

# ASCEND (Applied Skills Curriculum to Empower Newcomer Development)

## Case study

### What is ASCEND?

ASCEND is a newly launched employment readiness program by the Immigration Employment Council of British Columbia (IEC-BC). The IEC-BC teamed up with Veza Global to launch a specialized and interactive programme to teach newcomers to Canada the key soft skills Canadian employers look for in hiring. ASCEND is a blended-learning program, and can be completed fully online with 7 3-hour online modules and 6 workshops. Topics cover how to identify and showcase the value of existing skills and experience, personal branding, onboarding and career progression.

Veza Global played a key role in developing the content that went into this program. The content is based on a nurturing and interactive environment within an engaging and respectful coaching lens. This has been the hallmark of this project. Veza made the course available in a 100% virtual format, thus allowing it to be accessible; making the project that much more inclusive. Veza's work has been reviewed as a great success and continues to change the world, one life at a time.

### Challenges:

The challenges the project faced were systemic. Though the British Columbia economy continues to show impressive growth, the proportion of immigrant employees hired into meaningful employment continues to struggle when compared to domestic hires. Talented employees coming to BC are consistently taking jobs not in their fields with significantly less seniority than what they may have been employed with in their home country. Multiple studies across Canada have found that immigrants have double the unemployment rate to their equally skillful domestic counterparts as well as nearly half the medium income of the respective income. This is mainly due to the fact that many required experience working in a Canadian work environment. ASCEND addresses the soft skills needed, Canadian workplace culture and builds confidence in the individual.

The ASCEND program helps develop these skills for newcomers to Canada to help them gain employment with emphasis on the tech sector. This program develops soft skills such as:

- Improve employment readiness
- Take the burden off of the onboarding process
- Improve professional communication skills
- Improve employee retention

Benefit:

The ASCEND project allows employers to feel confident that their new hires will be ready to be successful in the workplace thanks to the skills they have acquired. This, in turn, has raised talent retention rates and improved employee feelings of support. ASCEND's personally tailored, interactive program builds soft skills for employees such as professional communication, personal branding, and networking skills. Immigrant employee retention has increased measurably thanks to the ASCEND program and the work Veza put into it.

The benefits of the ASCEND project do not stop at the corporate level. The benefits to the individuals who register for this program are immense. The ASCEND program is a strength based coaching program that educates the skilled immigrant workers in the Canadian business environment to better prepare them to leverage their expertise and communicate efficiently with experience and knowledge. Working with candidates on resume building and the interview process in Canada all while developing the professional skills they need to excel once hired. This gives participants the confidence and soft skills required in their new role and build a career here in the Canadian business environment.