



# Starting a Refugee Hiring Initiative

Leading companies in Canada have already committed to hiring refugees, playing a vital role in helping them to restart their lives, while at the same time benefiting from their talent, resilience, and ingenuity. Refugees are known for lower turnover, and consumers indicate not only that they are more likely to buy from companies hiring refugees, but also that they are more likely to work for them.

Developing a refugee hiring initiative that will set up both you and your refugee employees for success requires dedication, as well as some upfront investments in how you recruit and integrate talent.

This document provides guidance on how to get started with a refugee hiring initiative.

*The Tent Partnership for Refugees (Tent) works closely with [more than 300 companies](#) around the world to build and implement effective refugee hiring programs. Tent helps its member companies to set a strategy for their refugee hiring efforts and connect to local organizations to recruit refugee talent. It also trains companies on best practices for refugee hiring and integration. To find out more about becoming a Tent member, reach out – email [info@tent.org](mailto:info@tent.org).*



## Phase 1: Set an internal strategy for hiring refugees

### ✓ DESIGNATE ONE OR TWO LEADS FOR YOUR REFUGEE HIRING ACTIVITIES

Leads will be responsible for setting your company's internal strategy and driving your refugee hiring initiative forward. They will be able to bring together different stakeholders at your company to ensure internal alignment and address issues as they arise. Typically, leads come from Human Resources or the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion team, but this can vary by company. Leads can also serve as Tent's main points of contact and will be invited to participate in Tent member company calls, hiring fairs, and other opportunities.

### ✓ DEFINE GOALS

Setting specific and measurable goals for hiring refugees will help to ensure internal alignment. Tent can help you to develop realistic goals based on a variety of factors, such as your hiring needs and the presence of refugees in close proximity to your company's operations. Tent can also connect you with other companies to learn from their experiences.

### ✓ EDUCATE YOUR HUMAN RESOURCES TEAM ON REFUGEE HIRING

Given that most recruiters will be new to refugee hiring, your team should familiarize themselves with the resources available on Tent's [Members' Hub](#). Tent can also educate your colleagues on the refugee hiring process, including best practices for interviewing refugee talent, and provide information to better understand the legal statuses of refugees, as well as the relevant work authorization documentation.

## **Tent Coalition for Refugees in Canada**

The Tent Coalition for Refugees in Canada is a network of leading member companies from across the country stepping up to integrate refugees into their workforce. Through its Coalition, Tent provides members with exclusive guidance, training, and best practices; access to regular convenings with peer companies; recommendations on local organizations to work with to identify refugee talent; and many other free services. Learn more and express your interest by getting in touch – email [info@tent.org](mailto:info@tent.org).



### **Phase 2: Develop a refugee recruitment pipeline**

#### **FOCUS ON TWO OR THREE LOCATIONS TO PILOT HIRING REFUGEES**

Tent recommends that companies start with a targeted refugee hiring pilot to learn more about recruiting and integrating refugee talent, then utilize these learnings to expand to other locations. Tent can advise you on where to focus based on which of your company's offices/locations are in close proximity to large refugee populations. Ideally, pilot locations should be in areas that are accessible via public transportation.

#### **DETERMINE THE ROLES FOR WHICH YOU WILL RECRUIT REFUGEES**

Refugees arrive in Canada with a wide range of academic and professional backgrounds. Tent encourages companies to hire refugees at all levels – from entry-level and vocational roles to high-skilled roles. Tent can provide guidance on the types of roles refugees can fill at your company, and connect you with local partners that work with refugees at all skill levels.

#### **CONNECT WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND BUILD STRONG PARTNERSHIPS**

Once you align with Tent on your pilot location(s) and the types of roles refugees can fill at your company, Tent can connect you with a range of organizations to help you source refugee talent. Tent works with a network of non-governmental organizations, community organizations, staffing agencies, and other groups that service refugees and can help your company to source and recruit refugee talent. It is vital for local recruiters at your company to develop strong working relationships with these implementing partners, as they will be the ones to refer refugee talent to your company.



*For more information about working with organizations to identify and hire refugee talent, see Tent's "Working with Refugee-Focused Service Providers in Canada" resource, available via the [Members' Hub](#).*

#### **REVIEW AND MODIFY YOUR APPLICATION PROCESS**

Review your application process to ensure that it is not screening out refugees who are qualified for your roles. Tent can provide guidance to hiring managers on tailoring your application process so as to avoid excluding refugees who have, for example, a lack of or unfamiliar academic/professional credentials, or gaps in employment due to displacement.



*For more guidance on finding refugee candidates and adapting your hiring process, see Tent's "Recruiting Refugee Talent" resource, available via the [Members' Hub](#).*

## ✓ ANTICIPATE LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Some refugee candidates, especially those who have recently arrived in Canada, may not yet be proficient in English and/or French. Many companies require a level of language proficiency during the application and interview processes that is higher than what is strictly required for the work itself. Challenge your team to assess the level of local language proficiency that is actually required for the role, then tailor the application and interview processes accordingly. Consider that refugees will rapidly improve their English and/or French, especially in a work environment.



*For more information about hiring and supporting local language learners, see Tent's "How to Overcome Language Barriers and Invest in Refugee Talent" resource, available via the [Members' Hub](#).*

## ✓ ADDRESS TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS

Refugee employees often face transportation challenges. These include a lack of understanding of how to navigate public transportation options and not having a driver's license and/or car. In fact, these barriers can discourage refugees from even applying for jobs in the first place. Address these barriers by, for example, sponsoring a shuttle for employees, organizing a carpooling program, or contracting ride-hailing services.



*For guidance on how to help refugee employees commute to and from work, see Tent's "Addressing Transportation Barriers" resource, available via the [Members' Hub](#).*



### **Phase 3:**

## **Create a welcoming environment for your refugee employees**

## ✓ SET UP A REFUGEE-SPECIFIC ONBOARDING PROGRAM

Tailor your onboarding experience for refugee employees to reduce cultural and language barriers, and to ensure that they are set up for success. This is essential during their first months on the job, when attrition among refugee employees is typically at its highest. There are many ways you can create a more inclusive and supportive onboarding process for refugee employees – for example, by implementing a buddy program, giving new refugee hires an on-site introduction to managers and colleagues, and offering additional support for key procedures such as enrolling in benefits.



*For guidance on how to launch a buddy program in support of refugee hires, see Tent's "Implementing a Buddy Program for Refugee Employees" resource, available via the [Members' Hub](#).*

## ✓ INVEST IN CREATING AN INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE FOR REFUGEES

Building a culturally inclusive workplace for refugee employees starts by educating your entire workforce, including managers and the Human Resources team, on the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion, and the lived experiences of refugees. Take steps to ensure that your workplace and benefits are inclusive of refugee employees – for example, by reviewing your time off policy to ensure that refugee employees can take adequate time off to celebrate religious holidays; creating dedicated meditation/prayer spaces for employees who need them; and accommodating any dietary needs (e.g., Halal food for Muslim employees). For refugees with limited English and/or French proficiency, continue to invest in efforts to help them improve their skills – for example, by hosting on-site language classes during work hours (e.g., as a “lunch and learn”).



*For more information about building an inclusive workplace for refugee employees, see Tent’s “How to Integrate Refugee Employees into the Workforce” resource, available via the [Members’ Hub](#).*

## ✓ SUPPORT REFUGEE EMPLOYEES’ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Invest in professional growth and development programs for refugee employees to maximize the value they can bring to your company. You can provide a route for refugees’ career advancement through various initiatives, such as mentorship, on-the-job training, language classes, and personalized career development plans.

## ✓ COMMUNICATE THAT YOUR COMPANY HAS JOINED TENT AND WILL BE HIRING REFUGEES

Communicating that your company is committed to refugee hiring will help to generate buy-in from key stakeholders, including your employees, customers, clients, and suppliers.

- ▲ **Internal communications:** Leverage channels such as town halls, company-wide newsletters, leadership meetings, and internal communication platforms such as Microsoft Teams or Slack to ensure that employees are aware of your refugee hiring and inclusion efforts, and that your company has joined Tent. You can also invite Tent to speak at an internal event (e.g., a Human Resources meeting about the topic).
- ▲ **External communications:** Tent would be happy to work with your Communications team to publicize your company’s Tent membership and refugee hiring initiative, as well as any employee human interest stories stemming from these efforts. This can be done through dedicated press strategy and outreach, social media posts, inclusion in broader social impact campaigns, or other means. This will showcase to refugee job seekers, consumers, external stakeholders, and the wider business community that your company is taking action on the economic integration of refugees.

For both internal and external communications, consider “spotlighting” a refugee employee (via a blog post, social media, video, internal event series, etc.) and showcasing their story and contributions to your company. This can be a good way to create stakeholder alignment and excitement about your refugee hiring efforts.



*Tent frequently invites its members to participate in social media campaigns, industry events, press interviews, webinars, and videos to share more about their refugee engagement. Tent also regularly provides companies with high-profile platforms, such as our flagship Business Summit events or mentorship initiative launches, to announce measurable and specific commitments to support refugees.*



## Phase 4:

### Assess the pilot and scale based on learnings



#### TRACK YOUR REFUGEE HIRING INITIATIVE

Companies that work with Tent to hire refugees often like to track how many refugees they have been able to hire. This can help companies determine to what degree their efforts to hire refugees are successful, report back on Tent commitments to hire refugees, and feed into broader diversity and inclusion metrics.



*For more information about how to collect and track refugee status information in a sensitive, safe, and legal manner, see Tent's "Tracking refugee status in the workforce" resource, available via the [Members' Hub](#).*



#### EXPAND YOUR REFUGEE HIRING INITIATIVE TO NEW LOCATIONS

After you have piloted a refugee hiring initiative, you should assess what worked well and where there were challenges, so that you can take the learnings to expand to new locations. Tent can help you to identify appropriate regions or countries, connect you with local partners, and guide you in transferring your learnings to new locations.



#### CHECK IN WITH TENT REGULARLY

Tent is here to support your refugee hiring efforts! Reach out as needed with tactical questions or requests. Tent will also be in touch to collect best practices and updates on your projects.



## Next Steps:

To find out more about how your company can start hiring refugees and maximize the potential of refugee employees, reach out to Tent at [info@tent.org](mailto:info@tent.org).

## About the Tent Partnership for Refugees

With more and more refugees displaced around the world, businesses have a critical role to play in helping refugees integrate economically in their new communities. Tent was launched in 2016 by Hamdi Ulukaya, the CEO and founder of Chobani – a multibillion dollar food company in the U.S. – to mobilize global businesses to fill this gap. Today, Tent is a [network of over 300 major companies](#) committed to helping hundreds of thousands of refugees access local labor markets by helping them become job-ready and connecting them to work. Find out more at [www.tent.org](http://www.tent.org).