

Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance

Economic Services Administration | Community Services Division

REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS FOR NATURALIZATION SERVICES

The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services’ Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance is accepting applications from qualified organizations interested in providing naturalization services to qualified Washington residents. The application deadline is 5:00 p.m., April 7, 2023.

This document provides an overview of the Naturalization Services Program and instructions on how to complete the application.

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SECTION A CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

1. Purpose

The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services' (DSHS) Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA) is seeking qualified contractors to submit competitive proposals to assist eligible refugees and immigrants in becoming U.S. citizens by providing naturalization services.

The purpose of this Request for Applications is to solicit applications for the best service delivery of naturalization services that will assist low-income refugees and immigrants in securing U.S. citizenship. Qualified applicants must have the capacity to provide specialized services that are culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate to assist immigrants receiving public assistance who are eligible and prepared to successfully naturalize in Washington state. ORIA intends to award multiple contracts statewide covering a diverse range of geographic and ethnic communities in Washington state.

2. Background

Washington state has a large and dynamic refugee and immigrant community, and is among the top ten refugee receiving states in the nation. According to the 2021 American Community Survey, out of Washington's 2021 total estimated population of 7,595,088, approximately 15.1 percent (1,143,311) are foreign-born and 49.0 percent (560,282) of those are Naturalized U.S. citizens¹.

Naturalization is one of the hallmarks of successful integration. Each year, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) naturalizes approximately 800,000 citizens across the U.S. and around the world. In Federal Fiscal Year 2021, 809,388 people became U.S. citizens, including 17,388 people in Washington state². The geographic area of Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue has consistently ranked in the top 15 nationally in naturalizations since 2012³.

Immigrants who naturalize receive the same rights as other citizens, including the right to vote and the ability to participate in civic engagement. Other benefits include full protection of the U.S. Constitution, freedom to travel abroad, and eligibility for federal benefits, such as Social Security benefits and Medicare. According to the USCIS's Eligible-to-Naturalize dashboard, it is estimated that there are 202,181 eligible immigrants in Washington state⁴.

¹U.S. Census Bureau, American Fact Finder: <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=0400000US53&d=ACS%201-Year%20Estimates%20Data%20Profiles&tid=ACSDP1Y2021.DP02>

² USCIS, Naturalization Data Set: <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-and-studies/immigration-and-citizenship-data>

³ Homeland Security, Immigration Statistics Yearbook: <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2020>, Naturalizations 2020 (Tables 20-24) , Table 23

⁴ USCIS's Eligible to Naturalize Dashboard: <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-and-studies/immigration-and-citizenship-data/eligible-to-naturalize-dashboard>

3. Project Scope

ORIA is interested in proposals that include creative and innovative approaches to providing naturalization services to eligible refugees and immigrants. Strategies may include leveraging resources from other funding sources and using technology to support naturalization services.

Applicants must be able to work successfully in coordination with other organizations serving immigrants to ensure strong public/private partnerships, maximize community resources, create a seamless service delivery system and provide the best value for funded services.

The Naturalization Services Program provides services that assist eligible refugees and immigrants in becoming naturalized U.S. citizens. Services include, but are not limited to:

- Intake Screening
- Assistance with the following USCIS forms and applications:
 - N-400 Naturalization Application
 - Fee Waiver Request
 - Reduced Fee Request
 - N-648 Disability Exception
 - N-600 Application for Certificate of Citizenship
- Citizenship Training
- Interview Preparation
- Interview Assistance
- Appeals to the Board of Immigration Appeals
- Verification of Naturalization Attainment

ORIA is interested in proposals that prioritize services to the following people:

- Admitted as a refugee or granted asylum on or after August 22, 1996, who are currently receiving federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI), have been in the U.S. for at least four (4) years and have not naturalized;
- Admitted as a refugee or granted asylum who are currently receiving state-funded Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD) benefits; or
- Lawful permanent residents (LPR) who are currently receiving ABD benefit.

Services are limited to legal non-citizens immigrants who:

- Receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or other Washington state administered cash, food and medical assistance;
- Meet the eligibility criteria to apply for U.S. citizenship, including lawful permanent residence status; and
- Are eligible to naturalize or will be eligible to naturalize within one (1) year of receiving services.

Applicants shall identify the key personnel to perform the services and include their experience and qualifications. If awarded a contract, the applicant shall not make changes to key personnel, unless requested or approved by ORIA.

Applicants may either submit an application on their own or within a consortium, but not both in the same county. For example, an applicant cannot submit an application as a primary contractor in King County and be a consortium member for another primary contractor in King County. An applicant may submit an application as a primary contractor in Snohomish County and be a consortium member for another primary contractor in King County.

All organizations interested in providing ORIA Naturalization Services must submit an application under this request. This includes organizations that currently hold a Naturalization Services Program contract with ORIA. There is no guarantee of an award to any current contractor. There is no guarantee that current contractors who are awarded a contract will receive the same level of funding.

4. Applicant Minimum Qualifications

All applicants and their subcontractors, if applicable, must meet the following minimum qualifications:

- a. Have a current State of Washington business license.
- b. Have active status as a “recognized organization” with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Legal Access Programs (OLAP). This authorization was formerly administered by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA). If proposing as a consortium, all members providing direct services to eligible refugees and immigrants in the consortium must be recognized organizations.
- c. Have at least two years of experience within the past three years providing naturalization services to eligible refugees and immigrants.
- d. Have the requisite electronic hardware and software to communicate with DSHS and to provide invoices, participant data, supporting documentation and other information through DSHS’ secure email system. Minimum hardware requirements include a computer with internet access. Minimum software requirements include Microsoft Windows and Microsoft Office.
- e. Have a service location and space that is accessible to refugees and immigrants with disabilities and conveniently located to public transportation.
- f. Have the capacity to serve all eligible participants in their primary language and in culturally appropriate ways.

Applicants failing to demonstrate in their applications that they meet these minimum qualifications will be considered non-responsive and will be disqualified from further consideration.

5. Period of Contract Performance

ORIA intends to award multiple contracts for the services described in this Request for Applications. The period of performance under the contract shall be July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. Amendments extending the period of performance after June 30, 2024, if any, shall be at the sole discretion of ORIA. Additional services that are appropriate to the scope of this Request for Applications, as determined by ORIA, may be added to the contract in a mutually agreeable amendment.

6. Funding

ORIA's Naturalization Services Program receives \$2,545,000 in general state funding to invest in naturalization services. ORIA may reject any application in excess of that amount. Any contract awarded is contingent upon the availability of funding.

SECTION B
EXPLANATION OF APPLICATION PROCESS

1. Application Schedule

The application schedule set forth below outlines the tentative schedule for important events relating to this Request for Applications.

Item	Action	Date
1.	ORIA posts Request For Applications and Attachments	3/6/2023
2.	Applicants may submit questions until 5 p.m. Pacific Time to be included in the Q&A document	3/17/2023
3.	ORIA will post response to questions (Q&A document) on the ORIA Webpage	3/22/2023
4.	Applicants must submit complete Applications by 5:00 p.m., Pacific Time, to Naturalization@dshs.wa.gov	4/7/2023
5.	Evaluation of Applications (three or more Evaluators)	4/10/2023- 4/28/2023
6.	Review Application Scores	5/2/2023- 5/5/2023
7.	Announcement of Successful Applicant(s) and beginning of contract negotiations	5/9/2023
8.	ORIA notifies unsuccessful Applicant(s)	5/9/2023
9.	Unsuccessful Applicants may request a debriefing conference until 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time. Unsuccessful Applicants shall submit request to Naturalization@dshs.wa.gov	5/12/2023
10.	ORIA holds debriefing conferences, if requested	5/17/2023
11.	DSHS sends contracts for signatures	6/2/2023
12.	Successful Applicants must return signed contracts by 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time	6/23/2023
13.	Contract Execution/Start Date	7/1/2023

2. Posting of Request for Applications Documents

ORIA will post this Request for Applications, and all documents and announcements relating to this Request for Applications, on the DSHS ORIA webpage at <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/office-refugee-and-immigrant-assistance>.

3. Communications regarding Request for Applications

Upon the posting of this Request for Applications, all communications concerning this request must be directed to this email address: Naturalization@dshs.wa.gov. ORIA may disqualify any organization who communicates with anyone in DSHS in any other way regarding this Request for Applications.

ORIA considers all oral communications unofficial and non-binding on ORIA. Applicants should rely only on written statements issued by ORIA.

4. Questions and Answers

Applicants may send questions concerning this Request for Applications to ORIA at Naturalization@dshs.wa.gov and should include "Request for Applications" in the subject line. ORIA will respond to all questions, but may consolidate the questions as needed.

Questions received by 5:00 p.m., March 17, 2023 will be included in a question and answer document posted on the DSHS ORIA webpage at <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/office-refugee-and-immigrant-assistance> on March 22, 2023.

5. Minority & Women's Business Enterprises (MWBE) and Veteran-Owned Business Enterprises

In accordance with the legislative findings and policies set forth in RCW 39.19, 43.60A.200, 39.26.240 and 39.26.245, the State of Washington encourages participation by veteran-owned business enterprises and Minority-Owned and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE), either self-identified or certified by, respectively, the Department of Veterans Affairs or the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE). While the State does not give preferential treatment, it does seek equitable representation from the veterans, minority and women's business communities.

Participation by veteran-owned and MWBE contractors may be either on a direct basis in response to this Request for Applications or as a subcontractor to a contractor. However, no preference will be given in the evaluation of Applications, no minimum level of MWBE or veteran-owned business participation shall be required, and Applications will not be evaluated, rejected, or considered non-responsive on that basis.

Applicants may contact the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprises (OMWBE) at <http://omwbe.wa.gov/> and/or the Department of Veterans Affairs at <http://www.dva.wa.gov/program/veteran-owned-business-certification> to obtain information on certified firms for potential subcontracting arrangements or for information on how to become certified. Nothing in this section is intended to prevent or discourage participation from non-MWBE firms or non-veteran-owned businesses.

6. Auxiliary Aids and Limited English Proficient (LEP) Services

ORIA will provide access to this Request for Applications document to individuals with disabilities and Limited English Proficient individuals. Please contact ORIA at Naturalization@dshs.wa.gov to request more information and assistance.

If an individual believes that the Department has discriminated against them on the basis of a protected status, please contact the DSHS Investigations Unit for the Nondiscrimination Policy Brochure and complaint process. The brochure can be found at <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/publications/documents/Non-discrim%2022-171.pdf>

7. Cost to Prepare Application

ORIA will not be liable for any costs incurred by organizations in preparing, conducting a site assessment or submitting a response to this Request for Applications.

8. Joint Proposals

Organizations submitting a joint application must designate a lead organization or primary applicant. The primary applicant will be the sole point of contact through the Request for Application process. If selected as the successful applicant, the primary applicant shall sign the contract and any amendments, and will be liable and responsible to ORIA for all performance under the contract.

9. Withdrawal of Applications

After an application has been submitted, applicants may withdraw their application by notifying ORIA at Naturalization@dshs.wa.gov.

10. Ownership of Applications

All materials submitted in response to this Request for Applications become the property of ORIA, unless received after the deadline in which case the application shall be returned to the sender. ORIA shall have the right to use any of the ideas presented as part of the process in any manner as it deems appropriate or beneficial, regardless of whether it is contained in an application that results in selection for a contract.

11. Announcement of Successful Applicant(s)

ORIA shall notify the successful applicant(s) on May 9, 2023. All announcements of successful applicants are subject to satisfactory negotiation with ORIA.

Applicants may request a debriefing conference to Naturalization@dshs.wa.gov to discuss information regarding the review and/or evaluation of their application.

12. Ethics, Policies and Law

This Request for Applications, the evaluation of applications, and any resulting contract will be made in conformance with applicable Washington State laws and Policies.

Specific restrictions apply to contracting with current or former state employees pursuant to RCW 42.52. Applicants should familiarize themselves with the requirements prior to submitting an application. Applicants must include, in their application, information regarding any current or former state employees who are employed by, or subcontracted with, the applicant.

SECTION C
INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING CONTENT, FORMAT AND SUBMISSION OF
APPLICATIONS

Applicants shall submit their application documents to ORIA at Naturalization@dshs.wa.gov by 5:00 p.m., April 7, 2023. Each attachment represents a separate section of the application and should be submitted separately when submitting the complete application. Failure to complete and submit all required documents, and to sign them, if applicable, may result in the disqualification of an application. Applications should be typed in 12 point font and should be submitted in the following order with each section of the application clearly labeled.

1. Attachment A: Cover Sheet

All applicants must submit a completed Cover Sheet with the minimum contents, which include all of the required acknowledgments and information. The Cover Sheet must be signed by a legally authorized individual to bind the applicant contractually.

2. Attachment B: Applicant Narrative Form

Applicants must provide answers to all questions on the Applicant Narrative Form to demonstrate satisfaction of administrative requirements, as well as their qualifications, approach and proposed budget to provide the services as outlined in this Request for Applications. The number of points allocated to each answer is indicated next to the question.

The Applicant Narrative Form is posted separately from this document in Microsoft Word format. Except for limits that are noted on the Applicant Narrative Form, applicants may utilize as much space as needed to respond to each question. Applicants should not submit brochures, white papers, testimonials or other pre-prepared materials in response to any of the questions unless specifically requested.

Applicants must submit complete, well-organized answers that address all of the questions asked in the Applicant Narrative Form. Applicants should not assume that evaluators will be familiar with their businesses before conducting the evaluation.

Use of Attachment B, Applicant Narrative Form, assures that the applicant responds to specific questions in the proper order. In awarding points, evaluators will not be obligated to search through the applicant's answers to questions other than the one being reviewed in order to locate text that is responsive to the question being reviewed.

3. Attachment C: Naturalization Services Program Annual Budget Spreadsheet

Applicant must describe the annual costs for providing proposed services for one year using Attachment C, Naturalization Services Program Annual Budget Spreadsheet.

4. Attachment D: Applicant Certifications and Assurances

All applicants must submit the Applicant Certifications and Assurances form set forth on Attachment D, signed by an individual legally authorized to bind the organization contractually. Applicants may not alter or redline the Applicant Certifications and Assurances form in their application. Submitting altered or redlined terms or requirements in the application may result in disqualification.

5. Attachment E: Contractor Intake Form

All applicants must complete and sign the Contractor Intake Form (Form 27-043) attached to this Request for Applications as Attachment E. This form can also be downloaded in Microsoft Word format for ease of completion at <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/office-of-the-secretary/forms>.

6. Submission of Applications

Applications must be saved in an acceptable electronic format and emailed directly to ORIA at Naturalization@dshs.wa.gov. Applications must be received by ORIA in their entirety by 5:00 p.m., April 7, 2023. Applicant's completed version of each of the Attachments A, B, C, D and E should be included as separate attachments.

Applicants assume all risks for the timely submission of the application. Applicants are responsible to ensure timely electronic receipt of their application by ORIA. ORIA does not assume responsibility for problems with the applicant's email or network. However, if DSHS email is not working properly, appropriate allowances will be made.

ORIA will not accept late applications, nor grant time extensions for individual applicants. ORIA will disqualify any applications and withdraw it from consideration if it is received after the application submission due date and time.

7. Acceptable Electronic Formats for Submission of Applications

Attachments A, B, D, E (Cover Sheet, Applicant Narrative, Certification & Assurances and Contractor Intake form) must be submitted in Microsoft Word or Adobe PDF format. Attachment C, Naturalization Services Program Annual Budget, must be submitted in Microsoft Excel as an unprotected file.

NOTE: DSHS cannot receive emails that are larger than 30MB. To keep file sizes to a minimum, applicants are cautioned not to use unnecessary graphics in their applications. If your application approaches or exceeds 30MB, you must break it up and send it by more than one email so that no single email exceeds 30MB.

8. Alternative Submission Methods

Applicants wishing to request an alternative method for submitting their Application must contact ORIA at Naturalization@dshs.wa.gov at least ten (10) calendar days before the application submission date. No alternative submission method will be accepted unless agreed to by ORIA in writing prior to the application deadline.

SECTION D EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS

1. Application Responsiveness; Administrative Review

All applications will be reviewed by ORIA to determine compliance with administrative and minimum qualification requirements and instructions specified in this Request for Applications. ORIA may reject an application as nonresponsive at any time for any of the following reasons:

- Incomplete application
- Submission of an application that proposes services that deviate from the scope and technical requirements set forth in this document and Attachment F, Sample Contract
- Failure to meet the minimum applicant qualifications or to comply with any requirement set forth in this Request for Applications document, including attachments
- Submission of incorrect, misleading, or false information
- History of prior unsatisfactory contractual performance

ORIA may contact any applicant for clarification of the application. If an application is deemed non-responsive, it shall be removed from further consideration. ORIA shall notify non-responsive applicant(s) of this determination and the supporting reasons. Applications found to be non-responsive will be disqualified from further evaluation and applicants shall be notified electronically in writing.

If an applicant meets all administrative and applicant qualification requirements and submittal instructions, ORIA shall continue with the evaluation.

2. Errors in Application

Applicants are responsible for all errors or omissions contained in their applications. Applicants will not be allowed to alter application documents after the deadline for application submissions.

ORIA reserves the right to contact any applicant for clarification of application contents.

ORIA reserves the right to waive minor administrative irregularities contained in any applications.

3. Evaluation Criteria and Scoring of Applications

Following the administrative review, applications shall be evaluated and points shall be awarded for the management and budget components of the application, as applicable,

based upon applicant's responses to the questions set forth in Attachment B, Applicant Narrative Form and Attachment C, Naturalization Services Program Annual Budget Spreadsheet.

The maximum number of points available for each applicant is 100. The maximum number of points that may be assigned with respect to specific questions is set forth on Attachment B, Applicant Narrative form.

4. Application Evaluation Process

ORIA shall designate an evaluation team of at least three evaluators to review, evaluate and score the written question responses. These evaluators will be selected based on their qualifications, experience, capability and background.

Evaluators shall assign scores up to the maximum points available. Individual evaluator points will be totaled and the average points for each applicant will be calculated. The applicant's average points earned for each question will be added together to determine the applicant's total written evaluation points.

5. Evaluation Points to Small and Veteran-Owned Businesses

In accordance with [DES Policy 090-060](#) Supplier Diversity, ORIA shall consider awarding evaluation points to Veteran-Owned and/or Washington Small Businesses.

ORIA will evaluate applications for best value and provide an application preference point in the amount set forth in Attachment B, Applicant Narrative Form, to any applicant who certifies that they are Small Business (as defined in [RCW 39.26.010\(22\)](#)) or Veteran-Owned Business.

6. Applicant's References

Once the evaluations are completed, ORIA may request references from applicants in order to review past performance and validate information submitted in the application.

7. Selection of Successful Applicant

Applicants that receive the highest total number of points from evaluators will be presented to ORIA for consideration for a contract. ORIA will consider total funding available and the funds requested by successful applicants in order to determine the total number of final contracts awarded.

The selection process will determine which applicants provide the best value in providing high quality naturalization services that respond to the needs of refugee and immigrant communities in Washington state. Selection of the successful applicants depends upon ORIA's assessment of multiple factors, including the applicant's qualifications, proven experience, reliability, quality of proposed services and

deliverables, timeliness, cost and potential impact.

ORIA may consider the following criteria in making final determinations:

- Ensuring services in diverse geographic areas in Washington state;
- Ability to serve diverse language and cultural groups;
- Realistic cost estimates that demonstrate efficiencies.

ORIA may also consider the past performance on prior contracts, and may reject an application from any organization who has failed to perform satisfactorily under any previous contract with the state or another party. ORIA reserves the right to select an applicant whose application is deemed to offer the best overall value, and that is in the best interests of serving the immigrant and refugee community in Washington state.

ORIA will make the final determination as to which applicant(s), will be designated as apparently successful applicants on May 9, 2023. ORIA will notify successful applicants and unsuccessful applicants of its determination via email on May 9, 2023.

ORIA's decision will be subject to the execution of a contract satisfactory to ORIA within a reasonable period of time following the announcement of the successful applicant. In the event the parties are unable to reach agreement on the final details of a contract, consistent with Attachment F, Sample Contract, ORIA shall have the option of negotiating with the next highest ranked applicant.

**SECTION E
APPLICANT DEBRIEFING
PROCEDURE**

1. Debriefing Conferences

No later than 5:00 p.m. on the third business day following the announcement of successful applicants, applicants may send an email to Naturalization@dshs.wa.gov requesting a debriefing conference. Unless a different date is agreed upon by ORIA, the debriefing conference will be held on May 17, 2023. Discussion at the debriefing conference will be limited to the following:

- If the applicant's proposal was rejected, the reason for its rejection
- Evaluation and scoring of the application
- Critique of the application based on the evaluation
- Review of applicant's final score in comparison with the other final scores

No comparisons between applications will be allowed during the debriefing conference, which shall be conducted by telephone and shall last for a maximum period of 30 minutes.

**SECTION F
CONTRACTING PROCEDURES**

1. Contract Execution

The successful applicant is expected to sign a contract with ORIA that is similar to Attachment F, Sample Contract, and to enter into any subsequent contract amendments that may be required to address specific work or services.

ORIA reserves the right to negotiate the specific wording of the Statement of Work, based on the requirements of this Request for Applications and the terms of the application submitted by the successful applicant. If changes are requested as part of the application, ORIA may consider, but shall be under no obligation to agree to, modifications to the General Terms and Conditions of Attachment F, Sample Contract.

If the successful applicant fails or refuses to sign a contract within fifteen (15) business days of delivery by ORIA, ORIA may elect to designate the next highest-ranked finalist as the successful applicant.

2. Electronic Payment

The State prefers to utilize electronic payment in its transactions. The successful applicant will be required to register in the [Statewide Vendor Payment system](#), prior to submitting a request for payment under their contract. No payment shall be made until the registration is completed.