Connecting with Refugees A guide for Iowa employers

Connecting your business to information, strategies, best practices and resources for Refugee Employment

September 2015









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Who is a refugee?

The 1951 United Nations Convention
Relating to the Status of Refugees (the
Refugee Convention) defines a refugee as
a person who "owing to a well-founded
fear of being persecuted for reasons of
race, religion, nationality, membership of
a particular social group or political
opinion, is outside of the country of his
nationality, and is unable to or, owing to
such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of
the protection of that country or return
there because there is a fear of
persecution ..."



resettle refugees from areas of conflict. Up to 70,000 refugees per year are admitted to live in the United States. Refugees come to the United States for humanitarian reasons, and are granted full rights to live and work here. Refugees are required to apply to become lawful permanent residents after one year, and are eligible to apply to

More about refugees

The United States works with the United Nations and other countries of the world to

Time-limited assistance programs help refugees become self-sufficient. One important step in achieving self-sufficiency is obtaining quality employment. Refugees arrive in the country with an identification card called an I-94. After arrival, refugees also receive their Social Security card and an Employment Authorization card.

become citizens after five years.

Many refugees speak two or more languages

> Refugees are nurses, small business owners, farmers, construction workers, graphic designers, tailors, cooks, news reporters and more

"It is challenging to retain workers, but refugee employees have stayed with us for many years. Our retention rates have never been better." Manager, Renaissance

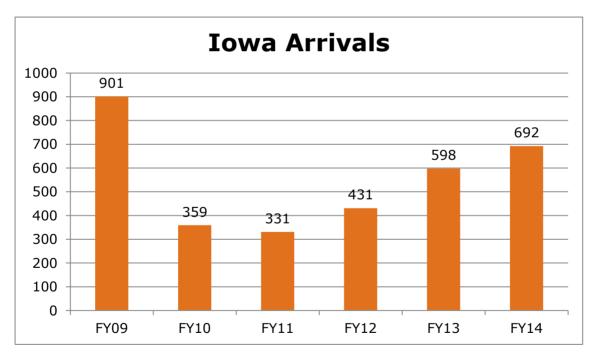
Savery Hotel

Making the connection

Iowa's history as a welcoming home for refugees has its roots in our response to the refugee crisis that was created when the war in Vietnam ended in 1975. In Iowa, Governor Robert Ray accepted responsibility for resettling 1,200 Tai Dam refugees, emphasizing that the success of the effort hinged on self-sufficiency and job creation rather than welfare. In November of 1975, the first three plane loads of new Iowans arrived in Des Moines.

Building on the solid results of this initiative, Iowa has remained a leader in resettling refugees from all over the world. In 1987, families from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary resettled in Iowa. In the 1990s, Iowa welcomed an influx of people from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Kosovo. Throughout the 2000s many of our newest residents have come from Somalia, Sudan, Liberia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Burma/Myanmar and Bhutan.

According to the Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), 3,312 refugees were resettled in Iowa over the last 6 years.



The Iowa Department of Human Rights, Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs and the Iowa Department of Human Services, Bureau of Refugee Services have produced this guide to provide some useful tips and resources to help employers explore the benefits of improved productivity, improve retention rates and other integration strategies for Iowa employers.

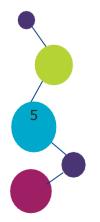
What can refugees bring to your workplace?

Different viewpoints may bring unexpected benefits in the global market

Diverse employees bring diverse viewpoints and ideas which can help your business grow. Today, Iowa companies are marketing their products in a global market and refugees can be a great asset to this expansion. Refugees bring international experiences and cultural perspectives. For example, refugees can provide insight about foreign consumers and the spending habits of America's newest immigrant communities. A diverse workforce is better equipped to create products and services that meet the needs of an increasingly diverse market.

Enthusiastic, motivated and hardworking employees

Refugees and immigrants are incredibly resilient. Throughout their lives they have routinely had to adapt to new circumstances leaving their home and loved ones and surviving harsh conditions of a refugee and migrant camps. This resilience and "can-do" spirit translates into strong motivation to work hard, start a new life and participate fully in American society.



Opportunities for flexible scheduling

Different cultures celebrate different holidays. Refugees and immigrants can increase morale by working through American holidays like Christmas or Thanksgiving, even taking on extra shifts so your native-born workers can have the time off they want.

Strong work ethic and retention

Upon arrival to the U.S refugees are eager to reenter the workforce. Most refugees have been engaged in some kind of employment before coming to the US. Many had few options regarding what kind of work they would do or what they would be paid. Therefore, they are extremely determined to earn a living and provide for their families and understand that work and success go hand in hand. Companies that have worked to fully integrate refugees into their labor force have seen sharp decreases in employee turnover, and



avoid the expense, production losses, and liabilities that come with higher turnover rates.

Built-in support

Local resettlement agencies and a variety of community organizations help refugees with family, community and personal matters so that newly arrived refugees can focus 100% on their work. These agencies ensure individuals are referred to appropriate services and are given assistance with reducing barriers such as child care and transportation. A list of agencies in central Iowa that can help you find refugee workers is included on page 22. These agencies will work with you to understand your needs and identify candidates for you to consider. The agencies routinely help applicants and new hires understand company policies and procedures.

Opportunities for Innovation

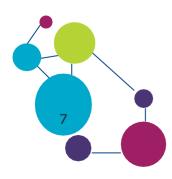
Business leaders today identify innovation as one of the primary drivers of business success. A multicultural workforce supports the kinds of diverse viewpoints and thoughts that can lead to new insights and innovative approaches to business challenges and opportunities.



Refugees bring transferrable skills to the United States. Refugees are doctors, nurses, small business owners, farmers, construction workers, graphic designers, merchants, tailors, cooks, news reporters and more. Many refugees speak two or more languages. Some have had access to vocational training or higher education, and thus have credentials, degrees and professional experience overseas.

Positive economic and community impact

Refugees live in our community, shop in our stores and pay the same taxes as the rest of us. Hiring refugees promotes their self-sufficiency, and allows them the dignity of working hard to support their families. As word spreads among America's ethnic communities that Iowa is a great place to "put down roots", more multicultural workers will be attracted. Refugees and immigrants keep Iowa growing.



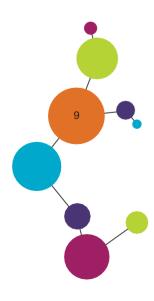




Arrange a mentor or buddy

Mentors provide support on work related matters as refugee and immigrant workers become proficient in their new role. While complying with safety regulations. Mentors can help your new workers practice, work duties, language skills and meet productivity goals while complying with safety regulations at your workplace.

Mentors can also provide ongoing support on work related matters as refugee and immigrant workers become proficient in their duties. Many times, mentors also become cultural brokers and help other team members see past differences and appreciate the new worker as a great addition to the team. For companies that incorporate workplace social activities like company picnics or pot lucks, mentors can help the new employee understand and participate.



Group Hire

Hiring limited English speaking employees in groups along with one person who has a stronger command of English can be beneficial because the person with stronger English skills can serve as a leader/liaison/interpreter for the group of new hires. This will help employers to break the language barrier, making interpretation accessible and less expensive. This will also help employees to deal with their transportation problems, if any, because they can share rides to work.





Provide orientations in native languages using interpreters

Give practical demonstrations or show a video

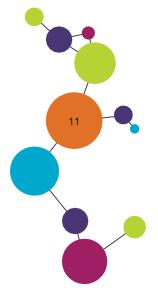


If possible, translate important notices documents and training materials in the key languages of your employees. However, it is strongly recommended to find out if the employees read their own languages. Keep in mind that some refugees may be unable to read their own language because they never had access to education before.

As supervisors work with their teams to develop their skills, remind them to do as much hands-on training as possible. Many times, showing refugee workers a skill, then asking them to demonstrate it, and using the same hands-on approach to correct their technique will be more effective than a detailed training manual.



Recording orientations in different languages in a digital format (video) can save time and expense of using an inperson interpreter



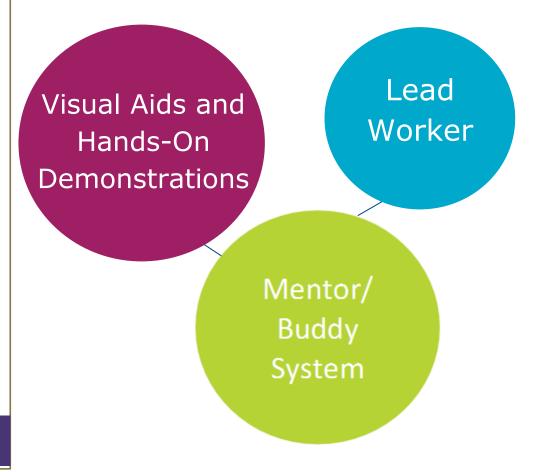
Words of Advice

Research has proven what G&K Services already knows, that English language learners develop new skills fastest when the teaching involves a lot of context and a lot of hands-on activity. Brian Christner from G&K Services offers a bit of advice for making sure workers truly understand, even if they are from a culture where it is not acceptable to question a boss. "You have to know your audience. You have to read their body language and facial expressions. You will see the light bulbs go on. We also use the "buddy system" where we match a new worker with someone from the same culture or a similar one. Be careful, though when you are looking for someone to buddy up or be a lead worker. You need to look at workers who are more well-rounded. They are probably the same ones who are coming to their supervisor showing some initiative." For companies that may still be considering whether refugee workers would be a good fit, Brian has one final piece of advice: "Go for it! There will be challenges, but nothing you can't deal with, and you will find some great workers you might not have even known were out there."

Best Practices in Iowa Companies: G&K

A leader in uniform rental and facility products for more than 100 years, G&K Services of Pleasant Hill has been able to find and develop great refugee workers for years. Human Resource Representative Sarah Murdoch explained how they started looking for refugee candidates to help meet their staffing needs. "It really started when we hired Prem (a Bhutanese refugee). He was such a hard worker, and a great spokesman for other refugees he knew were looking for good jobs. Since he took the initiative to help us identify great workers, we asked him if he could take the lead for us if we hired others from his culture. He was eager to help and has been a big part of helping new refugee workers understand their duties, company policies and how to provide the quality of service we want for our customers."

G&K Services Plant Manager Brian Christner mentioned the company's latest record for no reportable safety incidents was 439 days. When asked how he maintained such a safe environment with so many workers at all levels of English proficiency, he was quick to list the many ways G&K makes sure workers understand their duties and how to go about their work safely. He and his supervisors routinely hold "toolbox meetings" on the shop floor to reinforce safe work practices. He makes sure meetings include visual aids and hands-on demonstrations. He asks for volunteers to try the technique the way they've been shown.



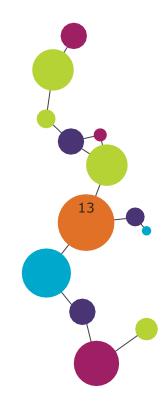


Arrange a culture day, picnic or potluck

Prioritizing companywide social events such as picnics, potlucks or fashion shows are a great way to increase integration and sense of belonging. Through food, traditional clothing, even dance –employees can share their culture and get to know one another.

Organize Lunch and Learns

Ready to join the workforce upon arrival, many employed refugees may miss out on opportunities to explore their community and learn about services. Inviting community services to give short presentations or display informational tables in the break room can give your employees opportunities to learn about services such adult education. This provides a no-cost way for companies to show their commitment to workers. It's a simple way to increase morale, productivity and retention.



Consider offering English as a Second Language (ESL) in the workplace.

Offering ESL in the workplace is a win-win situation. Consider partnering with your local community college, religious institution or other volunteers who are able to teach ESL even if it is a few hours every week.

You can take this to the next level by offering a computer lab with English learning software such as Rosetta Stone for employees who can learn English in their own time at their own pace. Consider partnering with your local workforce development offices, community colleges, Goodwill Industries or other institutes to get the computers and software donated.

Provide cross cultural and diversity trainings to supervisors and other employees

Diversity training is a way of equipping your managers, supervisors and other employees with the skills, knowledge and sensitivity to recognize and appreciate a diverse workforce.

A diverse workforce is not only about people from different cultures who speak different languages. Diversity encompasses employees of different genders, ages, races and work styles, as well as people with disabilities. Using the 'diversity' approach can involve:

- * Giving people a chance
- * Creating supportive team environments
- * Ensuring comprehensive induction for new employees
- * Providing appropriate training to all staff and supervisors
- * Fostering innovation by encouraging appreciation for diverse perspectives
- * Encourage "out of the box" thinking to improve quality and productivity

The benefits of diversity will span across your entire workforce, regardless of the cultural backgrounds and life experiences of your employees. Managers, supervisors, and employees will all learn about new, diverse groups of people, increase their skills in conflict resolution, cross-cultural communication and tolerance.



BEST PRACTICES IN IOWA COMPANIES: PINE RIDGE FARMS

Pine Ridge Farms, a local pork processor, has been hiring refugee workers for decades. In order to make sure workers understand their benefits and know about healthy choices, Pine Ridge Farms has implemented a system that can provide health information in 160 languages. The company routinely has employee information translated into the languages workers speak. Pine Ridge Farms makes sure an interpreter is available when communicating is important or when there is sensitive information being given to a worker with limited English. The company is always willing to reach out to local agencies if they suspect a cultural misunderstanding may be involved in worker performance issues they are experiencing.

Pine Ridge Farms has partnered with the Des Moines Area Community College to offer ESL classes in the plant at times that make it easy for workers to go to class right before or after work. This is especially important since the demands of home life often make it difficult to free up time for class later in the evenings, and there may not be any classes available before their daily work shift. Pine Ridge Farms has promoted from within, and has worked to find refugee workers with supervisory potential, as well as educating native-born supervisors about cultural awareness and respectful ways to address worker performance issues.

Translating Documents

Utilizing Local Agencies

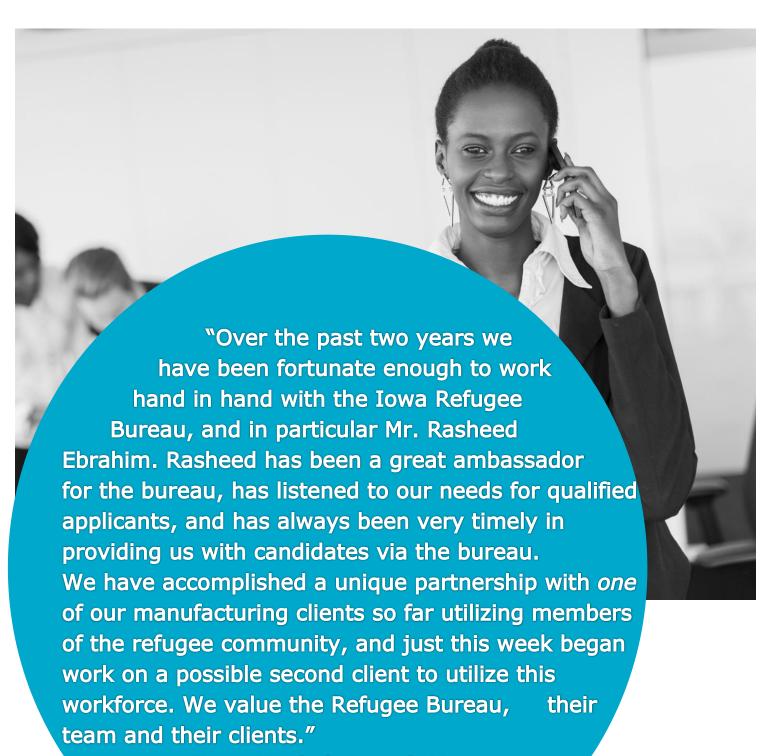
ESL Classes Using Interpreters

"After hiring some of the refugees and having competent translators on staff that also complete other administrative duties as part of their assignment(s), there was no question that this would work for us and for the employees. Supervisors and Managers became more comfortable with the team members that speak very little or no English and work very well with our bilingual staff that can bridge any communication issues."

--John Anderson, Director of Human Resources at Pine Ridge Farms

THE VALUE OF GOING ABOVE AND BEYOND

Their low turnover rate and the fact that many refugee workers have been with the company for 5 years or longer is a strong testament to the fact that the company values their labor. If Pine Ridge Farms stopped at just offering a job opportunity, that in itself would be a wonderful thing. However, they have and continue to do so much more to help refugees feel welcomed and valued. They have worked to make sure workers that are just starting their English learning understand company policies, get information in their language about their benefits, and especially get health recommendations that allow workers to do physically demanding work while building their strength and stamina. They offer ESL classes not just to allow easier communication with workers, but to help them in the community and to afford them an opportunity to continue to grow with the company. They look to their refugee workers for signs of leadership potential, offer them opportunities to learn more about other aspects of the company, and encourage them to apply for supervisory openings.



Tracy Vaubel, Branch Manager
Manpower

BEST PRACTICES IN IOWA COMPANIES: 3M

The first thing you see when you visit the 3M website is "Science...is just science. Until you make it improve the world." Like many advanced manufacturers, 3M-Ames faced challenges finding reliable, productive workers from time to time. In today's tight labor market, with unemployment rates at near record lows in Iowa, 3M turned to longtime business partner Manpower, where they are always looking for talented individuals who meet their clients' needs. As they began recruiting candidates, a contact with a career specialist who works with refugees suggested a possibility. Safety is a critical concern for any manufacturer, so there were important questions that needed to be answered as Manpower and 3M plant leadership considered whether refugees with limited English proficiency could help meet the plant's staffing needs.

Brenda Fugere, HR Manager at 3M Ames took time from her many duties to offer a testimonial. Take a look at what she said:



Similar to many employers, 3M in Ames is always looking for quality professionals for our production floor. In some departments we utilize Manpower for contingent workers.

About a year ago, Manpower presented us with the unique idea of utilizing members of the Central lowa refugee community for some of our contingent positions. Understandably, we as a team had many questions and even some concerns with this option.

I am happy to report that the members of our contingent team from the Refugee Commission have been exceptional! These team members have raised the bar when it comes to productivity levels. Most, if not all from the Iowa Refugee Commission team ramped up quickly, are dependable and do outstanding work! I can also say that to-date, we have had no safety related issues with them.

With the help of Manpower we created teams that included at least one person with English as a second language to help translate our processes, procedures and safety training material.

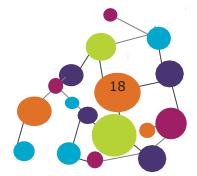
This has been a very successful venture for us and we are excited to continue utilizing associates from the Iowa Refugee Commission.

Sincerely,

Brenda Fugere

HR Manager

3M Ames







Refugees are authorized to work in the United States. They arrive in the country in "refugee status", which provides them with the authorization to work, along with the necessary documentation.



All refugees have:

 An I-94 Card issued by the Department of Homeland Security





This work authorization does not expire; however, all refugees are required to adjust their status from Refugee to Legal Permanent Resident by applying for a green card. They are eligible to become citizens after five years in the United States.

All refugees upon arrival are assisted to receive their Social Security cards that are available to employers from List C for employment verification. Some refugees may also have a state ID or a driver's license depending on how long they have been in the U.S.

Links and Resources

Resettlement Agencies

Catholic Charities

601 Grand Avenue Des Moines, Iowa 50309 Phone: 515/244-3761

Web: www.dmdiocese.org/migration-and-refugee-services.cfm

Provides resettlement and employment services to newly arriving refugees.

United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI)

601 Forest Avenue

Des Moines, Iowa 50314 Phone: 515/528-7525 Web: www.refugees.org

Provides resettlement and employment services to newly arriving refugees.

State Refugee Office

Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services (BRS)

1914 Carpenter Avenue Des Moines, IA

Phone: 515-875-5600

Web: http://dhs.iowa.gov/refugee-services

Offers Promise Jobs service providers for refugees who are on the TANF program, known in Iowa as the Family Investment Program (FIP). Also provides direct employment services, refugee training and education, consultation with employers who have or are considering hiring refugees, administers state and federal funding for refugees, and offers educational presentations to communities about their refugee residents.

Community Organizations

Lutheran Services in Iowa (LSI)

3200 University Avenue Des Moines, Iowa 50311 Phone: 515/271-7335

Web: www.lsiowa.org/refugee

LSI's Refugee Community Services empowers individuals with refugee status to pursue the quality of life they desire in five key areas:

- Elderly services;
- Employment Readiness Services;
- Community-Based English Language Classes;
- Urban Agriculture and Small-Farm Business Training; and
- Child Care Provider Training and Parent Education Programming

Ethnic Minorities from Burma Advocacy and Research Center (EMBARC)

Web: <u>www.embarciowa.org</u>

Helps refugees through advocacy, education and community development. **Interpretation**- Professional linguistic and cultural interpretation in languages from Burma, representing the wide variety of ethnic and linguistic groups in Iowa.

Mentorship- Mentors help refugee community members adjust to the educational, social, and cultural systems of the United States.

Community-based ESL- Accessible English as a Second Language classes for adult refugees to help them overcome language and cultural challenges. Childcare and transportation assistance provided.

Cross-Cultural Diversity Training- Trainings to build understanding between Iowan and ethnic communities, offer solutions to reduce cultural dissonance and increase inclusivity.

Employment Program- Young refugee adults, between the ages of 16 and 21, increase work-readiness skills through on-site experience and classroom training.

Navigator Programs- Youth, Parent, Health, and Community "Navigator" training programs epitomize EMBARC's mission of self-sufficiency through self-help. Refugee "Navigators" are trained on important life-skill topics, then teach and apply them throughout the community.

Youth Programs- EMBARC's SPARK programs provide youth from K-12th with individualized, interactive math and reading programming.

Direct Services- EMBARC provides direct social services by appointment or during walk-in hours (Mon. 10am-1pm; Wednesday 5-7pm and Fri. 2pm-5pm)

The Refugee Resource Center

Tifereth Israel Synagogue 924 Polk Blvd Des Moines IA 515-650-9272

Rrciowa.org@gmail.com

Open Wednesdays for direct services to refugees families needing assistance.

***Please note: this is not an exhaustive list of refugee serving organizations in central Iowa. These organizations were identified as being some of the most prominent and established in their communities; however, there are many more great services that refugees can utilize as well.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

This report was conceptualized and written by Sanjita Shrestha Pradhan, Executive Officer, Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs, Iowa Department of Human Rights. The office of Asian and Pacific Islander affairs is a central and permanent agency to advocate for Iowans of Asian and Pacific Islander heritage. The mission of the Office is to ensure Iowa's Asians and Pacific Islanders have opportunities equal to other Iowans in education, employment, healthcare, housing and safety.

Loren Bawn, Operations Manager, Bureau of Refugee Services was very instrumental in working with Iowa companies who provided us insights and information about the best practices they have applied in their companies. He made special trips to some of the companies for first hand interview and take pictures. Loren Bawn was also instrumental in reviewing of the report and providing feedback.

Britney Samuelson, Intern at the Office of Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs contributed much to the formatting and layout of the report. Britney is currently a student at Simpson College who is passionate about social policy work and impacting change in the areas of immigration, poverty and race relations.

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² Refugee Employment Subcommittee members: Nick Wuertz- Lutheran Services in Iowa, Pat Steele – Central Iowa Works, Soneeta Mangra-Dutcher – Central Iowa Works, Corinne Lambert – United Way of Central Iowa, Kemal Delilovic – Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services, Karen Miller – Manpower, Marvin Dejear – Evelyn K Davis Center, Doug Brooks – Iowa Workforce Development, Duane Nelson – Goodwill Industries, Alex Harris – Iowa Department of Education, Alexis Cade – DMACC Southridge, Jill Anderson – Catholic Charities, Mak Suceska – USCRI, Jeff Chamberlain – Iowa Employment Solutions, Troy Green – Oakridge Neighborhood

Refugee Employment Subcommittee Members

Lutheran Services in Iowa

Central Iowa Works

United Way of Central Iowa

Iowa Bureau of Refugee Services

Manpower

Evelyn K Davis Center

Iowa Workforce Development

Goodwill Industries

Iowa Department of Education

DMACC Southridge

Catholic Charities

U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants

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