

# How employers can help support refugees in the workplace

June 20 2024

---



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

New research focuses on the changes that employers can make help refugees and asylum seekers find work and be successful within the workplace.

More than 26 million refugees and asylum seekers around the world face significant barriers in accessing decent work. New research by Dr. Mladen Adamovic, Senior Lecturer in Cross-Cultural Management and Dr. Diarmuid Cooney-O'Donoghue, [published](#) in the *Human Resource Management Journal*, has focused on the steps that employers can take to support refugees and [asylum seekers](#) and help them both find work and be successful within the workplace.

The research team interviewed 37 refugees and people seeking asylum in Australia, as well as 35 managers who supervise or provide employment assistance for refugees, to understand the typical problems encountered and how they might be overcome. This research identified several successful approaches related to 1) recruitment and workforce planning, 2) training and development, 3) inclusive work practices, 4) meaningful work, and 5) well-being-focused management.

## **Rethink recruitment**

A conventional online recruitment process, using complex language or requiring multiple steps, is unlikely to be effective. Work experience placements could be a more effective route into work, allowing refugees to demonstrate their capabilities and overcome a lack of local work experience. Other employers had success with a "flipped" recruitment process starting with an interview rather than using paper qualifications as a filter, while others found that an ethnically diverse recruitment panel was an advantage.

Organizations may also find it beneficial to partner up with a non-profit that focuses on the job prospects of refugees. These non-profits have already dedicated human and [financial resources](#) to identifying skilled and motivated refugee jobseekers, training them, and preparing them for local workplaces.

## **Targeted training**

Once in post, refugees benefit from training to support their particular needs. This may include help with English language skills or cultural competency to help them adjust to local norms. There may also be a need for industry-specific training, for example learning local occupational health and safety regulations that are likely to differ from country to country.

## **Proactivity**

Many refugees come from "high power distance" cultures where proactivity is less common at work; they may need support and encouragement to take a more proactive approach. For their part, organizations should be proactive in considering their new colleague's needs, ensuring that managers help them to adapt to the local workplace's communication norms.

## **Inclusive work practices**

Mentoring, providing networking opportunities and recognizing that refugees may require greater initial input from their managers were all considered important to help refugees to adapt. However, the research also points out that a tailored approach is needed, as refugees have widely differing backgrounds, personal stories and circumstances.

## **Meaningful work**

Supporting refugees into work that aligns with their skills and qualifications is important. For some individuals, appointment straight into a very senior role may be stressful. There may sometimes be benefits to allowing them to start at a more entry-level position, so that

they can perform to the level of their own expectations before progressing.

## Trauma and confidence

A key finding of the interviews was the need to recognize the mental health of refugees as well as their intertwined economic, health, and housing challenges. Refugees have experienced trauma and those [past experiences](#), as well as any ongoing uncertainty around their visa status, can undermine their personal well-being and their performance at work.

"To create an inclusive workplace for refugees, it is important to go beyond the job-finding stage and adopt a [holistic approach](#) that includes tailored recruitment processes, targeted training, and a focus on well-being. By addressing the challenges faced by [refugees](#), organizations can develop an inclusive environment that not only supports refugee employees but also improves organizational performance," says the paper's first author, Dr. Mladen Adamovic.

**More information:** Mladen Adamovic et al, Best management practices for integrating refugee employees, *Human Resource Management Journal* (2024). [DOI: 10.1111/1748-8583.12553](https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12553)

Provided by King's College London

Citation: How employers can help support refugees in the workplace (2024, June 20) retrieved 25 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2024-06-employers-refugees-workplace.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private

study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.