

Group Mentorship Program

Guidebook 2022



Community Refugee
Sponsorship Australia



“... this is an opportunity to help, to meet [refugees], and to get that rewarding interaction ... The more kindness you show people, the more they will carry that forward ...”

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1. What is the Group Mentorship Program (GMP)?

Note: Our website features a 'Group Mentorship Program' page in which all key materials relating to the Group Mentorship Program can be found – including this Information Package. Please see <https://refugeesponsorship.org.au/what-we-do/group-mentorship-program/>

a. Background

Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia (CRSA)¹ has been advocating for the introduction of a community refugee sponsorship program which would enable ordinary Australians to sponsor refugees from overseas. This vision is inspired by the successful community sponsorship program operating in Canada since the late 1970s which has enabled more than 325,000 refugees to build a new life in Canada, in addition to those resettled under the government-funded program. Similar schemes are now being implemented in many countries around the world, including in the United Kingdom, Ireland and New Zealand.

The Group Mentorship Program (GMP) was initially launched as a pilot to put into practice various aspects of the sponsorship model, the GMP engages newly-arrived refugee individuals or households in need of additional support and connects them with a local group of volunteers in their community who have been screened and trained to provide that support.

Terminology: 'Sponsorship' vs 'Mentorship'

The GMP was initially envisioned as a one-off, pilot project to pave the way for a future large-scale community refugee sponsorship program backed by the federal government. This project involves local volunteer groups supporting refugees who are already in Australia (rather than arriving directly from overseas), who often have some level of government-funded settlement support. To distinguish this initial program from the ultimate sponsorship program that we hope to see introduced, we adopted the terminology of 'mentors' and 'mentorship' rather than 'sponsors' and 'sponsorship'. Additionally, we will refer to refugee households involved in this program as mentee/s.

- Tell us how you would like to help and join our newsletter mailing list at <https://refugeesponsorship.org.au/how-to-get-involved/>

¹ Previously known as the Community Refugee Sponsorship Initiative (CRSI)

b. Objectives

Building on the objectives of the 2020 pilot program, the GMP aims to:

	Deliver settlement and social cohesion benefits to refugee households and local communities in metropolitan and regional areas
	Further refine the group mentorship/sponsorship model and tools for future scale up in Australia (including partnering with other organisations in the development relevant tools)
	Maintain and build mentoring/sponsoring capacity (including in areas not represented in GMP#1)
	Introduce role of Supporting Community Organisations to enable future scale and build sector capacity
	Enhance the effectiveness of other aligned national, state and local initiatives (eg in areas of employment, regional settlement, social cohesion, support for women)
	Engage with indigenous stakeholders to secure local involvement and welcome

The GMP does not aim to address all of the needs of all of those seeking protection in Australia – it is a very specific project for a very specific purpose of developing a new resettlement pathway and showing the role that community groups can play in supporting successful refugee settlement.

c. Overview

The program in 2022-23 will involve:

- up to **90 refugee households** in need of additional support matched with up to **80 mentor groups** in communities across Australia (including regional locations)
- mentor groups providing **6-12 months practical support** (individualised and holistic mentoring) to refugee households starting in mid 2022 until mid 2023.
- **mentor groups raising a small amount of money** (we recommend \$1,000-\$3,000 depending on size of refugee household) to provide a budget for the work of the group
- **training and support of mentor groups** by CRSA and partner organisations (including by supporting community organisations and settlement agencies)
- **building and capturing community capacity and know-how** to feed into a future community refugee sponsorship program for refugees currently overseas

d. Program Targets

The Program will aim to achieve the following targets:

- At least **80 mentor groups across the country** mobilised, trained and supported to provide settlement support to refugee individuals/households using the group mentorship model
- At least **70% of adult mentees reporting significant progress** against one or more self-identified settlement goals connected to the support provided by the mentor group (e.g. education, employment, housing, language, social connectedness etc)

- At least 80% of the activated mentor group members reporting that their participation in the program has resulted in **new and enduring cross-cultural connections** being made in within their community

e. Summary of roles & responsibilities

Mentees who are keen to participate in the GMP will identify a few settlement goals (areas in which they would like support) and enjoy the support of members of their mentor group (working collaboratively with relevant settlement agencies) as they work toward achieving their settlement goals. These goals will be documented in a ‘mentorship support plan’ developed in collaboration by the mentee/s and the mentor group. Mentees will also participate in monitoring and evaluation activities for the purposes of program development. Please see ‘What are the eligibility criteria and referral process for mentee/s?’ for further details on mentee eligibility criteria and referral processes.

Mentor groups will work with the mentees to help them achieve their settlement goals and seek to cooperate with any existing settlement case managers assisting mentee/s for an initial period of six months (which can be extended by a further six months by mutual agreement between the mentor group and mentee/s). Mentor groups will receive training and support from CRSA and partner organisations and participate in information-sharing and monitoring and evaluation activities for the purposes of future program refinement and community development. Please see ‘What are the eligibility criteria and expectations for a Mentor Group?’ for further details.

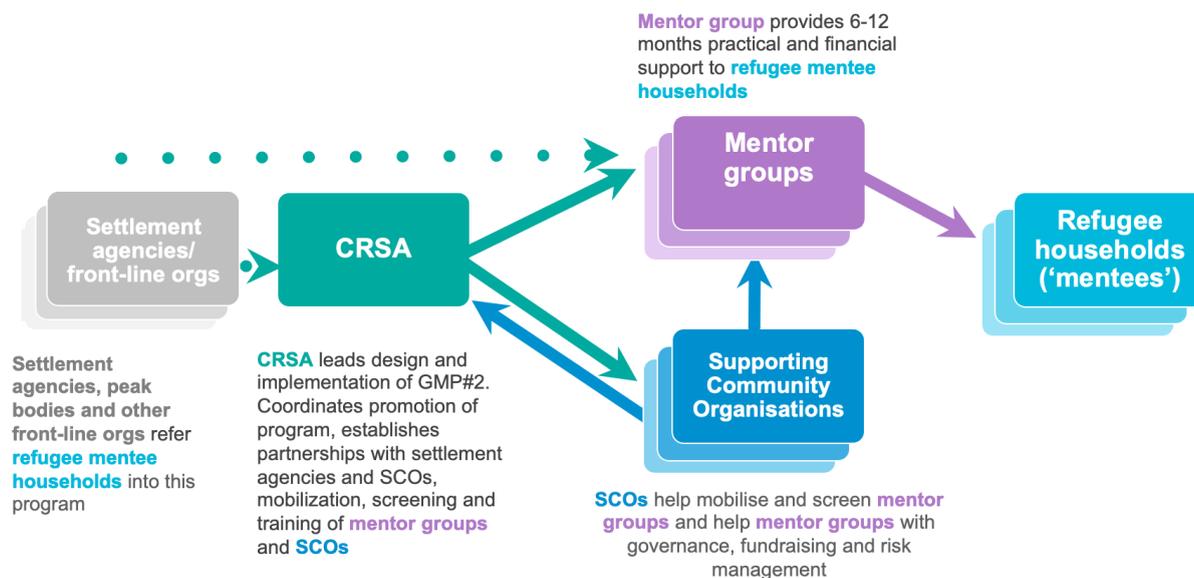
Where available, **Supporting Community Organisations (SCOs)** will help by mobilising and screening volunteers to become mentors and form mentor groups. They will be invited to use existing infrastructure and systems to help with governance of groups and, where possible, provide other support to groups. Please see ‘Eligibility criteria and expectations for a Supporting Community Organisation’ for further details.

CRSA will:

- coordinate the overall implementation of the GMP
- work with Supporting Community Organisations to identify and receive applications from mentor groups
- lead in the training of mentor groups
- work with a range of front-line organisations to match mentees with mentor groups
- continue to develop a ‘community of practice’ comprising mentor group members around the country, providing opportunities for them to meet, learn and share with/from one another
- oversee monitoring and evaluation of the program and document related learnings
- continue to develop plans for and advocate for the adoption of a future federally-backed community refugee sponsorship program

Partner organisations (including leading settlement agencies) will identify and refer refugee households as mentees; assist in matching mentees with mentor groups and help in training and supporting mentor groups; and participate in monitoring & evaluation activities for the purposes of program development. They may also play additional roles, depending on the specific profile of an individual refugee, mentor group or partner organisation.

All participants (monitoring & evaluation): All individuals and organisations involved in the GMP will be encouraged and expected to participate in documenting and sharing their experiences through surveys and interviews for the purposes of monitoring, evaluation and refinement of the program.



f. Program timeline

The program will run for the foreseeable future, with CRSA continuing to mobilise, train and support groups entering the program. The conclusion of the program will be different for each group depending on the date that they start work with their mentee/s and depending on whether they elect to work with their mentee/s for six or twelve months.

2. Criteria, expectations and referral processes

a. Eligibility criteria and referral process for refugee participants ('mentees')

Mentee/s eligibility criteria

Refugee participants must be:

- Living in the Australian community (not overseas or in detention)
- Holding a valid temporary or permanent protection or refugee visa (ie subclass 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 449, 866, SHEV (790), TPV (785) or 866)² [see [FAQs](#) for further clarification]
- Single adult (age 18 or over) or family unit
- Still in the process of settling in Australia (priority will be given to those who arrived in Australia in the last 2 years) OR settling into a new community in Australia (e.g. moving from Sydney to a regional location)
- Living in or moving to a location near an identified mentor group (suggest within a 20-minute drive but the mentor group can decide how far they are willing to travel)
- Not already receiving support from the mentor group under a different program

² For questions about people seeking asylum in Australia, see the [FAQs](#) on our website.

- In need of additional support of a nature that could be provided by a local mentor group (visit [Our Programs FAQs](#) for details)

We will be seeking to involve a diverse group of refugee participants taking into account differences in age, gender, sexual orientation, family composition, country of origin and other personal characteristics, with current personal needs/goals that could really be supported by practical help from a mentor group.



Referral process

We expect most refugee participants will be referred into the GMP by settlement agencies or other front-line agencies working with refugees. However, if you or someone you know would like to refer a refugee/household who meet the eligibility criteria into the GMP directly, please email details to Shabnam Safa at Shabnam.safa@refugeesponsorship.org.au. Please note, however, that part of the eligibility criteria is that the refugee participant is not already receiving support from the mentor group.

b. Eligibility criteria and expectations for mentor groups

Mentors must:

1. Be able to form a local group of at least five adults. We recommend that group members be living near each other (suggest 20-minute drive) and that these group members come from at least three different households in order to maximise the diversity of support for mentees and minimise the risk that the mentor group will be unable to continue if a family/household is affected by an unforeseen event. If you are an individual in need of a group, you can use our [Facebook group](#) to find others nearby, alternatively we may be able to help you connect with others in your local area.
2. Be an Australian citizen or well-established permanent resident
3. Be willing to apply for and able to pass background checks (National Criminal History Check (AFP Check) and Working With Children Check or equivalent (WWCC))
4. Have no criminal record or active adverse immigration proceedings (e.g. visa cancellation, citizenship revocation)
5. Be willing and able to raise a small amount of funds to provide a budget for the work of your group and help your mentee(s) with particular needs (we suggest \$1,000 - \$3,000 per group)

depending on the refugee(s)'s needs and family size; see answers to [FAQs](#) on our website for further details)

6. Be able to commit the necessary time to:
 - a. undertaking program training (approximately 5-6 hours)
 - b. developing a mentor support plan with your mentee(s) (in consultation with any settlement case managers that they are already working with)
 - c. providing mentorship support (variable depending on the needs of the mentee/s but we estimate a commitment of around 10 hours per week per group)
 - d. providing feedback to CRSA and its evaluation partner on your experience of the program at various intervals throughout the six to 12-month experience
 - e. engage in occasional peer-to-peer learning opportunities with other mentor groups (desirable but not compulsory)
7. Submit an application, including background checks (see 'How do I apply to be part of the GMP?')

Relevant professional skills, volunteer experience, local networks and/or languages will be a great asset to your group but don't worry too much if you can't think of anything specific that you can offer – there is plenty of scope for you to tap into your knowledge and strengths and develop new capabilities along the way. A foundational concept of the GMP and a future community refugee sponsorship program is that ordinary Australians can meaningfully support refugees in their local community, something that refugee sponsorship programs around the world have proven over the years.

We will be looking for groups that show a positive 'can-do' attitude and who can submit a well-thought-out application detailing your group and community profile and capacity. We will do our very best to involve all groups who meet the criteria in the program but we cannot promise that there will be an immediate opportunity for every single group. For instance, we may receive more applications than the scale of the program can accommodate and we may find situations in which we are unable to find a good match between an interested group and an eligible mentee.

Given the scope of the program, there is a chance that we may not be able to match you with a refugee household. We do not have any control or influence over where refugees find suitable and affordable housing. If you are based in a regional area with little or no refugee community members, this may mean that the GMP is not the right program for you. We encourage you to consider getting involved in the [CRISP](#) as an alternative.

c. Eligibility criteria and expectations for a Supporting Community Organisation.

Supporting Community Organisations (SCOs) should be legal entities registered and incorporated under relevant state or federal legislation. SCOs may include, for example, churches, schools, universities, sporting clubs, community associations, charities, non-profit organisations and local businesses. While not a requirement, it is preferable that SCOs are established organisations with existing infrastructure to support mentor groups such as financial management systems, public liability insurance and codes of conduct.

SCOs will be responsible for:

- Mobilising and assisting volunteers to form mentor groups
- Assist mentor groups with the application process, including obtaining and maintaining valid police checks and working with children checks

- Ensuring all mentor group members agree to abide by a mandatory mentorship code of conduct as set by CRSA and SCO
- Helping mentor groups set up or gaining access to a bank account in which the group's funds can be held
- Helping mentor groups access public liability insurance for their activities, and make an assessment on what other types of insurance may be appropriate given the proposed activities of the group
- Check in from time to time with mentor groups and mentees and be a first point of contact for mentor groups who require assistance with issues arising during the mentorship period

SCOs may wish to support a single mentor group, or a number of mentor groups in connection with this program. Obligations remain the same regardless of how many mentor groups are supported. We envisage that SCOs would be self-funded, though it is possible that SCOs could charge individual mentor groups a modest nominal fee in return for the support that the SCO provides to the mentor group.

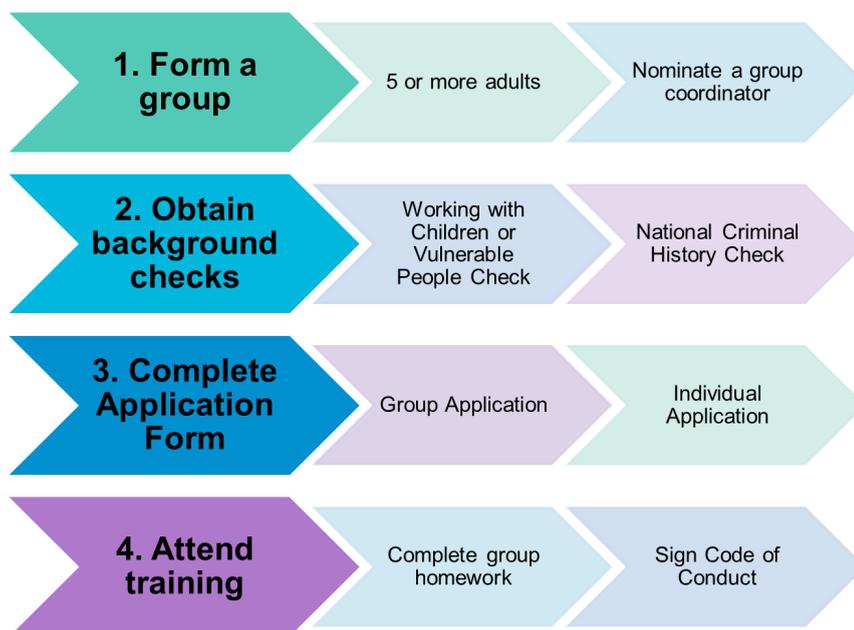


What is the role of mentor groups in a future program sponsoring refugees from overseas?

We hope that mentor groups who participate in the GMP will also be keen to take the next step and apply to sponsor a refugee individual/family from overseas in 2022 or beyond, through the Community Refugee Settlement and Integration Pilot.

3. How do I apply to be part of the GMP?

The GMP application process consists of four steps:



Once we have received your completed application form, we will assess your group against the program criteria, get in touch to confirm your group's involvement and then schedule a time for your group to attend one of our [training sessions](#).

Step 1a: Form a local group of at least five adults

For information about mentor group eligibility criteria and expectations, see 'Roles and Criteria' above. If you are an individual looking for others to form a group with, see the [FAQs](#) on our website or visit our [Facebook group](#).

Once you have formed a local group of at least five adults:

- Appoint one member of your group as the Group Coordinator who will be responsible for submitting the 'Intention to Apply' and 'Group Application Form', as well as being the focal point for communication with CRSA
- Meet and discuss your group's expectations and ways of working, your group and community's resources and your interest in the GMP, including the refugee profile(s) your group could support. This will help you arrive at a common understanding as a group, as well as complete the Mentor Group Application Form.

Step 1b: Connect with a local supporting community organisation (not mandatory)

For information on the role of the SCO, see 'Roles and Criteria' above.

It is not compulsory that each mentor group be linked with an SCO but it could make life easier for your group. For example, the SCO might be able to help your group open or access a bank account or public liability insurance.

Step 2: Apply for background checks

This program involves mentor groups engaging in unsupervised and self-directed activities with refugee households. Accordingly, we need to satisfy all stakeholders that each mentor group member is of good character with no relevant criminal history.

You will need to apply for and obtain background checks (National Criminal History Check (AFP Check) and Working with Children Check or equivalent (WWCC)) for each of your group members. You will not be able to progress past training in this program without them. Please apply for background checks as soon as possible to leave sufficient time for processing.

Need help with this step, check out our fact sheet on '[How to Apply for Police and Working with Children Checks](#)'.

i. How to apply for a National Criminal History Check (AFP Check)

You can apply for a National Criminal History Check [here](#) (this is cheaper and faster than applying directly to the Australian Federal Police). You should apply for an individual police check (Volunteer Check), which costs \$29.00. Processing times are 1-2 days for 70% of applications, and 3-12+ days for 30% of applications.

Police checks are done at a point in time, they do not have an expiry date, therefore we cannot accept old checks previously obtained. We will only be accepting valid police checks that meet our requirements that are no older than 6 weeks from date of application.

ii. How to apply for a Working with Children Check or equivalent (WWCC)

The process for applying for a WWCC varies by state/territory. You should apply for a volunteer check, which is generally free.

If you are in NT, QLD, or WA, you will need a non-profit organisation to help you submit your WWCC application. If your group is not part of, or associated with an SCO, please email Nicole Watkins at Nicole.watkins@refugeesponsorship.org.au and we will try to help you find an organisation that can assist you with this.

If you already have a valid WWCC for the state/territory from which you will be participating in the GMP you do not need to obtain a new one. Please provide the details of this check for the application. CRSA or an organisation that you are connected to can at any time conduct checks to verify the validity of these documents. If we find information that is in contrast to what has been provided, we will take all necessary steps to rectify the situation. If your WWCC/Blue Card is due to expire in the next 6 months, you will need to provide us with the updated clearance once obtained to continue to participate in the program.

For application details by state/territory, see below:

- ACT - [https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/1804/~/working-with-vulnerable-people-\(wwvp\)-registration#ltabs-1](https://www.accesscanberra.act.gov.au/app/answers/detail/a_id/1804/~/working-with-vulnerable-people-(wwvp)-registration#ltabs-1) (if you have a WWCC expiring on or after 16 March 2020, its validity has been extended due to COVID-19)
- NSW - <https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-working-children-check> (NB: New NSW WWCCs can take up to ten weeks to be processed)
- NT - <https://nt.gov.au/emergency/community-safety/apply-for-a-working-with-children-clearance>
- SA - <https://screening.sa.gov.au/applications/application-information-for-individuals>

- QLD - <https://www.qld.gov.au/law/laws-regulated-industries-and-accountability/queensland-laws-and-regulations/regulated-industries-and-licensing/blue-card/applications/apply> (If you don't have an SCO associated with your group, CRSA can help with your application. You must provide your online account number to CRSA when applying for your volunteer blue card so we can link you to our organisational portal. This way you won't be charged for the check. [More info on this here.](#))
- TAS - <https://www.cbos.tas.gov.au/topics/licensing-and-registration/registrations/work-with-vulnerable-people/applications/apply>
- VIC - <https://www.workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au/>
- WA - <https://workingwithchildren.wa.gov.au/applicants-card-holders/applying-for-a-wwc-check/how-to-apply>

Step 3: Complete and submit the Mentor Group Application Form

You will be able to access and complete a Mentor Group Application Form via our [website](#)³ from 31 July 2021.

The purpose of this application form is to help CRSA and its partners understand the nature of your group as much as possible, so that we can check that your group meets the criteria for the program and then later endeavour to facilitate a successful match and positive experience for both your group and your refugee mentee(s). It is not intended to be a 'pass/fail' process. Once we receive your completed applications, we will work with you to address any concerns or gaps. So please do your best to complete the form as accurately as possible but don't worry about being excluded from the program by answering a question in a particular way.

Your group's coordinator or SCO representative should then complete and submit the Mentor Group Application Form (one form per group) online via our website. You will be notified by email when this happens. We will also be advising when applications open on social media, so if you don't already, please be sure to like our [Facebook page](#)⁴ or follow us on [Twitter](#)⁵

The Mentor Group Application Form (see appendix for template) will include detailed questions about:

- each of your group members (e.g. name, contact details, occupation)
- your group and community's resources
- your group and community's profile, resources and capacity

It is advised that you spend some time as a group discussing some of these elements to ensure you cover all the required areas for the application. Please leave sufficient time for you as a group to discuss and complete it.

Step 4: Attend training

CRSA will invite you to attend training once we receive your application to participate in the program. You can review our training page on the website for upcoming dates to prepare and lock in dates with your group members. Groups are strongly encouraged to join the training workshops together

³ Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia – www.refugeesponsorship.org.au

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/CRSAaus>

⁵ https://twitter.com/CRSA_Aus

as a lot of the content is about building strong and effective group dynamics through group-based activities.

What happens next?

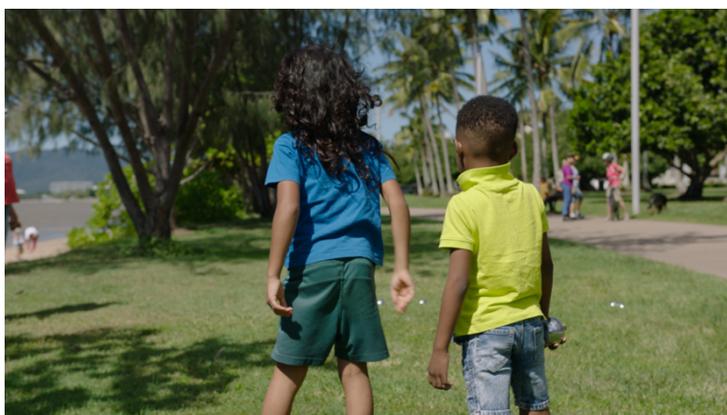
Once we receive your group's completed application form, we will review the application and let you know if any additional information or clarification is required and you will have an opportunity to clarify any remaining questions that you might have.

Once your mentor group application is accepted and you have completed the training program we will work towards matching your group with a mentee household in cooperation with those organisations who have referred the mentee/s to this program.

CRSA will issue a confirmation letter to matched mentor groups and mentees, who will be asked to countersign that letter confirming their participation in the GMP. They will also be asked to work together (in consultation with any existing settlement case managers) to develop a mentorship support plan which will be your group's 'roadmap' for the next 6 to 12 months.

We will provide more information about training, the mentorship support plan, and mentorship details once we have received mentor group applications and mentee referrals.

Thank you for your interest in the GMP, and we look forward to receiving your mentor group application. If you still have questions about the GMP, see the FAQ on our website.



I still have questions about the GMP

If you still have questions about the GMP that you need answered in order to apply, email Nicole Watkins at Nicole.watkins@refugeesponsorship.org.au. Answers to additional FAQ are available on the [Community Hub](#) page of our website.

If you have questions about the GMP that can be answered later, we ask that you hold them until we have received and reviewed your mentor group application, as they may be answered in due course, and you will have the opportunity to ask them later.

Appendices

Information Required for Mentor Group Application Form

To complete your online application form, you will need the following information (do not fill in this form).

Part 1: Basic information about each group member

1. Title (e.g. Ms, Mrs, Mr, Dr)
2. Full Name
3. Address
4. Telephone
5. Mobile
6. Email address
7. Year of Birth
8. Gender (F, M, Other, prefer not to say)
9. Occupation (or previous occupation if retired) (e.g. teacher, lawyer, accountant etc)
10. Current employment status (full time, part time, casual, retired, other)
11. Are you an Australian citizen or permanent resident?
12. What is the name of your group?
13. Do you have any criminal history or are you subject to any outstanding criminal proceedings?
14. Do you have any active immigration proceedings (e.g. visa cancellation, citizenship revocation) against you?
15. I have completed and uploaded background checks
 - i. AFP Check details
Number/Exp Date
 - ii. Working with Children Check
Number/Exp Date

Part 2: Information about your group

1. Have members of your group worked together as a group before?
 - a. If yes, for how long, and what sorts of activities have you undertaken together?
2. Is your group a legal entity, or associated with a supporting community organisation (e.g. community association, charity, faith organisation, school)?
 - a. If yes, what is the name and ACN/registration number of the supporting community organisation, and how is your group associated with it?
3. How many hours per week could your group collectively commit to mentoring a refugee individual/family? (we recommend allowing an average of 8 hours/week/group)
4. What times of the week would members of your group typically be available (e.g. weekdays, weekends, during office hours, after office hours)?
5. What personal/professional/business/ volunteer skills/experience do members of your group have that could be helpful to a refugee (e.g. [Group Member 1] works in the local primary school, [Group Member 2] runs a small business)?
6. What personal/professional/business/ community networks do members of your group have that could be helpful to a refugee (e.g. local clubs, associations, employers, schools)?
7. How do you plan to fundraise to support your work in the program? (incl any relevant experience members of your group may have)
8. Do members of your group speak any languages other than English?
 - a. If yes, which language(s), and how well (basic, intermediate, proficient)?

Part 3: Information about your community

1. Within what Local Government Area(s) could your group support a refugee? If you are located in a city or large town, give the most central postcode for your group + the radius (in number of kilometres) that members of your group could travel to mentor a refugee living outside of that postcode (e.g. 'within 10 kilometres of 3206').
2. Please provide a brief overview of your community consider including the following:
 - basic demographics, accommodation options (incl. if your area is a high tourist zone), transport options, employment and education (incl. ESL programs) and available social programs/services
3. Local settlement agencies/migrant services
4. Available interpreters known to you (including language(s))
5. General or specialist physical health services (incl. dental)
6. General or specialist mental health services
7. Given your group and your community's resources, could you support:
 - A single refugee
 - A refugee family
 - An individual/family living in your community
 - An individual/family moving to your community
 - A refugee in need of specialist physical/mental health support
 - A refugee with other specific needs [please specify]
8. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about the profile of refugee(s) your group could support?

Part 4: Information about your group's involvement in the Group Mentorship Program (GMP)

1. Is your group able to commit time for training (~8 hours) in connection with the GMP?
2. Is your group willing to participate in the following activities associated with the GMP?
 - peer-to-peer learning
 - fundraising
 - information-sharing
 - monitoring and evaluation
3. Is your group willing to participate in media and promotional activities in connection with the GMP (e.g. sharing your group's story with interested journalists)?
4. Is your group interested in sponsoring refugees from overseas in future?
5. What training or support from CRSA/partners do you think would be most useful to your group?
6. Do you have any questions or concerns about the GMP?
7. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?