

Tri-County Refugee Planning Committee (RPC)

2020 Legislative Priorities: Facing a New Economic Reality



- **Maintain full funding** for the **LEP Pathway** Employment program and **Naturalization Services**. Both programs are critical to helping Refugees and Immigrants become successful, contributing members in their new homeland. These services are **more important than ever to help the most vulnerable during the pandemic and recovery period, a time of unprecedented crisis**.
- Protect funding for these essential programs as it will be harder for LEP individuals to find employment. We must protect programs and services for refugees and those with limited English, who are more vulnerable now than ever.
- Support policies and legislation that are equitable and inclusive for all.

LEP PATHWAY & NATURALIZATION SERVICES:
COST EFFECTIVE PROGRAMS THAT SAVE MONEY & PROMOTE ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY

LEP PATHWAY is an essential program that provides English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction and employment services to refugees and limited English speaking TANF recipients to increase their employability. ESL is critical for refugees to become gainfully employed with living wages. Professional case managers, often refugees themselves, help clients enroll in ESL, assist with job search, skills training, job placement and job retention, helping refugees and immigrants integrate into the American work culture. Often this means assisting in transferring skills and education from careers in their home country. Case management services address barriers along the way and **result in employment leading to self-sufficiency and reduces or eliminates reliance on TANF and other assistance programs**. Refugees and immigrants support the local economy and help businesses meet their workforce needs.

NATURALIZATION SERVICES help refugees and immigrants, including the elderly and disabled, to obtain U.S. citizenship. Qualified case managers and instructors help clients complete the application process, prepare for their interview and test. **As naturalized U.S. citizens, they can vote, apply for government jobs, travel freely, and protect themselves and their families. As citizens, the elderly and disabled are eligible for federal rather than state funded benefits, saving the state money and increasing benefits for clients.**

The increase in Naturalization funding for the current biennium addresses increased costs in providing naturalization services, increased costs for clients to naturalize and new costs created by policy changes at the federal level. For example, additional hardships are placed on clients from the Tri-County area as some must now travel out of Seattle (to Portland or Yakima) for their interview, testing and oath ceremony (a measure instituted by USCIS to reduce the backlog and processing wait times).

SFY 2019	
LEP PATHWAY	NATURALIZATION SERVICES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3992 unduplicated participants served by the LEP Pathway program (employment & ESL) in SFY 19. • 2,699 (68%) received employment services of which 1,212 (44%) entered employment and 1079 (89%) remained employed after 90 days • 2,199 (55%) received ESL services. • 2075 of the 3,992 (52%) LEP Pathway clients were on TANF/SFA. • Total General Fund State support is \$2.366 million annually used to leverage half million of Federal funds in SFY 19. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3,196 participants were served in SFY 19. • 1,706 applications for naturalization submitted. • 1,157 became US citizens. • Total General Fund State support was \$1.66 million in SFY 19. • Funding increased to \$2.45 million in SFY 20 and \$2.46 in SFY 21, adding services to an additional 500 people and increasing new citizens by 239.

Source ESA ORIA Briefing Book SFY 2019

We thank the legislature for past and continued support of the LEP Pathway & Naturalization Services

For more information, please contact Vicki Asakura, Tri-County Refugee Planning Committee,
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TRI COUNTY REFUGEE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Serving King, Snohomish and Pierce Counties with affiliate members in Spokane and other regions in WA State