



TENT

Best Practices for Recruiting Refugee Talent in Canada



By the end of this presentation, you will :

- ▲ Know the benefits of hiring refugees.
- ▲ Know the legalities of hiring refugees or asylum claimants in Canada.
- ▲ Understand challenges faced by refugee job seekers.
- ▲ Know how to modify your resume screening, interviewing, and onboarding processes to make them more inclusive to refugee candidates.
- ▲ Know how to build a pipeline of refugee job seekers.



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**WHY HIRE
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What is the difference between refugees and asylum claimants?

A [refugee](#) is someone who has been forced to flee their country because of a well-founded fear of persecution or violence. They are typically recognized as refugees **outside Canada** and travel to Canada with support from the Canadian government or private sponsors. (e.g., Refugees from the Syrian and Afghan crisis)

An [asylum claimant](#) is someone who has left their country and has formally applied for refugee status **upon arrival in Canada**. Asylum claimants recognized as refugees are called **protected persons**. (e.g., LGBTQ individuals escaping prosecution due to their sexuality)

Canada has welcomed 1,088,015 refugees and protected persons since 1980.
As of Sept 2022, 20,000 Afghan refugees have arrived in Canada.

Canada will also be welcoming tens of thousands of Ukrainians fleeing the war in their country

Canada has also introduced the **Canada Ukraine authorization for emergency travel (CUAET)** for Ukrainians fleeing violence due to the war in Ukraine.

While they are not legally considered refugees in Canada, Ukrainians arriving via CUAET will have the right to work and will be eligible for certain services offered by the Canadian Government

Canada has welcomed ~90,000 Ukrainians since the war started in February 2022



Can refugees or asylum claimants work in Canada?

- ▲ Refugees, asylum claimants, and Ukrainians arriving in Canada via CUAET are allowed to work in Canada but will need to apply for a work permit when they arrive in Canada.
- ▲ Hiring managers can hire refugees, asylum claimants, and Ukrainians as long as they have a valid work permit



Why hire refugees?

In addition to changing the course of a refugee's life, there are also business reasons to hire refugees:

- Refugee employees have lower turnover than other workers.*
- Refugees are considered to be exceptionally motivated, resilient, and loyal employees.
- Refugees are typically more willing to relocate for decent work.
- Refugees make your workforce more diverse, which drives innovation and financial performance, among other benefits.**

"Refugees provide us with an amazing talent pool – they're skilled, dedicated, loyal and engaged."

— Rohini Anand, Former SVP of Corporate Responsibility & Global Chief Diversity Officer

Sodexo

*A study found that, for example, in the manufacturing sector, refugees turn over at 4 percent per year, compared to 11 percent for others (Fiscal Policy Institute, *Refugees As Employees: Good Retention, Strong Recruitment*, 2017). ** Studies have found that diversity unlocks innovation, drives market growth, and increases financial performance (Harvard Business Review, *How Diversity Can Drive Innovation*, 2012; Harvard Business Review, *The Other Diversity Dividend*, 2018).

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Tent can help companies connect with the relevant employment service providers across Canada to identify suitable candidates



For more information on how to work with employment service providers, please refer to the presentation “Best Practices for Working with Refugee-Focused Service Providers in Canada”

Refugee organizations want to partner with companies that will create a welcoming environment for refugee employees

Organizations will be particularly interested in learning about a company's approach to the following topics as they are critical to successful refugee integration:



Salary and benefits



Career pathways



Limited English language proficiency support



Hiring across skill levels



Transportation assistance

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Why should I adapt my company's recruitment practices for refugees?

Refugees face structural barriers when trying to enter the workforce, making them seem less competitive in a standard recruitment process. For example:

- Refugees often lack local work experience.
- They are not tapped into local professional networks.
- They may be the subject to negative stereotyping.

While a refugee candidate might be a good fit for the job, they may not succeed in a conventional hiring process.

Adapting the recruitment process

You should plan to adapt your standard process for assessing a candidate's suitability for the job or placement to make it more accessible for refugee candidates. Luckily, some of the most effective things you can do are likely already part of your process!

1. Challenge your team to assess the actual level of local language proficiency that's required for the role, and then tailor the interview process accordingly
2. Ensure that your standard recruitment process is focused as much as possible on assessing the **candidate's behavior, attributes** and **potential** to do the job.
3. Evaluate **skills** and **competence** during on-the-job training through skills profiling tools.
4. Test for any **technical skills** that are a prerequisite for doing the job (for example, numeracy, computer skills, experience operating heavy machinery, or business-level written English).
5. **Manage expectations** about the nature of the work. Consider providing a workplace tour as part of the recruitment process, to ensure candidates understand what the job entails.

Navigating language barriers in the recruitment process

You can use the following strategies to help overcome language barriers during the recruitment process:

1. Some refugee candidates, especially those who have recently arrived in your country, may not be proficient in your local language. Many companies require a level of local language proficiency in the interview process that is higher than that required for the work itself.
2. See if your local partner/s can assist with interpretation and paperwork completion for the initial screening and interviews.
3. Ensure clear communication by speaking slower, not louder, and avoiding idiomatic language (for example, avoid phrases like “give it a shot” or “it’s a piece of cake”).
4. Instead of asking yes/no questions, check for understanding by asking clarifying questions (for example, ask “What time is your next interview taking place?” instead of “Do you know what time your next interview takes place?”).

The resume review

When reviewing refugee candidates' resumes, be mindful of factors linked to their status, such as:

- Gaps in employment.
- Mismatched or out-of-date skills and experience.
- Lack of local experience or references.
- Lack of familiarity with job application norms in your country.

As you review, do your best to:

- Determine if and how gaps in experience can be managed.
- Evaluate if overseas work history or qualifications could indicate candidates' potential or relevant skills and experience.
- Consider using an independent agency or online resources to verify educational and skills equivalence from foreign institutions.

Do not reject a person for an entry level job solely because they appear “overqualified.”

- Many highly skilled refugees are unable to practice their profession when they are resettled and seek out lower-skilled roles.
- These candidates may decide to eventually leave to resume a career in their former fields – or they may be great candidates for fast-tracked responsibilities.

Adapting the interview process

As you schedule and conduct interviews, try to:

- Train interviewers to be aware of their **unconscious biases** and give them tools and information to overcome these, such as background information on refugees.
 - Consider **diversity** when composing interview panels to further mitigate unconscious biases.
 - Encourage strong **two-way communication** between interviewers and candidates to ensure they fully understand each other. Do not assume that refugee candidates' silence is confirmation of their understanding.
- Explain to interviewers that refugee candidates may not always adhere to **certain norms** – especially those concerning body language – and that this is a sign of cultural differences, not disrespect. (For example, some cultures do not practice eye contact or handshakes between men and women.)
 - Be open about the **local business culture** and ensure that candidates are comfortable with the behavioral expectations at your workplace.

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Steps to take before your refugee employee's first day (pre-boarding)

Taking steps to ensure that new refugee hires feel welcome and prepared ahead of their first day helps to accelerate their onboarding and establish their sense of belonging at your company:

- **Send clear offer communication:** In addition to typical administrative paperwork, consider sending a leadership communication to refugee employees welcoming them to the company. If possible, consider delivering these communications in both the primary local language and the employee's native language.
- **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 touch base and give them the opportunity to ask questions. Make sure they're clear on the logistics of getting to work, preparing themselves for a workday (e.g. is there a fridge where they can store a packed lunch?), and any documentation they need to bring with them on their first day.

Accounting for transportation issues

Some refugee candidates may not have a driver's license or access to a car. If public transportation is not available, and candidates are concerned about transportation, consider the following options:

- Arrange for carpooling with other employees and ensure that shifts align with carpooling routes.
 - Consider arranging an employer-sponsored van for all employees who need it.
 - Provide support and/or incentives for obtaining a driver's license.
- Connect with local organizations that offer discounted cars to low-income populations and check with your local social services department to see if transportation assistance is available.
 - If available, encourage the candidate to use rideshare services such as Uber or Lyft and consider providing subsidies for this transport.

Adapting your onboarding program to include refugee employees

Do a simple review of your existing onboarding program and identify activities within initial training programs that need to be modified or explained differently for a refugee audience. Making these modifications to your standard process helps to ensure that refugee employees will be able to:

- a) complete all onboarding procedures without a hitch, and.
- b) feel an immediate sense of community, legitimacy, and achievement at your company.

Recently arrived refugees typically aren't tapped into professional or social networks to link them to jobs.

If you partnered with a local organization to hire your new refugee employees, consider reaching out to them for support with onboarding – including translation/interpretation services.*

Suggested adaptations

- 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.*
- 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.
- Provide uniforms and badges early to help refugee employees feel an immediate sense of connection, belonging, and pride within their new workplace.
- If your onboarding program includes a diversity and inclusion training, consider adding in resources on refugees.

Creating a refugee-centric onboarding program

If your company has hired a large number of refugee employees, it may be worth developing a supplemental onboarding program for them so that they have the opportunity to access specifically relevant information, ask clarifying questions, and meet other refugee employees in a comfortable environment. Such a program could include:

- **A Q&A session with interpreters** who speak refugee employees' local language(s). This gives employees who have lower proficiency in the local language a chance to comfortably ask any outstanding questions they may have about the company and role.
- **An info session focused on resources offered by your company**, such as language development training, skills training/recertification programs, or transportation programs.
- **Workplace culture training**, to assist employees who are new to the local cultural environment with workplace processes and etiquette.



*...To go further: Give new refugee employees **local tips** on navigating and experiencing their new community a **welcome box** with items representing the local culture!*



Thank you

