



# Idaho Office for Refugees

## Refugee Program Impact on Idaho's Workforce

For 50 years, welcoming refugees has been an important part of Idaho communities and workforces. Over the past decade, more than **600 Idaho employers** have hired new refugee arrivals in industries including healthcare, construction, agriculture, manufacturing, hospitality, transportation, education, and retail.

Refugees bring a range of skill sets, are often multilingual, and have a strong work ethic and desire to contribute. Since 2002, refugees have created **over 260 new businesses** in Idaho.

Most refugee arrivals of working age obtain employment within four months at an average starting wage of \$16.75.

### CAREER ADVANCEMENT



Global Talent, a program of the Idaho Office for Refugees, supports professionals from refugee backgrounds in returning to their areas of expertise in the U.S. In FY24, Global Talent and 75 volunteers provided career coaching to 83 new American professionals from 22 countries. Twenty Global Talent job seekers went on to find jobs in their field in FY24, increasing their salary by \$39,200 on average.

### BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE



“CS Beef has embraced the refugee community. Our operation would not be what it is today without them as part of our workforce teams. Some have learned the skills of our highest-skilled jobs and have progressed into leadership roles. Along the way, those of us not familiar with their cultures and customs have learned a great deal which makes our leaders stronger, better educated and more empathetic towards all individuals.”

*-Steve Cherry, CS Beef Plant Manager*

## MEETING WORKFORCE NEEDS

Idaho has more job openings than unemployed adults to fill them. Idaho had 49,000 job openings in October 2024 and a ratio of 0.7 unemployed persons per opening, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

## CONTRIBUTIONS

Welcoming refugees results in a net positive fiscal impact. From 2005 to 2019, refugees and asylees paid \$123.8 billion more in taxes than they received in public benefits. That's a positive impact of:

- \$31.5 billion to the federal government
- \$92.3 billion to state & local governments

*Source: Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation, 2024*

## RESETTLEMENT PROCESS

Refugees have fled their home countries and can't safely return because of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or social group. The United Nations refers eligible refugees to resettlement programs around the world, including the U.S. The U.S. government conducts a thorough background check and screening process involving 8 government agencies. Most refugees resettling in the U.S. go on to become U.S. citizens.

Idaho is fortunate to have a legacy of refugee resettlement dating back 50 years. We welcome an average of 800 refugees each year through resettlement agencies in Boise and Twin Falls. The program enjoys widespread community support and partnerships.



## BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE

“Our experience with refugee employment has been rewarding on all fronts. We have watched our turnover rates drop, employee referrals grow, and productivity increase.

Our refugee team members energetically step into positions that are becoming increasingly difficult to fill.

**Most importantly, however, is the effect their presence has had on our entire staff,** providing co-workers with new perspectives and a deeper understanding of other cultures and backgrounds.

It is our hope that we can continue to support and welcome these resettlement communities as they attempt to make a new life for themselves and provide an important service to our community.”

*-David Snow, Riverside Hospitality  
Director of Human Resources*