

## Maintain Access to Citizenship: Increase Funding for the Washington New Americans Program

The Washington New Americans (WNA) program is a public-private partnership between the State of Washington and OneAmerica, a non-partisan non-profit dedicated to promoting democracy in immigrant and refugee communities. Our goal is to **support successful immigrant integration** by connecting eligible Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) to information and services they need to successfully pursue citizenship and become active members of our community. We work in partnership with the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA) and community organizations across the state to provide the following services at no cost:

1. Information about the naturalization process;
2. Citizenship application assistance (N-400 Form); and
3. Legal review of applications by a volunteer attorney or accredited representative.

**WNA** has served **more than 13,300** people through our roving citizenship clinics, network of volunteers and partner organizations, and dedicated multi-language information hotline since FY 2009.

### Services Provided Since 2009:

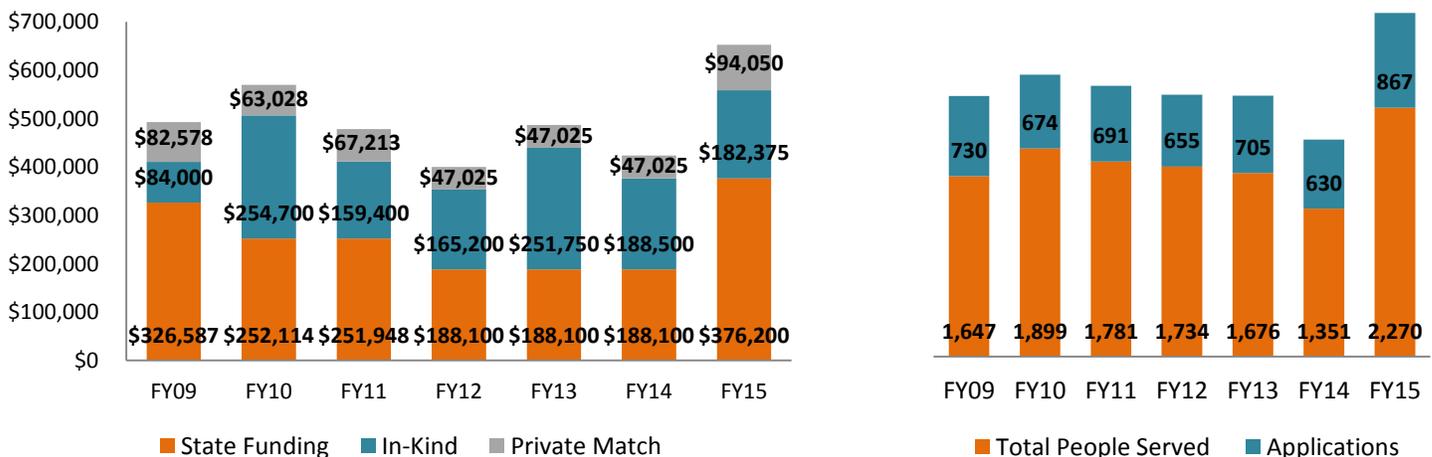
- 5,367 total naturalization applications completed;
- 6,382 hours of pro bono legal services;
- \$443,893 private dollars leveraged

### The Growing Need to Support WNA:

WNA is a proven program that has met and exceeded its contract goals during each year of its existence. However, the demand for naturalization services is rapidly surpassing our capacity. **The number of Washington State residents who are eligible and could benefit from WNA’s services has increased by 33% since the program’s inception, from 135,000 in 2008 to more than 180,000.**

During FY 2015, the state legislature funded WNA at \$396,000. However, when the program was created in 2009, the budget proviso indicated that the program be funded at \$1,000,000 per year.

### WNA Funding and Services Provided



\*State funding reflects amount received after a 5% contract administration fee taken by Department of Commerce.

## WNA Provides a Return on Investment

### Public-Private Partnership

WNA leverages state funding by raising additional funds through private grants and in-kind donations. For every \$1 invested by Washington's legislature, **we leverage an additional \$1.05 in private funds** and in-kind legal services to effectively provide quality citizenship assistance.

### Program Efficiency

The approximate cost for application and legal services provided through WNA is approximately \$159 per case (FY09-FY15 average), compared to the average of \$1,500 in attorney fees for these services. This represents a small investment for the economic, social and civic benefits of citizenship.

### Strengthening Our Economy

Naturalization creates economic growth by raising incomes for newly naturalized citizens and supporting entrepreneurship. According to research by the Economic Policy Institute, naturalized immigrants had an average of 14.6% higher incomes than non-citizen immigrants and much lower poverty rates, even when you eliminate factors like gender, race, and education, country of origin and length of time in the U.S.

A 2015 WNA Program Client Survey found that **31% of clients who naturalized through the program reported improvement in their financial situation** and **30% reported a positive employment status change since they naturalized**. Moreover, a 2010 Kaufman Foundation study found immigrants were **more than twice as likely to start a new business** as native-born Americans. And the foreign-born share of Washington's population continues to rise – from 6.6% in 1990, to 10.4% in 2000, to 13.5% in 2013, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

### Cost Savings to the State

WNA saves money for the state by referring clients on public assistance to DSHS' Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA) naturalization program, saving the state money by moving refugees and elderly and disabled immigrants from state-funded programs to federally-funded public assistance. In its lifetime, WNA has referred 2,850 clients on public benefits to ORIA, **saving Washington State nearly \$3,000 per client** who naturalizes or **\$8.55 million total since 2009**. Washington State's current FY15 investment of \$396,000 into the WNA program will ultimately save the state \$1.21 million.



Pictured: Carmen with her application filled out with assistance from WNA Citizenship Day volunteers.