

## REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

### Refugee and Immigrant Employment Services

Chapter 415, Laws of 2019 (ESHB 1109 Section 205 (4))

January 1, 2020

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT PATHWAY SERVICES:.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>ELIGIBLE POPULATION .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>POPULATION SERVED.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>SERVICES .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>PROGRAM FUNDING .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>PROGRAM DISBURSEMENTS .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>PROGRAM OUTCOMES.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>ORIA BASIC FOOD EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES:18</b>	
<b>ELIGIBLE POPULATION .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>POPULATION SERVED.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>SERVICES .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>PROGRAM FUNDING .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>PROGRAM DISBURSEMENTS .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>PROGRAM OUTCOMES.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>ATTACHMENT A.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>ATTACHMENT B.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>ATTACHMENT C.....</b>	<b>27</b>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chapter 415, Laws of 2019 (ESHB 1109 Section 205 (4)) requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS or the Department) to annually report to the Legislature all sources of available refugee and immigrant employment services (including limited English proficiency pathway services) funding during the current fiscal year, amounts expended to date by service type and funding source, the number of participants served and program outcome data. This Refugee and Immigrant Employment Services report covers state fiscal year (SFY) 2019 (July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019).

### Program Overview

The Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA) is located within the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Economic Services Administration, Community Services Division, and administers \$24 million in federal and state dollars to support holistic services for refugees and immigrants living in Washington state. More than 60 providers serve over 9,000<sup>1</sup> individuals annually. Through a network of community-based providers, ORIA delivers services that provide individuals and families with the resources they need to rebuild their lives from the moment of their arrival in Washington to becoming naturalized U.S. citizens.

These services are part of 13 different programs that fall into four core areas: Refugee Health and Wellness, Employment and Training Services, Immigration Assistance and Naturalization Services, and Whole Family Services. Some examples of services offered include: Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA) and Refugee Medical Assistance (RMA), comprehensive case management, self-sufficiency education, immigration assistance, refugee health and mental health services, employment assistance, English as a second language (ESL) services, unaccompanied refugee minor foster care, youth educational activities, elderly services and naturalization services.

#### Who are refugees?

The term refugee is a legal status given to people who permanently resettle in the United States as part of a federal humanitarian program. These individuals have been forced to flee their home country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular group or political opinion. They are resettled through the federal U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

For ORIA services, the term "refugee" also refers to people who have been granted asylum, victims of human trafficking, Amerasians, Cuban-Haitian entrants, and people with Special Immigrant Visas (SIV) from Iraq and Afghanistan.

<sup>1</sup> ESA Program Briefing Book 2019 Annual Unduplicated Clients Served report for Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (RIA) unduplicated clients. This count includes clients served by the following ORIA programs: LEP Pathway, ORIA BFET and Naturalization Services.

ORIA administers three employment and training programs, which provide opportunities for a diverse range of people who are refugees and immigrants seeking to gain the skills needed to become self-sufficient and economically secure. These programs are the Limited English Proficient Pathway (LEP Pathway) program, the ORIA Basic Food Employment and Training (ORIA BFET) program and the Career Ladder for Educated and Vocationally Experienced Refugees (CLEVER) program. Each offer individualized opportunities for participants to gain the skills, knowledge and confidence to enter employment, whether it's a first job in the U.S. or reentry into a previous professional career. ORIA partners with providers around Washington state, including community-based organizations (CBOs), refugee resettlement agencies, employment agencies, and community and technical colleges.

The LEP Pathway program provides linguistically appropriate and culturally sensitive services that lead to employment. LEP Pathway services include employability assessments, pre-employment preparation services, vocationally-focused English language instruction, job search, skills training, employment placement, job retention and support services. Work Experience and Community Services placements are available to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients.

The ORIA BFET program provides employment services to refugees and immigrants receiving federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits that do not receive any federal cash assistance, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and/or Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA). Individuals who have active SNAP benefits are eligible for Washington's Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET) program. Participation is voluntary and may include job search, job search training (soft skills), educational services (adult basic education and ESL), workforce skills training (vocational education), assistance with establishing small businesses, post-employment services, support services and other employment opportunities.

**Participation Eligibility Comparison: LEP Pathway and ORIA BFET**

Participants	LEP Pathway	ORIA BFET
Refugees receiving TANF	✓	
Non-Refugee immigrants receiving TANF	✓	
Refugees receiving RCA	✓	
Refugees, non-TANF, not active RCA, 5 years or less in US	✓	✓

<b>Participants</b>	<b>LEP Pathway</b>	<b>ORIA BFET</b>
Refugees not on any public assistance, 5 years or less in US	✓	
Refugees, non-TANF over 5 years in US		✓
Non-refugee immigrants, non-TANF and federal food recipient regardless of time in country		✓

### **Program Budget and Expenditures**

ORIA's employment programs braid federal and state dollars to provide a comprehensive package of services for people who are eligible in Washington state. The LEP Pathway blends general state funds (GF-S) with federal and state TANF dollars and federal dollars from the Office of Refugee Resettlement. The ORIA BFET program utilizes general state funds to leverage resources from the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Employment and Training Program.

The following tables show the total budget and expenditures for SFY 2019 refugee and immigrant employment services by funding source:

### **SFY 2019 Total Budget**

<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>LEP Pathway</b>	<b>ORIA BFET</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
TANF	\$ 5,600,000	N/A	<b>\$5,600,000</b>
ORR	\$ 749,386	N/A	<b>\$749,386</b>
GF-S	\$ 1,934,022	\$ 431,978	<b>\$2,366,000</b>
FNS (federal 50% match <sup>2</sup> )	N/A	\$431,978	<b>\$431,978</b>
FNS (federal 100% upfront <sup>3</sup> )	N/A	N/A	<b>N/A</b>
FNS (federal 100% mid-year <sup>4</sup> )	N/A	\$171,890	<b>\$171,890</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$8,283,408</b>	<b>\$1,035,846</b>	<b>\$9,319,254</b>

<sup>2</sup> FNS provides 100 percent federal matching dollars to GF-S dollars used to support the ORIA BFET program.

<sup>3</sup> No state match needed.

<sup>4</sup> Issued around July 1 each calendar year.

## SFY 2019 Total Expenditures by Program and Funding Source

Funding Source	LEP Pathway	ORIA BFET	TOTAL
TANF	\$5,117,557	N/A	\$5,117,557
ORR	\$1,186,684	N/A	\$1,186,684
GF-S	\$1,938,981	\$427,019	\$2,366,000
FNS	N/A	\$529,445	\$529,445
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 8,243,222</b>	<b>\$956,464</b>	<b>\$9,199,686</b>

LEP Pathway expenditures totaled \$8,243,222 for SFY 2019 (as of December 15, 2019). ORIA BFET expenditures for SFY 2019 totaled \$956,464 (as of November 30, 2019). This amount represents \$427,019 in state funds (GF-S) used to leverage \$529,445 in federal funds (50 percent match and 100 percent federal non-match).

### Program Outcomes

In SFY 2019, the LEP Pathway program served 3,992 unduplicated participants in both employment and ESL. LEP Pathway contractors placed 1,212 participants into jobs, and 257 of those jobs offered health benefits. In addition, 1,079 participants remained employed 90 days after being placed into jobs. Participants in the ESL programs made 1,139 full English language level gains in the skill areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

ORIA BFET served 834 unduplicated participants in SFY 2019, of which 782 were refugees and 52 were non-refugee immigrants. ORIA BFET providers placed 433 participants into jobs and out of those, 388 participants reached 90 days on the job during the year.

## LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT PATHWAY SERVICES

Washington State has a large and dynamic immigrant community and currently ranks second in the nation for resettling refugees<sup>5</sup>. According to the 2017 American Community Survey, 19 percent of the households in Washington speak a language other than English<sup>6</sup>. In King County, the state's most populous county, 26.5 percent of the families residing in the county speak a language other than English at home<sup>7</sup>.

For twenty years, the LEP Pathway program has provided an array of employment services targeted specifically for non-English proficient people

<sup>5</sup> Refugee Processing Center: <http://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>

<sup>6</sup> US Census Bureau, Quick Facts:

<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

<sup>7</sup> US Census Bureau, Quick Facts:

<http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmm>

from a wide variety of countries and cultural backgrounds. The LEP Pathway provides specialized services that address the unique employment needs of people who are refugees, English language learners and WorkFirst parents.

The LEP Pathway aims to provide a single, seamless program for services to increase participants' employability so they can achieve economic security and successfully integrate into their communities.

In SFY 2019, ORIA provided LEP Pathway services through 31 contracts statewide with the following types of organizations:

- Community-based organizations (CBOs)
- Community and technical colleges
- Refugee resettlement agencies
- Agency partners, such as the Employment Security Department (ESD)
- Other organizations serving refugees

See **Attachment A** for a list of SFY 2019 LEP Pathway contractors.

LEP Pathway providers have a long history of serving individuals and families that are refugees and immigrants. They have close ties to refugee and immigrant communities, are experienced in addressing their needs and are able to provide culturally sensitive, linguistically appropriate services. Many LEP Pathway providers employ individuals who have arrived in the U.S. as a refugee or immigrant and are able to bring their personal experiences, culture and language to their work with newly arrived refugees. This combination of personal experience, knowledge and skills in serving people who are refugees is critical to the success of the program.

#### Success Story

In the fall 2016, Igor, his wife Aurelia and their three young children left their home in Moldova and arrived in Renton, Washington to rebuild their lives. Initially, everything was very challenging, especially since Igor did not speak any English. He and his wife immediately enrolled in ESL classes at Renton Technical College (RTC) and worked hard to improve their English language skills.

Within two years, Igor went from Basic ESL classes to enrolling in RTC's Computer Networking Program and is about to graduate from the program. His wife completed the college's Accounting Specialist program and her Associate's Degree. She is now working for the college's Financial Aid Office. Their kids are attending school in the Renton School District.

After graduation, Igor wants to apply to the Renton Police Department and use his Computer Networking Degree to support his family as well as the City of Renton.

## ELIGIBLE POPULATION

Who is eligible to participate in the LEP Pathway program?

- People who receive Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA). RCA recipients are limited to eight months of cash assistance from the day they arrive in the U.S. The statewide monthly average of RCA refugees in SFY 2019 was 248 adults<sup>8</sup>.
- Limited English proficient people who receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). The statewide monthly average of eligible adults on TANF in SFY 2019 was 1,526 or 11 percent of the total statewide TANF adult caseload<sup>9</sup>.
- People who receive State Family Assistance (SFA). SFA is a state-funded TANF program for legal immigrants who are ineligible for TANF under federal rules. The statewide monthly average of eligible adults on SFA in SFY 2019 was 668 or 99 percent of the total statewide SFA caseload<sup>10</sup>.
- People who have a current status as a refugee, do not receive cash assistance, and have resided in the U.S. for 60 months or less. For this report, the term 'refugee' includes all other humanitarian immigration statuses allowing access to refugee benefits under federal law. These immigration statuses include refugees, people granted asylum, Cuban/Haitian entrants, Amerasians, victims of trafficking and Special Immigrant Visa holders from Iraqi and Afghanistan (SIVs).

## POPULATION SERVED

The following chart <sup>11</sup> shows SFY 2019 LEP Pathway participant information:

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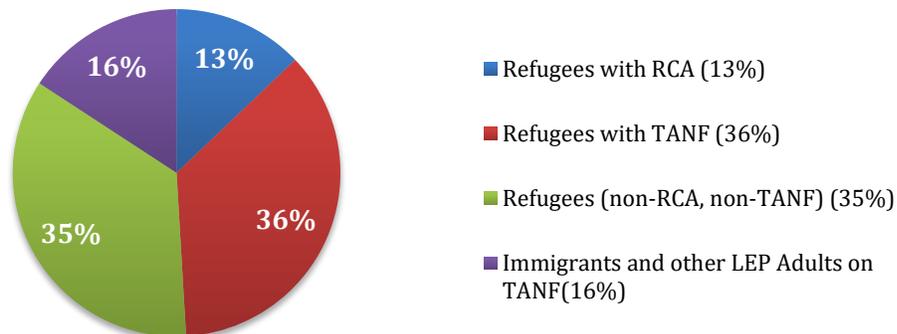
<sup>8</sup> Source: DSHS ACES data, <http://emaps.esa.dshs.wa.gov/DataWebObj/Default.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> Source: DSHS ACES data, <http://emaps.esa.dshs.wa.gov/DataWebObj/Default.aspx>

<sup>10</sup> Source: DSHS ACES data, <http://emaps.esa.dshs.wa.gov/DataWebObj/Default.aspx>

<sup>11</sup> Source: ORIA Database pulled as of October 15, 2019.

## Unduplicated LEP Pathway Clients

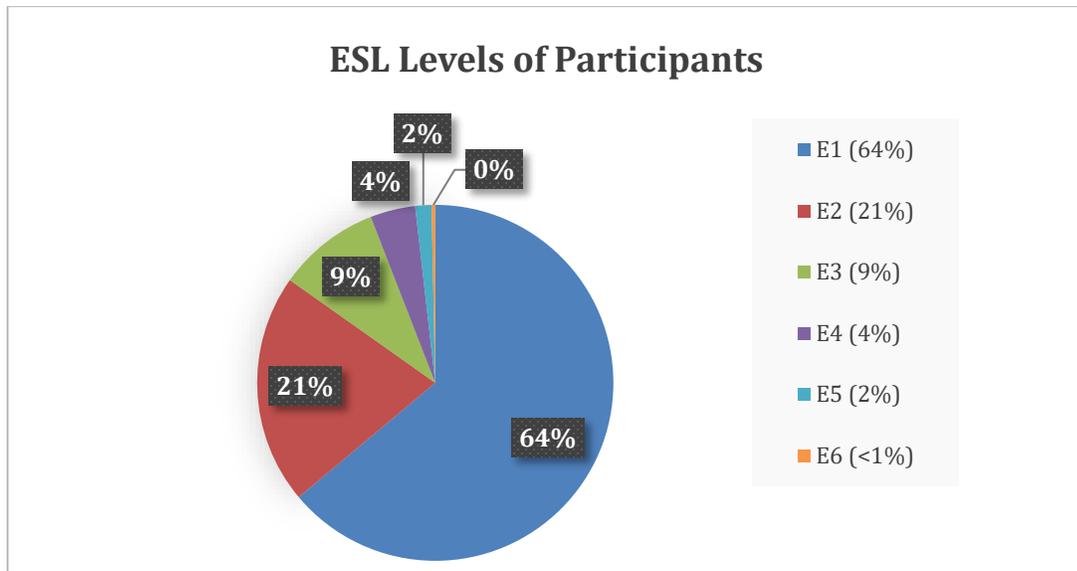


Participants in the LEP Pathway enter the program with a wide range of skills and challenges. LEP Pathway providers have significant experience in delivering responsive services to diverse groups of people, of which the ethnicity, education and cultural background can change from year-to-year. LEP Pathway providers develop programs and strategies to address the changing needs of those they serve. Many people arrive in the U.S. with limited prior education and some are not literate in their native language. The very act of resettling in the U.S. is highly stressful. Many people who are refugees also struggle with issues related to trauma, including physical and emotional challenges, adding to the pressure of learning to navigate multiple systems in the U.S. Many participants in the LEP Pathway program with multiple barriers are still highly motivated to get a job, so LEP Pathway providers work closely with employers to identify appropriate job placements along with arranging for English language training.

Some refugees and immigrants arrive with technical skills or high levels of education. A 2015 report<sup>12</sup>, shows that 31.7 percent of the adult immigrant population in Washington is likely to have a college education or higher. For highly educated refugees and immigrants, the challenge of finding a job is more difficult if they are unable to utilize their previous experience and education in the U.S. The ORIA CLEVER employment program complements the LEP Pathway by providing a seamless transition for highly educated and vocationally experienced refugees with a menu of services that help them enter jobs in their fields of expertise. Participants receive career orientation, vocational mentoring, transcript evaluation, licensing assistance and targeted job placement in the participants' respective fields. ORIA leverages the strength of both the LEP Pathway and CLEVER to support these clients in addressing their unique challenges while incorporating existing skills and strengths.

<sup>12</sup> [http://weareoneamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/Brain\\_Waste.pdf](http://weareoneamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/Brain_Waste.pdf)

The chart below shows the English skill level of TANF participants in the LEP Pathway. Level 1 is the lowest level with zero to very limited English language skills. Level 2 is limited as well, but the individual has basic English language skills with limited vocabulary. **Attachment B** provides a more detailed description of the English language levels. The vast majority (85 percent) of participants are at the lowest two levels of English, which is why the specialized services and expertise of LEP Pathway providers is so critical.



## SERVICES

The LEP Pathway program provides employment and English language services to adults who receive TANF, SFA and RCA benefits and to refugees who have resided in the U.S. for less than five years.

LEP Pathway providers work in partnership with DSHS Community Services Office (CSO) staff to accept a referral, conduct an employability assessment and identify the LEP Pathway work activities that the individual must participate in while receiving cash assistance. TANF and SFA recipients sign an Individual Responsibility Plan (IRP) to acknowledge and agree to participate in these activities. RCA recipients also receive an employability assessment, as employment is a priority due to the eight-month time limit for cash benefits. Most often, LEP Pathway clients participate in employment services coupled with English language services.

ORIA employment providers work with local employers to develop work opportunities and offer retention assistance to clients placed into jobs.

## **A. Employment Services**

Using results from the Employability Assessment, providers place participants into one or more of the following activities to help them find work:

### Job Search Workshops

Available to participants who have recently arrived to the U.S. and have little experience in the U.S. labor market. A basic Computer and Internet Introduction workshop helps to familiarize and train participants in the techniques required for online job search.

### Skills Training

Job skills training provided to LEP participants in targeted occupations. Participants selected for training should have the skills and abilities to perform the job in the specified field after training completion.

### Job Placement

Provides job search and job placement assistance to participants who are ready to enter the labor market. Participants receive referrals to employment opportunities that match their background, job skills, English proficiency and abilities.

### Job Retention Assistance

Continued support is available for a maximum of 90 days to participants placed into employment by providing worksite advocacy and necessary workplace accommodation, including interpretation and worksite conflict resolution.

## **B. English as a Second Language (ESL) Services**

One of the most significant challenges to getting a job for refugees and immigrants can be limited English proficiency. Individuals with low native language literacy skills and little formal education often face the greatest barriers to learning English. Limited English skills can mean a refugee or immigrant is unable to find employment or has limited opportunities for finding a job with a living wage. The ability to communicate in English increases opportunities to obtain higher wage jobs and integrate more easily into local communities. LEP Pathway's ESL services provide participants with work-related English language training to enhance their employability.

ESL contractors utilize the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) to assess an individual's English language proficiency for listening and reading, and other ORIA-approved tests to assess speaking and writing proficiency. LEP Pathway participants range from level 1

(beginning level skills) to level 6 (advanced ESL). See **Attachment B** for a detailed description of CASAS proficiency levels. ORIA contracts with local

community colleges and community-based organizations to develop employment related curriculum and training materials and to provide ESL classroom instruction to participants assessed at ESL level 6 or below.

### **Success Story**

When Reyna was forced to leave Guatemala in 2014 to seek asylum in the United States, she came with nothing but a few pieces of clothing and little cash. When she settled in Seattle she was referred to Puget Sound Training Center (PSTC), a community-based organization that helps limited English proficient immigrants and refugees find sustainable employment and job training opportunities in the warehouse industry.

PSTC case managers worked with Reyna to gain employability skills and identify opportunities. They also established a relationship with a WorkSource business liaison and were introduced to a wonderful local employer who at the time had a need for two full-time employees.

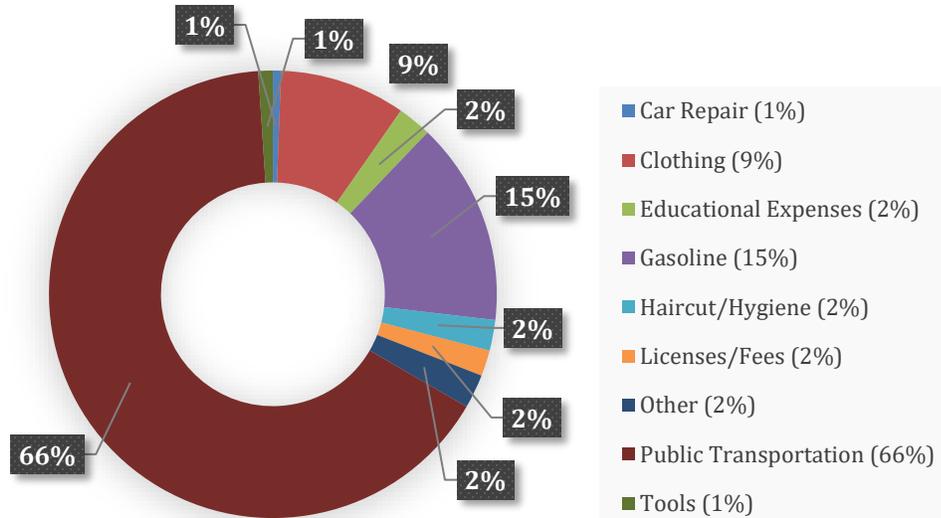
This employer offered what Reyna was seeking in an employer: a set work schedule that was Monday through Friday, a living wage, sick leave and vacation benefits and access to high quality health benefits. Reyna has weekends off and the opportunity to be home before her children arrive from school.

She recently told her PSTC case manager "Here they accept me as I am, they understand my needs and that I am still learning English." Reyna knows that her hard work, courage, and determination has paid off.

### **C. Support Services**

ORIA funds support services to help non-TANF refugee participants address barriers in order to participate in LEP Pathway activities. TANF recipients receive support services through their local Community Services Offices. The list of ORIA funded support services to help non-TANF employment participants during the SFY 2019 included: Public Transportation, Gasoline, Car Repair, Work Tools, Work Clothes, Educational Expenses, Licenses/Fees and Haircut/Hygiene. As exhibited in the following chart, transportation remains the greatest need for LEP Pathway participants.

## Utilization of Support Services



## PROGRAM FUNDING

There are three funding sources for LEP Pathway services, including funds from the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), TANF block grant, and general state funds (GF-S). These funds blend into a single funding stream that provides LEP Pathway employment, ESL and support services.

### SFY 2019 Budget

TANF – Federal/State	\$5,600,000
ORR	\$749,386
GF-S	<u>\$1,934,022</u>
	<b>\$8,283,408</b>

There are specific requirements for each funding source listed above:

- TANF funding covers services for any LEP adult receiving TANF/SFA.
- ORR Refugee Social Service (RSS) funding covers services for refugees who have been in the country for 60 months or less.
- GF-S funding has the most flexibility as it can pay for services for anyone in the LEP Pathway.

## PROGRAM DISBURSEMENTS

The LEP Pathway program contracts follow a state fiscal year schedule (July 1 to June 30). In SFY 2019, contractors entered into a performance-based contract structured on employment placements, job retention and English language level gains. This contracting model meets the required performance based outcome criteria for contracts. Under this model, contractors may receive a percentage of their contract amount by serving a minimum number of clients. The remaining amount is based on the provider’s annual performance outcome goals.

Under this model, LEP Pathway employment providers receive 95 percent of their contract maximum amount, divided into 12 monthly payments, to cover the costs to provide direct services to clients. Providers earn the remaining 5 percent of the contract maximum amount if they achieve their annual performance goal based on employment placement and job retention.

LEP Pathway ESL contractors receive 80 percent of their contract maximum amount, divided into four quarterly payments, to cover the costs to provide direct instruction and support services to clients. Providers earn the remaining 20 percent of the contract maximum amount if they achieve their quarterly performance goals based on a negotiated number of English language level gains.

Contractors submit invoices for employment services on a monthly basis and for ESL services on a quarterly basis. They may submit billings up to 30 days after each month/quarter of service. DSHS has 30 days from receipt and approval of each invoice to process and make payment.

The following are expenditures for SFY 2019 for LEP Pathway services by funding source and service type, as of October 15, 2019:

### SFY 2019 TANF Expenditures

Service	TANF		Total TANF
	Federal	State	
Employment	<b>\$2,850,544</b>	<b>\$716,388</b>	<b>\$3,566,932</b>
ESL Services	<b>\$1,297,355</b>	<b>\$253,270</b>	<b>\$1,550,625</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,147,899</b>	<b>\$969,658</b>	<b>\$5,117,557</b>

### SFY 2019 Total Expenditures

Service	ORR (Federal)	TANF	State GF-S	Total Fed/State
Employment	\$ 826,230	\$3,566,932	\$ 642,488	\$ 5,035,650
ESL	\$ 345,987	\$1,550,625	\$ 1,228,301	\$ 3,124,913
Support Services	\$ 14,467		\$68,192	\$ 82,659
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 1,186,684</b>	<b>\$5,117,557</b>	<b>\$ 1,938,981</b>	<b>\$ 8,243,222</b>

### PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The LEP Pathway uses a performance based contracting model with a standardized rate to measure program performance for all providers. For employment services, performance is defined as follows: a) percentage of unduplicated clients placed into jobs out of the total number of unduplicated clients in job search; b) total number of unduplicated clients who remained employed 90 days following the placement out of the total number of unduplicated clients who've been placed into jobs. For ESL, performance is measured by English language level gains determined through quarterly assessment. Providers now report outcomes through the ORIA eJAS system and both contractors and ORIA program managers can utilize the system to better track individual provider outcomes as well as those for the entire program.

In SFY 2019, the number of participants in the LEP Pathway decreased from the prior year due to a reduction in the number of refugees entering the U.S. While numbers are down, some indicators of economic stability have increased significantly, such as hourly wage and job retention.

The following table shows participant and performance outcomes reported for SFY 2019, with a two year look-back.

<b>Services and Outcomes</b>	<b>Count Type<sup>13</sup></b>	<b>SFY17</b>	<b>SFY18</b>	<b>SFY19</b>
Total Number of Unduplicated LEP Pathway Participants		5,434	4,585	3,992
Number of Employment Participants	Clients	4,183	3,243	2,699
Number of ESL Participants		3,084	2,613	2,199
Full ESL Level Gains	Services	1,259	922	1,139
Job Placements	Clients	2,154	1,567	1,212
Average Hourly Wage at Job Entry	Services	\$12.61	\$13.80	\$15.07
Full-Time		\$12.89	\$14.05	\$15.40
Part-Time		\$10.94	\$13.25	\$14.38
Number of Job Placements with Health Benefits	Services	1,086	476	257
Work Experience	Clients	203	174	203
Skills Training	Clients	58	49	62
Support Services	Services	1,545	857	498
Retention: Employed 90 Days After Placement	Services	1,381	1,216	1,079

## **CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES**

People resettling in Washington state as refugees have fled persecution and oppression in their homelands. Some come from lengthy stays in refugee camps, while others come soon after fleeing conflict and war. Some

<sup>13</sup> 'Clients' are unduplicated count and 'Services' are duplicated count.

suffer from the effects of post-traumatic stress, physical trauma and the loss of family and friends. The barriers they face upon arrival in the U.S. can include limited English proficiency, lack of skills needed for employment, limited previous education and challenges navigating U.S. systems. LEP Pathway providers offer services, which address not only the multiple barriers refugees and immigrants can face when entering the workplace, but they also offer services that utilize the client's unique strengths.

For newly arrived refugees, economic self-sufficiency is the key to a family's ability to thrive and successfully integrate into the community. However, many new arrivals cannot speak English, some cannot read or write in their own language, and many need to develop new job skills to become employable in the current job market. In addition, cultural differences often time may play a certain role and can alter the picture. For some groups, there are cultural norms against having women or individuals over 50 years old in the workplace. In those cultures, women may be expected to care for the family. Those who are older are considered "elders," beyond employment age. Regardless of these cultural factors, a good number of refugees still feel compelled by their economic situation to enter the workplace even if it is counter to what they view as appropriate.

The LEP Pathway program addresses these issues and many other needs of program participants. The primary goal is to prepare participants to achieve economic stability. DSHS refers participants to employment and ESL service providers close to their home and most are able to access services immediately. Through other funding, many LEP Pathway providers are able to help mitigate additional barriers that can affect self-sufficiency, such as medical, mental health, housing and immigration. Providers also have extensive partnerships with existing community resources to help address additional issues.

LEP Pathway providers work closely with local businesses and establish close ties with employers who have a history of hiring LEP individuals. Some employers will hire participants based on the service provider's reference, especially when the participant has no U.S. work experience. Employers are interested in hiring LEP Pathway participants because they often demonstrate a strong work ethic and willingness to learn.

The LEP Pathway program uses state and federal resources to help individuals address barriers to success and thrive in their communities. Pathway providers successfully prepare participants for employment by offering them an array of services to enhance their employability. Participants continue to show their resilience and ability to integrate and engage in their Washington communities.

## **ORIA BASIC FOOD EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING SERVICES**

The United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) offers federal funding to plan and implement employment and training (E&T) programs for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients. The program design helps recipients gain skills, certificates, or work experience to improve their employment prospects and to reduce their reliance on SNAP benefits. FNS offers two types of funding: 50 percent match for administrative costs and support services, and 100 percent federal funding to plan, implement and operate the program.

The Department administers the SNAP E&T program, known as the Basic Food Employment & Training (BFET) program in Washington State. It provides job search, job search training, job search assistance, educational services<sup>14</sup>, skills training, vocational education and employment assistance to Basic Food<sup>15</sup> recipients who do not receive TANF. Unlike TANF, participation in BFET employment and training services is voluntary and there is no participation hour requirement. BFET is an important part of the state's comprehensive workforce development system, serving low-income individuals, displaced workers and employers by encouraging financial independence from public assistance through skill acquisition, personal responsibility and gainful employment.

ORIA has been providing services through BFET since October 2012. The goal of the program is to increase employment and training opportunities for eligible refugees and immigrants<sup>16</sup> who might not qualify for LEP Pathway services but still need employment and training support to achieve economic stability. The BFET program through ORIA (ORIA BFET) offers the same services statewide as the general or "mainstream" BFET program, but it focuses on providing culturally and linguistically appropriate employment and training services to foreign-born individuals who have not naturalized. By administering the ORIA BFET program, ORIA leverages general state funding to match additional federal dollars for employment services that help program participants achieve economic stability and successfully integrate into their new communities.

In SFY 2019, ORIA provided ORIA BFET services through 12 contracts statewide. ORIA BFET contracts follow the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) schedule: October 1, 2018 thru September 30, 2019. These contractors include:

- Community-based organizations (CBOs)

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<sup>14</sup> BFET educational services include adult basic education (ABE), English as a Second Language (ESL), and General Educational Development (GED).

<sup>15</sup> Basic Food is Washington State's version of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

<sup>16</sup> Non-TANF non-refugee immigrants eligible for federal food benefits.

- Refugee resettlement agencies
- The Employment Security Department (ESD)
- Other organizations serving immigrants and refugees

See **Attachment C** for a list of FFY 2019<sup>17</sup> contractors.

## **ELIGIBLE POPULATION**

Federal food benefit recipients are eligible for ORIA BFET services when they are:

- Refugees or immigrants;
- Age 16 and older;
- Not recipients of TANF or Refugee Cash Assistance; and
- Not naturalized U.S. citizens

This program differs from LEP Pathway in that it serves all refugees and immigrants who meet the above criteria regardless of the length of time they have been in the U.S. It complements LEP Pathway by serving refugees and immigrants who do not qualify for LEP Pathway such as non-refugees, non-TANF immigrants, and refugees who have resided in the U.S. for over five years.

## **POPULATION SERVED**

The following table shows ORIA BFET participant information for July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019, with a two year look-back.

<b>Participants</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Total Unduplicated Participants Served	1,110	1,018	834
Refugees	1,037	970	782
Immigrants (non-refugee)	73	48	52

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<sup>17</sup> BFET contracts operate on the federal fiscal year cycle: October through September.

## SERVICES

BFET provides services to employable adults who receive federal food benefits. BFET does not pay for a four-year college degree, on-the-job wages, paid work experience, Workfare or the stipends provided in certain training programs.

ORIA BFET contractors are encouraged to partner with other BFET providers and to work with technical and community colleges to provide wraparound services to increase participant success. There is no set maximum time limit for BFET participation, but there is a general expectation to achieve a successful exit from the program by obtaining employment and/or completing training within two years of enrollment.

Services provided under ORIA BFET include:

### **A. Employment Services**

ORIA BFET provides a package of structured employment and training activities to help participants seek and obtain suitable employment, including case management services, basic education and ESL, vocational education, job search, job search workshop, computer basics workshop, labor market information, job seeking skills instruction, resume writing, job skills assessment, counseling, life skills and work ethic training, and job placement services.

### **B. Retention Services**

Once employed, ORIA BFET providers continue to offer services to participants for 90 days after job placement to help resolve initial employment barriers and achieve satisfactory work performance to increase job retention. Job retention services include: post-employment counseling, coaching and other case management activities, support services for transportation, clothing and other needs to maintain employment.

### **C. English as a Second Language (Basic Education)**

ORIA BFET provides ESL training to participants to gain language skills necessary to obtain and maintain employment. Instruction and curriculum for ESL must include work-related topics to help prepare participants for employment while learning English.

Contractors use the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS) testing for reading and listening and ORIA-approved assessments for writing and speaking to determine the participant's initial ESL level. Contractors are also encouraged to work with BFET contracted community and technical colleges to provide ESL training to program participants.

## D. Support Services

ORIA BFET offers a broad range of goods and purchased services necessary for participants to successfully engage in or complete a BFET activity. Support services include work clothing, equipment or tools required for a job, testing fees, relocation expenses, transportation, permits and fees, emergency housing and utility assistance and childcare<sup>18</sup>.

## PROGRAM FUNDING

FNS offers 50 percent federal match for BFET related administrative and support services and 100 percent funding to plan, implement and operate BFET. ORIA leverages both of these funding sources for ORIA BFET services. The BFET program operates on the federal fiscal year (FFY) cycle (October – September). ORIA provides BFET Services with funding from two sources: state refugee and immigrant employment services funding and federal match grant. This requires a mix of federal funding from two consecutive years to run the program as the state fiscal year (SFY) ends on June 30.

## PROGRAM DISBURSEMENTS

BFET operates on a cost reimbursement model and ORIA BFET contractors must incur costs associated with BFET services then seek reimbursements for

### Success Story

Aisha is from Somalia and is the mother of four children. She had to stop her formal education in sixth grade in order to help her mother and younger siblings. When Aisha first went to Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA), she was very hesitant and nervous. At ReWA she met with a bilingual case manager and together they assessed her skills, goals and barriers to employment.

Aisha enrolled in ESL classes offered by ReWA. As she gained English skills and became more confident, she began to engage in job search activities and job readiness classes. Aisha was offered and accepted a part-time position with Amazon. Even after she got her job, Aisha continued to work with her case manager to receive ongoing support which included transportation assistance.

ReWA staff also helped Aisha address her housing issue and worked with her until it was resolved when her Section 8 housing application was approved. Securing a job and housing gave Aisha and her whole family a sense of stability. Aisha continues to be hopeful and work hard despite many challenges. She is currently enrolled in the ORIA BFET program at ReWA and is in the Home Care Aide Training program.

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<sup>18</sup> Must be ineligible for other child care subsidies such as Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP) and local programs offered by the county or city.

those expenses from DSHS on a monthly basis to cover program expenditures. Upon review of each billing, DSHS will reimburse for eligible services from the contracted amount.

ORIA BFET contract expected expenditures as of June 30, 2019, totaled \$956,464. This amount represents \$427,019 in state funds (GF-S) used to leverage \$529,445 in federal funds (50 percent match and 100 percent federal non-match).

The following chart shows ORIA BFET expenditures and monthly caseload for SFY 2019:

Month	Clients Served	Total Expenditures
Jul-18	360	\$72,749
Aug-18	353	\$80,370
Sep-18	322	\$61,929
Oct-18	333	\$74,227
Nov-18	315	\$74,027
Dec-18	309	\$70,173
Jan-19	328	\$72,950
Feb-19	308	\$75,561
Mar-19	299	\$74,867
Apr-19	315	\$78,261
May19	327	\$105,440
Jun-19	328	\$115,910

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Participant and performance outcomes shown below as of June 30, 2019:

Outcomes	2018	2019
Total Unduplicated Participants Served	1,118	834
Entered Employment <sup>19</sup>	486	654
Full-Time	340	455
Part-Time	156	199

<sup>19</sup> Total entered employment count is unduplicated for the report period but some individuals may have both full and part-time employment during the report period.

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Average Wage	\$13.49	\$14.09
Full-Time	\$13.78	\$14.48
Part-Time	\$12.91	\$13.18
Retention: Employed 90 Days After Job Placement in the SFY	408	547

## **CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES**

Refugee resettlement in the U.S. focused primarily, in the early years, on resettling large numbers of individuals and families from a limited number of countries. These groups generally resettled with family or friends already living in the U.S. That pattern changed over the past 17 years, in part due to world events, and in part due to the U.S. government's efforts with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to make third country resettlement viable for refugees from a broader range of the world's approximate 23 million refugees. In FFY 2019<sup>20</sup>, the top three countries of origin for refugees resettled to Washington State were:

- Ukraine
- Afghanistan
- Russia

Stable employment, especially for groups arriving without existing local support networks such as family and friends, is the key to a family's ability to become self-sufficient and successfully integrate into their community. Though many newly arriving refugees and immigrants have limited English and job skills, they possess a strong desire to succeed and thrive in their new home country. They are willing to work hard to achieve economic stability for themselves and their families.

The ORIA BFET program continues to provide vital support to help refugees and immigrants reach better lives and opportunities for themselves and their families. Included throughout this report are client success stories to illustrate the success of the ORIA BFET programs.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.wrapsnet.org/Reports/AdmissionsArrivals>

## ATTACHMENT A

### SFY 2019 LEP PATHWAY CONTRACTORS

PROVIDER	COUNTY	SERVICES
Asian Counseling & Referral Services	King	Employment
Bellingham Technical College	Whatcom	ESL
Career Path Services	Spokane	Employment
Clark College	Clark	ESL
Columbia Basin College	Benton, Franklin	ESL
Community Colleges of Spokane	Spokane	ESL
Diocese of Olympia	King	Employment, ESL
Highline Community College	King, Pierce	ESL
International Rescue Committee	King	Employment
Jewish Family Service	King	Employment
Lutheran Community Services	Clark	ESL
Neighborhood House	King	Employment
Partners in Careers	Clark	Employment
Puget Sound Training Center	King	Employment, Skills Training
Refugee Federation Service Center	King	Employment
Refugee & Immigrant Services NW	Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom	Employment, ESL
Refugee Women's Alliance	King	Employment, ESL
Renton Technical College	King	ESL
South Seattle College	King	ESL
Tacoma Community House	Pierce	Employment, ESL
TRAC Associates	King, Pierce, Snohomish, Thurston	Employment, Skills Training
World Relief- King	King	Employment, ESL
World Relief- Spokane	King	Employment
World Relief- Tri-Cities	Benton, Franklin	Employment

## ATTACHMENT B<sup>21</sup>

### Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS)

<b>1</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Beginning Literacy / Pre-Beginning ESL</b></p> <p><b><u>Listening/Speaking:</u></b> Functions minimally, if at all in English. Communicates only through gestures and a few isolated words.</p> <p><b><u>Reading/Writing:</u></b> May not be literate in any language.</p> <p><b><u>Employability:</u></b> Can handle very routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral or written communication in English and in which all tasks are easily demonstrated. Employment choices are limited.</p>	<b>180 &amp; below</b>
<b>2</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Low Beginning ESL</b></p> <p><b><u>Listening/Speaking:</u></b> Functions in a very limited way in situations related to immediate needs; asks and responds to basic learned phrases spoken slowly and repeated often.</p> <p><b><u>Reading/Writing:</u></b> Recognizes and writes letters and numbers and reads and understands common sight words. Can write own name and address.</p> <p><b><u>Employability:</u></b> Can handle only routine entry-level jobs that do not require oral or written communication in English and in which all tasks are easily demonstrated.</p>	<b>181- 190</b>
<b>3</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>High Beginning ESL</b></p> <p><b><u>Listening/Speaking:</u></b> Functions with some difficulty in situations related to immediate needs; may have some simple oral communication abilities using basic learned phrases and sentences.</p> <p><b><u>Reading/Writing:</u></b> Reads and writes letters and numbers and a limited number of basic sight words and simple phrases related to immediate needs. Can write basic personal information on simplified forms.</p> <p><b><u>Employability:</u></b> Can handle routine entry-level jobs that involve only the most basic oral or written communication in English and which all tasks can be demonstrated.</p>	<b>191-200</b>

<sup>21</sup> Source <https://www.casas.org/docs/pagecontents/eslsld.pdf?sfvrsn=8?Status=Master>

4	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Low Intermediate ESL</b></p> <p><b><u>Listening/Speaking:</u></b> Can satisfy basic survival needs and very routine social demands. Understands simple learned phrases easily and some new simple phrases containing familiar vocabulary, spoken slowly with frequent repetition.</p> <p><b><u>Reading/Writing:</u></b> Can read and interpret simple material on familiar topics. Able to read and interpret simple directions, schedules, signs, maps and menus. Can fill out forms requiring basic personal information and write short, simple notes and messages based on familiar situations.</p> <p><b><u>Employability:</u></b> Can handle entry-level jobs that involve some simple oral and written communication but in which tasks can also be demonstrated and/or clarified orally.</p>	201- 200
5	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>High Intermediate ESL</b></p> <p><b><u>Listening/Speaking:</u></b> Can satisfy basic survival needs and limited social demands; can follow oral directions in familiar contexts. Has limited ability to understand on the telephone. Understands learned phrases easily and new phrases containing familiar vocabulary.</p> <p><b><u>Reading/Writing:</u></b> Can read and interpret simplified and some authentic material on familiar subjects. Can write messages or notes related to basic needs. Can fill out basic medical forms and job applications.</p> <p><b><u>Employability:</u></b> Can handle jobs and /or training that involve following basic oral and written instructions and diagrams if they can be clarified orally.</p>	211- 220
6	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Advanced ESL</b></p> <p><b><u>Listening/Speaking:</u></b> Can satisfy most survival needs and social demands. Has some ability to understand and communicate on the telephone on familiar topics. Can participate in conversations on a variety of topics.</p> <p><b><u>Reading/Writing:</u></b> Can read and interpret simplified and some non-simplified materials on familiar topics. Can interpret simple charts, graphs and labels; interpret a payroll stub; and complete a simple order form; fill out medical information forms and job applications. Can write short personal notes and letters and make simple log entries.</p> <p><b><u>Employability:</u></b> Can handle jobs and job training situations that involve following oral and simple written instructions and multi-step diagrams and limited public contact. Can read a simple employee handbook. Persons at the upper end of this score range are able to begin GED preparation.</p>	221- 235
	<b>Exit ESL Program</b>	<b>236</b>

## ATTACHMENT C

### FFY 2019 ORIA BFET CONTRACTORS

PROVIDER	COUNTY	SERVICES
Asian Counseling & Referral Services	King	Employment & Training
Employment Security Department	Spokane	Employment & Training
Neighborhood House	King	Employment & Training
Partners in Careers	Clark	Employment & Training
Puget Sound Training Center	King	Employment & Training
Refugee Federation Service Center	King	Employment & Training
Refugee & Immigrant Services NW	Snohomish, Skagit, Whatcom	Employment & Training
Refugee Women's Alliance	King	Employment & Training
TRAC Associates	King, Pierce, Snohomish	Employment & Training
World Relief- King	King	Employment & Training
World Relief- Spokane	King	Employment & Training