



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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MAPPING REFUGEE SKILLS AND EMPLOYER NEEDS IN SURREY AND ABBOTSFORD

Employers across many sectors are facing skill shortages that can be filled by refugees, who bring their talents, resilience and unique perspectives.

In response to the recent humanitarian crisis in Syria, BC welcomed more than 3,800 refugees by January 2017, and most of them have settled in Surrey and Abbotsford. Employers in these communities are willing and interested in tapping into this talent pool to meet their skill shortages. However, there is very little information about the skill sets or occupational profiles of refugees, as well as the barriers/challenges faced by employers in connecting to them effectively. >>

IEC-BC's Mapping Refugee Skills and Employer Needs in Surrey and Abbotsford fills this gap by identifying the occupational skills and experience of refugees in Surrey and Abbotsford who are currently seeking employment.

- 55% of those assessed have some level of post-secondary education; and 40% have a high-school diploma.
- 60% have a low to basic English-language proficiency.
- In Surrey, Construction and Manufacturing are the sectors that most candidates are interested in, followed by Retail Trade.
- In Abbotsford, the highest interest is in Retail Trade, followed by Manufacturing, Transportation and Warehousing.

The project also uncovers the challenges faced by employers in connecting to the refugee talent pool in these two communities:

- Knowing how and where to connect with “job-ready” refugee talent;
- Helping refugees to understand Canadian workplace culture and norms, and
- Boosting their ability to communicate effectively in English as required for the Canadian workplace.

Here are some of the strategies mapped out to connect refugees to employment:

- Use online matching tools, e.g. IEC-BC's BC JobConnect portal.
- Facilitate face-to-face interaction between employers and refugees at Job Fairs.
- Coordinate the development of pre-employment programming, including English language training in the workplace and short-term internships.
- Continue the development of refugee onboarding tools and resources, e.g. IEC-BC's Onboarding Refugees Toolkit.
- Institute a “one-stop” service venue where employers can interact directly with immigrant serving organizations and meet with refugee talent.
- Review provincial employer incentive programs to facilitate refugee hiring and retention.

KEY PROJECT FACTS

- *Mapping Refugee Skills and Employer Needs in Surrey and Abbotsford* was carried out between November 2016–October 2017 by IEC-BC in partnership with the Surrey Board of Trade, Abbotsford Chamber of Commerce, DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society and Abbotsford Community Services.
- It was informed by substantive input from 42 employers in Surrey and Abbotsford and it maps the skills and occupational profiles of 144 refugees living in these communities.