



Mission: Connect and educate Latina families to transform lives and our Yakima Valley.

MEMO

RE: Cities for Citizenship—Request for Letter of Support from City of Yakima

To: Yakima City Council & City Manager

From: Laura Armstrong, Executive Director of La Casa Hogar (laura@lacasahogar.org / 509-457-5058) & Board of La Casa Hogar

Date: June 18, 2019

La Casa Hogar respectfully requests Yakima City Council offer a letter of support to apply for a grant on July 19th for citizenship work. This letter of support will mark the next step of a collaboration La Casa initiated in June 2018. La Casa seeks this letter to reinforce public verbal support for this work, to strengthen the proposal, and generate wider support for this important work.

La Casa's citizenship program was founded in 2010 when La Casa began offering classes in response to community demand for citizenship support. Since 2010, thousands of community members have attended classes at La Casa and **over 1,200** of our Yakima Valley neighbors are now US Citizens as a result. This program relies on partnerships with other groups including Englewood Christian Church, St. Michael's Mission, and several local organizations.

Cities for Citizenship is a program hosted by a national group: National Partnership for New Americans. Cities for Citizenship is a national initiative aimed at increasing citizenship among eligible U.S. lawful permanent residents and encouraging cities across the country to invest in citizenship programs. La Casa began a conversation in June 2018 with the Partnership Committee regarding this opportunity. From there, the full City Council approved a proclamation of "New Citizens Day" on October 2nd, 2018. The City also joined the "Cities for Citizenship" program and is now publicly one of the 73 cities and counties that have adopted this designation. (See here: <http://www.citiesforcitizenship.com/cities-counties>). La Casa's current request for a letter of support is the next step in developing this partnership.

Cities for Citizenship offers two-year grants ranging from \$25,000-40,000. La Casa will apply and if awarded, receive the funds to support the citizenship program serving the City of Yakima and beyond. As part of this application, La Casa needs to demonstrate our partnership with the City. In the letter of support, La Casa will ask for: verbal support, the city to share provided information flyers about citizenship resources in town, annually proclaim New Citizens Day on or about October 2nd, and as available- ask a City volunteer/employee during webinars or trainings with Cities for Citizenship.

Why does this matter? Research from [USC Dornsife](#) reveals that in Yakima County alone, over 12,100 people are currently eligible for citizenship. About 60% of those individuals have low probability to naturalize due to barriers such as language, transportation, little formal education, and intimidation. La Casa works with those community members and offers case management from class registration to oath ceremony. Equipped with legal expertise and accredited through the Department of Justice, La Casa maintains a 92-99% success rate among those who apply and successfully become US Citizens.

What are next steps? La Casa respectfully requests the City of Yakima to approve a letter of support on July 2nd during the City Council meeting and direct a city employee to work with La Casa to draft and finalize the official letter.

Thank you for your consideration.

106 South 6th Street ~ Yakima, WA 98901 ~ 509.457.5058