



TENT

Setting Up Refugee Employees & Their Teams for Success

TRAINING PRESENTATION

A Resource for HR/ People Teams and Managers



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ONBOARDING
REFUGEES
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Why invest in setting refugees up for success at work?

- ✓ Attrition is typically highest for refugee employees during their first month at a new job.
- ✓ By taking steps to set refugee employees up for success from the get-go, 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!

HR & line managers should both be involved in refugee onboarding

Some responsibilities and tasks covered in this presentation clearly sit with **HR** (e.g., setting up an internal system to track employees' refugee status) or with **refugee employees' line managers** (e.g., giving refugee reports regular performance feedback).

However, other responsibilities (e.g., creating forums for exchange between refugee and non-refugee colleagues) could sit with either HR or line managers – or even employee volunteers – depending on capacity within your company.

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



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Recruitment: Tracking employees' refugee status – and why it's important

A key step to building an effective refugee hiring program is to know how to identify and track refugees who apply and are hired. Collecting this data will enable you to better serve your refugee employees.

Companies and HR teams should have a system to identify, support, and retain these workers. Tent has developed [guidance for Canadian employers](#) on how they can track refugee status in a sensitive, safe, and legal manner.

▲ Tent is developing a similar guide for U.S. employers available in summer 2022!



Pre-Boarding: Making the workplace culturally inclusive for refugee employees

Refugees may face cultural barriers when they join a workplace in their new host country.

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

When companies are culturally inclusive, it allows all employees to flourish - enhancing innovation, productivity, and employee engagement.



Pre-Boarding: Preparing the workplace to be more culturally inclusive for refugee employees

- Create a safe, secluded **place for meditation or prayer** and allow for flexibility in schedules for employees who have specific prayer times.
- Provide flexibility in the **dress code** or different uniform options for employees who have a religious dress code, like wearing a hijab or yarmulke.
- Make sure that the organization's cafeteria has options that cater to **diets** that arise from cultural traditions, such as Halal, vegetarian, vegan, and no-pork options.
- Review the company's **holiday schedule** to ensure that the organization includes floating holidays, which can be used for specific cultural or religious days.
- For employees that have lower levels of proficiency in the host country's language, provide **language "workarounds"**, such as ensuring that training and HR resources are in the employee's native language.

Pre-Boarding: Engaging your new refugee employee before their first day

- **Send a clear, personal welcome note**
In addition to typical administrative paperwork, consider sending a leadership communication to refugee employees welcoming them to the company.
- **Conduct meet-and-greets**
Offer new hires an on-site introduction to managers and colleagues and a short tour of the workplace to create early opportunities to build new connections and get familiar with the space.
- **Provide pre-employment support**
Call new refugee employees a few days before the first day to give them the opportunity to ask questions about transportation, documentation, lunch culture, etc.

Onboarding: Creating a tailored refugee onboarding experience

Personalized guidance from HR during the onboarding phase will help reduce the cultural barriers that new refugee workers may face while getting acclimated.

HR teams should work directly with line managers to ensure that refugees receive a tailored onboarding experience and be hands-on with line managers and refugee employees during their first 90 days.



Onboarding: Ensuring that refugee employees understand company culture and benefits

- A **one-on-one meeting** between a refugee employee and a HR professional to share resources and provide guidance during the first week of employment.
- Offer **extra support for key procedures**, like enrolling in benefits or setting up direct deposit, as these may be unfamiliar to refugee employees. If needed, provide translation or an interpreter to assist.
- An **info session** focused on resources offered by your company, such as language development training, skills training/recertification programs, or transportation programs.
- Distribute hard copies of **onboarding materials** in case accessing digital materials at home is a challenge. Make sure to include materials with organizational background, values, policies, etc. so that refugee employees can quickly get up to speed on their new workplace culture.

Onboarding: Addressing language and cultural barriers for refugee employees

- A **Q&A session about the company** and its HR procedures with interpreters who speak refugee employees' local language(s).
- Ensure that the employee benefits provider has the capacity to provide information in the refugee employees' **local language**, either by ensuring someone on staff speaks the local language or by hiring an interpreter.
- **Workplace culture training**, to assist employees who are new to the local cultural environment with workplace processes and etiquette.
- Sharing **information** on the nearest health clinics, banks, and grocery stores if the worker is new to the local community.

Onboarding: Integrating refugees into your workforce

Companies can encourage **cross-cultural interactions** which can drive increased employee engagement by pairing refugee employees with non-refugee “buddies”. These “buddies” can mentor refugee employees in their first few months at the company.

Conversely, companies may want to pair refugee employees who speak the same language together if their roles are parallel, so that refugee employees who are still learning the local language can learn about their jobs without a language barrier.



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General guidance for working with refugee colleagues

SHARED VALUES

Recognizing shared values lays the foundation for strong relationships. Refugee employees come from diverse backgrounds and may require unique support as they get acclimated in their new community and workplace, but they also share many of their non-refugee counterparts' aspirations.

RESPECT

While some refugee employees seek to maintain their refugee identity, others may choose to shed it over time. Everyone should respect their refugee colleague's wishes in this regard.

RESOURCES & SUPPORT

If you're working with a local organization to find refugee candidates, consider asking them to provide you with additional resources.

You can also reach out to the Tent team for support.

General guidance for working with refugee colleagues

1 Never ask a refugee why they fled their home country

2 If it feels appropriate, ask your refugee colleague about their cultural background and experiences

3 Respect privacy and approach conversations with sensitivity

4 Ask open-ended questions

Preparing to manage refugee employees



- ✓ **Contact HR** to understand the background(s) of your refugee employee(s)
- ✓ Make time to **connect 1:1**, especially in their first week.
- ✓ Double down on **positive reinforcement**.
- ✓ Set up **regular touchpoints** with your refugee employee(s)
- ✓ Emphasize a culture of open, direct, and positive **communication**.

Preparing team members to work with refugee colleagues



1. **Work with HR** to emphasize the value that refugee employees bring to the team
2. **Educate managers** on your new colleagues' backgrounds and what is expected from them when working with refugee employees.
3. **Set your team up for success** through Diversity & Inclusion training
4. Design **inclusive team events**

Facilitating clear communication with refugee employees



1. Be conscious of the words you use
2. Give **simple instructions** for individual tasks
3. Check for understanding by asking **open questions**
4. Be mindful of **cultural differences**
5. If you are having trouble communicating, **speak slower**, not louder.

How to give effective performance feedback to refugee employees



Ensure that their skill level matches their role:
“What skills would you like to use more often or differently?”

Address unique impediments to success:
“Are there other factors—such as language barriers, technical terminology differences, or cultural practices—that are stopping you from using your skills?”

Discuss the frequency and quality of feedback:
“How often would it be helpful for me to provide you with feedback on your performance?” “What is your preferred way of receiving feedback?”

Support their growth ambition:
“Are there any other areas and/or programs, aside from your normal role, that you would like to explore?”

Tent is here to help!

The Tent Partnership for Refugees is here to provide individualized guidance on how to set up refugee employees and your teams for success.

We can [connect you with NGOs](#) to help you recruit refugee talent and provide you with support that will help refugee employees succeed in their roles.



Much of the information in this presentation can be found in these Tent resources:

- [A New Home at Work: an Employer's Guide to Fostering Inclusion for Refugees in the Workplace](#), 2019.
- [How to Create a Culturally Inclusive Workplace for Refugee Employees](#), 2021.
- [How U.S. Companies Can Foster Cultural Inclusion for Afghan Refugees](#), 2022.
- [Bridging Language and Work: Solutions to Invest in Immigrant and Refugee Talent](#), 2022.



Q&A