



GRANTMAKERS CONCERNED WITH
IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES



Northwest Area
Foundation

Reducing Poverty. Building Prosperity.

Grantees for Immigrant Asset-Building Initiative Announced

Credit Unions and Immigrant Service Providers to Launch Initiative in Washington and Iowa

Sebastopol, CA - (September 11, 2014) - [Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees](#) (GCIR), the [National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions](#) (Federation), and the [Northwest Area Foundation](#) (NWAFF) are pleased to announce the grantees selected for the [Northwest Area Immigrant Asset-Building Initiative](#) (Initiative), a project designed to connect low-income immigrants to safe and affordable financial products and quality immigration services. The two grant recipients are [OneAmerica](#), which will collaborate with [Lower Valley Credit Union](#) (LVCU) in Washington State, and [Ascentra Credit Union](#), which will partner with the [Diversity Service Center of Iowa](#) (DSCI).

With generous support from NWAFF, the grantees will conduct a year-long campaign to provide immigration and financial services for immigrants in the two states. The partnership between OneAmerica and Lower Valley Credit Union will facilitate citizenship clinics in Washington State, where credit union staff will offer financial education and financing options for the \$680 naturalization application fee in tandem with immigration legal services provided by OneAmerica and its local affiliate, [La Casa Hogar](#). In Iowa, Ascentra Credit Union and DSCI will work together to provide preferred rate financing options for those seeking assistance with immigration application fees, as well as financial education and citizenship courses.

"A successful citizenship application can change an immigrant's life for the better," said GCIR President Daranee Petsod. "This Initiative helps low-income, often unbanked immigrants in two critical ways: (1) It offers affordable loans to pay the required application fees, and (2) it introduces them to mainstream financial services that are essential to attaining the American Dream. In so doing, it amplifies the impact of substantial philanthropic investments in services to help immigrants naturalize."

"Through this Initiative, best practices that we are identifying for delivering safe and affordable financial services to recent immigrants will be shared across our credit union network," said Cathie Mahon, Federation President/CEO. "Partnerships between credit unions and local community organizations are proving effective in the efficient delivery of services that help low-income consumers achieve financial independence."

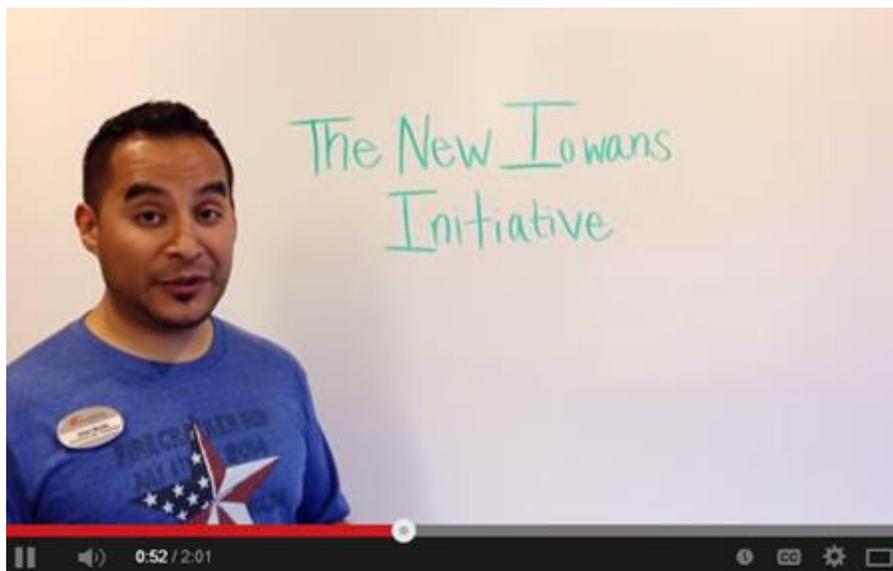
When the Initiative was being conceptualized, the NWAF recognized that the efforts aligned well with the foundation's aim of reducing poverty and achieving sustainable prosperity in the Northwest region through cutting-edge efforts.

"This work is exciting because it is building innovative partnerships to ensure that immigrants and refugees have the knowledge, skills, and resources to build assets over time," said NWAF Program Officer Christianne Lind. "It has the potential to help address a critical unmet need in the field."

For the partner organizations in both states, the collaborative element of the Initiative fits well with their ongoing work and builds on the organizations' track records of reaching immigrant communities.

"OneAmerica is thrilled to be working with Lower Valley Credit Union on this project," said Lilly Hankins, OneAmerica's Washington New Americans Program Manager. "It will help address one of the single largest barriers to U.S. citizenship for many immigrants: the naturalization fee. This project illustrates LVCU's commitment to community development and aligns with OneAmerica's goal of promoting successful immigrant integration, including the vital element of financial integration."

"The staff at Ascentra Credit Union has been working with immigrants for years and knows the unique demands of our diverse membership," said Ascentra's Community Development Coordinator Alvaro Macias. "The Initiative is a partnership between two trusted names in our community; we continue to be proactive in reaching out to segments of our population who need an opportunity to improve their current situation."



Click on the image to hear Alvaro Macias explain Ascentra's New Iowans Initiative

The Federation and GCIR will publish a briefing paper with outcomes and best practices from the Initiative next fall when the work is complete. The findings will offer lessons for potential partnerships

between community credit unions and immigrant-serving organizations in other states. In addition, the Initiative will produce a resource toolkit with information on how credit unions can meet the needs of low-income immigrant communities.

About GCIR

Since 1990, GCIR has sought to influence philanthropy to advance the contributions and address the needs of the country's growing and increasingly diverse immigrant and refugee populations. In so doing, we seek to promote effective grantmaking that not only improves the lives of newcomers but also strengthens communities. To learn about other loan programs for immigrants provided by community credit unions and opportunities for funders, see GCIR's latest publication, [*Dreamer Loan Programs: The Power of Partnerships with Community Development Credit Unions*](#). For more information about GCIR and our various programs and resources, visit www.gcir.org or email info@gcir.org.

About the Federation

The National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions is a certified CDFI Intermediary representing community development credit unions (CDCUs) that provide credit, savings, transaction services and financial education to more than 2.5 million residents of low-income urban, rural and reservation-based communities across the United States, and hold over \$20 billion in community-controlled assets. Founded in 1974, the Federation is headquartered in Lower Manhattan with offices in Madison, WI. The Federation offers a wide range of advocacy, educational, training, investment, marketing, and outreach programs to support and assist CDCUs. For more information about the Federation and its programs, visit www.cdcu.coop.

About NWAFF

The Northwest Area Foundation is dedicated to supporting efforts by the people, organizations and communities to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable prosperity. The Foundation's region includes the eight states of Minnesota, Iowa, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon and more than 75 sovereign Tribal Nations that share the same geography. The Great Northern Railway, founded by James J. Hill, operated in this area. Hill's son, Louis W. Hill, established the Foundation in 1934. For more information, visit www.nwaf.org.

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