

# Coaching as a Catalyst for Social Change at Refugee JumpStart Coaching

2024 Award Winner: Distinguished Coaching Catalyst



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Refugee JumpStart Coaching (RJS) seeks to empower refugees as they transition from displacement to a sense of belonging in their new communities. Based in California, more than 100 refugees around the world have benefitted from RJS's personalized coaching and mentoring. The work achieved by RJS demonstrates how coaching can serve as an empowering tool that lights the way for individuals facing significant challenges and adverse conditions.

### **A Beacon of Hope**

Refugee JumpStart Coaching was founded in 2021 by Hussein Alzribi, a former Syrian refugee, and Bev Weise, a California-based leadership coach. The two sought to jumpstart the careers of educated, skilled refugees, and support them as they navigate the challenges of setting a foundation and vision for a new life for themselves in a new environment—often amid cultural barriers—while coming to terms with the traumas they had fought hard to leave behind.

Hussein and Bev recognized that though refugees face significant challenges as they work to rebuild their lives, they also bring their drive, passion and

**“Coaching really makes a difference. We tried to transition some of the coaching skills to a vulnerable population, which is not that common, with refugees. And this stuff works!” Bev Weise, MBA, ACC, Refugee JumpStart Coaching Co-Founder**



talents to their new community. With coaching's ability to help a person to distill their vision develop their own plan to achieve it, it was a natural fit to support refugees in determining their path forward and helping them to find their place as meaningful contributors in their new communities.

The founders of RJS originally envisioned a holistic way to support refugees as they became thriving contributors in their communities. Refugee JumpStart's internal structure is also reflective of their desire to jumpstart the careers of refugees. Many of their team members are refugees, located all over the world and working seamlessly together.

RJS's holistic approach, reflected even in their own organization, highlights how by providing refugees with support to find out how they can use their skills and knowledge to become an active member of their new community, this dream can become a reality.

Through the program, RJS utilizes coaching to equip refugees with the confidence, resilience, and training to navigate new societies and become active community members. More than 100 refugees around the world have benefitted from RJS coaching, contributing to their social and economic integration in their new host communities.

### **A Personalized Approach**

RJS uses a unique coaching methodology. While rooted in the ICF core competencies and seeking to focus on a client's needs, RJS recognizes that refugees have all experienced a unique, adverse journey. Their coaching is deeply influenced by an understanding of the challenges that refugees face, including the journey of loss and trauma; how cultural backgrounds impact self-perception and presence in the host community; how individual strengths and qualifications can best support someone in a new environment; how a country of resettlement can impact their ability to work; and more.

Trauma-informed coaching plays a critical function at RJS. Ensuring that refugees feel safe is a first step in the coaching process, and one that must be carefully implemented. These trauma-informed care principles and practices also influence how RJS tailors their coaching to the long-term needs of refugees. RJS coaches' deep understanding of the refugee



mindset – from their experience and specialized training – enables them to implement a coaching methodology that encourages a strong mental and emotional foundation that leads to lasting stability and growth.

**“I liked the fact that I was given the opportunity to see myself in a different and powerful way. I also liked having someone who was listening to me and was guiding me, helping me to find solutions through some rough topics.” – RJS Client**

RJS also implements strengths-based coaching, which identifies a refugee’s experience and education, as well as their personal strengths. While they may not have the qualifications required to perform the exact same job they were doing in their country of origin, typically because their certifications and degrees are not recognized by their host country, they are still skilled and possess a wealth of knowledge that can be applied in a variety of ways. Identifying those new career pathways can be challenging, and RJS coaches are uniquely trained to provide guidance as refugees navigate new job opportunities.

Their hybrid model of coaching and mentoring also provides flexibility and helps coaches keep up with refugees around the world. RJS is able to check in with refugees after they have found gainful employment and help them navigate the intercultural barriers they may face in the workplace.

### **Coaching’s Ripple Effect**

Since its founding, RJS has made significant strides as they coached refugees around the world. In 2024, they completed more than 270 coaching sessions.

And the benefits of these coaching sessions extend to more than just RJS’s clients. As the individuals who are coached become more empowered or grounded in their own strengths, and that self-knowledge and self-confidence has a ripple effect that passes forward to those around them. When refugees are empowered, their families—both with them and back home—experience the benefits.

In their new role, intercultural communication and a deep understanding of their strengths and knowledge can encourage collaborating with fellow employees and improve performance for employers. RJS clients tend to also have an easier time integrating into their host community, as coaching can help them identify ways to become active members who can contribute in meaningful ways to their host communities.

RJS coaches also help refugees to problem-solve as they navigate the challenges of their new home, such as whether their current location will be a permanent or temporary resettlement, or determining what to do if their degree doesn’t align with the careers available to them now.

**“When coaching can help refugee clients integrate more seamlessly into their new communities, both economically and socially, they are more likely to become active members of their communities. Once stabilized, many refugees have a strong desire to give back to their communities—they know what it is like to feel vulnerable and powerless and often feel a debt of gratitude that they would like to repay. Empowered individuals can become agents of change in their own communities.” - Hussein Alzribi, Refugee JumpStart Coaching**

Providing coaching to a single individual can pass forward to their families, their communities new and old, and around the world.

RJS’s work also supports multiple UN Sustainable Development Goals, such as reducing inequalities and encouraging work and economic growth, and the organization continues to scale to meet the needs of the global skilled refugee population. Its coaches work toward peaceful and inclusive societies by equipping refugees with tools to become active, valued community members in their host countries. All of RJS’s efforts seek to bring about positive change around the world, and many refugees can speak to how they have seen the rippling benefits of coaching in their lives.

## Empowering Refugees, Transforming Society

RJS's work supporting refugees has transformed lives. It has encouraged refugees to engage with their host communities, strengthened self-confidence, and helped clients welcome a fresh start while building upon who they are and what they've experienced. As Refugee JumpStart Coaching scales its services to even more regions of the world, their work provides a clear demonstration that refugees can be empowered and, with coaching, can integrate into their new homes and become valued members.

## This case study features one of the winners of the 2024 ICF Coaching Impact Awards – Social Impact.

### About the ICF Coaching Impact Awards – Social Impact

This award recognizes individuals or organizations creating meaningful social change through coaching. Aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and ICF's values, it highlights how coaching can drive lasting, positive impact in communities and beyond.

There are four award categories: **Coaches**, **Coaching Education**, **Organizations**, and **Social Impact**.

To learn more visit: [coachingfederation.org/about/awards](https://coachingfederation.org/about/awards)

