

**REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE**

**Refugee and Immigrant Employment Services:  
Limited English Proficient (LEP) Pathway and  
Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET)**

Chapter 4, Laws of 2015 (ESSB 6052 Section 207 (3))

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# **Refugee and Immigrant Employment Services: Limited English Proficient (LEP) Pathway and Basic Food Employment and Training (BFET)**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Chapter 4, Laws of 2015 (ESSB 6052 Section 207 (3)) requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS or the Department) to report to the Legislature annually on all sources of available funding for refugee and immigrant employment services 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 report covers the most recently completed state fiscal year (SFY) 2017 (July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017). The data available for current SFY 2018 (July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2018) is limited.

### **Program Overview**

The Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA) is located within the DSHS, Economic Services Administration, Community Services Division, and administers \$25 million in federal and state dollars to more than 60 providers, serving over 8,600<sup>1</sup> refugee and immigrant clients in Washington state annually. ORIA services include refugee cash/medical assistance (RCA/RMA), comprehensive case management, self-sufficiency education, immigration assistance, refugee health screening 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.

ORIA oversees employment services and English as a Second Language (ESL) classes to eligible refugees and immigrants through its Limited English Proficient (LEP) Pathway program (LEP Pathway or Pathway) and the ORIA Basic Food Employment and Training (ORIA BFET) program. In November of 2016, ORIA introduced a new program that works with highly educated and vocationally skilled refugees. Fully funded by a federal grant from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, the Career Ladder for Educated and Vocationally Experienced Refugees (CLEVER) Program aims to develop career plans and opportunities for newly arrived refugees.<sup>2</sup> ORIA provides employment services through contracts with community-based organizations (CBOs), refugee resettlement agencies, the state's Employment Security Department, and other employment agencies. ORIA contracts with local community and technical colleges and community-based organizations to provide vocationally focused ESL classes.

The LEP Pathway Program provides linguistically and culturally appropriate services that lead to employment. LEP Pathway services include employability assessments, pre-employment

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<sup>1</sup> ESA Program Briefing Book 2016 Annual Unduplicated Clients Served report for Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (RIA) 8,787 unduplicated clients for SFY 2015 DSHS Offices (ESA & HCS). This count includes clients served by the following ORIA programs: LEP Pathway, Refugee Resettlement Assistance and Naturalization Services.

<sup>2</sup> Data from the CLEVER program is currently unavailable for this report.

preparation services, vocationally-focused English language instruction, job search, skills training, employment placement, job retention, and support services. Additionally, Work Experience (WEX) and Community Services (CS) placements are available to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) recipients.

The ORIA BFET program provides employment services to refugees and immigrants who do not receive TANF and/or Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA), but receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. 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.

**Comparison Chart between LEP Pathway and ORIA BFET Eligible to Participate**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>LEP Pathway</b>	<b>ORIA BFET</b>
Refugees receiving TANF	✓	
Non-Refugee immigrants receiving TANF	✓	
Refugees receiving RCA	✓	
Refugees, non-TANF, not active RCA, 5 years or less in US	✓	✓
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 uniquely braid federal and state dollars to provide a comprehensive package of services for eligible refugees and immigrants 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 2017 refugee and immigrant employment services by funding source:

## SFY 2017 Total Budget

Funding Source	LEP Pathway	ORIA BFET	TOTAL	Notes
TANF	\$ 5,600,000	N/A	\$ 5,600,000	
ORR	\$ 1,736,388	N/A	\$ 1,736,388	
GF-S	\$ 1,933,983	\$ 419,045	\$ 2,353,028	
FNS	N/A	\$ 419,045	\$ 419,045	federal 50% match <sup>3</sup>
FNS	N/A	\$ 238,160	\$ 238,160	Federal 100% <sup>4</sup> upfront
FNS	N/A	\$ 297,200	\$ 297,200	federal 100% <sup>5</sup> mid-year <sup>6</sup>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 9,270,371</b>	<b>\$ 1,373,450</b>	<b>\$ 10,643,821</b>	

## SFY 2017 Total Expenditures by Program and Funding Source

Funding Source	LEP Pathway	ORIA BFET	TOTAL
TANF	\$ 4,987,570	N/A	\$ 4,987,570
ORR	\$ 1,925,239	N/A	\$ 1,925,239
GF-S	\$ 1,933,983	\$ 423,088	\$ 2,357,071
FNS	N/A	\$ 724,501	\$ 724,501
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 8,846,792</b>	<b>\$ 1,147,589</b>	<b>\$ 9,994,381</b>

LEP Pathway expenditures totaled \$ 8,846,792 for SFY 2017 as of November 8, 2017. ORIA BFET expenditures, as of June 30, 2017 totaled \$1,147,589. This amount represents \$423,088 in state funds (GF-S) used to leverage \$724,501 in federal funds (50% match and 100% federal non-match).

### Program Outcomes

In SFY 2017, the LEP Pathway program served 5,434 unduplicated participants in both employment and ESL. LEP Pathway contractors placed 2,154 participants into jobs, and 1,086 of those jobs reportedly offered health benefits. In addition, 1,789 participants retained their job for 30 days and 1,381 continued employment with the same employer for at least up to 90 days. Participants in the ESL programs made 1,259 full English language level gains in the skill areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing.

ORIA BFET served 1,110 unduplicated participants in SFY 2017, of which 1,037 were refugees and 73 were non-refugee immigrants. ORIA BFET providers placed just over 474

<sup>3</sup> FNS provides 100% federal matching dollars to GF-S dollars used to support the ORIA BFET program.

<sup>4</sup> No state match needed.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> Issued around July 1 each calendar year.

participants into jobs and out of those 394 participants reached 90 days on the job during the year.

## LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT (LEP) PATHWAY

### BACKGROUND

Washington State has a large and dynamic immigrant community and currently ranks fourth in the nation for resettling refugees<sup>7</sup>. According to the 2014 U.S. Census estimates, 18.8% of the families in Washington speak a language other than English<sup>8</sup>. In King County, the state's most populous county, 26.4% of the families residing in the county speak a language other than English at home<sup>9</sup>.

The LEP Pathway Program began as a pilot project in King County in 1999 to provide an array of employment services targeted specifically for non-English speaking people from a wide variety of countries and cultural backgrounds. The LEP Pathway provides specialized services to refugees and other WorkFirst parents<sup>10</sup> with limited English skills to increase their employability and place them into jobs intended to lead to self-sufficiency.

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 2017, ORIA provided LEP Pathway services through 31 contracts statewide with the following types of organizations:

- Community-based organizations (CBOs)
- Local community and technical colleges
- Refugee Resettlement Agencies
- Employment Security Department (ESD)
- Other organizations serving immigrants and refugees

See **Attachment A** for a list of SFY 2017 LEP Pathway contractors.

All LEP Pathway providers have a long history of serving 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 and linguistically appropriate services. Many LEP Pathway providers employ former refugees who are able to bring their personal resettlement experiences into their work with newly arrived refugees. This combination of awareness,

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<sup>7</sup> Refugee Processing Center: <http://www.wrapsnet.org/admissions-and-arrivals/>

<sup>8</sup> US Census Bureau, Quick Facts: <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

<sup>9</sup> US Census Bureau, Quick Facts: <http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=bkmk>

<sup>10</sup> TANF/SFA recipients who are required to participate in employment, job search, or training components to receive cash benefits.

knowledge and skills in serving refugees is critical to the success of the program.

## ELIGIBLE POPULATION

LEP adults who are eligible for LEP Pathway program services include those who:

- Receive Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA)<sup>11</sup>. RCA recipients are limited to eight (8) months of cash assistance from the day they arrive to the U.S. The statewide monthly average of RCA refugees in SFY 2017 was 651 adults.
- Receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) assistance<sup>12</sup>. The statewide monthly average of LEP adults on TANF in SFY 2017 was 3,021 or 17.4% of the total statewide TANF adult caseload.
- Receive State Family Assistance (SFA)<sup>13</sup>. SFA is a state-funded TANF program for legal immigrants who are ineligible for TANF under federal rules. The statewide monthly average of LEP clients on SFA in SFY 2017 was 773 or 99% of the total statewide SFA caseload.
- 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 allowed access to refugee benefits under federal law. These immigration statuses include refugees, people granted asylum or asylees, Cuban/Haitian entrants, Amerasians, victims of trafficking and Special Immigrant Visa holders from Iraqi and Afghanistan (SIVs).

## POPULATION SERVED

The following table shows SFY 2017 LEP Pathway participant information:

Participants <sup>14</sup>	
<b>Total Unduplicated Participants Served</b>	<b>5,434</b>
Refugees on RCA	1,056
Refugees on TANF	2,198
Refugees (non-RCA, non-TANF)	1,296
LEP Adults on TANF/SFA and Other Referred LEP Adults	884

<sup>11</sup> Source: DSHS ACES data, <http://emaps.esa.dshs.wa.gov/DataWebObj/Default.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> Data Source: RIA Database pulled as of September 16, 2017.

Participants in the LEP Pathway enter the program with a wide-range of skills and challenges. LEP Pathway providers have significant experience in delivering services to diverse groups of people, whose ethnicity, education and cultural background can change from year-to-year and in developing programs and strategies to address changing needs. Many of these clients arrive with very limited education prior to their arrival in the U.S. and some are not literate in their native language. The very act of resettling in the United States is traumatic. Many refugees also struggle with the issues related to trauma, including physical and emotional challenges and the pressure of learning to navigate multiple systems in the U.S. Clients 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.

Other refugees and immigrants arrive with technical skills or high levels of education. National research also shows that 28-30 percent of refugee clients are 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. ORIA's newest employment program, CLEVER, complements the LEP Pathway by providing a seamless transition for highly educated and vocationally experienced refugees into a menu of services that help them access 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.

## **SERVICES**

The LEP Pathway Program provides employment and ESL 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 Community Services Office (CSO) staff to accept a referral, conduct 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 and 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**

The LEP Pathway Program participants receive an Employability Assessment to determine their educational level, English proficiency, work experience, and barriers to employment. 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 – Are 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 introduce and train participants in the techniques required for online job search.
- Work Experience (WEX) and Community Service (CS) – Volunteer work activities improve the employability of LEP TANF parents by providing hands-on experience in a supportive and monitored work environment. Participants practice positive employee behaviors and learn new job skills.
- 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 – Job Search and Job Placement assistance to participants who are ready to enter the labor market, 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 ninety (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 C** 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. 1-6.

## **C. Support Services**

Support services provide funds to help non-TANF refugee participants address barriers in order to participate in LEP Pathway activities. TANF recipients receive support services through their local DSHS Community Services Offices. ORIA expanded support services to help non-TANF employment participants during the SFY 2017 by including funding for work clothes, tools, educational expenses, licenses/fees and hygiene items.

#### **D. LEP Pathway Expansion**

ORIA continuously seeks to provide effective and innovative employment and ESL services to address changing and widely varying needs of refugee and immigrant participants. The following service expansions were available in SFY 2017:

- Skills Training - Access and acceptance into mainstream skills training programs is often difficult for Pathway participants due to advanced English language requirements. To offer job skills training services to Pathway participants, DSHS implemented an expansion of services that included skills training. ORIA funded TRAC Associate's Commercial Truck Driving Skills Training from December 2016 through September 2017.
- Intensive ESL - The Intensive ESL model provides newly arrived refugees with the lowest levels of English with concentrated and contextualized English language instruction for a period of six months. Intensive ESL expands the traditional 12 hours of LEP Pathway instruction to 20 hours per week. The curriculum focuses on not only the language needed for the U.S. job market, but also the language needed to integrate into the community.

### **PROGRAM FUNDING**

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

The following chart shows the LEP Pathway budget for SFY 2017:

#### **SFY 2017 Budget**

TANF – Federal/State	\$ 5,600,000
ORR – TAG	\$ 1,036,388
ORR – RSS	\$ 700,000
GF-S	<u>\$ 1,933,983</u>
	<b>\$ 9,270,371</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. In addition, a portion of ORR funding, the Targeted Assistance Grant (TAG), targets refugees residing in King or Spokane counties due to the high concentration of refugees living in them.
- GF-S funding has the most flexibility as it can pay for services for anyone in the LEP Pathway.

### PROGRAM DISBURSEMENTS

The total budget amount listed in the previous ‘Program Funding’ section represents the maximum funding ORIA may issue in contracts to cover services for a fiscal year. LEP Pathway contracts follow a state fiscal year schedule (July 1 to June 30). In SFY 2017, Contractors entered into a performance-based contract that was structured on the achievement of specific outcome goals. This contracting model meets the performance based outcome criteria for contracting required by the Governor’s Executive Order 10-02, Performance Based Contracting. Under this model, Contractors receive 80% of their annual contract amount on a monthly basis to cover the costs to provide services for a minimum number of clients. Providers earn the remaining 20% when they achieve their quarterly performance outcomes. Service providers must provide eligible services and bill ORIA in order to receive disbursements from this budget.

Contractors submit invoices for employment services on a monthly basis and for ESL services on a quarterly basis, and 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 2017 for LEP Pathway services by funding source and service type, as of November 7, 2017:

#### SFY 2017 TANF Expenditures

Service	TANF		Total TANF
	Federal	State	
Employment	\$ 2,694,062	\$ 437,911	\$ 3,131,973
ESL Services	\$ 1,552,141	\$ 303,456	\$ 1,855,597
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 4,246,203</b>	<b>\$ 741,367</b>	<b>\$ 4,987,570</b>

#### SFY 2017 Federal ORR and GF-S Expenditures

Service	ORR (Federal)		Total ORR (Federal)	State GF-S	Total Fed/State
	RSS	TAG			
Employment	\$ 629,565	\$ 495,699	\$ 1,125,264	\$ 1,245,050	\$ 2,370,313
ESL	\$ 178,287	\$ 577,753	\$ 756,040	\$ 653,876	\$ 1,409,916
Support Services	\$ 19,042	\$ 24,892	\$43,935	\$ 35,057	\$ 78,992
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 826,895</b>	<b>\$ 1,098,344</b>	<b>\$ 1,925,239</b>	<b>\$ 1,933,983</b>	<b>\$ 3,859,222</b>

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

The LEP Pathway uses a performance based contracting model and negotiates performance outcomes at the beginning of each contract year. For employment services, performance is reaching 30-day and 90-day job retention at the same employer. For ESL, performance is achievement of literacy skills as determined by quarterly testing. Providers report program outcomes through monthly or quarterly reporting that accompany invoices submitted for payment.

The table below shows participant and performance outcomes reported for SFY 2017, with a two-year look-back.

Services and Outcomes	Count Type <sup>15</sup>	SFY15	SFY16	SFY17
Total Number of Unduplicated LEP Pathway Participants		4,541	4,791	5,434
# Employment Service Participants	Clients	3,675	3,731 <sup>16</sup>	4,183
# ESL Services Participants		2,279	2,568	3,084
Full ESL Level Gains (Levels 1-6)	Services	891	936	1,259
Number of Job Placements	Clients	1,734	1,834	2,154
Average Hourly Wage at Job Entry		\$10.69	\$11.35	\$12.61

<sup>15</sup> 'Clients' are unduplicated count and 'Services' are duplicated count.

<sup>16</sup> *Id.*

<b>Services and Outcomes</b>	<b>Count Type<sup>15</sup></b>	<b>SFY15</b>	<b>SFY16</b>	<b>SFY17</b>
Full-Time	Services	\$10.77	\$11.55	\$12.89
Part-Time		\$10.52	\$10.94	\$11.99
Number of Job Placements with Health Benefits	Services	529	455	1,086
Work Experience (WEX)	Clients	87	185	203
Community Services (CS)	Clients	1	0	2
Skills Training	Clients	134	110	58
Intensive ESL	Clients	N/A	69	36
Support Services	Services	882	1,007	1,545
Retention - Employed 30 Days After Job Placement	Services	1,286	1,440	1,789
Retention - Employed 90 Days After	Services	975	1,150	1,381

## **CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES**

Refugees arrive in Washington State having 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 suffer with 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 provide 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 also enter into 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, some 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 LEP 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 mitigate barriers 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 more quickly by attending classes and workshops, working closely with their employment counselors and accepting available employment.

One of the best ways to understand the success of the LEP Pathway is through the stories of those served through the program.

**Mahsumeh**<sup>17</sup> came to the U.S. in the spring of 2011 from Afghanistan with her three-year-old son. She had no educational background, and enrolling in the Community Colleges of Spokane LEP Pathway’s ESL services was her first experience going to school. The LEP Pathway ESL Program helps refugees improve their English skills regardless of their level. Mahsumeh was a diligent student who worked her way through the six levels of English classes. Her teachers helped her set goals and make a plan to continue her education. The program also helped her address barriers such as finding childcare.

Upon completing her English studies, Mahsumeh enrolled in a GED program. She passed the Math, Science and Social studies test and is currently working on finishing up her last GED test. The LEP Pathway was just the beginning of her journey to rebuilding her life. She is working with her teachers at the community college to enroll in the Bank Teller training program in order to have a better chance at obtaining a full time job.

**Hameed** and his family are refugees from Iraq. They have lived in the U.S. for 3 years, 9 months. One of his three children has cerebral palsy and is in a wheelchair. Hameed chose to

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<sup>17</sup> All client names have been changed for confidentiality purposes.

come to the U.S. because of *“ISIS in Iraq. Maybe kill me and my family if we sit in Iraq. Also, my son have disability. We don’t have medicine in Iraq and nobody help him. In America, help him with medicine and doctors and now he go to school.”*

Soon after his arrival, Hameed began taking English classes through the Clark College LEP Pathway Program. Hameed knew that in order to find a job and support his family, he needed to improve his English skills. When asked why he attended ESL classes at Clark College he said it was “because we have good staff, good teachers who help me.

When he first came to the U.S., Hameed did not speak English and knew nothing about U.S. culture. Through his classes at Clark College, he gained the knowledge and skills to navigate his new community. “Now I understand how I live in America. How I rent a house, how I go shopping. Now I have experience. How I talk with my American friend. How I get loan in bank.” Hameed likes to talk! He continued with advice for new refugees. “You need relax. You need take time. I thank my God He help me. Americans good people. They help me.” With his new skills and the help of his LEP Pathway teachers and employment specialist, Hameed obtained fulltime employment and plans to resume ESL classes shortly.

**Esmatullah** arrived from Afghanistan almost two years ago and has been working with Jewish Family Service to reenter his previous career in technology. He earned a bachelor’s degree in computer science and worked in Afghanistan as a Network Infrastructure Engineer and IT Manager. In March 2017, he graduated from Coding Dojo, a local coding boot camp that he attended for three months while receiving case management and financial support from Jewish Family Service. After completing the course, Esmatullah continued to work on his job search materials with the help of Coding Dojo and his Jewish Family Service Case manager.

For college-educated refugees like Esmatullah, the professional level job search is a time consuming and arduous process and many find it difficult given all their other commitments. Esmatullah focused and found creative ways to make time for the targeted search and to make ends meet. Approximately six months after graduating from the boot camp and after several interviews with half a dozen companies, Esmatullah secured a job with Starbucks as a Configuration Technician. This job is similar to his previous work in Afghanistan and will help him build the professional network he needs to establish a strong professional career in Washington State.

**Jamal’s** philosophy on success in America is “If you work, life is good. No work, no good.” A Syrian Kurd from Aleppo, Jamal worked as a tailor for nearly 30 years in his home country. After mastering the trade, he opened his own shop where he did alterations, repairs and custom tailoring. Jamal was forced to give up his career when the Syrian civil war threatened the lives of his children. He fled with his wife Amira and their four children in 2012. They first sought refuge in Istanbul, Turkey. While it offered respite from the violence of war, Turkey offered no future for Jamal or his family. As refugees, the children could not go to school. Jamal’s eldest daughter was forced to work to help support the family because refugees can be paid half as much as Turkish citizens for the same job. As Kurds, he and his family also faced persecution in Turkey. Concerned for the safety and future of his children, Jamal decided that his family would apply to the U.N. to be considered for permanent resettlement.

After four years of screenings and interviews, they learned that they would be resettled in the United States. Jamal was overjoyed and thankful that his children would finally be safe and able to return to school.

Jamal and his family were resettled by World Relief Spokane in May 2016 and Jamal was promptly enrolled in the LEP Pathway employment program. He received assistance with transportation, job skills coaching, and employer connections provided by his employment case manager. Arrangements were made by his case manager to interview with a local commercial sewing factory, which turned into a full time job. Jamal was happy to be sewing again and his supervisors appreciated his expertise. Unfortunately, Jamal encountered some difficulty at that job and after only a few months found himself again searching for employment.

After working at a thrift shop through Community Jobs for several months, Jamal was hired as a room attendant at the Davenport Grand Hotel. While he was happy to be working and earning money to support his family, Jamal found little joy or pride in the work. He longed to return to tailoring, the trade his calls his “friend since childhood.”

While Jamal worked at the hotel, he was connected with a volunteer from World Relief who made a connection with the owner of InThreadz, a new tailoring business in the Spokane area. In June 2017, Jamal met with the owner and master tailor at inThreadz. They were immediately impressed by his sewing skills and offered him a job on the spot, despite the language barrier.

Since starting this job, Jamal has been beaming with joy and pride. He is proud to be able to use his expertise as a tailor to support his family and to enrich an American business. He is also proud to be supporting his family, independent of any government support for the first time since fleeing Syria. He is learning a lot at his new job about what it takes to be successful in America. While he loves his job, Jamal is still looking to the future. He hopes to one day own his own tailoring shop in Spokane.

## **BASIC FOOD EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (BFET)**

### **BACKGROUND**

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, formerly called the Food Stamp Program) recipients. The program design helps recipients to 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>18</sup>, skills training, vocational education, and employment assistance to Basic Food<sup>19</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>20</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 2017, ORIA provided ORIA BFET services through 12 contracts statewide. ORIA BFET contracts follow the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) schedule of October 1, 2016 thru September 30, 2017. These contractors include:

- Community-based organizations (CBOs)
- Refugee Resettlement Agencies
- Employment Security Department (ESD)
- Other organizations serving immigrants and refugees

See **Attachment B** for a list of FFY 2017<sup>21</sup> contractors.

## **ELIGIBLE POPULATION**

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

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

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<sup>18</sup> BFET educational services include adult basic education (ABE), English as a Second Language, and General Educational Development (GED).

<sup>19</sup> Basic Food is Washington State's version of the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as Food Stamps.

<sup>20</sup> Non-TANF non-refugee immigrants eligible for federal food benefits.

<sup>21</sup> BFET contracts operate on the federal fiscal year cycle: October through September.

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, 2016 – June 30, 2017:

Participants	2015	2016	2017
Total Unduplicated Participants Served	1,111	1,125	1,110
Refugees	1,033	1,030	1,037
Immigrants (non-refugee)	78	95	73

## **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 (WEX), 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 and 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>22</sup>.

## PROGRAM FUNDING

FNS offers 50% federal match for BFET related administrative and support services and 100% 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.

The following table shows the allocated budget for FFY 2016 and FFY 2017 which make up SFY 2017 as follows:

	FFY 2016	FFY 2017	SFY 2017
State 50% Match	\$ 405,088	\$ 433,001	<b>\$ 419,045</b>
Fed. 50% Match	\$ 405,088	\$ 433,001	<b>\$ 419,045</b>
Fed. 100% <sup>23</sup> upfront	\$ 423,629	\$ 0.00	<b>\$ 238,159</b>
Fed. 100% <sup>24</sup> mid-yr. <sup>25</sup>	\$ 222,595	\$ 298,100	<b>\$ 297,200</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,454,400</b>	<b>\$1,164,102</b>	<b>\$ 1,373,449</b>

## PROGRAM DISBURSEMENTS

BFET operates on a reimbursement model and ORIA BFET contractors must incur costs associated with BFET services then seek reimbursements for those expenses from DSHS on a monthly basis to cover program costs. Upon review of each billing, DSHS will reimburse for eligible services from the contracted amount.

ORIA BFET contract expected<sup>26</sup> expenditures as of June 30, 2017, totaled \$1,147,588.64. This amount represents \$423,087.63 in state funds (GF-S) used to leverage \$ 724,501.01 in federal funds (50% match and 100% federal non-match).

<sup>22</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.

<sup>23</sup> No state match needed.

<sup>24</sup> *Id.*

<sup>25</sup> General issued around July 1 each calendar year.

<sup>26</sup> Some June invoices have not been paid by report creation date.

The following chart shows ORIA BFET expenditures and monthly caseload for SFY 2017:

Month	Clients Served	Total Expenditures
Jul-16	475	\$118,368
Aug-16	454	\$117,446
Sep-16	442	\$100,635
Oct-16	437	\$ 97,920
Nov-16	432	\$ 90,481
Dec-16	403	\$ 93,781
Jan-17	404	\$ 89,895
Feb-17	398	\$ 85,772
Mar-17	418	\$ 91,842
Apr-17	413	\$ 81,454
May-17	430	\$ 91,787
Jun-17	424	\$ 88,207

## PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Participant and performance outcomes shown below as of June 30, 2017:

Outcomes	2016	2017
Entered Employment <sup>27</sup>	473	474
Full-Time	349	343
Part-Time	134	142
Average Wage	\$11.03	\$12.32
Full-Time	\$11.08	\$12.36
Part-Time	\$10.89	\$12.22
Retention - Employed 90 Days After Job Placement in the SFY	416	394

<sup>27</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.

## 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 15 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 an increasing numbers of refugees from a broader range of the world's approximate 16 million refugees.

In FFY 2017<sup>28</sup>, the top three countries of origin for refugees resettled to Washington State were:

- Ukraine
- Afghanistan
- Iraq

According to the U.S. Homeland Security Office, Yearbook of Immigration Statics 2015<sup>29</sup>, 1,051,031 individuals obtained legal permanent resident status in FFY 2014. Their birth by region is as follows:

- 40% Asia
- 35% North America
- 10% Africa
- 8% Europe
- 7% South America
- Less than 1% Oceania
- Less than 1% unknown region

Having 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 in this report are two client stories to illustrate the success of the ORIA BFET programs.

**Kaka**<sup>30</sup> is a 41-year-old mother of three who arrived in the United States in 2016 from Eritrea. Kaka was a homemaker and lived in a refugee camp most of her adult life. When Kaka first went

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<sup>28</sup> <http://www.wrapsnet.org/Reports/AdmissionsArrivals>

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2015>

<sup>30</sup> All client names have been changed for confidentiality purposes.

to the Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA) and enrolled in the ORIA BFET program, she worked with an Arabic and Tigrigna language speaking case manager, the two languages that Kaka speaks fluently. Kaka was pleased to work with a case manager that spoke her language and was sensitive to her culture.

The case manager assessed Kaka's barriers, challenges and needs and helped put a plan together. Some of her barriers were limited English, no employment experience, and no formal education. Her case manager encouraged Kaka to attend the English classes consistently and push herself to speak and express herself. After three months of English classes, Kaka went to a job fair and interviewed with LSG Sky Chefs. Kaka was unable to speak well or answer most questions. Although she felt discouraged, her case manager told her not to worry and that she needed to go through the experience and see how interviews work in the US. Together, they practiced interview skills.

Kaka's case manager secured another interview for her with a staffing agency in Kent. She went to the interview and received a temporary job where she packaged candy and assisted with the assembly line. During this time, she continued going to English classes. In June 2017, Kaka took a job at the Embassy Suites Hotel in a permanent full time job earning \$14 per hour. Kaka is now able to help her family with rent and other expenses.

**Batool** is a refugee from Iran. She recently moved to Washington from Michigan and faced many barriers to employment when she arrived in Washington. She did not have transportation, stable housing, English literacy or conversation skills, and she had no network of friends or family. Batool completed high school in her home country and worked as a tailor for 10 years before relocating to the United States, so she came with valuable skills. Her ORIA BFET provider, Refugee Immigrant Services NW (RISNW) helped her enroll in ESL classes at Edmonds Community College. RISNW helped her to get a bus pass and to pay for textbooks through ORIA BFET support services.

In addition to following up with her regarding her ESL studies, RISNW staff helped her search for a job. RISNW staff worked with Batool to create her resume, complete job applications, and coach her on the etiquette and expectations of an interview.

RISNW staff helped her apply for numerous jobs in the food, customer service and housekeeping industries. Using RISNW's longtime connection with Basson Bakery in Lynnwood, Batool's case manager helped her secure a part-time job at the bakery.

Because she needed employment that would sustain her, she continued to search for full time work *while* working part time *and* keeping up with her attendance at Edmonds Community College. She received several job offers only to find that transportation remained a barrier for many of these opportunities. In the end, with the help of ORIA BFET and RISNW, Batool finally secured full time employment, and she continues her English language studies.

## ATTACHMENT A

### SFY 2017 LEP PATHWAY CONTRACTORS

<b>Contractor</b>	<b>Service</b>	<b>Contract Amount</b>
Asian Counseling & Referral Services	EMP	\$275,241
Bellingham Technical College	ESL	\$55,434
Clark College	ESL	\$240,709
Columbia Basin College	ESL	\$186,000
Community Colleges of Spokane	ESL	\$399,565
Diocese of Olympia	ESL & INT	\$266,997
ESD – Spokane	EMP	\$146,705
Highline Community College	ESL	\$663,676
Jewish Family Service	EMP	\$478,313
Lutheran Community Services	ESL	\$65,000
North Seattle Community College	ESL	\$34,694
Partners in Careers	EMP	\$224,564
Puget Sound Training Center	EMP	\$390,293
Refugee & Immigrant Services NW	EMP	\$439,434
Refugee & Immigrant Services NW	EMP	\$343,667
Refugee Federation – King	EMP	\$807,356
Refugee Women's Alliance	EMP	\$691,233
Refugee Women's Alliance	ESL & INT	\$454,146
Renton Technical College	ESL	\$178,000
Shoreline Community College	ESL	\$55,681
South Seattle College	ESL	\$200,038
Tacoma Community House	EMP	\$152,198
Tacoma Community House	ESL	\$213,788
TRAC Associates – King	EMP & SK	\$1,136,855
TRAC Associates – Pierce	EMP	\$137,894
TRAC Associates – Snohomish	EMP	\$27,049
TRAC Associates – Thurston	EMP	\$27,187
World Relief - King	EMP	\$257,141
World Relief – Spokane	EMP	\$196,997
World Relief – Tri-Cities	EMP	\$177,725
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$8,923,580</b>

EMP- Employment Provider  
 ESL- ESL provider  
 INT- Intensive ESL  
 SK- Skills Training

## ATTACHMENT B

### FFY 2017 ORIA BFET CONTRACTORS

<b>Contractor</b>	<b>Initial<sup>31</sup></b>	<b>Mid-year adjustment<sup>32</sup></b>	<b>Contract Amount</b>
Asian Counseling & Referral Services	\$ 66,430	\$ 1,200	\$ 67,630
ESD Spokane	\$ 30,550	6,700	\$ 37,250
Neighborhood House	\$ 83,810	18,300	\$ 102,110
Partners In Career	\$41,970	\$1,700	\$43,670
Refugee Federation Service Center	\$ 68,500	\$ 22,900	\$ 91,400
Refugee & Immigrant Services NW	\$ 65,755	\$ 15,200	\$ 80,955
Refugee Women's Alliance	\$ 94,840	\$ 52,800	\$ 147,640
TRAC - King County	\$ 105,390	\$ 80,300	\$ 185,690
TRAC - Pierce County	\$ 52,690	\$ 900	\$ 53,590
TRAC - Snohomish County	\$ 22,120	\$ 10,100	\$ 32,220
World Relief - Seattle	\$ 77,935	\$ 29,800	\$ 107,735
World Relief - Spokane	\$ 156,013	\$ 58,200	\$ 214,213
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 866,003</b>		<b>\$ 1,164,103</b>

<sup>31</sup> Combines 50/50 match and 100% federal funds.

<sup>32</sup> Increase due to additional 100% federal funds pass-through for additional client service. Decrease contract allotment to match changes in goals/outcome.

## ATTACHMENT C<sup>33</sup>

### Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) Score Correlation

ESL Level	Description	Score Range
<b>ESL 1</b>	<p><b>Beginning Literacy / Pre-Beginning ESL</b></p> <p>Listening/Speaking: Functions minimally, if at all, in English. Communicates only through gestures and a few isolated words.</p> <p>Reading/Writing: May not be literate in any language.</p> <p>Employability: 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 would be extremely limited.</p>	<b>180 and below</b>
<b>ESL 2</b>	<p><b>Low Beginning ESL</b></p> <p>Listening/Speaking: 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>Reading/Writing: Recognizes and writes letters and numbers and reads and understands common sight words. Can write own name and address.</p> <p>Employability: 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>ESL 3</b>	<p><b>High Beginning ESL</b></p> <p>Listening/Speaking: 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>Reading/Writing: 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>Employability: Can handle routine entry-level jobs that involve only the most basic oral or written communication in English and in which all tasks can be demonstrated.</p>	<b>191-200</b>
<b>ESL 4</b>	<p><b>Low Intermediate ESL</b></p> <p>Listening/Speaking: 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>Reading/Writing: 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>	<b>201-210</b>

<sup>33</sup> Source <https://www.casas.org/docs/pagecontents/eslsld.pdf?sfvrsn=8?Status=Master>

ESL Level	Description	Score Range
	Employability: 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.	
<b>ESL 5</b>	<p><b>High Intermediate ESL</b></p> <p>Listening/Speaking: 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>Reading/Writing: 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>Employability: Can handle jobs and/or training that involve following basic oral and written instructions and diagrams if they can be clarified orally.</p>	<b>211-220</b>
<b>ESL 6</b>	<p><b>Advanced ESL</b></p> <p>Listening/Speaking: 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>Reading/Writing: 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>Employability: 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>	<b>221-235</b>
	<b>Exit ESL Program</b>	<b>236</b>