



TENT

Bridging Language & Work

Solutions to Invest
in Immigrant and
Refugee Talent

January 2022

TENT.ORG



About

About The Tent Partnership for Refugees



TENT

With more and more refugees displaced for longer periods of time, businesses have a critical role to play in helping refugees integrate economically in their new host communities.

The Tent Partnership for Refugees mobilizes the global business community to improve the lives and livelihoods of more than 30 million refugees who have been forcibly displaced from their home countries. Founded by Chobani's founder and CEO Hamdi Ulukaya in 2016, we are a network of over 200 major companies committed to including refugees. Tent believes that companies can most sustainably support refugees by leveraging their core business operations - by engaging refugees as potential employees, entrepreneurs, and consumers.

The full list of Tent members can be found [here](#).

Find out more at www.tent.org.

About JFF (Jobs for the Future)



JFF is a U.S.-based nonprofit that drives transformation in the American workforce and education systems.

For nearly 40 years, JFF has led the way in designing innovative and scalable solutions that create access to economic advancement for all. One of JFF's areas of focus is inspiring and supporting companies to prioritize worker well-being alongside traditional business performance. To that end, this guide was developed as part of JFF's Corporate Action Platform, which helps to uncover and share talent solutions that enable companies to address both business and social needs.

Join us as we build a future that works. www.jff.org.

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Chapter 1

Introduction



In today's global economy, talent management, which includes sourcing talent, retaining employees, and developing talent, is among corporate leaders' top business priorities, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated talent management challenges.

Companies are seeking new strategies for investing in their workforces and are diversifying their talent pipelines to gain competitive advantages in the global marketplace. Many are turning to workers from immigrant and refugee backgrounds, a strategy that can both meet their talent needs and fulfill their social impact goals.

However, not all companies have recognized the full potential and value that immigrant and refugee talent can bring to their businesses. Corporate leaders cite a variety of challenges to investing in workers from immigrant or refugee backgrounds. Chief among those concerns is a need for workers to be proficient in the dominant local language.

An enduring perception among employers is that language fluency is a prerequisite for job success. However, it is important to realize that many critical roles can be filled by immigrants and refugees who are still learning the local language. We call these individuals **"local language learners."**

For the purposes of this guide, local language learners are broadly defined as a subset of immigrant and refugee talent who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand the language spoken by the majority of residents in the region or country in which they reside. Local language learners are a diverse group of immigrants and refugees who are both capable of working and eligible to work. They are often overlooked because employers see language proficiency as a prerequisite for performing well on the job.

However, companies often benefit when they realize that immigrant and refugee workers can contribute to the business even while they are learning the local language. They can gain a competitive advantage in the global economy by expanding their talent pipelines to fill open roles, increasing language diversity within their workforces, expanding the markets they can serve, growing the products they can offer, and creating greater representation of customers and communities. By implementing solutions that help overcome language barriers for immigrant and refugee talent, companies can unlock hidden value for their business and support the economic integration of their workers.

Many critical roles can be filled by immigrants and refugees who are still learning the local language ▲



Defining Terms: Who is a Local Language Learner?

Language proficiency is defined in different ways because frameworks for language proficiency vary across the world. Our definition of local language learners is based on two common language proficiency frameworks that differ in several ways:

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)¹

The CEFR provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe.

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

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

Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language (TESOL)²

TESOL is most commonly used for English as a Second Language (ESL) coursework and supports professionals teaching English to speakers of other languages.

Level 5	Bridging
Level 4	Expanding
Level 3	Developing
Level 2	Emerging
Level 1	Starting

We define local language learners using levels 1, 2, and 3: from starting to developing proficiency.

¹ Council of Europe, Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, "Global Scale - Table 1 (CEFR 3.3): Common Reference Levels," <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>.

² TESOL Pre-K-12 English Language Proficiency Standards Framework (Alexandria, VA: TESOL International Association, 2006), https://www.tesol.org/docs/books/bk_prek-12elpstandards_framework_318.pdf?sfvrsn=2.

About this Guide

The purpose of this guide is to serve as a new resource for corporate leaders that provides actionable advice on investing in workers who are local language learners. For companies that have not yet hired local language learners, this guide will make the case for investing in these workers, who are a largely untapped and valuable source of talent in the global economy.

The Tent Partnership for Refugees (Tent) is an organization dedicated to mobilizing the global business community to support refugees by encouraging companies to think about refugees, not as victims, but as potential employees, entrepreneurs, and consumers. The language barrier is one of the most common obstacles cited by major companies that are looking to hire workers from immigrant and refugee backgrounds. In line with Tent's mission and in response to this common perception, the organization commissioned this guide to help companies learn how to successfully hire more refugees who have limited language capabilities, as well as other local language learners. The guide demonstrates for companies how they can ensure the success of the people from immigrant and refugee backgrounds that they do hire and to support the economic integration of those workers.

Some of the best solutions for language barriers in the workplace have been developed at the local level through the creativity and innovation of workers and managers who want to support the success of their peers and colleagues.

However, even companies that have already invested in local language learners often still struggle to identify or standardize practices across their organizations. One corporate leader told us that their company has gotten better over the years at recruiting and integrating workers who are local language learners, but "as we are learning, we may forget. A guide of what to do next would be so helpful." This guide codifies solutions in an integrated way so that companies can take a more structured approach to investing in local language learners by making them a part of their workforce.

First, we offer a framework for companies to understand the ways in which they can invest in local language learners beyond expanding access to language training. Offering language training programs and subsidizing language training costs are important ways for companies to invest in local language learners, but these initiatives can be too resource- and time-intensive for some companies. However, this should not deter companies from hiring and investing in local language learners because many strategies and solutions beyond providing language training can be implemented.

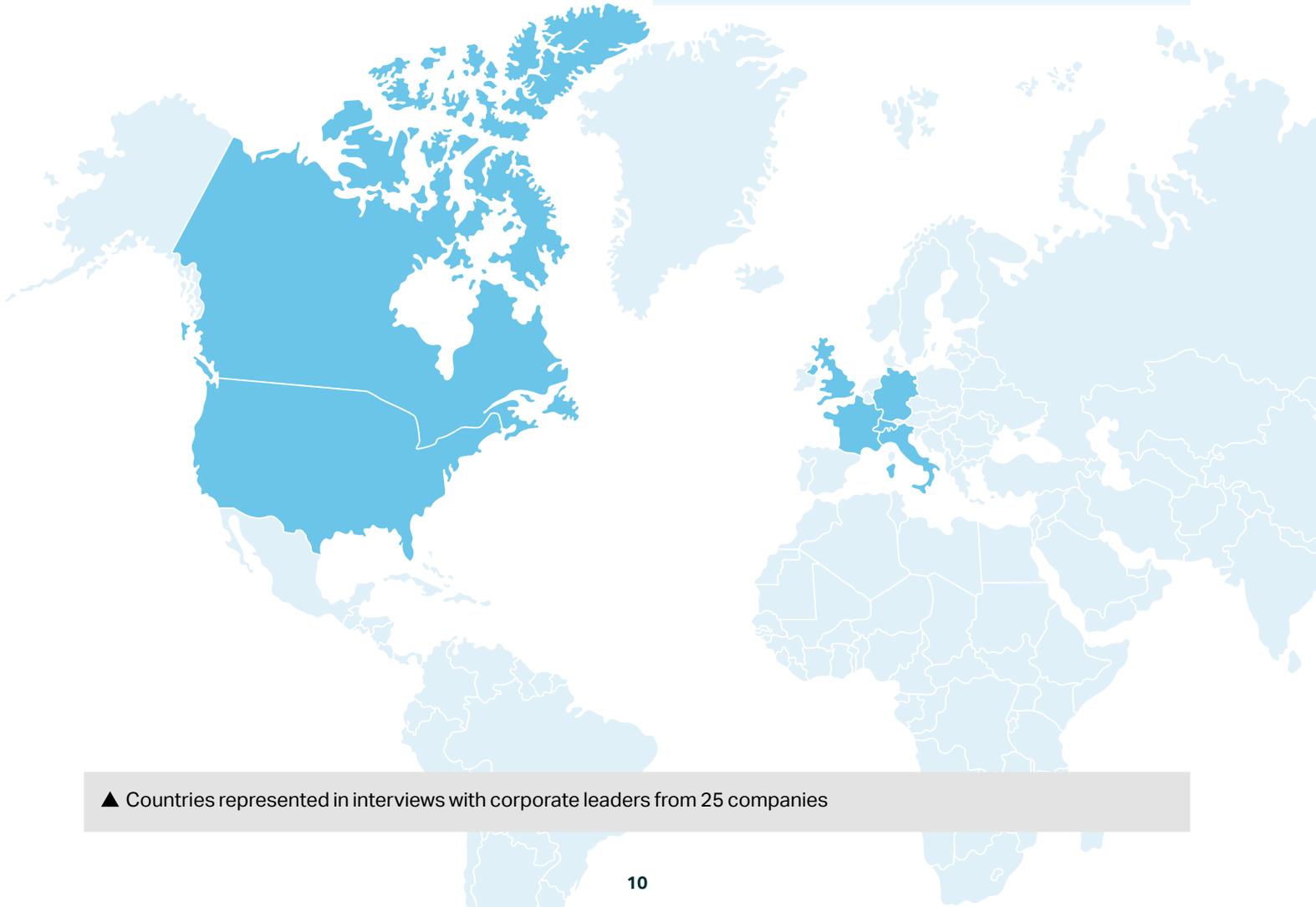
We build on this framework in subsequent sections by offering specific solutions across the talent management cycle and highlighting why companies must also consider broader policy and community factors to best support local language learners. Finally, we conclude the guide with concrete steps that companies can take to begin implementing these solutions.

Project Methodology

The practices and recommendations in this guide are based on interviews with people at 25 companies, most of which either are in the Fortune 1,000 in the United States or are of similar size in revenue and that have operations in the United States, Canada, and/or Western Europe. These people represented a range of business functions, including human resources (HR); diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI); and corporate social responsibility (CSR). In total, corporate leaders from seven countries and nine industries contributed to this guide.

Countries

-  Canada
-  France
-  Germany
-  Italy
-  Switzerland
-  United Kingdom
-  United States



▲ Countries represented in interviews with corporate leaders from 25 companies

Industries of companies interviewed



In addition to interviews with corporate leaders, we gathered insights from support organizations that focus on immigrant and refugee talent, including research organizations, chambers of commerce, local refugee resettlement organizations, workers’ unions, workforce development organizations, adult education providers, and language training providers.

Finally, the interviews were supplemented with background research focused on the policy context across regions covered in this guide. This research focused on the wraparound support that refugees receive through national or regional policies and how companies supplement those supports (if at all) through corporate practices.

Chapter 2

**The Business Case
for Investing
in Local Language
Learners**

Local language learners, including immigrants and refugees, are a diverse and dynamic workforce with the capacity to make vital contributions to their communities, companies, and the broader economy.

Immigrants and refugees are often multilingual and multicultural, which can help employers diversify their workforce and gain a competitive advantage in the global economy. With their wide range of educational attainment, skills, and professional backgrounds, local language learners are well equipped for a variety of roles even as they continue to strengthen their language skills.

Immigrants and refugees make significant contributions to the economy in a variety of ways, including participation in the labor force. They represent over 17 percent of the U.S. workforce and a quarter of Canada's workforce.⁸ Furthermore, immigrants and refugees pay billions of dollars in taxes, purchase homes, and start businesses that are vital to the economy. In the United States, immigrants and refugees contribute over \$492 billion each year in local, state, and federal taxes.⁹

Immigrants, Refugees, and Local Language Learners Are a Substantial Talent Pipeline

Immigrants and refugees represent millions of workers and a significant part of talent in the global marketplace.³ In 2019, 44.7 million immigrants were living in the United States, totaling 13.6 percent of the country's population.⁴ Over 2.5 million of these immigrants are refugees that have resettled in the United States since 1980.⁵ Immigrants and refugees similarly make up a large percentage of the populations of Canada and several European countries.⁶ Germany's 13.5 million immigrants represent 16.1 percent of the country's population, while 21 percent of Canada's population (7.5 million) and 14 percent of the United Kingdom's population (9.4 million) are foreign-born.⁷

³ Immigrants are people who seek permanent residence in a country that is not their country of origin. Refugees are people who have fled their country due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Additional information about how we define immigrants and refugees can be found in the appendix of this guide.

⁴ Abby Budiman, Key Findings about U.S. Immigrants (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, August 20, 2020), <https://www.pewresearch.org/?p=290738>.

⁵ Map the Impact: United States of America infographic (New York, NY: New American Economy, 2019), <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/locations/national/>; Fact Sheet: U.S. Refugee Resettlement (Washington, DC: National Immigration Forum, 2020), <https://immigrationforum.org/article/fact-sheet-u-s-refugee-resettlement/>.

⁶ 2020 Annual Report to Parliament on Immigration (Ottawa, Ontario: Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2020), <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/ircc/migration/ircc/english/pdf/pub/annual-report-2020-en.pdf>; "German Population of Migrant Background Rises to 21 Million," Deutsche Welle (Bonn, Germany), July 28, 2020, <https://p.dw.com/p/3g4g9>.

⁷ OECD, "Foreign-Born Population" (indicator, accessed on October 14, 2021), https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/foreign-born-population/indicator/english_5a368e1b-en.

⁸ News release: "Foreign-Born Workers: Labor Force Characteristics—2020" (Washington, DC: Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, May 18, 2021), <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/forbrn.pdf>; Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2020 Annual Report.

⁹ Map the Impact, New American Economy; New American Economy refers to "likely refugees" because nationally representative surveys that normally provide socioeconomic data to researchers do not include information on respondents' immigration status beyond citizenship status. There is little quantitative data available on refugees and their socioeconomic characteristics after their resettlement.

Economic Contributions of Immigrants and Refugees in the United States

96% Nearly 80 percent of the United States' immigrants and refugees are working age. According to New American Economy, **96 percent of likely refugees are employed.**¹⁰

\$5bn Immigrants and refugees are highly entrepreneurial. The United States has over 3.2 million immigrant entrepreneurs, with a total business income of \$88.5 billion, of which nearly **186,000 are refugees, with a total business income of \$5 billion.**¹¹ Though they represent only 13.6 percent of the U.S. population, immigrants account for 21.7 percent of U.S. business owners.¹²

\$7.7bn Immigrants have \$1.3 trillion in spending power, of which **\$71.7 billion is attributed to refugees.** Immigrants pay almost \$125 billion in rent each year.¹³

3x Research shows that hiring refugees can benefit businesses through higher retention rates. In the U.S. manufacturing sector, for example, **refugees are almost three times more likely to stay in their job** than their non-refugee counterparts—a pattern repeated in the hospitality and meatpacking sectors and many others.¹⁴

Increased sales **Supporting refugees improves the perception of a brand** among U.S. consumers and increases sales, especially to younger consumers, women, and people of color.¹⁵

Of course, not all immigrants and refugees are local language learners. For example, 53 percent of immigrants in the United States are proficient in English. How many local language learners are there? Estimating the level of language proficiency among immigrants and refugees is complex and

varies based on country of origin and length of time spent living in the new country. Even though it is difficult to pinpoint an exact number of local language learners, it is clear that they represent a large and untapped source of talent for companies around the world.

¹⁰ Map the Impact, New American Economy.

¹¹ Map the Impact, New American Economy.

¹² Entrepreneurship infographic (New York, NY: New American Economy, 2020), <https://www.newamericaneconomy.org/issues/entrepreneurship/>.

¹³ Map the Impact, New American Economy.

¹⁴ David Dyssegaard Kallick and Cyierra Roldan, Refugees as Employees: Good Retention, Strong Recruitment (New York, NY: Tent Partnership for Refugees and Fiscal Policy Institute, May 2018), <https://www.tent.org/resources/good-retention-strong-recruitment/>.

¹⁵ Tent Partnership for Refugees and NYU Stern, How Helping Refugees Helps Brands (New York, NY, 2018), https://www.tent.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/TENT_HowHelpingRefugeesHelpsBrands_Report_FINAL.pdf.

¹⁶ Budiman, Key Findings.



Companies Benefit from Investing in Local Language Learners

Businesses that have hired local language learners identify numerous advantages. Major businesses recognize that investing in local language learners can benefit both workers, who gain new job opportunities, and the business, which taps a new source of talent, improves its ability to serve customers, and creates a more inclusive organization that benefits all workers.

Broader, more diverse talent pipelines: Though many businesses have historically overlooked local language learners, more companies now recognize that local language learners are willing and able to bring value to their organizations. Many companies see local language learners as a means of broadening the candidate pool from which they can fill their talent needs. Those companies also gain access to workers that are hard-working, eager to work, loyal to their employers, and likely to stay longer with their employer.

More inclusive company culture: After hiring and supporting local language learners, companies interviewed for this guide noted more engagement and retention from other workers, many of whom volunteer to mentor, onboard, and support local language learners as they become integrated into the business. Companies that build programs supporting immigrant and refugee talent, including local language learners, also noticed more loyalty to the company, because all workers feel increased pride in their employer for supporting and investing in local language learners.

Increased workforce and language diversity:

Companies have found that adding local language learners to their workforce allows them to better communicate with a broader group of customers and in more geographic markets.¹⁷ Organizations of all types find value in employing local language learners who can help customers feel more represented and comfortable, whether in a store, restaurant, or office. This is especially true in service industries, which place a premium on effective communication with customers.

Greater representation of customers and communities:

Job postings for all types of skills that specifically seek bilingual workers provide evidence that local language learners enable businesses to widen their customer base, expand into new markets, or offer different services to existing customers.¹⁸ Some industries, such as health care, recruit multilingual workers to better serve customers and patients. One health care company interviewed wanted to expand and improve care to a particular segment of the community that shared a single ethnic background, but it struggled to find bilingual workers who could communicate in that community's native language. Investing in a local language learner from that community could expand the company's services and offerings.

Fulfillment of social impact goals: As more consumers and employees seek out companies with a social purpose, companies find that investing in local language learners is one way to fulfill their CSR objectives. Companies with commitments to hire immigrants and refugees, including local language learners, can create both business and social value for their business and communities. These businesses also see investments in local language learners as part of broader efforts to expand DEI.

¹⁷ Not Lost in Translation: The Growing Importance of Foreign Language Skills in the U.S. Job Market (New York, NY: New American Economy, March 2017), http://research.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/NAE_Bilingual_V9.pdf.

¹⁸ Not Lost in Translation, New American Economy.

Challenges to Investing in Local Language Learners Can Be Mitigated with the Right Solutions

Though companies stand to gain from investing in local language learners, some corporate leaders hesitate to do so because of a variety of challenges. While some of these challenges are more prominent in some industries, almost all these barriers can be mitigated through the effective solutions that are detailed in the next sections of this guide.

Safety: For some industries and occupations, fluency in the local language is required for safety reasons. For example, manufacturing companies hesitate to hire local language learners to operate heavy machinery. When safety issues arise, being able to warn other workers in the local language or quickly comprehend instructions is important. Companies can overcome this by hiring local language learners into roles that require less language fluency and then providing training, both technical and language-focused, to create pathways into more advanced roles.

Change management: Some managers will be unenthusiastic about having local language learners on their team because it can take more effort to train, onboard, and communicate with them. Organizational change is complex and requires intentional efforts to create buy-in, empower workers, and communicate in a transparent manner. Companies interviewed for this guide indicated a need to shift company culture and manager mindsets alongside implementation of practices to support local language learners. Some companies address this challenge through DEI training and other efforts to build an inclusive workplace. Others strategically place local language learners with managers and teams that are skilled at developing talent and that embrace DEI goals.

Lack of career pathways: While local language learners may be able to perform some roles, mostly entry-level, without advanced language proficiency, there is limited opportunity for advancement without language fluency. This underscores the importance for companies not only to implement solutions that allow local language learners to succeed in their initial roles, but also to expand access to language training that can lead to broader economic integration.

Costs: Some businesses do not invest in local language learners because they think that doing so will be costly. Some leaders cited the costs of translating documents, hiring translators, or providing language courses to workers. But it is important for companies to see these activities as investments in their workforce that will engender a positive return, not as costs. Like other forms of skills training and professional development, language solutions are critical for companies to build their talent pipeline and retain workers over time.

Validating training and skills from other countries: Some local language learners have degrees and credentials from their home countries that cannot be used in their host country, and recredentialing can be complex (though it varies from country to country). Because recredentialing can take years for some professions, some local language learners work in roles for which they are overqualified while they learn the local language, complete training in their new country, and work toward recredentialing.

In these instances, community partners, such as organizations that serve refugees, credential evaluation providers, or workforce development entities, can help local language learners navigate the recredentialing processes in their new country. They can also offer language training so that local language learners, especially those with highly specialized training or skills, can become more integrated and have greater access to education and career opportunities in their new country.

¹⁷ Not Lost in Translation: The Growing Importance of Foreign Language Skills in the U.S. Job Market (New York, NY: New American Economy, March 2017), http://research.newamericaneconomy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/NAE_Bilingual_V9.pdf.

¹⁸ Not Lost in Translation, New American Economy.

Chapter 3

How Can Companies Invest in Local Language Learners?

Companies often believe that investing in local language learners only means providing access to language training and courses. While this is an important way for businesses to invest in their workforce, there are numerous other strategies and solutions that companies can implement. In this chapter, we offer a framework for companies to use for investing in local language learners.

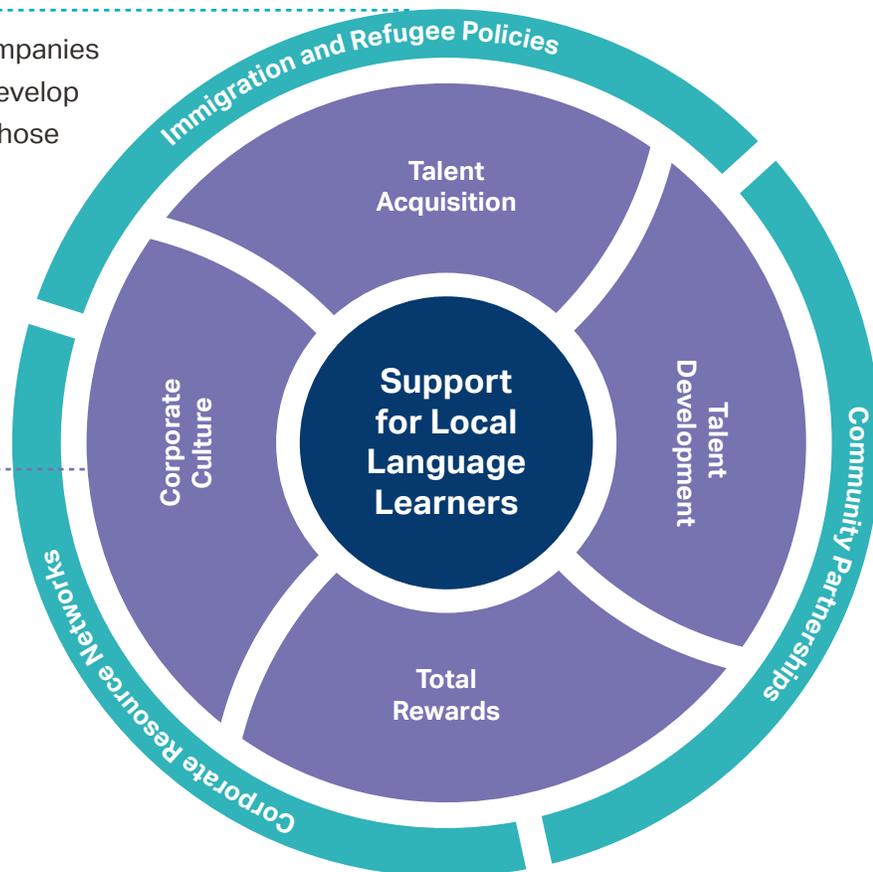
The ideal support for local language learners comes from the learners' surrounding environment and the practices that employers use to support their on-the-job success.

Environmental Context

Factors that influence how companies hire local language learners, develop bridge solutions, and sustain those solutions over time.

Bridge Solutions

Practical actions and tools that companies use to hire and support local language learners, before or in addition to access to formal language training.



Environmental Context Influences How Companies Invest in Local Language Learners

Public policy and government-provided services are critical to ensuring that newcomers such as immigrants and refugees receive the services and support they need for stability and success. These services can include access to wraparound support (e.g., housing, transportation, child care) and access to employment opportunities.

The depth of support services available in a country or region matters to businesses because it marks the baseline from which companies must build when investing in local language learners.

These factors vary from region to region, and they influence how companies invest in local language learners, develop solutions to overcome language barriers, and sustain solutions over time. Public policy, community partnerships, and corporate resource networks are all part of the environment in which companies must operate when investing in immigrant and refugee talent, including local language learners.

What Is Wraparound Support?

Wraparound support is defined as services, programs, or resources that address the needs of workers in a holistic manner. Examples of wraparound support include transportation access, child care support, and housing access. Programs that offer wraparound support ensure that workers' basic needs are met so that they can thrive in work and beyond.

Companies Can Implement Solutions to Bridge Language Gaps for Local Language Learners

While companies may have little direct influence over environmental factors, they can implement solutions, beyond access to language training, that support local language learners' success. We call these "bridge solutions" because they get local language learners into jobs faster while they work toward greater language proficiency. Bridge solutions are practical actions and tools that companies can use to hire and support local language learners, before or in addition to access to language training.

"Bridge solutions" get local language learners into jobs faster while they work toward greater language proficiency. ▲

Bridge solutions are organized into four categories aligned with traditional components of corporate talent strategy: talent acquisition, talent development, total rewards, and corporate culture.

For each category, companies can implement new practices or modify existing ones in order to invest in local language learners.¹⁹ Bridge solutions not only promote worker success for companies that implement them but are also likely to produce benefits to the business and the bottom line. By implementing bridge solutions, companies can address commonly cited challenges, such as the needs to access talent, reach new customers, and compete in the global marketplace.

¹⁹ The four levers of bridge solutions are based on JFF's [Impact Employer Talent Framework](#). Impact employers are defined as companies that tackle today's evolving challenges by adopting business strategies that have a positive impact on workers, communities, and the bottom line. Companies implementing bridge solutions for local language learners are impact employers that understand the imperative of investing in local language learners to benefit their workers, communities, and bottom lines.

Implementing Bridge Solutions Alongside Language Training Maximizes Impact

To optimize benefits to both businesses and workers, bridge solutions should be implemented in conjunction with access to language training (provided either by the company or a partner). Helping local language learners access language training and improve their proficiency in the local language is vital to their long-term success and retention. This also allows companies to develop their talent and create pathways for local language learners to access additional educational and advancement opportunities.

Helping local language learners access language training and improve their proficiency in the local language is vital to their long-term success and retention. ▲



While this guide is not intended to provide details about effective language training, we should note that most practitioners agree that contextualized language training grounded in the reality that local language learners experience in their jobs and daily lives is key.²⁰ Language training that is based on the learner’s specific context is more likely to be applied, practiced, and retained by the learner.

Language training should be tailored to the context in which these learners operate. It should equip them with the language skills necessary for success in their specific job roles, within their companies and industry, and within their local community.

²⁰ This guide defines contextualized language training as language learning that is grounded in the reality that local language learners experience in their jobs and daily lives. More information about how we define contextualized language training can be found in the appendix of this guide.



Best Practices in Language Training

To maximize the impact of language training, companies should consider whether their current or planned program has the following attributes:

- Industry-based** **Industry-based, contextualized** language training, focused on what workers need in their jobs and tailored to the daily context in which workers live and work
- Accessible** **Accessible** language training that is paid for by the company, is accessible on site or during working hours, and can be offered through partnerships with community organizations
- Incentivized** **Incentivized** language training that acknowledges, celebrates, and rewards the accomplishments of learners
- Equitable** **Equitable** language training that is tied to DEI efforts, promotes a sense of belonging, is grounded in the empowerment of workers rather than the exclusion of language or culture, is accessible companywide, and offers best practices for all employees on integrating local language learners into teams and the company overall
- Tech-enabled** **Tech-enabled** language training that uses nimble translation tools (e.g., live translation, translated closed captions) and offers real-world practice and collaborative learning
- Data-driven** **Data-driven** language training that monitors learner activity to enable more responsive classroom lessons and personalized instruction

Chapter 4

Bridge Solutions: Connecting Local Language Learners to Jobs and Other Resources

Bridge solutions can be implemented across the talent management cycle to provide comprehensive support to local language learners. Companies that embed the implementation of bridge solutions across business units (e.g., HR, operations, CSR, etc.) create a stronger sense of engagement and accountability within the company to support the success of local language learners. Efforts to invest in local language learners are then more likely to be seen as a business imperative.

This section offers examples of bridge solutions for companies that seek to invest in local language learners. These practices span core components of corporate talent strategy: talent acquisition, talent development, total rewards, and corporate culture. Though it is ideal for companies to implement bridge solutions across the talent management cycle, not all bridge solutions will work for every company. There is no single way to implement these practices. Instead, the practices detailed here are offered as strategies that companies are using to invest in their local language learners. We encourage companies to customize implementation of these strategies to fit their own business needs and the needs of local language learners in their region.

These practices span core components of corporate talent strategy: talent acquisition, talent development, total rewards, and corporate culture. ▲



Talent Acquisition

Companies use bridge solutions for talent acquisition to diversify their talent pipelines and implement unbiased hiring practices that support local language learners.

Local language learners often have the skills to perform and excel in many different roles, but corporate hiring practices create hurdles that exclude candidates based on language proficiency.

Redesigning talent acquisition processes allows companies to gain a competitive advantage by seeking talent from new sources and tapping into the vast potential that lies in local language learners.

▲ 1.

DIVERSIFY TALENT PIPELINES THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Partnerships with refugee resettlement agencies, workforce development organizations, staffing agencies, and other community organizations focused on securing employment for immigrants and refugees can be core to corporate sourcing and hiring practices.

For example, HR and hiring managers might partner with community organizations that help local language learners by building their understanding of the company and role, translating application documents, and preparing them for interviews.

Many leading companies create a feedback loop with these partners so that traditional hiring practices can be improved to better support local language learners.

Some companies develop partnerships with individual organizations in areas where they have a need for talent for specific worksites or roles, while others develop relationships in a centralized manner to support a broader company initiative to hire immigrant and refugee talent.

▲ 2.

MAKE LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS AMBASSADORS TO THEIR COMMUNITIES

Companies that have successfully hired local language learners often turn to these individuals to refer others from their communities for open roles. Some companies create formal referral programs and provide a financial incentive for local language learners to source talent for the company.

Referrals can also happen informally through word of mouth as more local language learners learn of open roles at companies that have hired from their communities before.

These employees then become ambassadors for the company and help others to navigate the hiring process as well as onboarding. The relationships and support network between local language learners can be vital to creating a welcoming environment and a sense of belonging within the organization.

▲ 3.

SHOWCASE THE COMPANY, WORKERS, AND JOBS TO LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN CREATIVE WAYS

An emerging practice in talent acquisition is using visuals or videos as alternatives to written job descriptions. This practice humanizes the recruiting process for local language learners and reduces some language barriers. Video job descriptions do a better job of showing local language learners what the company does, where they will work, and who their colleagues will be. Companies can also showcase local language learners that already work for the company and include testimonials in non-local languages.

Another creative solution is providing tours and walkthroughs of work sites during the recruiting and hiring process.

This allows local language learners to become familiar with their potential work environment and make more informed decisions. Companies highlight the physical environment in which prospective employees would work, provide an opportunity for current workers to talk about their experiences at the company, and show the specific tasks or responsibilities associated with the job.

In industries that require difficult manual labor or machine operations, walkthroughs help local language learners understand the scope of their responsibilities prior to committing to a job and reduce the likelihood of turnover later.

▲ 4.

CONDUCT INTERVIEWS IN LANGUAGES WITH WHICH LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS ARE MOST COMFORTABLE

Leading companies conduct interviews in non-local languages in areas that have a significant population of local language learners. This bridge solution requires companies to have interviewers who are bi- or multilingual or work with community partners to have interpreters present during interviews. Multilingual interviews ensure that local language learners can communicate in the language with which they are most comfortable, focusing on their responses to interview questions rather than on the need to be articulate in a language they are still learning.

This bridge solution may be most effective in regions where there is a concentration of local language learners speaking a single foreign language. One company in the United States conducted interviews in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese to better communicate with local language learners in its region.

This required having employees who could also speak Spanish or Vietnamese to conduct interviews with local language learners. During the Syrian refugee crisis, some companies in Canada and Europe conducted interviews in Arabic as well as the local language.

▲ 5.**EVALUATE AND HIRE LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS BASED ON THEIR ABILITY TO PERFORM THE JOB**

Many companies that have hired a large number of immigrants and refugees have found that, because extensive written applications and interviews can be an intimidating barrier to local language learners, a trial employment period can be a more effective way to assess those learners' suitability for the job. Some leading employers use trial periods ranging from one week to 90 days in duration for local language learners to learn about the company and their own core job functions.

Over this time, local language learners are evaluated based on their ability to learn and perform core job functions before a permanent offer is extended. Local language learners are compensated for their work during the trial period and supported with training and onboarding to maximize their ability to succeed.

▲ 6.**PROVIDE IMPORTANT ONBOARDING DOCUMENTS AND INFORMATION IN MULTIPLE LANGUAGES**

A common bridge solution used by companies is to translate key documents, such as job applications, company policies, and other human resource information. Companies typically select a few languages that are most common in their community and make documents available in those languages. For example, companies with sites in areas of the United States where Spanish predominates among non-English speakers provide all documents in English and Spanish in the hope of being more inclusive of Spanish speakers throughout the hiring process.

However, this bridge solution can be challenging to implement in regions with great language diversity. Companies in major metropolitan areas or regions with immigrants and refugees from several countries find it difficult to translate documents into all languages. In any case, it is best not to rely exclusively on translation to support local language learners, in part because some local language learners are not able to read or write their native language.

Case Studies:

Examples of Bridge Solutions for Talent Acquisition

Case Study 1: IKEA



The vision of IKEA, the largest furniture retailer in the world, is to create a better everyday life for the many people: coworkers, customers, and the communities they operate in.

Its global Skills for Employment refugee integration initiative aims to help 2,500 refugees and asylum seekers in 30 countries improve their employability and language skills by 2022 so they can gain meaningful employment, with either IKEA or other companies. The initiative offers refugees short-term work placements ranging from a few months to a year in duration. Upon completion of the placement, participants are invited to apply to existing vacancies at IKEA. So far, 847 refugees and asylum seekers have participated in the initiative in 22 countries. 61% of them have found a job at IKEA.

The participants' recruitment process is customized by each country to fit the local context and needs of refugees in that region.

For example, IKEA Switzerland offers all refugee candidates a tour of an IKEA store and their potential workplace during the recruitment process to help contextualize the expectations and responsibilities of their role. 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. During this time, candidates, or "coworkers with potential," work regularly in a specific area with a line manager, who shows them the basics of the job, supervises their work, and provides them with support as needed. Candidates progress depending on how fast they learn. 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. This talent acquisition solution is one way that IKEA Switzerland customized the program to better serve its community.

Case Study 2: Tyson Foods



Tyson Foods, an American multinational corporation and the world's second-largest processor and marketer of chicken, beef, and pork, has plants in mostly rural regions of the United States and relies on a 40 percent immigrant workforce to operate their plants.

To fill its talent needs and build deep community relationships where it has plants, Tyson employs official community liaisons, workers who have risen through the ranks and are responsible for being a link between local language learners and managers. The liaisons both assist with hiring from their

own communities and share critical cultural information with management (e.g., dates of Burmese holidays that will prevent Burmese employees from working). Being fluent in English themselves, liaisons can help those who are not fluent be represented more fully in the workplace, encourage additional immigrant workers to join the company, and prevent potential miscommunications on the job.

In addition to community liaisons, Tyson employs interpreters at most of their plants who are certified to speak two languages. The company uses specific mechanisms to confirm their interpreters' language proficiency and also compensate them for their interpretation services.



Talent Development

Bridge solutions are also effective ways for companies to develop their existing talent through personalized skill-building and career pathways that lead to economic integration for local language learners. Talent development solutions can be implemented to train, onboard, and promote skill-building for local language learners so that they are successful once hired. By focusing on developing local language learners, companies are likely to see higher rates of productivity, engagement, and retention among their workers.



▲ 1.**PAIR LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH PEERS WHO CAN PROVIDE ON-THE-JOB TRAINING AND MENTORSHIP**

A common bridge solution that is widely used by companies across all industries to train local language learners is to pair them with bilingual or multilingual workers for “shoulder-to-shoulder” training. Pairing a local language learner with a peer, ideally someone who can speak the same language, is an effective way to teach the specific tasks and activities associated with their shared role. Peers show local language learners what they need to do to perform their roles successfully, and they provide support as the learners perform those tasks over their first days or weeks at the company. In addition, local language learners can build a strong relationship with their peers from the start and turn to them for support as they are trained and onboarded to the company.

▲ 2.**MINIMIZE USE OF WRITTEN MATERIALS FOR TRAINING AND ONBOARDING PROGRAMS**

As with the bridge solution of turning written job descriptions and onboarding materials into visual tools, companies are also shifting toward more visual and video-based training materials that can both illustrate the job tasks and be offered in multiple languages.

This solution is most effective for roles with repeated tasks that can be broken into discrete steps and be illustrated. For example, to minimize the use of language in training resources, a major food processing company uses pictures in its training materials to show the specific tasks required in a particular role.

The picture-based resources are not only provided in training sessions, but also posted around the work site so that local language learners can continue to refer to them as needed. Companies also use picture-based signage around the work site to indicate key places, including exits, breakrooms, bathrooms, and more.

These solutions have resulted in a more inclusive and welcoming work environment for local language learners as well as a safer workplace with less risk of accidents precipitated by a language barrier.

▲ 3.

STRUCTURE TEAMS TO INTEGRATE LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH WORKERS ACROSS THE COMPANY

To facilitate faster language and skill acquisition, companies strategically place local language learners on teams with workers who are fluent in the local language. This reduces silos and encourages collaboration between local language learners and other workers.

Companies find that this works best on teams with supportive managers who are skilled at developing talent and with team members who are patient and eager to support local language learners. Integrated team structures may require more up-front investment in time and resources as local language learners are first onboarded, but the reward is quicker language and skill acquisition, stronger relationships, and a more inclusive company culture.

▲ 4.

TREAT MULTILINGUALISM AS AN ASSET, NOT A BARRIER TO ADVANCEMENT

The ability to speak multiple languages is an asset that makes local language learners competitive candidates in the market. Leading companies prioritize promoting and advancing local language learners as they improve their technical and local language skills. Local language learners can also be effective leaders and managers. Because of their lived experiences, they are often more effective at welcoming, training, and supporting new workers. By offering the right support and training, numerous companies are able to promote local language learners into leadership roles to manage and develop other local language learners who can benefit from their shared experiences.

Local language learners should be promoted based on mastery of skills and competencies, even if they are still learning and improving their language skills. A major retailer promotes local language learners into leadership positions in certain departments or sections of its stores based on their expertise on merchandise rather than their language fluency. It has found that language need not be a barrier to promotion, especially if bridge solutions are implemented.

▲ 5.

ADOPT INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY TO TRAIN LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS THROUGH JOB SIMULATIONS

More companies across a range of industries are turning to immersive learning to train their employees in safer, more accessible, and effective ways.²² Immersive learning technology includes tools and platforms that make use of virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR), and extended reality (ER).

These tools and platforms allow local language learners to learn by doing and build a wide range of skills without needing advanced language proficiency. In addition, immersive learning technology addresses safety concerns that often stop companies from hiring local language learners. Immersive technology is ideal for high-risk, difficult-to-simulate environments because workers can learn and practice through repetition in a safe manner.

▲ 6.

IMPLEMENT INTEGRATION PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE BOTH SKILLS AND LANGUAGE TRAINING

Programs focused on the integration of refugees into the community are common among employers with commitments to investing in refugee talent, especially in Canada and many European countries. Many corporate integration programs are aligned with broader refugee integration efforts and policies in the country. Designed with public and community partners to be among the first employment opportunities for new refugees, integration programs combine skills and vocational training with language courses and social programs that help familiarize refugees with their new community. These programs vary in length from a couple of months to a year. The role of employers is often to provide work placement, skills training, and other support needed for refugees to succeed in the labor market. Clear learning and development goals are set, and performance evaluations are transparent. Local language learners that participate in integration programs usually earn a certification, qualify for more rigorous apprenticeship programs, or receive permanent offers of employment at the end of the integration period. They are also provided time to learn the local language, either through on-site language courses, community-based classes, or language practice buddies. Companies also provide other support, such as mentorship, community-building programs, and career exploration opportunities.

²² 2020 Immersive Learning Technology (Boston, MA: JFF Labs, January 2020), <https://www.jff.org/what-we-do/impact-stories/jfflabs-acceleration/2020-immersive-learning-technology>



Case Studies: Examples of Bridge Solutions for Talent Development

Case Study 1: Old Navy

OLD NAVY

For **Old Navy**, the largest specialty clothing retailer in the United States, training for roles can be complex because of the speed needed to change over the floor every six weeks (for seasonal and other special promotions) and because of the large quantity of items sold. The company addresses this complexity with an on-the-job development program that promotes associates who have developed expertise in a section of their store (e.g., back room, shoes) to be leads or senior leads.

These employees are then scheduled for extra hours so they can become subject-matter experts in certain areas of the store. They shadow the current lead for that section and build up their knowledge about how the work in that section is done and about the tools and resources needed for success. Since this program is built around on-the-job, shoulder-to-shoulder training, multilingual individuals can excel in leadership roles even while they are still building their local language proficiency. This creates pathways for local language learners to become leads—which means that there will be more local language learners to train future leads, opening the door for further multilingual store leadership at Old Navy.

Case Study 2: Chobani

Chobani

Chobani is a leading food brand in the U.S. It has grown its operations through strong ties to local partners, such as Utica's refugee resettlement center, which helps the company draw talent from Utica's diverse community.

As a result, Chobani estimates that approximately 30 percent of their manufacturing workforce is made up of immigrants and refugees, and this manufacturing workforce speaks over 20 different native languages. Chobani says that flexibility is key – for years, the company translated certain materials (i.e., safety training, benefits guides, etc.) into the most common native languages spoken by their teams, until it realized that many employees could not read

or write their native language. Now, Chobani Academy, the company's internal learning and development platform, presents materials in the simplest form possible: lots of pictures and diagrams, with simple English words illustrating the job process and translation provided as needed. This caters to different learning styles while supporting local language learners who may not be literate.

In addition, Chobani has partnered with Voxy EnGen, an organization providing skills-focused, virtual English language learning for employers working with limited English proficient employees, to build custom content and assign structured, specialized learning paths tailored to the level of English proficiency of their employees at their South Edmeston location in New York.

Case Study 3: McDonald's



With 1.7 million employees in over 100 countries, **McDonald's** is the world's second-largest private employer. To ensure consistent training across their workforce, the McDonald's corporate office 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 in the company's workforce. 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.



Total Rewards

Companies use a range of bridge solutions to provide holistic benefits that support the stability and well-being of local language learners. Total rewards go beyond a narrow focus on compensation, traditional benefits, and skills training. They might include educational programs, child care, adaptable and flexible scheduling, financial support, and other wraparound support.

While related to total rewards, talent development is focused on skill-building and the advancement of workers, while total rewards promote stabilization and the holistic well-being of workers. Providing total rewards for local language learners boosts worker loyalty, engagement, and retention, which drives higher productivity and better business performance.

While some of the bridge solutions in this section are novel, others—such as flexible scheduling, tuition support, transportation credits, and child care access—are best practices in talent management used by employers to invest in the well-being and advancement of their whole workforce. These best practices have particular importance for local language learners, especially immigrants or refugees in the early stages of resettlement and integration.

▲ 1.

MAKE LANGUAGE LEARNING ACCESSIBLE TO ALL WORKERS THROUGH INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY

Common language learning apps, such as Duolingo, Busuu, and EF Hello, are accessible tools for local language learners to acquire language skills. Companies should provide access and subscriptions to these tools as a benefit for all workers, because being multilingual is advantageous to workers and increasing workplace language diversity is good for the business. Some companies work with app developers to customize modules and vocabulary so they are specific to the company and role. This helps local language learners acquire vocabulary that they need to know on a daily basis for succeeding in their roles.

As noted earlier in this guide, a best practice in language training is for companies to subsidize language training that is accessible to workers on site and during work hours. While apps can make language learning more accessible to some workers, it is important to recognize that many newcomers have other obligations that make it difficult to leverage these technologies and learn the local language in their own time.

▲ 2.

MAKE LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS AMBASSADORS TO THEIR COMMUNITIES

Companies that have successfully hired local language learners often turn to these individuals to refer others from their communities for open roles. Some companies create formal referral programs and provide a financial incentive for local language learners to source talent for the company. Referrals can also happen informally through word of mouth as more local language learners learn of open roles at companies that have hired from their communities before.

These employees then become ambassadors for the company and help others to navigate the hiring process as well as onboarding. The relationships and support network between local language learners can be vital to creating a welcoming environment and a sense of belonging within the organization.

▲ 3.

OFFER VIRTUAL AND IN-PERSON INTERPRETATION SERVICES

Hiring interpreters for major meetings is an important bridge solution that creates a more inclusive environment for local language learners and ensures that key information is communicated effectively. Some companies provide either virtual or in-person interpreters at companywide meetings or at meetings where important HR information will be conveyed. While this can be a costly solution, especially if there are multiple languages, it ensures that key information is communicated accurately in non-local languages.

Other companies compensate multilingual workers for providing translation or interpretation help to local language learners. But relying on multilingual workers has its limits because they may not be trained to provide these services; therefore, companies should hire professional interpreters if possible.

▲ 4.

FACILITATE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS AND OTHER WORKERS

To encourage social interaction and connection, companies create buddy programs that pair local language learners with colleagues who are fluent in the local language. These programs provide benefits for local language learners, other workers, and the whole business. Local language learners build social connections with their colleagues and dedicate time to practicing the local language at work (either during the day, on lunch breaks, or after work). These programs offer an opportunity for other workers to volunteer, engage with their colleagues, and build stronger social connections. In turn, businesses benefit from stronger employee engagement, loyalty, and retention.

▲ 5.**PROMOTE ADAPTABLE, FLEXIBLE SCHEDULING TO ACCOMMODATE NEEDS OF LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Adaptable and flexible scheduling is important to broadly support the stability and well-being of immigrants and refugees. New arrivals to a community may have more appointments than other workers as they participate in public or community integration programs, and they may need to provide direct child care as others in their family seek employment and participate in similar programs. Some companies use apps to make it easier for workers to schedule and to change their shifts as needed. Companies can integrate scheduling apps with translation capabilities so that information is available in multiple languages.

▲ 6.**PROVIDE TUITION SUPPORT FOR LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS TO FURTHER THEIR CAREER ADVANCEMENT**

Providing tuition reimbursement for educational programs can support skills development for local language learners and help them advance in their careers. Access to new skills development can prepare local language learners for advanced roles within the company. Those that have degrees and credentials from their home countries may need to participate in additional training to validate their skills and certifications. In countries with robust apprenticeship models, local language learners in some industries may need to take additional coursework to qualify for apprenticeships that can lead to long-term career pathways.

For example, Germany and Switzerland both have robust national apprenticeship programs and standards in many professions and trades. While newcomers may not immediately qualify for those apprenticeship programs, companies can help local language learners develop the language proficiency and other technical skills that are needed for qualification.

▲ 7.

GIVE TRANSPORTATION CREDITS TO LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS TO MAKE WORK MORE ACCESSIBLE

Providing transportation support promotes stability for new immigrants and refugees while boosting productivity for the business. Some companies provide local language learners with public transit passes or cards to pay for fuel, while others create carpooling programs. Local language learners who are immigrant and refugee newcomers may not yet have a driver's license or access to a car or might be wary about their ability to read the signs along roads and in transit systems. In addition, some work sites, especially in the manufacturing industry, are located outside of cities, making it even more difficult to get to work.

▲ 8.

CREATE STABILITY FOR LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS BY ADDRESSING THEIR CHILD CARE NEEDS

Like transportation support, child care incentives go a long way toward creating stability not only for local language learners but also their families, especially in the early stages of resettlement in a new country. Local language learners who are new immigrants and refugees must often support family members that are also looking for work, learning the local language, and navigating new systems. In particular, immigrant and refugee women often shoulder the majority of child care responsibilities and have increased expectations about their role in fulfilling domestic duties.

Immigrant and refugee women often experience significant gaps in employment and pay compared to their male counterparts.²⁴ Providing on-site child care or vouchers that can be used to pay for child care services is a critical way that companies can enable local language learners, especially women, to access some of their first employment opportunities in a new region.

²⁴ Raiyan Kabir and Jeni Klugman, *Unlocking Refugee Women's Potential* (Washington, DC: Georgetown Institute for Peace and Security and the International Rescue Committee, July 2019), <https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/document/3987/reportrescueworksunlockingrefugeewomenspotential.pdf>.



Case Studies: Examples of Bridge Solutions for Total Rewards

Case Study 1: Inditex

INDITEX

Inditex is one of the largest fashion groups in the world, operating over 6,800 stores in 93 markets. The organization has made a large commitment to connecting refugees with jobs in new countries. Because Inditex recognizes the value of a multilingual workforce, it gives all Inditex employees access to the premium version of a language learning platform called Busuu and encourages them to use it to learn a new language.

Busuu offers digital training programs (separate from standard onboarding and training) that allow employees to learn a new language at their own pace while accommodating their unique learning style. It not only offers general vocabulary, but also Inditex- and store-specific vocabulary and official language certifications, providing local language learners with flexible, contextualized

language learning tools. All employees can take initiative and build fluency in other languages that may create professional opportunities for them in other countries. Inditex employees dedicated over 126,000 hours improving their language skills through Busuu in 2020.

Beyond providing access to language learning opportunities, Inditex has also supported the inclusion of refugees through their SALTA program, which began in France in 2008 and has since expanded to 13 markets training over 1,400 people, about 15 percent of whom are refugees. SALTA's objective is to provide job opportunities to people who live in situations of social exclusion. In addition to the professional training, the company provides language training for participants of SALTA who may need it. The success of the program is due to essential partnerships with over 40 foundations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the participation of 3,000 Inditex employees who have served as trainers, tutors, and mentors to program participants.

Case Study 2: Danby



Danby is a Canadian company that specializes in designing, manufacturing, and distributing small appliances through national and independent retailers in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Mexico. In 2017, CEO Jim Estill started the Ease into Canada program, sponsoring refugees in Canada during the Syrian refugee crisis.

To help local language learners build confidence, Danby created a formal lunch

buddy system, pairing each learner with a 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. This program supports local language learners by making language learning more accessible, applied, and social; facilitating camaraderie; and creating social connections. Danby also provided on-site classes, tutors, and a free library of books for local language learners to improve their English proficiency.

Case Study 3: adidas



adidas, headquartered in Germany, is the largest sportswear manufacturer in Europe and the second largest in the world. The company’s core belief is “through sport, we have the power to change lives,” which drives the adidas Integration Program for employees who are new to Germany. This program helps participants adapt to the German marketplace and society by providing job opportunities, volunteer support, donations, and internal

coaching and mentorship. Coaches work with local language learners to help them reflect, identify career goals, and connect them to relevant stakeholders internally and externally.

In addition to networking, the coaches provide one-on-one support for refugees to help develop their personal interests, solve specific integration challenges, and identify potential career next steps. This helps participants who are local language learners adapt to their new community, build stability in their lives, and find meaning in their roles.



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Corporate Culture

It is just as important for companies to create the conditions and environment for local language learners to thrive as it is to provide training, onboarding, and benefits. Corporate culture is foundational to the successful implementation and long-term sustainability of all bridge solutions. Investing in bridge solutions that create a more inclusive corporate culture benefits all workers, especially local language learners, because it affects their sense of belonging at the company.

Investing in solutions that drive an inclusive corporate culture also benefits the bottom line. Customers and prospective employees favor companies that have positive social missions and that prioritize worker well-being as part of their culture. Moreover, businesses that demonstrate a strong social commitment to their workers have higher rates of employee engagement, retention, and productivity.

▲ 1.**INCLUDE LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS
IN BROADER DEI EFFORTS**

Many companies complement investments in local language learners with broader DEI efforts. Anti-bias, cultural competency, and inclusive leadership are common training topics that companies focus on as they work toward creating a more diverse and inclusive culture. Some companies require the managers of local language learners to undergo training to help prepare them for managing a diverse team with multiple languages represented.

Helping workers understand best practices in working with local language learners can facilitate everyone's success. Even as companies encourage local language learners to learn and improve their local language skills, it is important to emphasize that they do not need to hide or suppress any other languages that they speak. Language solutions and training are intended to empower local language learners, not exclude their cultures and backgrounds.

▲ 2.**ELEVATE THE VOICES AND NEEDS
OF LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS THROUGH
WORKER-LED GROUPS**

Worker-led groups, sometimes called Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), focus on fostering a more diverse and inclusive workplace. They are important resources to support a more inclusive corporate culture. Many of these affinity groups are identity-oriented and create a community for workers of the same race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc. Others are based on job roles or are topical (e.g., a mental health resource group).

These groups benefit workers and businesses in many ways, including by providing a safe space to support belonging, an avenue for leadership development, and a feedback channel so that worker experiences are recognized and valued by the company. Some companies have groups for immigrant and refugee talent, which not only create an important community for workers but also elevate their voices across the company and ensure that their needs are communicated to corporate leaders.

▲ 3.

RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE THE CULTURES AND BACKGROUNDS OF LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

One way to create a welcoming environment for local language learners is to celebrate the diversity that they bring to a company. Potlucks, multicultural holiday celebrations, and family-oriented events are examples of ways for companies 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.

However, companies should not think that events alone can create a sense of inclusion and belonging. Meaningful celebration and recognition of local language learners requires other investments, including other bridge solutions that are detailed in this guide.

▲ 4.

UTILIZE NIMBLE TRANSLATION TOOLS TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION ACROSS MULTIPLE LANGUAGES

A variety of technology tools and platforms can support communication between local language learners and other workers or with customers. For example, a multinational retailer encourages the use of Google Translate in its stores to facilitate communication between local language learners and other workers as needed. In some instances, local language learners use Google Translate to communicate with customers as well.

Nimble translation tools can be helpful to smooth in-the-moment communications between coworkers and with customers. It can be easy to talk over or ignore people who do not speak the local language fluently. Encouraging the use of these tools signals that the company cares about including local language learners and making them comfortable, even if it takes a little more time or requires some extra steps.

▲ 5.**CREATE SPACES FOR WORKERS TO GATHER AND SOCIALIZE ACROSS SILOS AND LANGUAGES**

Social connections at work are important for local language learners, who may be new to a country, a region, or the company. There is also a tendency for people to socialize predominantly with people who speak the same language and avoid interacting with those who speak other languages. Companies must be intentional about breaking down silos between local language learners and those who are fluent in the local language.

One way is to create physical spaces where workers can gather and socialize during breaks or throughout their days. Some companies encourage workers to mingle in these spaces with people who speak different languages or designate lunch breaks as time for buddy programs and local language practice.

▲ 6.**PROTECT THE CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY OF LOCAL LANGUAGE LEARNERS' STATUSES**

Not all immigrants, refugees, or local language learners will want their status to be disclosed. It is important for companies to protect the privacy of their workers and avoid disclosing information about their immigration or refugee status. In some cases, there may be political or safety issues that cause workers to keep their backgrounds and statuses private. If their status needs to be disclosed, it should be done with informed consent from the worker. Companies need to listen to their workers and have privacy protection policies in place to keep worker statuses private, as needed or desired.

It is the company's responsibility to create an environment in which workers have personal agency and choice about how they want to be identified by their peers and managers. This may also mean that companies take a more active role in educating workers on their rights and what choices they have, especially if workers are newcomers to the country or region.



Case Studies: Examples of Bridge Solutions for Corporate Culture

Case Study 1: Barilla

Barilla

The Italian Food Company. Since 1877.

Italy-based **Barilla**, the largest pasta producer worldwide, believes that the biggest barrier to diversity is cultural. Not everybody in the company understands the importance of diversity to the business. To address this issue,

Barilla combines training in unconscious bias and stereotypes with a new staffing model that has integrated, cross-functional teams. These teams foster inclusion by having employees from different backgrounds work together and blend different approaches and cultures, creating a more welcoming environment for local language learners. As representatives from the company observed, "Diversity is a fact, but inclusion is a choice."

Case Study 2: Deutsche Bahn



Deutsche Bahn is a German railway company and the largest railway operator in Europe, transporting about two billion passengers and 227 million tons of goods annually. Operated by the German government, it has a vested interest in integrating refugees into the German labor market and culture and supporting local language learners as they build their German proficiency.

Deutsche Bahn helps refugees and local language learners work on their German through regional language cafés. The language café is part of a formalized program called

“Sukl” (social and cultural integration) designed to support and encourage language practice on site and facilitate social connections for workers. They fulfill requirements of qualification programs, which are aimed to especially support refugees and are hosted by employees of the company who have volunteered to help. This ensures that local language learners are integrated throughout the company instead of being isolated from other workers. This helps develop social connections with colleagues who are eager to help them learn and adjust. To strengthen language competency in the workplace, Deutsche Bahn has also developed language training based on the specific vocabulary that is needed to successfully finish vocational education programs.

Case Study 3: L'Oréal

L'ORÉAL

L'Oréal is the world's largest cosmetics company, present in 150 countries and headquartered in France. The company realizes it can be challenging for newcomers to succeed in local labor markets without understanding the business environment. To overcome this, it partners with a number of NGOs to provide paid internships for

migrants and refugees that culminates with a certificate in an area of business operations such as marketing, which makes local language learners more employable in the new labor market. To help them gain cultural insights, each local language learner is paired with a French-fluent L'Oréal employee. The pairs meet twice a month for the duration of the program so the learner can better understand L'Oréal's culture, practice job interviews, decode business norms, and connect to new professional contacts.

Top Bridge Solutions for Investing in Local Language Learners

Companies can invest in local language learners using bridge solutions across their whole corporate talent strategy. The most common bridge solutions among leading companies are bolded below.



Talent Acquisition

- **Develop partnerships with community organizations to diversify talent pipelines.**
- **Provide important onboarding documents and information in multiple languages.**
- Utilize referral programs and incentives to build a pool of immigrant and refugee candidates.
- Showcase the company or a job in creative ways (e.g., visual job descriptions, tours of work environment. etc.).
- Conduct interviews in multiple languages.
- Evaluate candidates during trial work periods as to their ability to perform the job.



Talent Development

- **Pair local language learners with peers for on-the-job training.**
- **Favor using diagrams and visuals in training and onboarding materials over written material.**
- Integrate teams so that local language learners are embedded with other workers.
- Position multilingualism as an asset, not a barrier to advancement.
- Use immersive learning technology for skills training and development.
- Implement integration programs that combine skill building, language learning, and mentorship.



Total Rewards

- **Make language learning technology and programs accessible to all workers.**
- Offer virtual and in-person interpreter and translation services.
- Create buddy programs that pair local language learners and other workers.
- Accommodate the needs of local language learners through adaptable, flexible work schedules.
- Provide tuition support for local language learners to further their career advancement.
- Give transportation credits and devise other strategies to make work more accessible.
- Support child care services for local language learners, especially immigrant and refugee women.



Corporate Culture

- **Combine investments in local language learners with broader DEI efforts.**
- Develop affinity and ERGs for local language learners.
- Recognize local language learners through multicultural celebrations and events.
- Facilitate communication across languages through nimble translation tools.
- Create common gathering spaces for workers to socialize across silos and languages.
- Maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of local language learners.

Chapter 5

Environmental Context: Understanding Policy and Community Factors



Public policy plays a critical role in whether immigrants, refugees, and local language learners receive the services and support they need for stability and success in their new host country or region. The level of wraparound support and services provided by governments or public institutions has an enormous influence on the ability of immigrants, refugees, and local language learners to meet their basic needs, access employment, and succeed in the workforce, especially in the early stages of resettlement.

Corporate leaders must understand this environmental context because it helps determine how effectively newcomers can seek, maintain, and thrive in jobs. The support available to immigrants and refugees is the baseline from which companies should build when investing in local language learners, and this baseline varies from country to country and region to region. Companies that understand this context will be better equipped to help fill any gaps or determine where strategic partnerships are needed to support local language learners.

A wide array of public policies affects the ability of immigrants and refugees to access education, attain good jobs, and achieve economic stability. For the purposes of this guide, we focus on three core factors that ultimately influence the best ways in which companies can support and invest in immigrant and refugee talent: 1) government-provided wraparound support for local language learners, 2) community partnerships, and 3) corporate resource networks.

Public Policies and Wraparound Support Affect the Stability and Well-Being of Refugees and Immigrants

To maintain a stable footing and achieve economic well-being in their new host country, immigrants and refugees need access to financial and social support that seamlessly integrates education, skill-building, and human and social services. However, the availability and duration of such support varies by country and locality. Public policies and rules governing social safety net programs determine the types of wraparound support provided, who is eligible to receive such support, and the duration of the support.

Government-sponsored programs supporting refugees may include resettlement and wraparound support, poverty prevention assistance, and refugee sponsorship programs that connect refugees to local community members who will help them integrate into local communities, navigate their new environment, and acquire the local language. Additional support may include cash assistance, medical care, employment authorization, child care support, and temporary housing.

The European Union has a holistic, government-led approach to supporting immigrants and refugees. For example, EU member states have a common approach to supporting refugees through inclusive education and training services, employment opportunities, and access to health services and adequate housing.²⁵ Similarly, the Canadian government provides refugees with support to find housing, orientation to their new community, referrals to other refugee-serving programs, and, for those with financial need, income support, either in the form of a one-time financial allowance or monthly payments.²⁶ In the United States, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement tasks nine national refugee resettlement agencies with offering assistance to refugees to integrate into U.S. society. These refugee resettlement agencies have local affiliates throughout the country that offer wraparound services to refugees at the local level, including housing assistance, medical support, and job readiness and employment services.²⁷ However, some U.S. public policies prevent or discourage immigrants from accessing vital social safety net support, such as food and financial assistance, creating challenges for both undocumented immigrants and those with legal status.

²⁵ "European Web Site on Integration," European Commission, November 24, 2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/the-ec-presents-its-eu-action-plan-on-integration-and-inclusion-2021-2027>.

²⁶ "What Kind of Support Do Government-Assisted Refugees Get?" Canada.ca, September 29, 2021, <https://www.cic.gc.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?qnum=098&top=11>.

²⁷ "Resettlement Services," U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Refugee Resettlement, February 3, 2021, <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/orr/programs/refugees>.

Ultimately, refugees' access to wraparound support, the duration of that support, and the extent to which the support is provided by the government varies by country. Understanding the wraparound support and social services available

to their immigrant, refugee, and local language learners will help companies determine if or how they can help fill any gaps that exist in meeting their workers' needs.

Community-based Organizations Provide Vital Support to Refugees and Immigrants

In addition to government-sponsored services and support, several global and regional nonprofit and civic organizations connect refugees and immigrants to a variety of social services, such as health services, support for basic needs (e.g., food, water, housing), business and entrepreneurship opportunities, education, and employment-related assistance. The employment-related services provided by these community partners can include an assessment of an individual's education and skill development needs, as well as preparation to help the individual enter the local job market. They may also include connecting refugees and immigrants with education or job training services, literacy and local language courses, job search and placement agencies, and mentoring support; helping refugees and immigrants prepare resumes or cover letters; and supporting them with workplace issues that may arise.

Some nonprofit organizations also advocate on behalf of immigrant and refugee populations to ensure those groups get access to services that support meeting basic needs and foster broader economic well-being.

These community partner organizations may include:

- refugee resettlement organizations (primarily in the United States);
- non-governmental organizations (NGOs);
- advocacy groups;
- adult education providers;
- community-based organizations; and
- community colleges or other local education institutions.

Understanding the extent to which local nonprofit and civic organizations support immigrants, refugees, and local language learners will help companies determine if or how they can develop community partnerships to support local language learners.

Corporate Resource Networks Enable Corporate Leaders to Learn from One Another and Grapple with Common Challenges

Corporate leaders can tap into internal and external corporate resource networks of colleagues and peer companies to learn best practices and strategies to invest in local language learners. Resource networks enable leaders to share ways to increase employee productivity and retention as well as ways to invest in employees to ensure their needs are met.

Internal corporate resource networks can be formal or informal. Managers across different shifts or job sites can provide information to one another about effective bridge solutions or other practices. An internal resource network might also entail program leaders across different geographic regions sharing best practices in supporting local language workers.

External corporate resource networks are made up of corporate peers who also hire and support local language learners. The Tent Partnership for Refugees is an example of a global corporate resource network in which companies committed

to hiring refugees can share best practices and receive guidance on implementing programs to support refugees. External corporate resource networks are also available at the local and regional levels. Local chambers of commerce and industry associations are common resources for corporate leaders to access information and share practices with other businesses. Worker unions and staffing agencies are also organizations that businesses can turn to for best practices in investing in local language learners. Some regions, such as the Canadian province of Ontario, have partnerships between government and businesses focused on ways to support immigrant and refugee talent.

An internal resource network might also entail program leaders across different geographic regions sharing best practices in supporting local language workers. ▲

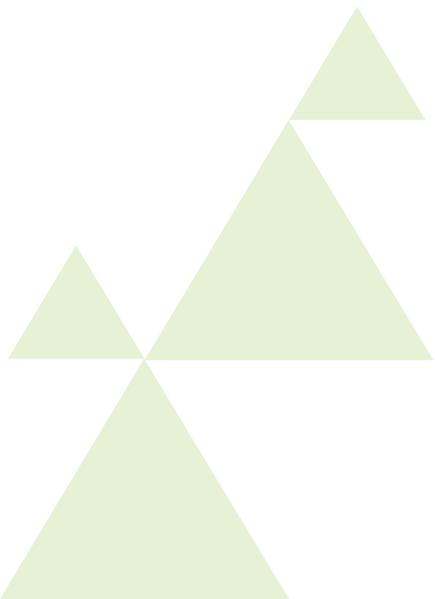
Companies Should Be Aware of and Adapt Solutions to Their Environmental Context

No one-size-fits-all approach to supporting immigrants, refugees, and local language learners exists. Companies must analyze the needs of their workers, the context in which they live, and the extent to which they have access to support outside of work.

Public policy and local environments have a large influence on the extent to which companies may need to fill gaps in support of refugees. ▲

Public policy and local environments have a large influence on the extent to which companies may need to fill gaps in support of refugees. In countries or regions where there is a more basic level of public services for refugees, companies may need to either invest in providing those services themselves (e.g., language training, transportation) or dedicate resources toward partnerships with other organizations that can help meet workers' needs by reaching refugee communities and identifying key resources.

The following tables outline three levels of support that refugees may find in their host country or region in three areas: basic needs, employment supports, and nonprofit and private-sector engagement. Below each table are suggestions on ways companies can support refugees and local language learners in their workforce if there are gaps in assistance.



Public Wraparound Support to Help Refugees Meet Their Basic Needs

Basic Support	Intermediate Support	Robust Support
Resettlement agencies in the United States that help refugees with social integration & support accessing services (e.g., housing, clothing, & food)	Assistance securing permanent housing	Government subsidies to cover most living expenses for those in need
Temporary income assistance for those with financial need (more common in the United States)	State-run orientation programs that focus on integration and referrals to other refugee-serving programs	Formal child care that is available to all refugee children (often free)
Unsubsidized child care programs (more common in the United States)	Free, public local language training	Services and support provided for survivors of trauma as well as for mental and physical health issues
Nonprofits or advocacy groups that offer language training or support to other social services		Free specialized vocational language training
Free cultural integration courses provided by public sector		



What Companies Can Do:

Depending on the types and levels of social and human service support made available to refugees, immigrants, and local language learners, companies should:

- Expand the availability of jobs that pay family-supporting wages, provide health insurance, and offer other benefits to local language learners;
- Become familiar with their national and local public policy context and the impact it has on immigrants and refugees, particularly local language learners;
- Become familiar with their local resettlement agencies (in the United States) or other NGOs and the services they provide;
- Connect their local language workforce to public services to the extent that public services and wraparound support are available; and
- Connect their local language workforce to other nonprofits and civic organizations that support refugees.

Public and Private Employment Support Provided to Refugees and Immigrants

Basic Support	Intermediate Support	Robust Support
Government resettlement agencies in the United States that inform refugees of their basic workers' rights and help them find employment opportunities by assisting with job search and giving help preparing resumes or cover letters	Public or private job search agencies focused on refugee employment	Public or private workforce training programs that connect refugees to work opportunities that either provide full-time employment or prepare refugees for it (e.g., a one-year pre-apprenticeship)
Limited vocational or educational programs with reduced tuition or fees	Limited or temporary public-sector programs to support training and employment of refugees	Coalitions of employers that agree to promote hiring of refugees
	Government grants for implementing programs that assist refugees in qualifying for licensing and certifications necessary to attain employment	Subsidized long-term vocational training programs that last two to five years
	Support from resettlement agencies or nonprofits with workplace issues that may arise	Broad evaluation of foreign qualifications and credentials so they can be validated in the host country
	Mentoring support	



What Companies Can Do:

Depending on the types and levels of social and human service support made available to refugees, immigrants, and local language learners, companies should:

- Become familiar with their local resettlement agencies, the services they provide, and whether they can refer the company to qualified refugees seeking employment; and
- Understand the best practices of reaching, screening, and hiring refugees and local language learners.

Private and Community Support Provided to Refugees and Immigrants

Basic Support	Intermediate Support	Robust Support
Decentralized network of private organizations serving refugees	Somewhat decentralized network of public and private organizations serving refugees	Centralized network of public and private organizations serving refugees
Partnerships between companies and organizations to support local language learners	Sharing by multiple companies of best practices and common challenges in supporting local language learners	Dedicated company programs and networks of leaders focused on serving refugees in the workforce
Company-provided wraparound support that goes directly to refugees	Informal or formal ways for companies' internal managers to share best practices across sites or regions	Regional or national initiatives that bring together public and private partners to focus on employment for refugees
		Multiple-company efforts to create a shared pool of refugee talent and provide comprehensive job and wraparound support
		Partnerships between companies and community organizations that are developed in a streamlined way (often with support from public partners)



What Companies Can Do:

Depending on the types and levels of private and community support available to refugees, immigrants, and local language learners, companies should:

- Become familiar with local or regional community and partner organizations that exist in their regions to support immigrants, refugees, and local language learners;
- Develop partnerships with these organizations to source talent and connect local language workers with social and human services, education, and skill-building opportunities;
- Provide direct support to refugees or community organizations;
- Coordinate with one or more private organizations to support refugees; and
- Develop a streamlined approach to building partnerships with refugee-serving public agencies.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

Companies can implement many solutions and strategies to empower and invest in local language learners. Though historically overlooked, local language learners offer tremendous value to companies, particularly as the need for language diversity and a multilingual workforce continues to grow. Companies can turn to immigrant and refugee talent, including local language learners, to meet these critical business needs.

How Can Companies Start Investing in Local Language Learners?

This guide details many ways for companies to invest in local language learners beyond or in addition to providing access to language training. Bridge solutions can be utilized across the talent management cycle and at scale to invest in local language learners.

The solutions offered here are a starting point. Every company is unique, as is its context. Here are some of the first actions that many companies take as they begin investing in local language learners:

- 1 Name their intention:** Take the time to unpack why and how local language learners can benefit the business. Why is investing in local language learners a priority for the company? What business needs could they help address? Whether the goal is filling a need for talent or fulfilling social impact priorities, defining and communicating how local language learners can contribute to the business are important.
- 2 Identify key roles:** Unpack assumptions about which roles require language fluency and identify assets that local language learners can bring to key roles. Is language fluency or advanced proficiency central to fulfilling the job functions or responsibilities? Companies should focus on a small set of roles, work sites, or regions to test new bridge solutions and investing in local language learners. As companies become more adept at supporting local language learners, they scale these practices across the organization.
- 3 Assess the company's hiring process:** Rework job applications and interview processes to be more inclusive of candidates for whom the local language is new. Companies should determine to what extent processes screen out local language learners for the identified roles. They can partner with community-based organizations serving immigrants and refugees to create a talent pipeline of local language learners.
- 4 Redesign the onboarding experience:** Implement bridge solutions, such as peer-to-peer learning, interactive training, and visual signs, that increase local language learners' familiarity with their colleagues, their role, and the environment. Companies should use the onboarding process to set up local language learners for success. They can also enable managers and other workers to support local language learners in a variety of ways, from training to mentorship.

- 5** | **Facilitate social connections:** In addition to skills training and development, what benefits all workers are strong relationships with their colleagues and a supportive community at work. Companies should provide employees with a supportive network at work and also recognize that creating ways for workers to learn about each other, their cultures, and their interests can result in an inclusive corporate culture that empowers and celebrates all workers.

- 6** | **Invest in language training:** Leading companies recognize that a multilingual workforce provides their business with a competitive advantage. Companies should help all workers, including local language learners, learn and advance their language skills. Greater language diversity is beneficial to the business, and local language proficiency is vital for workers to access other educational and career advancement opportunities. Companies can invest in language training in a variety of ways, including tuition benefits, accessible language classes, language apps, and language practice buddies.

Appendices

Resource Bank

To learn more about **regional or global refugee resettlement or community-based organizations**, visit:

International Rescue Committee
(Global)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
(Global)

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
(United States)

Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative
(Global)

Helping Newcomers Work
(Canada)

To learn more about the **public policies and government-sponsored wraparound support** impacting immigrants, refugees, and local language learners, visit:

Resettlement Assistance Program
(Canada)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Refugee Resettlement
(United States)

Fact Sheet: U.S. Refugee Resettlement
(United States)

Other resources for **companies investing in immigrant and refugee talent:**



Unlocking Hidden Value: How Investing in Immigrant Talent Benefits Your Bottom Line
JFF



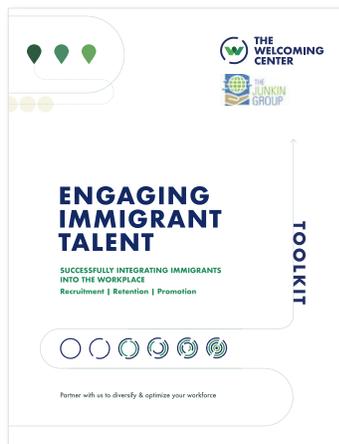
A New Home at Work: An Employer's Guide to Fostering Inclusion for Refugees in the Workplace
Deloitte Consulting and the Tent Partnership for Refugees



U.S. Employers' Guide to Hiring Refugees
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service and the Tent Partnership for Refugees



Employer Playbook: Strategies for Immigrant Inclusion in Canadian Workplaces
World Education Services



Engaging Immigrant Talent Toolkit
The Welcoming Center



Investing in Refugee Talent: Lessons Learned in Labour Market Integration
Hire Immigrants

Terminology and Definitions

Immigrants

While the legal definition of immigrant varies across countries, this guide uses the word to refer to the diverse array of individuals who seek permanent residence in a country that is not their country of origin.

Refugees

Refugees are people who have fled their country due to persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Many countries offer special legal protections for refugees to ensure their safety and to provide services supporting their resettlement.²⁸ In 2020, there were 30 million refugees worldwide. This global number of refugees is based on UNHCR's data from July 2020, which provides the total numbers of refugees, in addition to the number of Palestinian refugees from UNRWA's database, and Venezuelans (which UNHCR count as "displaced" people but not as "refugees").²⁹

Local language learner

For the purposes of this guide, local language learners are broadly defined as a subset of immigrant and refugee talent with limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand the local language (e.g., English in the United States).

Local language learners are a diverse group of immigrants and refugees who are capable of working and eligible to do so but may be overlooked by employers because of their low level of language proficiency.

Contextualized language training

This guide defines contextualized language training as language learning that is grounded in the reality that local language learners experience in their jobs and daily lives. Language training that is based on the learner's specific context is more likely to be applied, practiced, and retained by the learner. Contextualized language training is specific to the environment in which these learners operate and equips them with the language skills necessary for success in their specific job roles, within their companies and industry, and within their local community.

Wraparound support

Wraparound support is defined as services, programs, or resources that address the needs of workers in a holistic manner. Examples of wraparound support include transportation access, child care support, and housing access. These programs put workers at the center and ensure that workers' basic needs are met so that they can thrive in work and beyond.

²⁸ "What Is a Refugee?" United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2021, <https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html>.

²⁹ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Refugee Population Statistics Database, (Copenhagen: UNHCR, June 18, 2021), <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>.

Acknowledgments

This guide was made possible through support from the Tent Partnership for Refugees as well as over 50 contributors from the corporate and workforce sectors, who provided critical insight and inputs to help shape our guidance and recommendations. JFF developed this guide with input from individuals at companies that hire immigrant and refugee talent and at organizations that support workers from immigrant and refugee backgrounds in North America and Europe. We want to extend a special thanks to the following contributors:

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