



TENT

# Managing Refugee Employees & Setting Them Up for Success

A Training Presentation  
for Managers



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## Why invest in setting up refugees for success at work?

- ▲ Attrition is typically highest for refugee employees during their first month at a new job.
- ▲ By taking steps to set up refugee employees for success from day one, you can increase retention rates.
- ▲ After approximately six months, refugee employees are likely to require less tailored support.
- ▲ Creating an inclusive environment for refugee employees will benefit other employees too!

Many refugee candidates will want to know about the steps companies are taking to create a welcoming environment for refugee employees.





## Both direct managers and HR teams should be involved in setting up refugees for success

- ▲ The responsibilities and tasks covered in this presentation clearly sit with **refugee employees' direct managers** (e.g., giving refugee reports regular performance feedback).
- ▲ However, other responsibilities (e.g., creating forums for exchange between refugee and non-refugee colleagues) will require collaboration between HR, direct managers, and even employee volunteers, depending on the capacity within your company.

Make sure that roles, responsibilities, and the division of labor are clearly communicated and defined.





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## General guidelines for working with refugee colleagues

1.

Approach all conversations with **sensitivity and respect.**

2.

Build rapport, identify shared values, and **get to know your refugee** colleagues personally.

3.

Ask open-ended questions that **give refugee colleagues an opportunity to share more.**

4.

**Respect your refugee colleagues' privacy** and never ask why they fled their home country.



## Pre-boarding: Making the workplace culturally inclusive for refugee employees

Refugees may face cultural barriers when joining a workplace in their new country. Companies that are culturally inclusive allow employees to flourish, enhancing innovation, productivity, and employee engagement. To build an inclusive workforce, managers can:

- ▲ Build forums for collaboration between refugee and non-refugee colleagues.
- ▲ Encourage employees to take advantage of your company's diversity training.
- ▲ Offer meaningful professional development and upskilling opportunities to refugee employees.

**Cultural inclusion** is the full and successful integration of people from diverse backgrounds into a workplace. A culturally inclusive workplace cultivates respect, equity, and the positive recognition of differences.

## Pre-boarding: Preparing yourself to manage refugee employees

- ▲ **Contact HR** to understand the background(s) of your refugee employee(s), and read Tent's resources on creating a culturally inclusive workplace for Ukrainian and Afghan refugees if the employee(s) is from one of these communities. *Find both resources via Tent's [Members' Hub](#).*
- ▲ Encourage a culture of open, direct, and **respectful communication**.
- ▲ **Send a welcome note before a refugee employee's first day** on the job to help them feel more comfortable, and to establish a welcoming work environment from day one.
- ▲ Additionally, **share detailed maps or directions** that explain how new refugee hires can commute to work via public and/or private transportation.





## Pre-boarding: Preparing other team members to work with refugee colleagues

- ▲ **Be prepared to communicate** the benefits you expect refugee employees will bring to your team – for example, their strong commitment and/or diverse professional perspectives.
- ▲ Design **inclusive team events** that encourage cross-cultural collaboration, and invite all employees to participate.
- ▲ **Educate your team** about their new colleagues' backgrounds, and train them on what is to be expected when working with refugees. *Provide additional information about how to support refugee employees by sharing relevant Tent resources, available via the [Members' Hub](#).*
- ▲ Encourage team members to **complete your company's diversity and inclusion training** to encourage positive cross-cultural relationships across the company, and reduce cross-cultural misunderstanding.

Set up a buddy program that pairs new refugee hires with an experienced employee "buddy". These "buddies" can help to guide new refugee employees during their first few months on the job.

## Onboarding: Creating a tailored refugee onboarding experience

Be hands-on with refugee employees during their first 90 days. Managers should work directly with their HR team to ensure that refugee hires receive a tailored onboarding experience.

Personalized guidance during the onboarding phase will help to reduce the barriers new refugee employees face while getting acclimated.





## Onboarding: Facilitating clear communication with refugee employees

- ▲ **Be sensitive to any cultural differences**, especially in areas related to communication, eye contact, and physical touch, as refugees may come from countries with different social norms and dynamics.
- ▲ If you are having trouble communicating with a refugee employee, **speak clearly and give simple instructions** for tasks – avoid the tendency to speak loudly or use idiomatic language, and break down directions step-by-step when necessary.
- ▲ **Schedule regular check-ins** during a refugee employee's first week on the job, emphasizing that these meetings are an open forum for them to ask any questions.
- ▲ Some refugee hires will have limited English language proficiency, so be mindful of the words you use – **avoid jargon, acronyms, and colloquialisms** when possible.
- ▲ **Provide logistical support** to new refugee employees, ensuring that each individual is equipped to navigate staff benefits, commuting, and company technology.

Set clear guidelines around communication and what refugees can expect from the employee-manager relationship at your workplace, as they may be accustomed to different employee-manager dynamics than what is typical at your company.

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## Integrating: Encouraging collaboration between refugee and non-refugee employees

- ▲ **Introduce new refugee employees to company leadership** and other senior-level colleagues to increase their visibility and help them to feel more comfortable at work.
- ▲ **Organize team events** that encourage collaboration between refugee and non-refugee colleagues, such as group lunches, holiday celebrations, or community service days.
- ▲ Pair new refugee hires with multilingual colleagues who speak the same language and can help them learn about their role. This can help to **reduce language barriers** for refugee employees who are learning the local language.



## Integrating: Providing ongoing support to refugee employees

- ▲ **Be patient** with refugee employees, encouraging them to develop skills over time, and not pushing them to be perfect from day one.
- ▲ Be encouraging and **offer positive reinforcement**, especially during a refugee employee's first few months on the job, to help them build confidence about their performance.
- ▲ **Maintain continuous engagement** with refugee employees through regular (formal and informal) check-ins.
- ▲ **Offer opportunities for reskilling and/or upskilling**, ideally with a focus on both hard and soft skills. This could take many forms – for example, professional development workshops or mentorship.

Refugees may come from countries or companies where staff benefits packages are not the norm. Help new refugee hires to sign up for these benefits, and ensure that they are making the most of them!

## Integrating: Giving effective performance feedback to refugee employees

Consider tailoring your usual **performance feedback process** for refugee employees. Set up frequent touch points throughout their first six months, which can be used to establish trust, set goals, and ensure that all expectations are clear (and being met). Here are some helpful tips for giving feedback to refugee employees and supporting their professional development:

### Address any barriers to success:

*"Are there factors – such as language barriers, technical terminology differences, or cultural practices – that are preventing you from using your skills?"*

### Discuss the style and frequency of feedback:

*"What is your preferred way of receiving performance feedback, and how often would you like to receive it?"*

### Ensure that their skill level matches their role:

*"What skills would you like to use more often or differently?"*

### Support their ambition for growth:

*"Outside of your normal role, are there any other areas of interest or programs you would like to explore?"*



## Tent is here to help!

Tent is here to support your refugee onboarding and integration efforts. Reach out as needed with tactical questions or requests – email [info@tent.org](mailto:info@tent.org).

For more guidance and information about onboarding and integrating refugees, see the following Tent resources (available via the [Members' Hub](#)):

- ▲ How U.S. Companies Can Foster Cultural Inclusion for Afghan Refugees
- ▲ Setting Up Refugee Employees and Their Teams for Success
- ▲ Creating a Culturally Inclusive Workplace for Ukrainian Refugees
- ▲ Implementing a Buddy Program for Refugee Employees
- ▲ A New Home at Work: An Employer's Guide To Fostering Inclusion for Refugees in the Workplace

# Thank you!

