

# About Refugee Employment

# MVRRT / METRO VANCOUVER REFUGEE RESPONSE TEAM

## REFUGEES AND THE LABOUR MARKET

### For Many Refugees Workforce Entry Remains A Challenge

In the quest for employment and financial self-sufficiency, many refugees face significant obstacles.

Studies show that both immigrants and refugees contribute positively to the Canadian economy and pay more into our social systems than they extract. In the February 2016 Vancity report on Syrian refugees and the BC economy, it was estimated that this influx will contribute more than \$563 million to the local economy over the next 20 years.<sup>1</sup>

Although in the longer-term refugees fare well in the workforce and as entrepreneurs, for many there are challenges that must be overcome in the first months and years after arrival.

- Many face multiple personal barriers, including limited access to transportation, complex family-care demands, health issues and trauma-related mental health needs, among others.
- Many have limited or no English language skills.
- In many cases, their skills, training and experience don't easily align with the needs of employers and the local labour market.
- Customs and cultural beliefs can present barriers or require some form of accommodation within the workplace; e.g. prayer space and time, gender separation, etc.
- Overseas credentials and work experience are difficult to interpret and/or evaluate.

### ABOUT THE MVRRT EMPLOYER SURVEY

Since the influx of Syrian refugees into BC, many employers have come forward with an interest in hiring refugees. However, few "job matches" have been made. In September 2016, MVRRT conducted a survey to organizations in the MVRRT region (ten municipalities in Metro Vancouver) in order to:

1. Gain an understanding of the interest and capacity of employers to hire refugees;
2. Understand the range of employment possibilities within Metro Vancouver for refugees especially for those with limited language and transferable skills; and
3. Identify existing positions / job opportunities for refugees.

61 Metro Vancouver employers responded. In addition to gathering information, the initiative sought to animate employers with an interest in recruiting refugees by helping them to identify suitable opportunities and occupations within their organizations. For refugees and service providers, the survey helped to develop a profile of the types of positions that employers have available.

### Employers Are Willing To Hire, But Less Often Able

An MVRRT survey of employers found that more than half are willing to hire refugees, but only a quarter of those have done so. Some survey highlights:

**Jobs do exist.** 45% reported current job openings for which refugees would be considered.

**Private-sector employers are more likely than those in the public sector to hire refugees.** 79% expressed a willingness, and 17% have done so in the past two years, compared with 13% and 7% in the public sector.

**Larger organizations are more likely to hire refugees than smaller ones.** 60% of the largest expressed a willingness and 27% have done so. Comparable numbers for the smallest organizations were 47% and 0%. Medium-sized businesses fell between.

**English language skills are a primary limiting factor,** but 51% of respondents saw opportunities for those with limited language skills and 77% for those with intermediate level language skills.

### Supports Could Help

Employers have some refugee supports in place, but believe more would be helpful.

59% of employers reported having supports in place. These include coaching/job retention support (61%), faith/cultural accommodation (55%), and cultural awareness training for staff (45%).

#### EMPLOYER REFUGEE SUPPORT

66% reported at least one language in addition to English in the workplace, and 65% more than two. However, proportions were small for Arabic (18%) and Farsi (15%), the languages spoken by many of BC's most recent refugee arrivals.

The most desired support, cited by 63% of employers, was access to refugee candidates. Workplace English language training (33%) and foreign credential recognition (26%) were also significant. Smaller, private sector organizations, often lacking in HR resources, were the most likely to desire supports.

<sup>1</sup> From Crisis to Community: Syrian Refugees and the B.C. Economy  
<https://www.vancity.com/AboutVancity/News/MediaReleases/RefugeesBoostLocalEconomy-Dec2-15/Conflict-to-communities-Syrian-Refugee-Report.pdf>

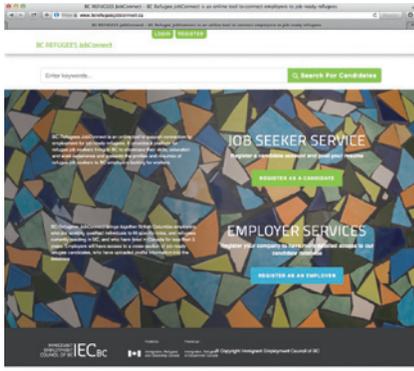
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## HELP: CONNECTING REFUGEES TO GOOD JOBS, AND EMPLOYERS TO GOOD HIRES

### BC Refugees JobConnect

An online tool for refugees and employers.



**BC Refugees JobConnect** is an online tool designed to support connection between job-ready refugees and employers. Developed by the Immigrant Employment Council of BC, the tool offers job ready refugees the opportunity to showcase their skills, education and work experience. Job seekers upload their educational and occupational backgrounds to create a profile or online resume. Employers search for candidates using job titles or keywords.

Job seekers and employers can go to [www.bcrefugeesjobconnect.ca](http://www.bcrefugeesjobconnect.ca) to upload information or find workers.

### MVRRT, Refugee Programs and Services Inventory

The MVRRT's comprehensive online listing of service providers includes more than 70 agencies offering a range of settlement and employment services to refugees.

For those looking for employment counseling, career mentoring, workplace language training, help with foreign credentials or any number of other services, the MVRRT's comprehensive listing of employment resources can be filtered by region or by agency. Other searchable service categories include Children & Youth Services, Health Services – Medical, Health Services – Mental Health, Language Services, Men Services, Seniors Services, Settlement Services and Women Services.

[www.metrovanrrt.ca/refugee-programs-services/](http://www.metrovanrrt.ca/refugee-programs-services/)

### SYRIAN REFUGEES, ONE YEAR IN

A survey of Syrian refugees conducted by ISSofBC one year after the greatest influx arrived in late 2015 produced this snapshot of labour market outcomes.

- A year after arrival, 17% of respondents were employed on a full-time or part-time basis.
- The two main sectors of employment for respondents were Manufacturing, Construction and Trades (59%) and Food, Retail and Hospitality (31%).
- Sixty-four percent of respondents who were not working at the time of the survey indicated they were actively looking for work.

<http://issbc.org/our-work-with-refugees/one-year-in/>

## The Metro Vancouver Refugee Response Team

*These Member Organizations provide guidance, leadership and oversight to the MV RRT. Collectively they developed the Action Plan that has guided the activities of the MV RRT for 2016-17.*

MOSAIC – MV RRT Contract Manager  
PEERs Inc. – Project Consultants  
Back in Motion Rehab, Inc.  
BC Alliance for Manufacturing  
BC Centre for Ability  
BC Construction Association (BCCA)  
BC Muslim Association  
Boys and Girls Clubs of South Coast BC  
Burnaby Board of Trade (BBOT)  
Burnaby Community Services  
Burnaby Family Life  
Burnaby Public Library  
Burnaby School District 41  
Canadian Lutheran World Relief  
City of Burnaby  
City of New Westminster  
City of Vancouver  
Coast Mental Health  
Coquitlam Public Library (CPL)  
Douglas College  
Fraser Health  
Immigrant Employment Council of BC  
Islamic Society of British Columbia  
ISSofBC  
Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver  
Lower Mainland Purpose Society for Youth and Families  
New Westminster School District 40  
North Shore Multicultural Services (NSMS)  
Pacific Immigrant Resources Society  
Richmond Multicultural Community Services (RMCS)  
Richmond School District 38  
Royal Bank of Canada (RBC)  
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.  
South Asian Community Coalition Against Youth Violence  
Syrian Canadian Council of BC  
Syrian Community Network  
United Church  
Vancity  
Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Society  
Vancouver Coastal Health  
Vancouver School Board (VSB)  
YWCA Metro Vancouver

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Email us at:

[sspindari@mosaicbc.com](mailto:sspindari@mosaicbc.com)  
to let us know if this fact sheet was useful to you, or if you have suggestions for further content.

### More Info

For more info on the MVRRT, check out our website at <http://metrovanrrt.ca> or contact  
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E: [sspindari@mosaicbc.com](mailto:sspindari@mosaicbc.com)

To find out more about refugee resettlement in B.C., visit the BC Refugee Readiness Hub at <http://refugeehub.issbc.org>



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