



FINANCES & FUNDRAISING



**WELCOME
CIRCLES**
for Refugees



DEAR WELCOME CIRCLE LEADER,

Thank you for your yes to Welcome Circles! We are so grateful for your willingness to participate in this ministry.

The **Finances & Fundraising Toolkit** was created to help your Welcome Circle to create a solid budget and get the financial support you will need. You will find information about finances and fundraising from the [Refugee Welcome Collective](#) and [Community Sponsorship Hub](#). We find the information from these other organizations very useful even if all of it is not relevant for our circles.

You will also find a guide about Best Practices for Cash Disbursements, Donations, & Fundraising from Chris Koehler, Director of the Seattle Archdiocese Immigrant and Refugee Ministry.

You will also find a sample budget template.

Every Welcome Circle is different, just as every family is different. You will most likely come across unique circumstances in your circle. Rest assured, our team in the Immigration and Refugee Ministry of the Seattle Archdiocese is prepared to walk with you, giving you the encouragement and support you need, pointing you to helpful resources, and praying for you daily.

As you begin this journey, please always feel free to reach out to us at any time with any questions, concerns, or suggestions you may have. We look forward to hearing from you and walking with you in this journey!

In Christ,

The Welcome Circles Team

Then the King will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?' And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren,

You did it for me.



WELCOME CIRCLES

Seattle Archdiocese
Immigrant and Refugee
Ministry

For help with your journey as a Welcome Circle, you can reach out to:

Amy Nash, Welcome Circle Coordinator
amy.nash@seattlearch.org

Rebecca Burdullis, Welcome Circle Associate
rebecca.burdullis@seattlearch.org

Also, make sure to join our email list at www.archseattle.com/welcomecircles.

Budget Tool Monthly Budget Tool and Guidance

Newcomers and sponsors can use this tool to create a monthly budget. A budget is a plan for how to manage income and expenses. Income is money and benefits you are receiving from a job or other assistance. Expenses are money you need to spend on housing, transportation, food, and other things.

Monthly Budget Tool

Monthly Income (+)		Monthly Expenses (-)	
Earned wages from job		Rent	
Refugee Cash Assistance		Utilities	
Public benefits (cash)		Transportation	
Public benefits (SNAP)*		SNAP-eligible food*	
Other		Food (not covered by SNAP)	
Other		Cell phone	
Other		Internet	
		Clothing & goods	
		Savings	
		Support for family overseas	
		Other	
Total:		Total:	

*Do not include in total

Financial support is essential in providing a newcomer's strong start. From Initial rent to rental deposits and utilities, funds will be needed to provide welcome. Community sponsor groups provide this welcome by collecting a minimum amount of funds and soliciting in-kind donations to support the arriving newcomers. The below steps and tips will help you meet your fundraising goals. Fundraising for community sponsorship can be challenging, but with strategic planning and community support, it can be a successful and meaningful endeavor. Remember to be transparent about how the funds will be used, provide regular updates to donors, and express gratitude for their contributions.

Steps for Successful Community Sponsorship Fundraising

1 Set a fundraising goal & list of in-kind donations needed	Based on the requirements of the community sponsorship program you are participating in, set your group's fundraising goal. It can be helpful to create an estimated budget of expenses (rent, transport, utilities, food, phone and internet, home set-up, clothing, and school supplies) to get a sense of how funds you raise and in-kind donations you receive will be used and what will be needed. Check with the local resettlement agency for any current fundraising guidelines.
2 Identify your donor base	You will be surprised by the donor base you already have in your network of family, friends, and neighbors. Consider also reaching out to local community businesses and foundations and bringing your campaign to schools, churches, or civic groups.
3 Develop your group strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before you begin raising funds, identify your timeline, to whom individuals and organizations should make their donation, where donations will be deposited or stored, if donations made will be tax exempt, how they will be tracked, and a plan for remaining funds and conclusion of the sponsorship period.• If you are within a few months of newcomers' arrival, share a sign-up list for needed in-kind items. Or, let donors know you will be sharing the list in the future. Use the list below as a reference for essentials. Before soliciting in-kind donations, create a plan for storage or donor delivery to the home. While collecting in-kind goods can generate enthusiasm, don't let it hold up your fundraising efforts.• Arrival times can vary up to six months; check with the local resettlement agency and share varied timelines with in-kind donors so that they can plan to be flexible. 📄 Home Supply List (RefugeeHousing.org)• Identify the roles of each member in the sponsorship group in helping the group meet the fundraising goal and acknowledge who on the team will keep others accountable and on track to carry out their role and responsibilities.
4 Create language & communications that all members of your group can use	Draft the language group members can use in their outreach to individuals, community groups, and businesses. The communication material should include background on why you are helping to welcome a refugee family through community sponsorship, your financial and in-kind goals, how funds will be used, in-kind donations sign-up sheet, how any unspent funds will be used, and how those that give can expect to hear from you on the impact of their gift. By creating this language at the beginning of your effort, you will save sponsor group members' time and ensure quality and consistency in your fundraising asks.

5

Track your asks & donations

Create a document to track the asks and gifts received. If the document is shared across team members, it can help ensure coordination. The document should include the contact information of those that donate so that you can follow up with them to acknowledge their donation and provide an update. It should also include, the name, amount donated, date given, and form of gift (cash, check, in-kind).

6

Acknowledge your donors & give them an update

Send those that donated to your group an acknowledgment of their gift and the impact it had. It can also be nice to send an update to your donors on the progress of your welcome. While specific newcomer details should not be shared, you may plan to update donors when the newcomers arrive, start school, or complete their first day in a new job.

Fundraising Tools

- Fundraising platforms: Use online crowdfunding platforms like [GoFundMe](#) or [Kickstarter](#), to create a fundraising campaign and share it with friends, family, and supporters. These platforms make it easy for people to donate to your cause and share your campaign with others. Note, the use of these platforms does not necessarily make a donation tax deductible.
- Social media: Create social media accounts for your community sponsorship group and regularly post updates on your progress and upcoming events. Social media is a great tool to build awareness and excitement for your cause, as well as connect with potential donors and supporters. Make sure to keep the confidentiality and privacy of newcomers in mind.
- Fundraising events: Host fundraising events, such as dinners, or auctions, to raise money for your cause. Consider partnering with local businesses or organizations to maximize the impact of the event and increase community support. Make sure to plan and promote your event well in advance and be sure to thank your donors and supporters afterward. Keep in mind that events often require a significant amount more time and effort than personal asks to your networks.

The benefits of initial financial support will be multiplied as newcomers start their lives and become neighbors in your community. Fundraising not only secures the very much-needed financial support but is an opportunity to engage the broader community in welcome.



WELCOME CIRCLE RESOURCE

BEST PRACTICES FOR CASH DISBURSEMENTS, DONATIONS, & FUNDRAISING

Welcome Circles fall under the umbrella of the parish or non-profit's 501(c)3. Here are some dos and don'ts to be aware of when making purchases or expenditures for sponsored families as a 501(c)3).

- 1. It's best not to distribute cash to the newcomer family**, but still possible if handled correctly. One issue with cash is that we can't say for sure how the funds were used by the recipient. St. Vincent de Paul and similar places only use vouchers because that's best accounting procedures and they can definitively prove what the funds were spent on. Also, since they help a lot of people no donations are received for support of specific individuals – i.e. SVdP decides what the funds are used for, not the donor.
- 2. Solicit cash donations to support your welcome circle ministry in general, not for specific costs or for a specific family.** Ask for donations “to support our refugee ministry” (or similar phrasing) that the parish (not the donor) decides how to use. Then, the parish can purchase the items needed like groceries. A staff member could purchase things like groceries on behalf/as an agent of the parish and then get reimbursed from the parish. The parish could also purchase gift cards to Fred Meyer that can be used for food, clothing, household items, and distribute those to the family, even though these cards are cash equivalent. *You should avoid as much as possible volunteers purchasing anything for the sponsored family and then reimbursing the volunteer. Instead, issue a gift card to the sponsored family so they can purchase items directly. Reimbursing welcome circle members is generally good to avoid, but can be done if the expenditure is approved by the parish beforehand and you get receipts.*
- 3. If someone wants to cover the cost of a specific item, it would be better not to involve the parish at all. This would not be reimbursed and is not tax-deductible.** A donor cannot stipulate who benefits from their donation. For example, “I am making a \$700 donation to buy Olga a new phone” is not allowable. They could buy the phone themselves and gift it to Olga, consider that a gift to her, and not request reimbursement. When an individual purchases items for a specific person, it's generally not tax-deductible. Individuals could also just make a cash gift directly to the family and not involve the parish. Again, it would not be a tax-deductible gift. Importantly, cash and in-kind gifts can be a culturally sensitive area, so check first with your interpreter/cultural guide.
- 4. It is best to have the parish pay vendors directly if the welcome circle is covering that cost.** For rent, the parish would directly pay the landlord. For car insurance, the parish would directly pay the insurance company.
It is okay to solicit in-kind donations of things like furniture, food, groceries, etc. These are tax-deductible,
- 5.** although most people don't ask for the receipt. Anyone who asks for a tax receipt can be given a form where they describe the goods donated and note the value (the donor decides this). The form should have the tax ID number, the date, and states that the donor received no substantial goods or services in exchange for their contribution.

Each parish may have its own policies around these issues. A parish may generally allow financial distributions under certain circumstances; however, they may reasonably decide not to in others.

Please feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns regarding these issues.

Chris Koehler, Director of Missions and Immigrant Affairs

206-274-3194

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WE ARE FUNDRAISING

SPONSORING A REFUGEE FAMILY THROUGH WELCOME CIRCLES

Refugees suffer unthinkable tragedy and arrive here with next to nothing. We offer them hope by participating in Welcome Circles, a program developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Your donations to this ministry will go a long way in helping us provide all the services a family needs to resettle in our community.

"I make this appeal to journey together towards an ever wider "we" to all men and women, for the sake of renewing the human family, building together a future of justice and peace, and ensuring that no one is left behind." -Pope Francis

SERVICES WE ARE PROVIDING INCLUDE:

- Housing and rental assistance
- Food and groceries
- Clothing
- Support for medical benefits
- Help with travel & transportation
- Help with employment
- Help with English language proficiency
- School supplies
-

HOW YOU CAN HELP:

- Spread the word among your family, friends and neighbors
- Serve as a volunteer
- Make a Donation
- Contact your employer

HOW YOU CAN MAKE YOUR DONATION COUNT:

- \$150 pays for groceries for one week
- \$600 pays for groceries for one month
- \$1,000 helps us buy clothing for the family
- \$3,000 covers apartment rent for one month
- \$5,000 helps us acquire a used vehicle

Writing an Appeal

Tell a story through donor's eyes /
easy to read / conversational tone

Include photos / be clear

Sense of urgency / call to action /
concise / ALL gifts matter

Show impact – what is the
problem we're trying to solve?

Landing page to donate /
thank the donor

Sample Appeal Letter

Dear Friend,

War, instability, and oppression force many around the world to flee their homelands and seek safety. At the end of 2023, [the UN Refugee Agency states there were 117.3 million people forcibly displaced from their homes.](#)

The Archdiocese of Seattle is honored to be one of six agencies nationwide participating in **Welcome Circles for Refugees**, a program developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishop's (USCCB) Migration & Refugee Services. Communities and individuals throughout the Archdiocese of Seattle have sponsored approximately 100 refugees since we launched the Welcome Circle Program in September 2022.

Today, Welcome Circles in Western Washington are supporting 27 refugee families from Ukraine, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Venezuela, Haiti, and Eritrea, among others.

What is a Welcome Circle? A Welcome Circle is a caring group of 5-20 people who pool their resources and accompany a family into housing, employment, benefits, healthcare, transportation, and help refugee families become financially stable. They assist families for two years, though most stabilize in the first six months.

Most importantly, a Welcome Circle serves as friends and navigators during this journey. Additionally, staff at the Archdiocese of Seattle provide tools and resources to support Welcome Circles and their sponsored refugee families throughout assimilation. You can read more about the Welcome Circle program [on our website.](#)

How are Refugees Sponsored? Welcome Circles within the Archdiocese of Seattle currently support 27 families. The need to sponsor more refugee families continues to grow. When a Welcome Circle wants to sponsor a family, they must go through a certification process and the federal government requires they raise a minimum of \$2,250.

Please join us in this effort to support refugees and DONATE TODAY. All gifts matter.

"I make this appeal to journey together towards an ever wider 'we' to all men and women, for the sake of renewing the human family, building together a future of justice and peace, and ensuring that no one is left behind." Pope Francis

You can read more about Julia Yemelianova and her two young children from Ukraine who were embraced by the St. Jude Welcome Circle [here.](#)

Questions? Contact us at _____.

Audience

Start with your Inner Circle!

Ask parishioners, friends, co-workers, neighbors, your alma mater, and family members to support your cause, creating and nurturing a community that believes in the cause.

Donors are more likely to contribute when they understand where their money is going and can see the tangible impact of their donations.

Photos speak a 1,000 words.



Acknowledge

- Invite a refugee family to participate in writing a thank you note to your donors.
- Make sure you THANK donors promptly!



Donation Drive

- Charity of the year for the school or parish
- Food, clothing, toiletry drive
- Highlight during Catholic Schools Week



Fundraising Event or Project

School / Parish Partnership

- Partner with your Parish School! Ask to be the “raise the paddle” as part of the school auction
- Ask the School for you to be the charity of the year! (donation drives, lemonade stands, auction, jog-a-thon / charity run)
- Hold a special event and the raffle becomes your fundraising income!
- Have donors fill out an in-kind form – the Archdiocese of Seattle has a standard form we can all use

Project Idea – Community Recipe Book

Matching Gifts

- Check your company's giving community involvement portal for matching gift opportunities. This is an opportunity to match your donation and volunteer time.
- Some nonprofits host double the donation search engines.
 - See [this example](#).
- Send an end of year reminder to email donors to get their donation matched





Marketing

Create Exposure:

Social media, email marketing,
flyer distribution

Awareness:

Social media, blogging, video marketing,
personal outreach

Consideration:

Share success stories, personalize the
fundraiser, create a sense of urgency

Conversion:

Make it easy to donate, say thank you,
keep people updated

Loyalty:

Personalize thank you's, keep in touch,
provide opportunities for involvement,
recognize donors publicly (if they are ok with that)