evaluate current challenges, existing resources, and additional resources for community sponsorship programs. The survey included questions on two specific areas: recruitment and onboarding of community sponsors, and training and technical assistance for community sponsorship staff and sponsor groups.

Findings from this survey were presented to national and local stakeholders through a series of monthly roundtable discussions co-hosted by CSH and RWC. These roundtables gave national resettlement agencies, Community Sponsorship Catalyst Fund ("Catalyst") grantees, and other community sponsorship stakeholders an opportunity to discuss and expand on the results, identify emerging themes, and decide next steps. CSH and RWC have and continue to use the results of these discussions and the survey to support the enhancement and expansion of community sponsorship programs by mitigating existing program challenges and developing resources, such as comprehensive national trainings and ongoing technical assistance support, that address systemic needs and help enable new programs to launch and scale.

Method

The survey was first distributed through email listservs to the Refugee Council USA's Community Sponsorship working group, Community Sponsorship Catalyst Fund grantees, and Sponsor Circle umbrella organizations. National staff within these groups were asked to forward the survey link and instructions to community sponsorship program staff within their network. Recipients were encouraged to consult with direct service staff to capture the most accurate responses.

The survey was opened on January 21, 2022 and closed on January 28, 2022. There were 98 responses to the survey, 71% of which identified as local resettlement staff. Other respondents were made up of national resettlement staff (13%), local non-profit staff (8%), and Sponsor Circle umbrella organizations (3%). Community sponsorship staff for all nine national resettlement agencies completed the survey. The majority of responses (65%) were submitted by staff of local affiliates or within the national offices for Church World Service, Episcopal Migration Ministries, and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Staff of local affiliates or national offices of Lutheran Immigrant and Refugee Service, HIAS, Ethiopian Community Development Council, World Relief, and the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants accounted for roughly 33% of responses.

Recruiting and Onboarding

The recruitment and onboarding stages for community sponsorship programs are multifaceted, involving various activities, tasks, and procedures between the initial outreach to pairing of sponsor groups with newcomer families. During this period, program staff develop critical relationships with prospective partners, encouraging them through the onboarding process, while also managing and monitoring their progress as they complete program requirements and prepare to welcome newcomers.

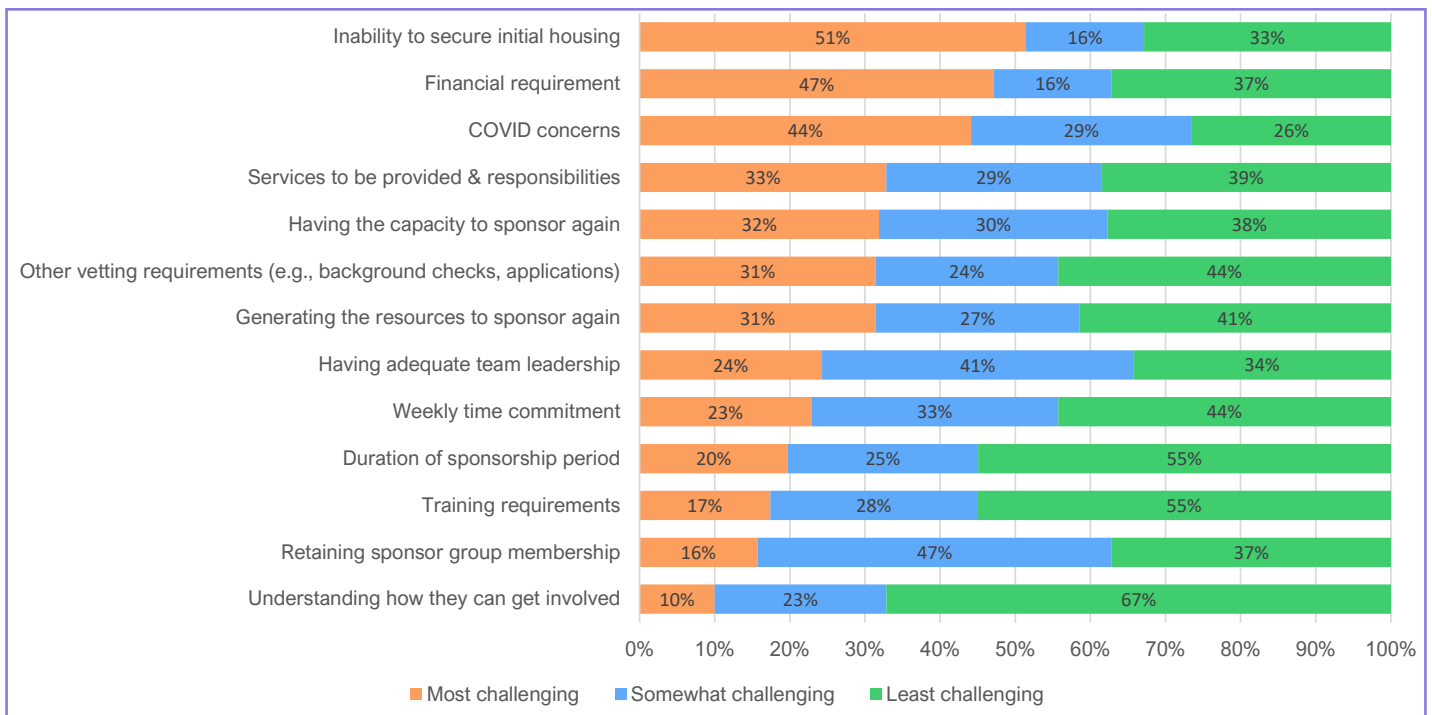
A series of questions were asked in the Community Sponsorship Recruitment, Training, and Technical Assistance survey to ascertain the greatest challenges prospective sponsors and staff encounter during the recruitment and onboarding phase. In addition, the survey collected information on resources that would be most helpful to community sponsorship programs. The following section discusses the greatest challenges and most helpful resources as identified by respondents.

Prospective Sponsors Recruitment and Onboarding Challenges

The recruitment and onboarding process is a time intensive process. During recruitment, interested groups (referred to here as prospective sponsors) learn about how they can participate in community sponsorship and what the program requires of sponsors. During the onboarding process prospective sponsors submit their applications for vetting, undergo background checks, complete required training, fundraise, and help find and/or secure initial housing for newcomers.

A main challenge during the recruitment and onboarding process for prospective sponsors, as cited by a majority of survey respondents (51%), is the inability to secure initial housing. Respondents identified other key challenges expressed by prospective sponsors as financial requirements of sponsors (47%) and concerns over sponsoring during the ongoing coronavirus pandemic (44%). Community sponsorship onboarding activities that respondents identified as least challenging for prospective sponsors were understanding how they can get involved (67%), community sponsorship program training requirements (55%), and the duration of the sponsorship period (55%).

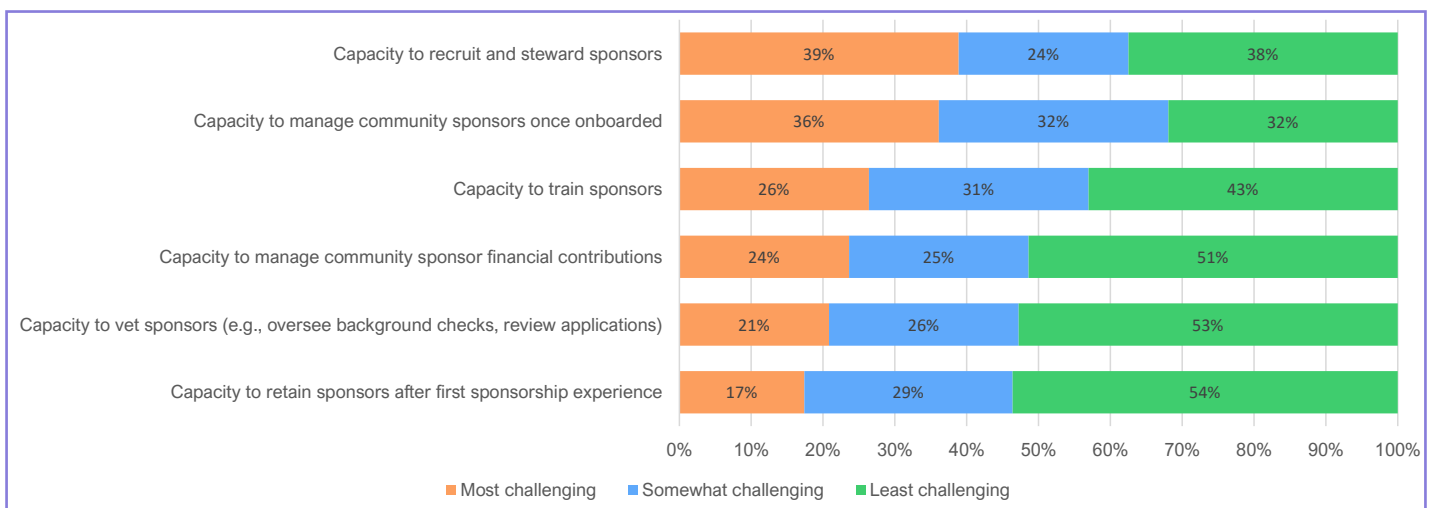
Q4: What aspects of community sponsorship do interested groups express as the most challenging?



Organizational Recruitment and Onboarding Challenges

At the organizational level, respondent ratings for the greatest onboarding challenges they faced were mixed, suggesting some variation in the challenges encountered by community sponsorship programs. The differences in challenges is likely a result of variation in the type, requirements, and age of community sponsorship programs, in addition to the local environment and contextual factors. The highest rated “most challenging” aspects were: capacity to recruit and steward sponsors during the onboarding process (39%) and capacity to manage sponsors once onboarded (36%). The least challenging aspects for recruiting and onboarding at the organizational level were: capacity to vet sponsors, such as overseeing background checks and reviewing applications (53%); capacity to retain sponsors after first sponsorship experience (54%); and capacity to manage sponsor financial contributions (51%).

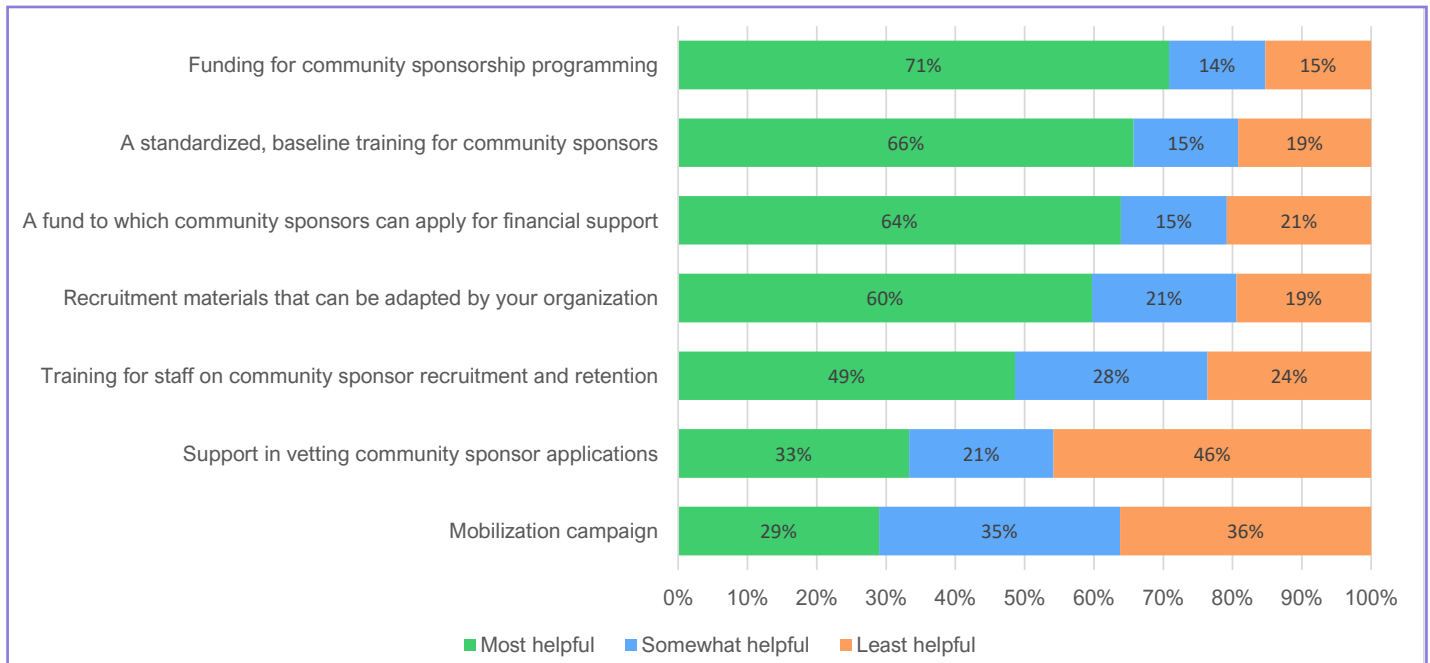
Q6: What are the greatest challenges facing your organization in recruiting and onboarding more community sponsors at this moment?



Helpful Resources for Recruitment and Onboarding

Respondents were asked to identify resources that would be helpful to them as they recruit and onboard sponsors. Respondents rated all identified support resources as being at least somewhat helpful to their program. A majority of respondents rated several key resources and tools as most helpful to their organization: funding community sponsorship programming (70%), a standardized baseline training for community sponsor groups (66%), a fund in which community sponsors could apply for financial support (64%), and recruitment materials that can be adapted by organizations (60%). The main support identified as “less helpful” was support in vetting sponsors (46%).

Q8: What would be helpful to you as you recruit and onboard community sponsors?



Many of the resources identified as “helpful” have been or are currently being developed by CSH, RWC, and Welcome.US. Program funding was the highest rated “helpful” resource for community sponsorship recruitment and onboarding. The Community Sponsorship Catalyst Fund (“Catalyst Fund”), housed within CSH, offers support for local, regional, and national community sponsorship programs. To date, through the Catalyst Fund over \$4 million has been raised to support 40 community sponsorship programs in an estimated 90 local offices. The second highest rated “helpful” resource was a standardized baseline training, which CSH, RWC, and Welcome.US co-designed and launched in August 2022.

Another resource that was highly ranked by respondents was recruitment materials and support. Based on this feedback, CSH and RWC have been actively working with Welcome.US to develop recruitment resources. One notable example that was developed in February 2022 is the community sponsorship portal on the Welcome.US website. The portal includes a sponsorship 101 tutorial (co-designed by CSH and RWC) and a sponsorship directory managed in collaboration with CSH. CSH and RWC will continue to work on the development of key resources for community sponsorship programs based on feedback from the survey and ongoing roundtable discussions.

Community Sponsorship Training and Technical Assistance

The training and technical assistance section of the survey collected data on training and technical assistance needs of community sponsors and community sponsorship staff at the national and local levels.

Survey responses show varied training programs for community sponsors and community sponsorship staff. Some national resettlement agencies have developed comprehensive training programs for their local offices to use with community sponsors. Other resettlement agencies are in the phase of piloting co-sponsorship programs and are currently developing training content for community sponsor groups to be used and adapted across their network. Training for local and national staff varies as well, with some resettlement agencies providing training to local staff while others do not.

Current Training Curriculum

The survey evidences both the wealth of training curricula currently in use, as well as the areas in which curricula is needed. The vast majority of respondents (77%) have a developed training curriculum. Most of this curricula (87%) is for community sponsors, with some (13%) for training of community sponsors and staff. This data corresponds with the stated need for training and support for local staff. More than half (67%) of respondents with a training curriculum stated the curriculum covers topics related to race and racism.

National Training

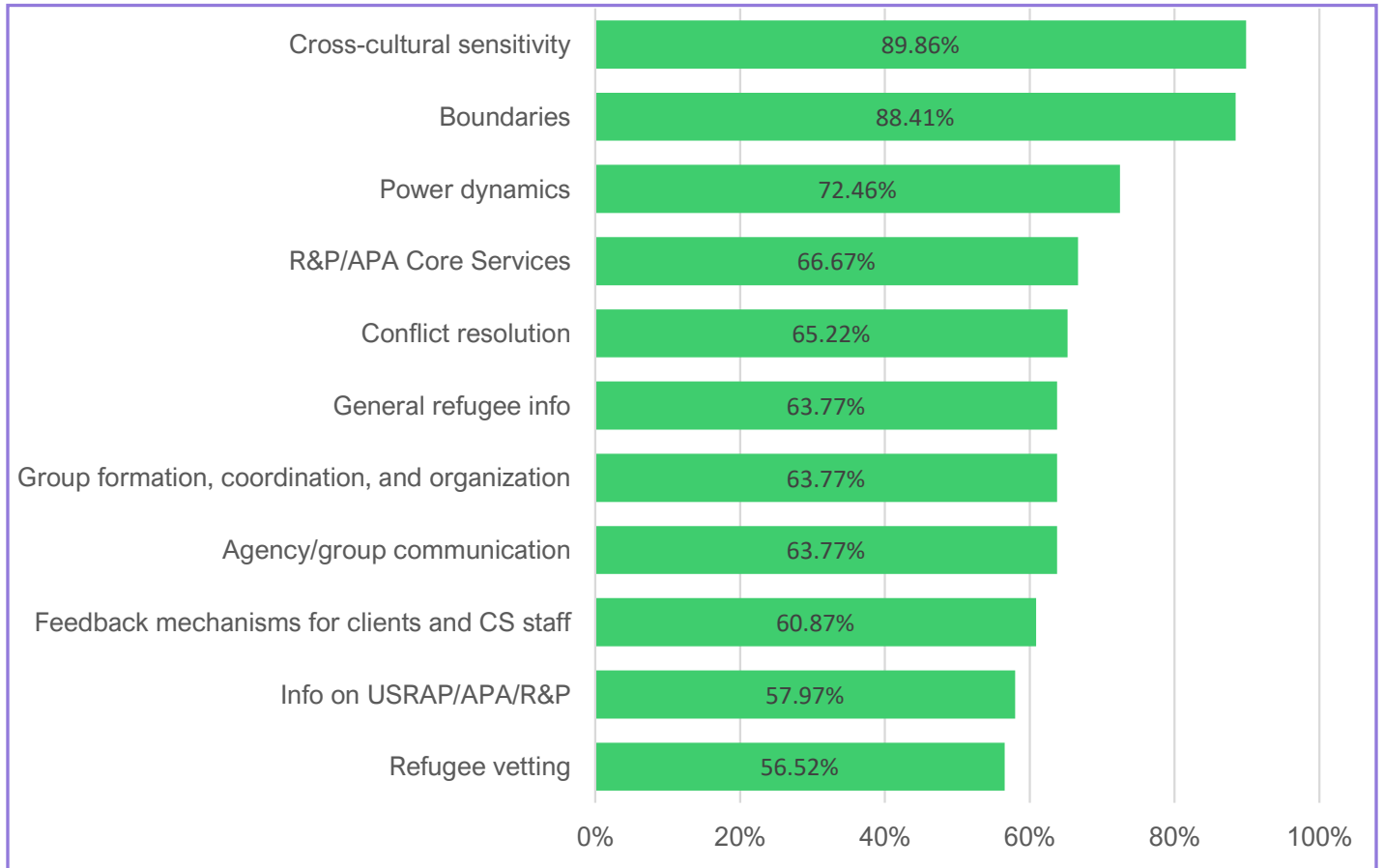
The survey shows that many local staff are not currently accessing training through a national agency, suggesting there are opportunities for training and technical assistance. Slightly over half (52%) of local office survey respondents reported they are receiving training from their national resettlement agency. Of the training provided to respondents, the majority of training is for staff (64%), with 25% of referenced training being for both staff and community sponsors.

One question asked survey participants to rank the value of a national training for community sponsorship groups from one to five, with one being "not valuable at all" and five being "very valuable." The response was made clear by an average ranking of four. The most requested topics include cross-cultural sensitivity (90%); boundaries (88%); power dynamics (72%); and R&P/AP core services (67%). Of the 18% that selected "Other" as a response and wrote in suggested topics, the most common write-in answers were client confidentiality, core service delegation, and defining roles (group and agency).

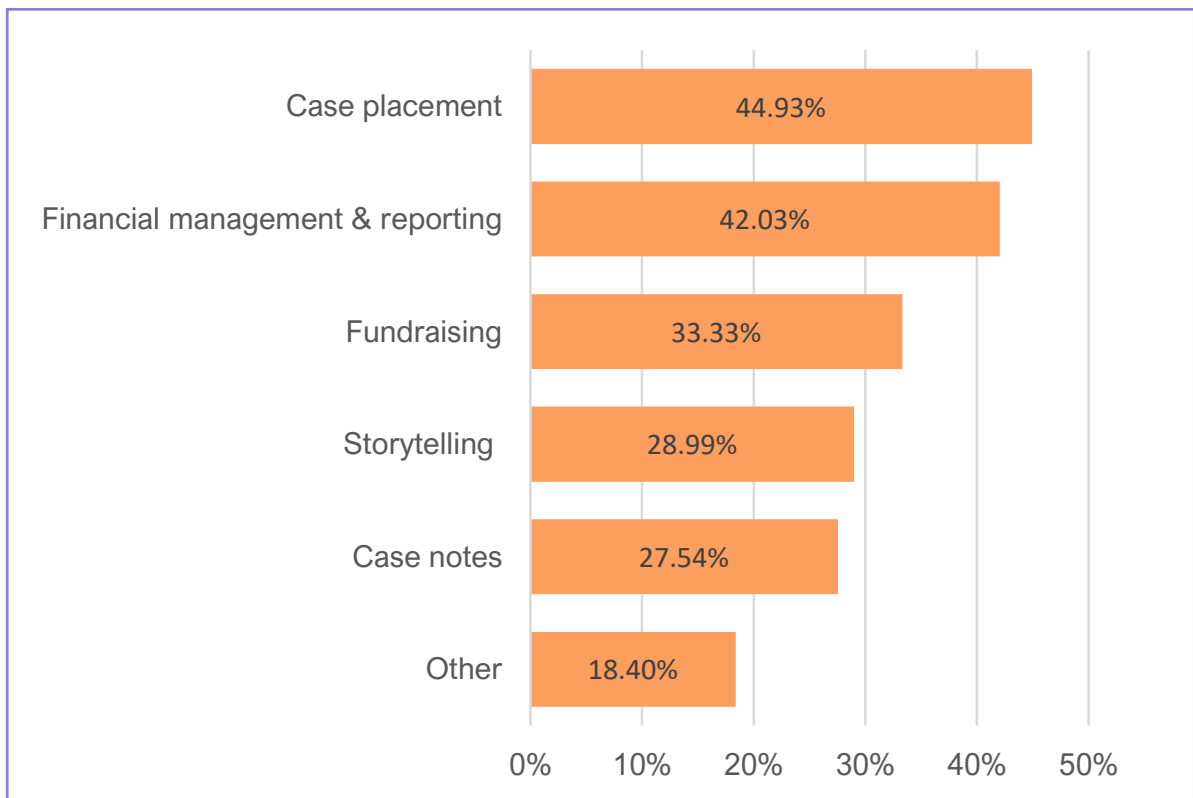
In addition to the development of the standardized baseline training co-developed by CSH, RWC, and Welcome.us, RWC is developing publicly available resources around some of the most suggested training topics in the survey. Examples of these include one-pagers on setting boundaries, cross-cultural sensitivity, and suggested practices for group formation, coordination, and organization.

Q19: What topics would you want included in a national community sponsorship training?

Top 50% Topics Requested



Other Topics Requested (Less than 50%)



Current Training Curriculum

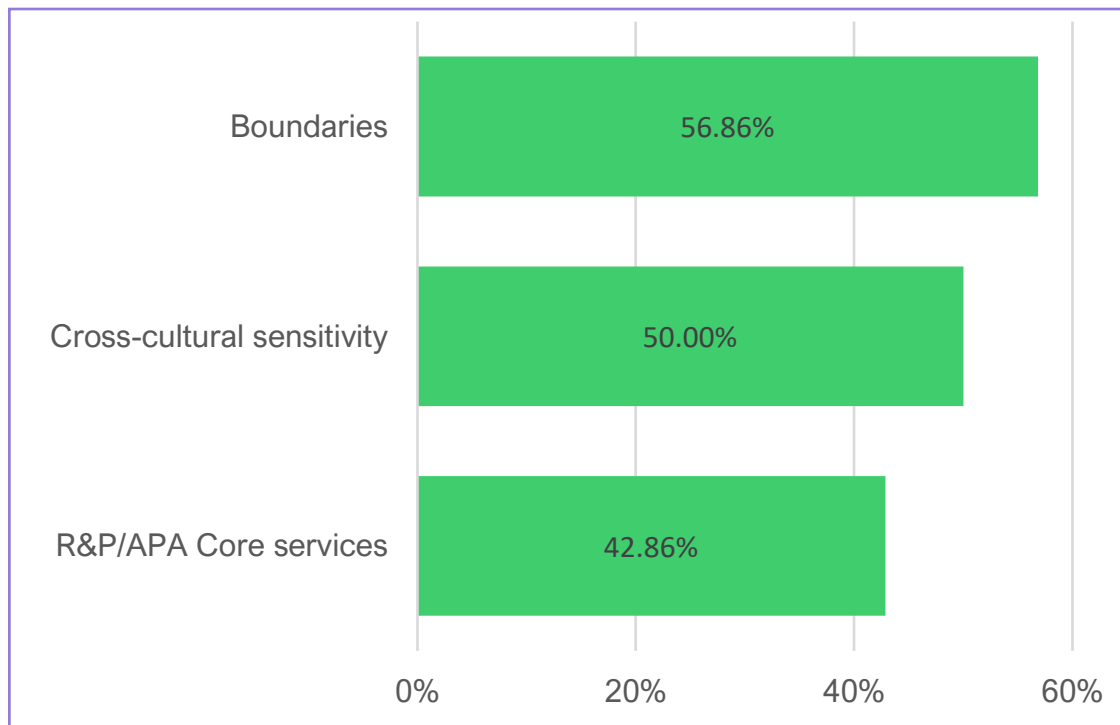
Respondents were in general agreement on the topics with which community sponsors might need technical assistance. Boundaries (57%); cross-cultural sensitivity (50%); and R&P and Core services (43%) were selected as the three topics most likely needed. General information (4%), fundraising (6%), and case placement (7%) were identified as the least needed.

For organizational staff, managing community sponsorship programs (41%); volunteer and staff training (41%); and working with institutions, businesses, universities, and other non-traditional community sponsorship partners (38%) were identified as topics of training that would be most helpful in ongoing technical assistance.

Internal process flows, policies, and structures (38%) were identified as a topic on which organizations could use technical assistance. Using a strengths-based approach, CS recruitment, training, and supervision, and designing feedback loops for staff, clients, and volunteers tied (28%), closely followed by program sustainability (22%).

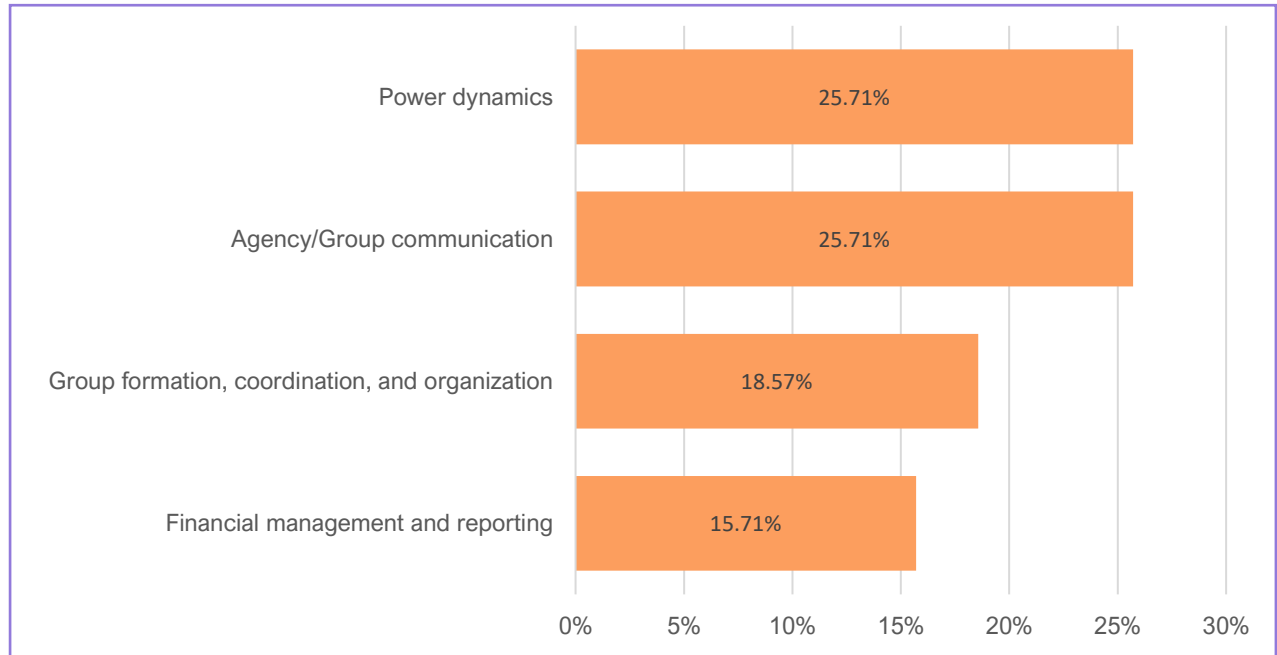
Q20: What three topics might community sponsors need technical assistance on?

Topics Ranked 40% or More

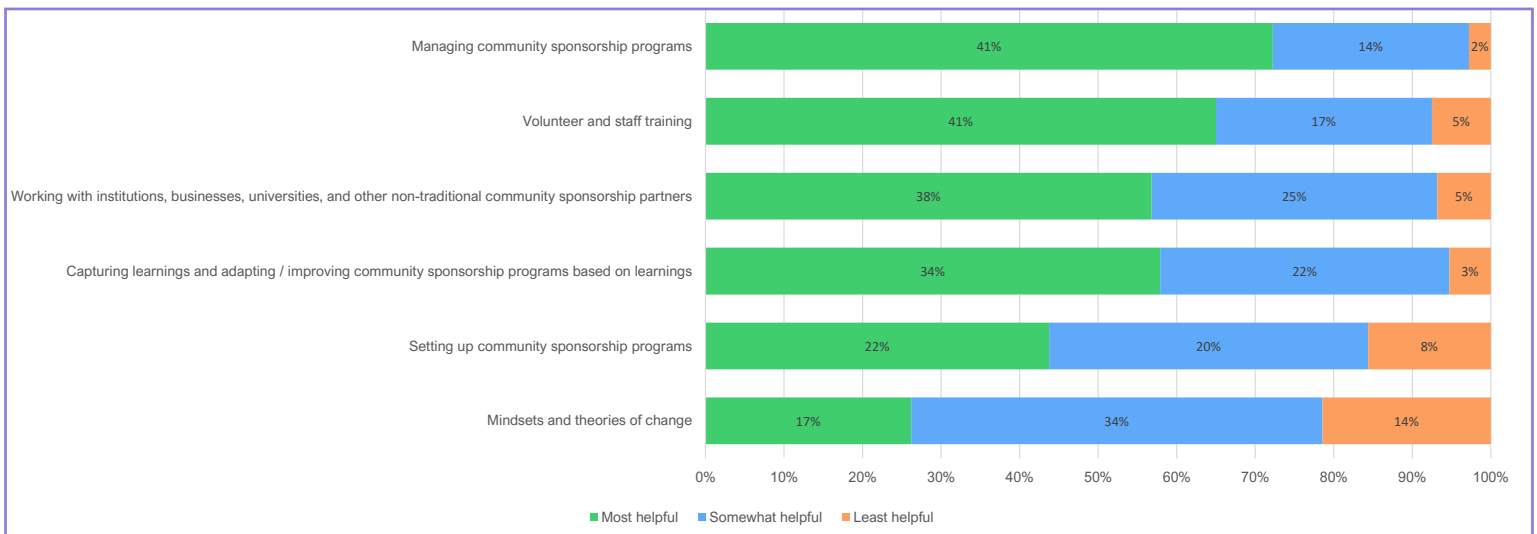


Q20: What three topics might community sponsors need technical assistance on?

Topics Ranked 15% or More

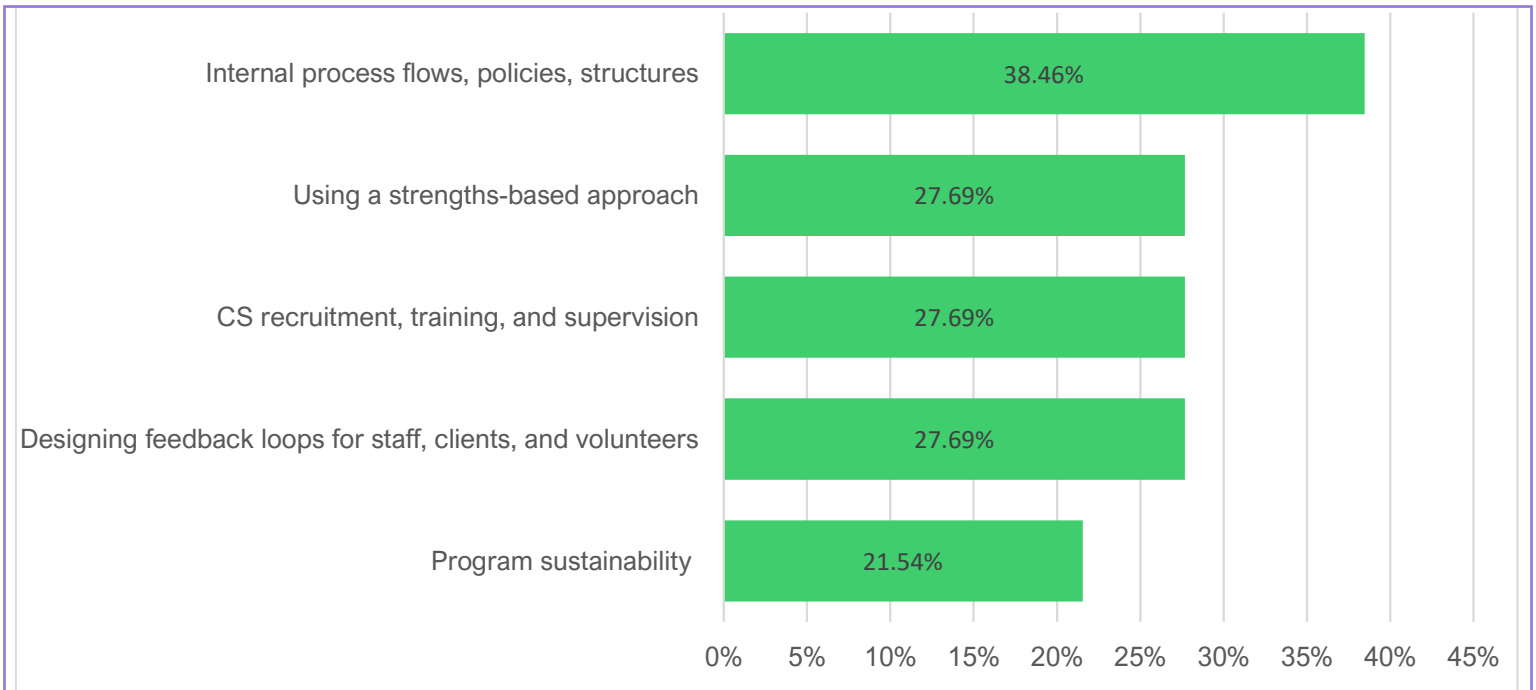


Q21: Which areas of training would be most helpful to have ongoing technical assistance?

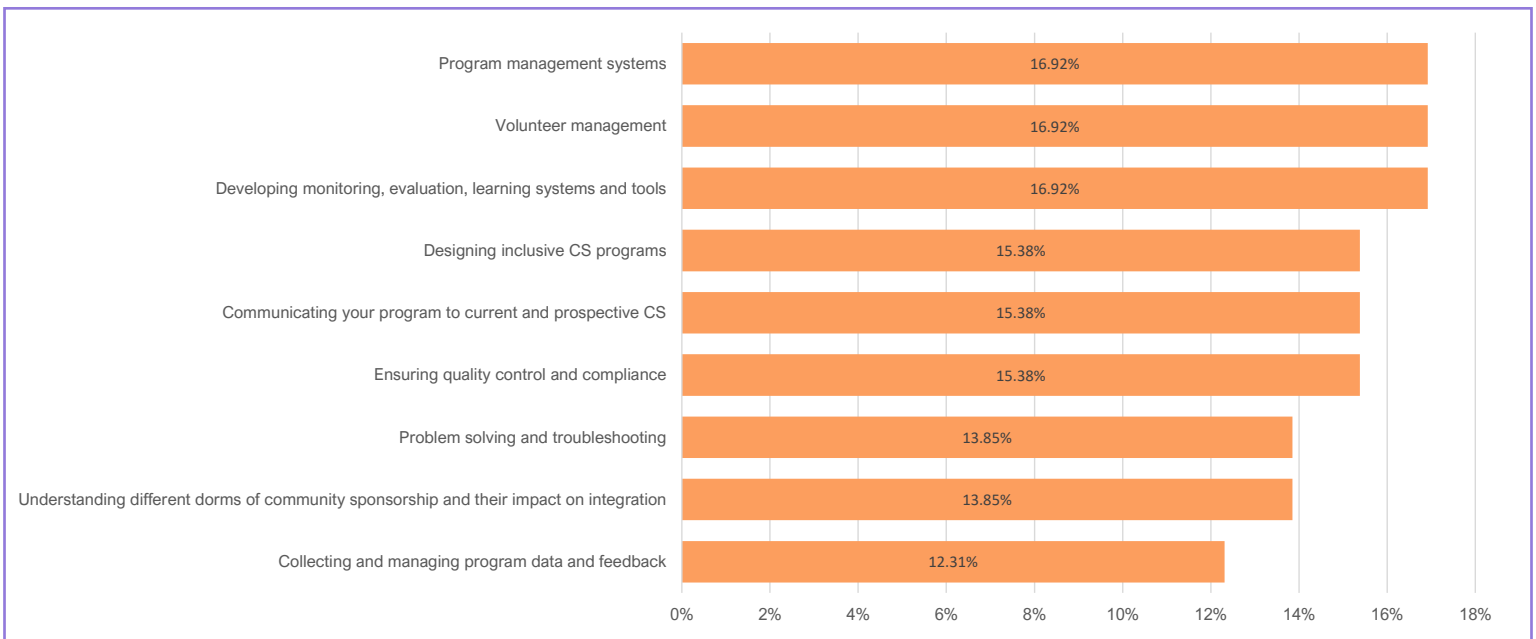


Q22: What three topics might your organization need technical assistance on?

Topics Ranked 20% or More



Topics Ranked 10% or More



Conclusion

Over the past year, community sponsorship programs have significantly expanded, offering groups of individuals and local community organizations located across the country new opportunities to meaningfully welcome and support newcomers as they resettle in the United States. The Community Sponsorship Recruitment, Training, and Technical Assistance survey provides a snapshot of current organizational capacity for these programs. While responses indicate the breadth of training and capacity already in place, responses also highlight and rank areas of need and challenge. Many of the challenges expressed offer opportunities for organizations to leverage national capacity to develop resources for local programs.

CSH and RWC are using the results of the survey to mitigate and address key challenges encountered by community sponsorship programs and develop supporting resources. As part of this effort, CSH and RWC worked with Welcome.US in February 2022 to launch a community sponsorship-focused portal. The portal features a community sponsorship tutorial and allows prospective sponsors to submit interest forms through a directory of community sponsorship programs. In August 2022, the Community Sponsorship Essentials training, a baseline community sponsorship training co-designed by CSH, RWC, and Welcome.US, was launched. CSH and RWC will continue to use the results of this survey to inform the development of critical resources and provide helpful data in prioritization of supporting recruitment and training across the U.S.

Community Sponsorship Hub (CSH)

Established in 2021, the Community Sponsorship Hub (CSH) is dedicated to growing the role of communities in the protection, resettlement, and integration of refugees and other forcibly displaced people. By mobilizing civil society and the public, private, and philanthropic sectors and empowering them with resources and access, CSH shapes and coordinates a community sponsorship system that leverages the power of welcoming Americans.

CSH pursues its mission through four main areas of work: promotion of community sponsorship as a critical form of welcome, design and coordination of an expanded community sponsorship system, capacity-building of stakeholders through the provision of training, technical assistance, and funding, and advocacy for policies that enable welcome through community sponsorship.

To connect with staff at the CSH, please contact: info@communitysponsorshiphub.org

Refugee Welcome Collective (RWC)

The Refugee Welcome Collective is a community sponsorship technical assistance provider funded by the U.S. Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). RWC works to improve outcomes for refugees resettled through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program by building capacity and expanding community sponsorship.

RWC collaborates with partners 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 to support community sponsorship programs across the U.S.

To request training or technical assistance from RWC, please contact: ta@refugeewelcome.org



Volunteer

