

SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK MULTI-STAKEHOLDER REFUGEE HIRING EVENTS

Jumpstart Refugee Talent
Toronto, Ontario

Area of Practice:

- Employment and Entrepreneurship Supports

Video:

<https://youtu.be/VPshvrysKug>

A Pathways to
Prosperity Project

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PATHWAYS TO
PROSPERITY
Presenting Welcoming Communities in Canada



VOIES VERS LA
PROSPÉRITÉ
Présentant des communautés accueillantes au Canada

BACKGROUND ON THE ORGANIZATION AND IMPETUS FOR THE PROGRAM

Jumpstart Refugee Talent is a refugee-led international charitable organization headquartered in Toronto, with a network of offices across the country and globally. Founded in 2015 by three Syrian friends, the organization is dedicated to promoting the economic inclusion of refugees in receiving communities. Jumpstart connects refugees with meaningful employment and entrepreneurial opportunities, aiming to help them successfully integrate into their new communities. Guided by the firsthand experiences of its founders, Jumpstart's vision is to create a world where refugees have equal access to economic opportunities, recognizing and valuing their unique perspectives and contributions to building inclusive and prosperous communities.

In recent years, Jumpstart Refugee Talent, in collaboration with World Education Services and other partners, has played an important role in coordinating "Multi-Stakeholder Refugee Hiring Events." These events were developed in 2019 by the Refugee Jobs Agenda Roundtable, a national coalition of 150 corporations, employment and settlement agencies, and governments. The impetus for the refugee hiring events was the observation that traditional career fairs were not leading to meaningful employment for refugees at the same rate as other newcomers. Refugees face several barriers to employment, such as limited professional networks, difficulties navigating unfamiliar workplace norms and expectations, and the absence of Canadian work experience. These barriers often prevent them from finding employment that matches their valuable skills and experience. The refugee hiring events directly connect refugees with employers who have active hiring needs, creating structured opportunities for employment that align with their expertise.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Name:

Multi-Stakeholder Refugee Hiring Events

Description:

The refugee hiring events connect refugees with meaningful employment opportunities. Since 2019, the event has been delivered several times in the Greater Toronto Area, as well as in Moncton, Regina and Winnipeg. The events bring together multiple stakeholder groups, including local settlement agencies serving refugee clients, employers with active job vacancies, community organizations, and various levels of government. Employers of all sizes participate, offering roles across entry-, mid-, and high-level positions, ensuring a diverse range of opportunities for candidates. The events are organized in three stages: pre-event preparation, event-day logistics, and post-event follow-up.

Preparation begins 1-2 months before the event. Employers submit job vacancies, including detailed descriptions of job titles, requirements, and salaries, which are compiled into a centralized platform. Refugee candidates apply for these roles through local settlement agencies. The lead settlement agency pre-screens applications to identify the most qualified candidates for each role and informs the other participating agencies about the selected candidates. These candidates then receive targeted, job-specific coaching from their settlement agencies to prepare them for the interview process. To ensure accessibility, preparation sessions are conducted in multiple languages, with interpreters available for those requiring translation services. Employers also participate in targeted

preparatory sessions for them in order to familiarize themselves with the event's format and the unique needs of refugee candidates. These sessions emphasize reducing biases, understanding gaps in resumes, and appreciating the diverse backgrounds of participants.

On the day of the event, a centralized registration system is used to track attendance and manage the flow of participants. Walk-in candidates, while not pre-registered, are when possible accommodated through on-site pre-screening to determine their eligibility. Pre-screened candidates then participate in scheduled interviews with employers. The event also features a Coach's Corner, where employment counselors coach candidates before and after their interviews. Employers are encouraged to provide specific feedback, which can be immediately reviewed with employment counselors.

Following the event, employers report on interview outcomes, including hires made, candidates progressing to further interviews, and those who were not selected. Any additional feedback is collected from employers and shared with candidates. Settlement agencies assist candidates in incorporating this feedback into their continued job search or professional development, ensuring that the event has lasting benefits even for those who are not immediately hired.

Goal(s):

The refugee hiring events aim to achieve several goals. In the short term, the events aim to secure meaningful employment for refugees. In the long term, the events seek to reshape perceptions of refugee talent, demonstrating their abilities across entry-, mid-, and high-level roles while challenging stigmas and promoting their contributions to the economy.

Target Client Group(s):

The primary target client group of the hiring events is refugees seeking employment. The events also indirectly serve employers by providing access to pre-screened candidates, as well as settlement agencies, which collaborate to support their clients. Local governments and communities also benefit from the successful economic integration and contributions of refugees.

Delivery Partners:

There are many delivery partners for each event. The events delivered to date included the following organizations in addition to Jumpstart Refugee Talent (in alphabetical order): ACCES Employment, Achēv, Ainsworth Inc., Angus Consulting Management Ltd., APEX Industries Inc., Avande, Bell, BMO, Booster Juice, Bunzl Canada, Canada Inns, Canadian Tire Corporation, Catholic Crosscultural Servies, Christie Refugee Welcome Centre, CIBC, City of Greater Moncton, City of Regina, City of Toronto, Clean Life Balance, Compass Group Canada, Conseil économique et coopératif de la Saskatchewan (CECS), Corey Craig Group (Tim Hortons), COSTI, DHL Matrix Logistics Service Ltd., Diversity Institute (TMU), Eaton Canada, Epic Opportunities, EQ Bank, Fancy Pokket Corp, Futuretek, Greystone Energy Systems, Healthy Muslim Families, HMC Connections, Humber College, Hydel Inc., IKEA, Immigrant Centre, Immigrant Partnership Winnipeg, INTERAC Corp., InteRent, Interprovincial Cooperative, IRCC MAGMA, J.D. Irving Ltd. , Karegaroo, Kenaidan Contracting Ltd., Kids Help Phone, Les Entreprises Smart Lux, Macaulay Centres for Children, MAGMA AMGA, Manitoba IEC, Manitoba Start, Marks Work Warehouse, New Canadians, Newcomer Women's Services, Nexim Healthcare Consultants Inc., NGIT Services, Novamodus Solutions, Opportunities for Employment, Oriole, OTEC, Paragon Security, Polycultural Immigrant and Community Services, Price Industries Ltd., Protrans, Purolator,

RBC, RDJ Bakeries, Regina Immigrant Women Centre (RIWC), Regina Open Doors Society (RODS), Regina Public Library, Regina Region LIP, Regina Work Prep Centre (RWPC), Rex Power Magnetics, Rooted Connections, Saskatchewan Polytechnic, Scotiabank, Simaril, Sobeys, Sofina Foods, South Saskatchewan, Independent Living Centre (SSILC), SportsCheck, Starbucks, Success Skills, Sunlife, Sysco, TD Bank, Telus, Tent Partnership for Refugees, The King's Trust, The Neighbourhood Group Community Services, Toronto Public Library, Triplewell Manufacturing Company Ltd., Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC), Webber Infrastructure Management, Welcome Place, Western Financial Group, Woodgreen Community Services, Working NB Travail, World Education Services, World System Builder, and YMCA of Greater Toronto.

Human Resources:

The human resources required are settlement agency staff, talent acquisition or hiring managers representing the participating employers, and community volunteers. Settlement agency staff manage pre-screening and candidate preparation. Employers conduct interviews and make decisions on whether to hire, pass the candidate to another round in the hiring process, or inform the candidate that they will not be progressing further while providing feedback on their interview. Volunteers support event logistics, including registration and guiding candidates. A convening organization (e.g., World Education Services in Toronto, the City of Greater Moncton in Moncton, the Manitoba Immigrant Employment Council in Winnipeg, and the Regina LIP in Regina) coordinates stakeholders and ensures smooth implementation.

Funding:

The past events were funded by World Education Services and Starbucks, while participating settlement agencies contributed in-kind support through staff time.

KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE

Effective:

Several features contribute to the effectiveness of the hiring events. The refugee hiring events are the result of the strong collaboration across multiple stakeholder groups, creating unique opportunities for all parties involved. Refugees gain access to job opportunities across entry-level, mid-level, and senior-level positions, aligning with their skills and experience. Employers benefit from access to pre-screened, job-ready candidates, while settlement agencies are better able to support their clients' integration into the labour market.

Unlike traditional job fairs, the refugee hiring events focus on 20–30-minute interviews, allowing candidates and employers to assess fit more meaningfully. The quality of the interactions is further enhanced through the preparation of candidates and employers prior to the interviews. Refugee candidates receive tailored coaching, including guidance on Canadian-style interviews, stress management, and rehearsals. Employers review candidate resumes and participate in sessions to build awareness of the challenges that refugees may face, such as resume gaps or cultural differences.

The events are also designed as a learning opportunity for candidates. Those not immediately hired receive detailed feedback, enabling them to refine their skills and improve their chances in future opportunities.

Efficient:

The structured, technology-driven and outcome-oriented approach of the hiring events make them highly efficient. Employers benefit from a streamlined hiring process by interviewing pre-screened candidates matching their job requirements, saving time and resources. Similarly, by collaborating, settlement agencies can pool resources, share responsibilities and broaden their reach.

The use of digital tools such as Lever software to manage applications, pre-screen candidates and schedule interviews allows for a faster and more accurate process compared to paper-based systems. In addition, the planning of the events follows a well-defined project timeline to ensure that all critical tasks, such as the venue selection, employer onboarding, and candidate preparation, are completed on schedule. On event day, there is a structured schedule with staggered time slots to prevent congestion and for smooth participation for both candidates and employers. After the event, a structured follow-up process ensures that employers report hiring outcomes.

Finally, throughout the planning of the events, employers provide real-time updates on their job openings, so that on event day candidates focus only on active, relevant positions.

Relevant:

The refugee hiring events address key barriers that refugees face, such as limited professional networks, the lack of Canadian work experience, and difficulties navigating unfamiliar workplace norms and expectations. By providing pre-screening, interview preparation, and real-time coaching, the events equip refugees to navigate the labour market with confidence. Employers benefit from access to pre-screened, job-ready talent, meeting their workforce needs effectively. The events also support local governments' efforts to integrate refugees into their communities, leading to not only positive outcomes for refugees and employers but the economic health of communities as a whole.

Sustainable:

The refugee hiring events rely on strategic collaboration and ongoing stakeholder engagement for sustainability. The events are built on strong partnerships among employers, settlement agencies, community organizations, and governments, creating a shared commitment to the success of the events. Furthermore, the success of each event, as well as the national and local media coverage of the events, attract new partners and resources. Additionally, the evaluation of each event allows for constant improvements, ensuring that the events continue to meet the needs of all stakeholders. To further expand their reach, in 2024, Jumpstart launched 'How to Host Your Own Refugee Hiring Event' workshops to equip other settlement agencies with the knowledge to organize similar events in their local communities.

Transferable:

The refugee hiring events are adaptable to diverse settings, including rural, midsize, and large communities. Each event is tailored to local needs, considering the refugee population's language proficiency and professional backgrounds, while aligning with employer requirements and available job opportunities. This adaptability ensures effectiveness across various contexts.

While the events have been designed for refugees, they could easily support other target groups, such as international students and economic-class immigrants. Successful replication of the events requires collaboration and trust among stakeholders, with a neutral, convening organization (e.g.,

World Education Services, a city hall or chamber of commerce) responsible for bringing stakeholders together. Furthermore, the successful replication of the events requires that employers have active job vacancies and that both candidates and employers receiving targeted preparation. Proficiency in digital tools, combined with strong coordination and communication skills, is also very important for streamlining pre-screening, scheduling, and event management.

Innovative and Forward Thinking:

An innovative feature of the events is that they integrate tailored preparation, structured interviews, and actionable follow-up to create a comprehensive approach. Refugee candidates receive coaching to navigate cultural and professional expectations, while employers participate in preparatory sessions to understand the unique strengths and challenges of hiring refugees. Furthermore, the emphasis on learning, through feedback, real-time coaching and post-event guidance, provides candidates who are not immediately hired with valuable insights to refine their skills for future opportunities. The events also actively work to change perceptions among employers, emphasizing the valuable skills and experience refugees bring to the workforce and economy.

Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:

The refugee hiring events differ significantly from traditional job fairs by shifting the focus from general networking to structured, outcome-driven interactions. At the core of the events are pre-scheduled, targeted interviews aimed at securing job offers either on the spot or shortly afterward. Employers come prepared with specific hiring needs, and candidates are pre-screened to match these roles, ensuring productive and meaningful engagement.

In addition, the events incorporate a high level of collaboration between employers, settlement agencies, and other stakeholders. This trust-based approach focuses on continuous learning and feedback, allowing for improvements with each event.

High Client Uptake:

The refugee hiring events are well attended. The events in Toronto drew between 151 and 313 candidates, 12 to 25 employers, and included 9 to 19 partner organizations in addition to Jumpstart. In Winnipeg, 98 candidates and 9 employers attended the event, which was organized by 10 partner organizations. The event in Moncton included 43 candidates, 8 employers, and 6 partner organizations. Finally, the event in Regina was attended by 40 candidates, 4 employers, and 13 partner organizations.

High Client Retention:

The events retain employers, settlement agencies, and refugee candidates by delivering measurable success and fostering a growth-oriented approach. Employers return because the events streamline hiring, produce successful outcomes, and enhance their public image through media recognition. Across the Toronto events, for example, 10 employers attended more than one event. Settlement agencies are motivated to stay involved due to the collaborative model, which shares workloads and improves employment results for their clients. In the case of Toronto, for example, 13 partner organizations contributed to the delivery of more than one event. Refugees remain engaged because the events provide clear pathways to employment, even for those not hired immediately. Candidates who receive constructive feedback can implement it and return to future events better prepared, often leading to successful outcomes.

Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:

The refugee hiring events delivered strong outcomes, with 54% to 85% of interviews leading to a successful outcome on event day. For example, in 2023, the Toronto event received 1,151 applications from refugee candidates. Of these, 401 individuals (35%) were pre-screened and selected for interviews. On the event day, 307 candidates attended, including 259 pre-screened participants and 48 drop-ins. The event facilitated 367 interviews for 65 open roles, resulting in 34 candidates (9.3% of the interviews) receiving job offers on the spot and 163 candidates (44.4% of the interviews) advancing to the next round of interviews. Of note, the successful outcomes of the events – immediate job offers and moving to the next round – may vary from event to event depending on the specific jobs offered, the industries involved, and the decision-making authority of employer representatives at the events.

The success of the events is also demonstrated in their growth. For example, in Toronto, the number of participating employers increased significantly, from 10 at the first event to 25 at a subsequent event, showing the trust and engagement from employers and the reputation of the events for delivering results. Participant feedback further underscores the events' impact. Refugee candidates frequently describe the event as transformative, with many highlighting the detailed feedback and support they receive. Surveys show that a large majority of attendees would recommend the event to others or participate in future sessions themselves (80%). Employers have also reported a deeper understanding and appreciation of refugee talent, expressing surprise at the high level of preparation, professionalism, and skills demonstrated by the candidates. Finally, the events have also led to increased trust and collaboration among all stakeholders. Employers build stronger relationships with settlement agencies as they recognize the value of targeted hiring support, while settlement agencies move away from siloed operations, working together to share resources and enhance their collective impact.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

The refugee hiring events measure their success through a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods are used to track key metrics, such as the number of applications received, pre-screened candidates, event-day attendance, interviews conducted, and hiring results. Employers are required to report whether candidates were hired, advanced to second-round interviews, or declined. Tools such as Lever, Excel, and Salesforce software help manage applications, pre-screen candidates, and assess post-event hiring outcomes. To support in-person tracking, template sheets are used at the registration table, with interviewers, during candidate exit interviews, and by volunteers managing the flow of participants throughout the events.

Qualitative methods are used to assess the experiences of refugees, employers, and settlement agencies. Refugees provide immediate input during the events and through post-event surveys, reflecting on the interview process and overall experience. Employers and settlement agencies contribute through focus groups and debrief meetings, sharing observations on the events' structure, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. This feedback often highlights specific barriers, such as language proficiency or preparation gaps, offering actionable insights to enhance future events.

The data collected is consolidated into post-event reports shared with all stakeholders, ensuring transparency and accountability. These reports drive continuous improvement, helping the events to be refined and adapted to local needs, while maintaining their core principles.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Jumpstart Refugee Talent

<https://jumpstartrefugee.ca/contact/>

Refugee Hiring Events

<https://www.welcomingeconomy.ca/refugee-hiring-events/>

How to Host Your Own Refugee Hiring Event

<https://www.welcomingeconomy.ca/host-your-own-refugee-hiring-event/>