

## **How You Can Help: Starting Citizenship Classes at your Church**

**The Need:** If your church is interested in starting a citizenship class program Arrive Ministries first recommends doing some basic research to make sure citizenship classes are needed in your local community by asking the following questions:

### **1. Are refugees/immigrants in our community eligible to apply for citizenship?**

In order to be eligible, refugees/immigrants must be permanent residents (green card holders) for 5 years. If your community is mostly comprised of undocumented immigrants or populations who have been in the U.S. a very short or very long time, they might not need the service. A good way to find out what the refugee/immigrant population is like in your area is to talk to the multicultural liaison or ESL coordinator at your local school or school district.

### **2. Are there other citizenship classes already serving our area?**

You can find out by looking on the Minnesota Literacy Council website for citizenship class listings: <http://www.mnliteracy.org/hotline>.

### **3. Do the refugees/immigrants in our community speak enough English to be able to pass the test?**

U.S. Immigration requires that new citizens must be able to read, speak and write basic English in order to pass the citizenship test. If your local community consists of people with a very low English level, ESL and literacy classes may be a better stepping stone toward citizenship and a better place for you to invest the time and talents of the people in your church.

**The Investment:** If your church answers the questions above affirmatively, you should also determine if your church has the logistical capacity to launch your own citizenship class program. The logistical considerations for starting a citizenship class program include:

#### **1. Committed volunteer leadership**

Arrive Ministries strongly recommends that interested churches have a team of 2-4 committed volunteers to provide leadership for the citizenship class program. These volunteers would serve in the two main roles of Citizenship Class Teacher and Citizenship Class Coordinator.

The teacher position focuses on the education portion of the class: curriculum development, lesson-planning, classroom teaching and in-class guidance for volunteer tutors (often times the teacher is a retired school teacher or one with a strong civics, ESL and/or communication background).

The coordinator position focuses on the logistical and relational side of the class: publicity, student and volunteer recruitment, volunteer orientation and encouragement, classroom set-up and general administrative oversight.

Arrive Ministries can provide detailed volunteer job descriptions for interested churches. We recommend churches ask this volunteer leadership team to make a commitment of at least one year.

#### **2. Ongoing volunteers interested in one-on-one tutoring**

Churches need to have a pool of 5-20 volunteers (depending on anticipated class size) who are willing to make a weekly commitment for the duration of each 10-week class.

#### **3. Weekly space to host classes**

Churches need a space where students and tutors can hear each other and the teacher easily, and includes desks or tables that can comfortably seat all students and volunteers, a white board, room to

socialize and room for tea/coffee and snacks.

**Training and Support from Arrive Ministries**

Arrive Ministries provides free training for churches who want to start their own citizenship class program. We provide quarterly or semi-annual training sessions, depending on interest. Through our Board of Immigration Appeals-accredited immigration legal services program, we can also serve as a referral source for students who want legal representation and paperwork support on the citizenship application. Our immigration legal service department can provide an in-class presentation for students about the citizenship application process.

*If your church is interested in starting a citizenship class program, contact Christine Burton, Director of Immigration Legal Services at [cburton@arriveministries.org](mailto:cburton@arriveministries.org) or 612-243-2971.*