

RefuTalent: Cultivating and utilizing Canadian newcomer talent to support their local communities during COVID-19



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Who are we?

RefuHope is a non-profit organization that is focused on creating a welcoming environment for all newcomers to Canada and facilitating means for them to be successful in their communities. We strive to do that through what we like to call innovative projects. These projects are guided and fine-tuned to match the needs of the communities and tend to be themed to match the current situation.

We are a team of youth, students, graduates, and professionals that work together to have a positive impact in our communities. Our team is very diverse, with some of us present here in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and throughout Canada and others present outside of Canada in places like the Middle East and Kenya (Kakuma Refugee Camp). However, RefuHope celebrates its Canadian origin. With London Ontario, being our main base of operations.

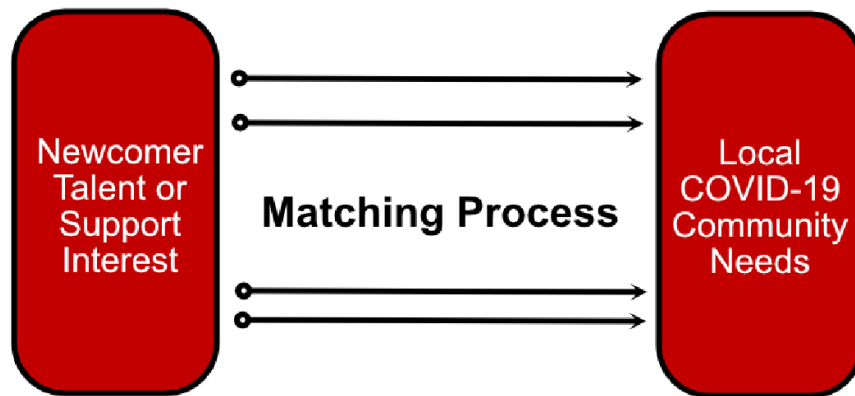
If you are interested in learning more about us as an organization you can visit our website at: www.refuhope.com or email alaa@refuhope.com to schedule a meeting to chat further.

What is RefuTalent?

RefuTalent is a project that has been created as part of RefuHope's endeavour to combat the spread of COVID-19 by facilitating ways for newcomers to lend a hand to their local communities. Our aim is to cultivate and organize the talent and support that newcomers to Canada are willing to offer to alleviate some of the difficulties that have come from the recent pandemic. It will provide a way for newcomers to showcase how they can also benefit their communities and put their talents to good use during this difficult time.

Mission and Purpose: Utilize newcomer interest to support their communities during COVID-19 and allow them to showcase these talents.

The aim is to establish a system (particularly one that will serve as an organized talent matching database) that addresses public needs and match that with newcomer talents, skills, and efforts to assist in combating the current COVID-19 pandemic.



Our vision for RefuTalent is to allow local community needs to be submitted through a website application. These needs will populate our database and automatically be matched with a newcomer volunteer according to certain filters that are applied which screen for the basic requirements. The need could be something as simple as grocery shopping or something as complex as tutoring. We [RefuTalent] chats with the newcomers in the form of an open interview and during that process create a “profile” for them on our matching system. Our vision for this project is to take the newcomers’ hand and follow through with them all the way during this experience. We want to ensure their satisfaction and sense of belonging throughout this journey of interacting with their community positively. This project will strive to allow local needs within the community to be facilitated **free of cost** by very passionate newcomer volunteers who want to give back.

Project Plan/Stage:

This plan has been set up to incorporate flexibility within each of the stages to allow for any modifications in consultation with the RefuTalent Lead and Operational Affairs Director.

The operations of this project will initiate in London, Ontario and then mainly expand to the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), Canada. If the team sees potential, the project can expand into any areas that are expected to be ripe for the implementation of such a project.

The project is divided into **three stages** :

Stage 1: Laying down the foundations (Finalize by ~Match 1st)

The RefuTalent Team will take on the role of representing the project and reach out to other organizations that can provide support for this project in the following capacities:

- Act as a partner for RefuTalent to provide contacts and connections to newcomer talents;
- Provide useful information about what the current COVID-19 needs are in a particular region or community;
- Consult with other organizations who have data and intel on newcomer talent;
- Consult with leaders in community and researchers to assess the feasibility of the project and whether it needs to be fine tuned; AND
- Collaborate with other stakeholders that can facilitate the operations for this project.

The overall goal of this phase is to gain the momentum to push forth the development of the database and platform.

We plan to simulate **5 refugee matches** with COVID-19 needs in their local communities and then expand our system to be able to host thousands of newcomer volunteers.

During this phase, the **RefuTalent Technical Team** would utilize and work closely with our University of Toronto Student Partnership to put together a versatile system that allows for the process of matching between Newcomers and needs to be an automated process on the RefuHope website (www.refuhope.com).

*Below is an example of what **one week of operations** looks during this stage at RefuTalent:*

TASK #1, PART A: Create a google form for the general public to COVID-19

9 compile community needs (link to current form here)

- 1) Form should be multilingual
- 2) Create a poster for the post

3) Create a poster for the google form

TASK #1, PART B: Create a facebook post that explains the google forms (COVID-19 needs) and invites people who see the post to vote into the form (*Check the sheet linked above*)

1) Should be multilingual depending on the facebook group posted

2) Preferably targeted towards the elderly and vulnerable populations

TASK #2: Create a list of facebook groups and external plugs to share the COVID-19 needs form in (*Check the sheet linked above*)

1) List of FB groups for london communities seems to be effective

2) Oftentimes, word of mouth happens to also be effective

TASK #3: Create a list of contacts for opportunities/needs that currently exist in (could be in London). (*Check the sheet linked above*)

1) volunteer organizations that are operating in COVID-19

2) Non-profit pillar network

3) Local opportunities

4) Needs in databases

TASK #4: Create an interview questionnaire to be able to compile data on the newcomer volunteer and be able to hone in on their talents.

Stage 2: Putting together a larger system (Finalize by ~April 1st)

The purpose of this stage is to upscale operations and provide support by utilizing our automated website application. The External-Affairs team as part of RefuHope has connected us with community partners which will be able to facilitate the referral of many refugee volunteers into our RefuTalent project. With the help of community partners and coordination with local volunteer organizations we will be able to facilitate and match our newcomer volunteer base with many needs that exist in their own communities.

We will utilize the experiences of our **5 refugee matches** from **stage 1** to work out a versatile system that can accept various needs and make the integration of newcomer volunteers a smooth and enjoyable experience for them.

Stage 3: Presenting the system and further prospective outreach

During this stage, the project will take on a national direction. We plan to form key partners that can not only allow us to supply our newcomer volunteers with better training opportunities to gain some professional development as part of their onboarding process to the match, but also enable us to optimize the way we deliver the services and

support for the community. We hope to reach places throughout the country and allow this same system to be implemented in various rural areas.

Communication and connectivity

Task management and exquisite communication systems

As highlighted earlier, we are students and have many other responsibilities to accommodate for. However, we take our mission and project very seriously. For this, we have put together various guidelines and expectations for us to be held accountable. We meet with valuable mentors and community partners who want to see this project come to fruition. We are constantly learning and evolving as a team to refine this project and present it as a way of service for this country and our communities.

An endeavour in a high risk/reward environment

We view this project to be of the high-risk, high-reward type. There is a lot of uncertainty associated with the implementation of the project but we often find ourselves fully invested. Over the past while, we have managed to gain the trust and confidence to keep moving forward and take on the challenges that come with this project. We appreciate the difficulty of the task we have set to achieve and will keep on tackling the problems at hand until we produce a functional system that benefits all Canadians during these difficult times.
