



TENT

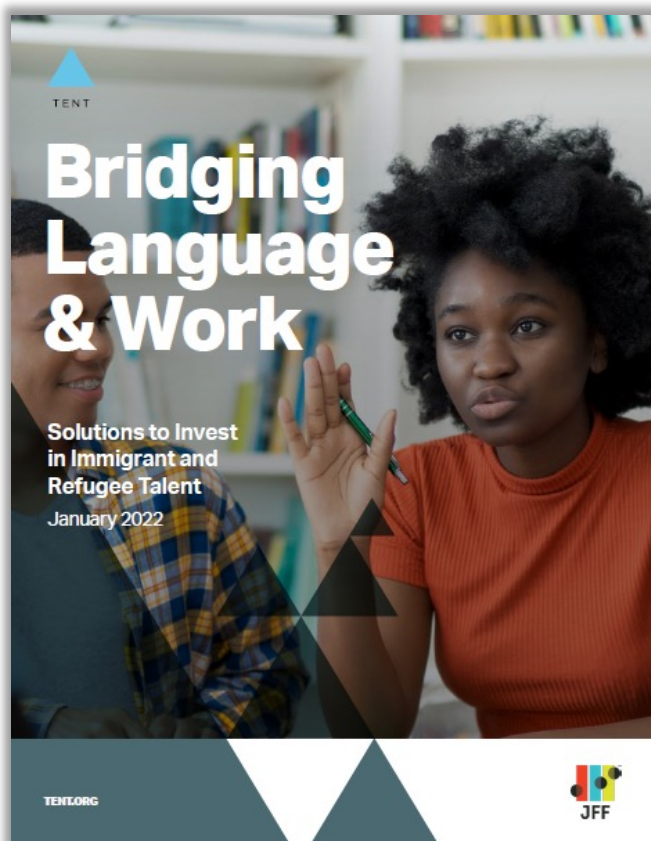


JFF

# How to Overcome Language Barriers and Invest in Refugee Talent



## Tent and JFF launched Bridging Language and Work: Solutions to Invest in Immigrant and Refugee Talent



*Bridging Language and Work: Solutions to Invest in Immigrant and Refugee Talent* is a guidebook for businesses with actionable advice on hiring and investing in workers who are local language learners.



Link available on Tent's website:

<https://www.tent.org/resources/overcoming-language-barriers/>

## By the end of this presentation, you will:

- ▲ Know why companies can benefit from hiring local language learners
- ▲ Find out what “bridge solutions” companies can put in place to support local language learners in the workforce
- ▲ Find out about existing resources that companies can tap into to support local language learners
- ▲ Learn how to implement best practices to hire and support workers that are also local language learners



# Contents

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**1**

---

**WHO IS A LOCAL  
LANGUAGE  
LEARNER?**

---

---

**2**

---

**WHY HIRE LOCAL  
LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS?**

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**3**

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**HOW TO INVEST IN  
LOCAL LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS**

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## Who is a local language learner?



The [Common European Framework of Reference \(CEFR\)](#) indicates the various levels of language proficiency of users of a language.

We define local **language learners** as basic and independent users (levels A1, A2, B1)

Many refugees will be considered **local language learners** as they start accessing the labor market

C2	Proficient User
C1	
B2	Independent User
B1	
A2	Basic User
A1	

# Contents

---

1

---

**WHO IS A LOCAL  
LANGUAGE  
LEARNER?**

---

---

2

---

**WHY HIRE LOCAL  
LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS?**

---

---

3

---

**HOW TO INVEST IN  
LOCAL LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS**

---



## Why should companies consider hiring local language learners?

- ▲ As economies face worker shortages and aging workforces, refugees represent an important talent pool.
- ▲ Many employers believe that language fluency is a prerequisite for job success, preventing refugees who are still learning the local language from being hired.
- ▲ By implementing solutions that help overcome language barriers for refugee talent, companies can unlock hidden value for their business.



## Hiring refugees is good for business



Businesses that have hired local language learners will see advantages like:

- ▲ **Broader and more diverse talent pipelines.**
- ▲ **More inclusive company culture**, leading to higher employee engagement and lower turnover rates.
- ▲ **Increased workforce and language diversity**, allowing companies to reach a broader group of customers.
- ▲ **Greater representation of customers and communities**, enabling businesses to expand into new markets or offer different services.
- ▲ **Fulfilment of social impact goals**, creating value for their business and communities.



## Challenges to hiring local language learners can be mitigated

Though companies stand to gain from hiring local language learners, some businesses hesitate to do so due to challenges like:

- ▲ Safety concerns
- ▲ Change management
- ▲ Fewer career pathways
- ▲ Costs associated with lower language ability
- ▲ Difficulty validating skills and credentials

In the following slides, we will cover tactics companies can put in place to address these challenges across every stage of the talent management cycle.

# Contents

---

**1**

---

**WHO IS A LOCAL  
LANGUAGE  
LEARNER?**

---

---

**2**

---

**WHY HIRE LOCAL  
LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS?**

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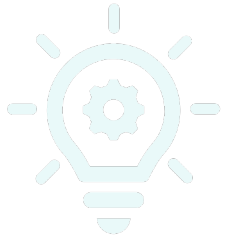
**3**

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LOCAL LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS**

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## Moving beyond language training with bridge solutions



Companies often think investing in local language learners only means providing language training. While this is important, **there are many other strategies companies can use to support local language learners.**



## Companies can adopt “bridge solutions” to support local language learners

Bridge solutions are ways that companies can get local language learners into jobs faster while they work toward greater language proficiency.

Bridge solutions should be implemented alongside language training. This means local language learners can improve their local language proficiency while allowing companies to develop their talent and create advancement opportunities for their workers.

▲ See p. 25 of the [guide](#) for best practices on language training programs.



## Implementing bridge solutions across the talent management cycle

Companies can embed bridge solutions across business units (e.g. HR, operations, CSR, DEI, Public Affairs, Communications, etc.) to create a stronger sense of engagement and accountability within the company.

Bridge solutions can be organized into four categories aligned with traditional elements of corporate talent strategy:



**Talent Acquisition**



**Total Rewards**



**Talent Development**



**Corporate Culture**



## Bridge solutions: Talent Acquisition



### **Diversify talent pipelines through partnerships**

- ▲ Develop partnerships with organizations focused on securing employment for refugees (local NGOs) that help candidates apply for jobs, translate documents and prepare for interviews.



### **Make local language learners community ambassadors**

- ▲ Encourage local language learners to become community ambassadors. By creating a financial incentive for these ambassadors to refer others from their community to open roles, companies can source diverse talent for the company. These referrals can also happen informally through word of mouth.

## Bridge solutions: Talent Acquisition

**3**

### Showcase the company in creative ways

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- ▲ Use visuals or videos as alternatives to written job descriptions to show local language learners what the company does, where they will work, and who their colleagues will be.
- ▲ Provide on-site tours of the workplace during the recruiting and hiring process, to allow candidates to become familiar with their potential work environment and the scope of responsibilities.

**4**

### Conduct interviews in the candidate's preferred language

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- ▲ Conduct interviews in different languages in areas that have a significant population of local language learners.
- ▲ This helps candidates focus on their responses rather than on the need to articulate in a language they are still learning.
- ▲ This bridge solution requires companies to have interviewers who are bilingual or to have interpreters present during interviews.

## Bridge solutions: Talent Acquisition

**5**

### **Evaluate and hire based on trial performance**

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- ▲ Use trial periods ranging from one week to 90 days to assess the candidate's suitability for the job.
- ▲ Local language learners should be compensated for their work during the trial period and supported with training and onboarding to maximize their ability to succeed.

**6**

### **Provide important documents in multiple languages**

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- ▲ Translate essential documents, such as job applications, company policies, and other HR information into the most common languages in their communities.
- ▲ Try not to rely exclusively on translation services to support local language learners.

## Bridge solutions: Talent Acquisition



### Case study:

*IKEA, Switzerland*

- ▲ IKEA's Skills for Employment refugee integration initiative aims to help 2,500 refugees improve their employability and language skills by 2022.
- ▲ IKEA Switzerland utilizes a five-day trial period in lieu of formal interviews, reducing reliance on language and providing a greater sense of the job to refugees, while assessing candidates based on their ability to perform job tasks.
- ▲ The candidate and line manager have regular meetings during the trial period to discuss the onboarding process and where the candidate can grow as well as clarify any miscommunications.
- ▲ After the trial period, line managers decide if the candidate should be hired and into which team.

## Bridge solutions: Talent Development



### **Provide mentorship through bilingual peers**

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- ▲ Pair local language learners with bilingual peers for “shoulder-to-shoulder” training to teach them the specific tasks associated with their shared role.
- ▲ Local language learners can turn to these mentors for support during the training and onboarding phase.



### **Minimize the use of written materials**

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- ▲ Turn written training materials into visual and video-based training materials to illustrate job tasks.
- ▲ This solution is most effective for roles with repeated tasks (e.g., a food processing company that uses pictures in its training materials to break down process tasks).
- ▲ Use image-based signage around the work site to indicate e.g., exits, breakrooms, and bathrooms, which can reduce risk of accidents due to language barriers.



## Bridge solutions: Talent Development

**3**

### **Treat multilingualism as an asset, not a hindrance**

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- ▲ Prioritize advancing local language learners as they improve their technical and local language skills. They should be promoted based on mastery of skills and competencies, even if they are still learning the language.
- ▲ By offering the right support and training, companies can promote learners into leadership roles to manage and develop other local language learners who can benefit from shared experiences.

**4**

### **Adopt technology to train through job simulations**

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- ▲ Use immersive technology like virtual reality to deliver job training that allows local language learners to learn by doing.
- ▲ This technology also addresses safety concerns that often stop companies from hiring local language learners by simulating high-risk environments.

## Bridge solutions: Talent Development



### Case study: McDonalds, *Europe*

- ▲ To ensure consistent training across its workforce, McDonald's provides flexible training through an online training platform that employees can access at all times through tablets at the restaurants.
- ▲ Local language learners who want to learn a specific job task, such as how to make french fries or manage the drive-through, can access videos that show the task and see instructions in the most commonly spoken languages.
- ▲ The platform allows franchises to train a workforce that is representative of their local community and creates opportunities for employees to build or practice skills, regardless of their local language proficiency.

## Bridge solutions: Total Rewards

1

### **Make language learning accessible to everyone through technology**

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- ▲ Provide access to common language learning apps (e.g., Duolingo, Busuu, Babel, Memrise) as a benefit for all workers, to increase workplace language learning.
- ▲ Work with app developers to create customized modules and vocabulary specific to the company and role.

2

### **Facilitate social connections**

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- ▲ Create a buddy program that pairs local language learners with colleagues who are fluent in the local language to help learners practice the local language at work.
- ▲ These programs offer an opportunity for other workers to volunteer, engage with their colleagues, and build stronger social connections.

## Bridge solutions: Total Rewards

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### Promote adaptable, flexible scheduling

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- ▲ Promote flexible scheduling to accommodate the needs of refugees who may have more appointments than other workers as they participate in public or community integration programs.
- ▲ Some companies use apps with translation capabilities to make it easier for workers to schedule or change their shifts.

## Bridge solutions: Total Rewards



### Case study: *Danby, Canada*

- ▲ Launched in 2017 in response to the Syrian crisis, Danby's Ease into Canada Program helps local language learners build confidence by creating a formal lunchtime buddy system, pairing each learner with a local Danby employee who has volunteered to help a newcomer with language practice.
- ▲ The company also creates informal opportunities to practice speaking English such as "walk and talks," carpooling, weekend events, potlucks and tea circles.
- ▲ Danby also provides on-site classes, tutors, and a free library of books for local language learners to improve their English proficiency.



## Bridge solutions: Corporate Culture

### 1 Elevate the voices of local language learners through Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)

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- ▲ Leverage worker-led groups to support local language learners.
- ▲ ERGs for refugee talent elevate their voices across the company and ensure that their needs are communicated to corporate leaders.

### 2 Recognize and celebrate different cultures

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- ▲ Hold events like multicultural holiday celebrations, and family-oriented events to celebrate local language learners and create a welcoming community for their families.
- ▲ Events should be led and designed by people from those backgrounds and focus on authentically honoring that culture and educating others about it.

## Bridge solutions: Corporate Culture



### Case study: Deutsche Bahn, *Germany*

- ▲ Deutsche Bahn is the German railway company and has a vested interest in integrating refugees into the labor market and supporting local language learners as they build their German language proficiency.
- ▲ Deutsche Bahn helps refugees work on their German through regional language cafes. The language cafe is part of a program on social and cultural integration that encourages language practice on site and facilitates social connections.
- ▲ Deutsche Bahn has developed language training based on the specific vocabulary needed to successfully finish vocational educational programs.

## How to start investing in local language learners

1. **Name your intention.** Establish why and how local language learners can benefit your business. What business needs could they help address?
2. **Identify key roles.** Unpack assumptions about which roles require language fluency and identify what local language learners can bring to key roles. Companies should focus on a small set of roles, worksites or regions to test new bridge solutions and then scale these practices across the organization.
3. **Assess your hiring process.** Determine to what extent current application and interview processes screen out local language learners, and then rework these processes to be more inclusive. Create a pipeline of local language learner candidates by partnering with community-based organizations.

## How to start investing in local language learners

4. **Redesign the onboarding experience.** Implement bridge solutions to increase local language learners' familiarity with their role, their colleagues, and the working environment such as peer-to-peer learning and interactive training.
5. **Facilitate social connections.** Provide a supportive network that celebrates all workers and create formal and informal ways for workers to learn about each other.
6. **Invest in language training.** Help all workers learn and advance their language skills through accessible classes, tuition benefits, and practice opportunities.

**Thank you!**

