

BEST PRACTICES TOOLKIT

Integrating Text Messaging into Naturalization Services and Beyond

BEST PRACTICES DEFINED

Best practices are operating processes that produce consistently better results than other techniques. We glean best practices from the good practices of frontline organizations and leaders, and improve them through reflection, feedback, and experimentation. Best practices may be born through the efforts of one community and transformed when they are adopted by others in a new context, but the underlying understanding of their utility remains constant and is always measured against desired results.

ABOUT THIS SERIES

Identifying and spreading best practices requires a learning network for peer-to-peer exchange of ideas. This toolkit series serves as one mechanism for us to share and build on best practices.

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

In recent years, texting has become an increasingly popular way to communicate with applicants and constituents. This toolkit provides recommendations for organizations on how to integrate text messaging into their naturalization services. It is based on best practices that New Americans Campaign partners have discovered while using text messaging with their clients in 2018 and 2019, through Campaign Innovation Fund grants, the Campaign's Civic Engagement pilot project, and their day-to-day outreach and provision of naturalization services.

COMMUNICATION IN NATURALIZATION SERVICES

Communication plays a critical role in providing quality naturalization services. Organizations must tell potential applicants that naturalization is important, explain that they can provide competent naturalization legal services, answer potential applicants' questions about how to gather documents and information needed for application assistance, and confirm when and where applicants can receive services. After the application completion phase, organizations keep in touch with applicants to ensure that they move through the application process, become citizens, and then become civically engaged in their communities. Texting is an effective way to communicate with naturalization applicants throughout the application process that surpasses phone calls and emails in both efficiency and convenience for many circumstances. This toolkit is designed to help organizations incorporate texting best practices into their naturalization programs across the country.

Non-Profit Organizations Recognize the Benefits of Texting

According to a survey of New Americans Campaign partners gathered by the Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC) in May 2019, almost 60 percent of respondents use texting to communicate with clients or volunteers in some way. Another 22 percent do not yet text their clients or volunteers, but would like to do so. Campaign partners use texting to communicate with potential or current clients around naturalization workshops, naturalization services, civic engagement, citizenship classes, and also other immigration services – with texts to communicate details of naturalization workshops the most commonly reported use.

There are many benefits to incorporating texting into the overall communications strategy of an organization’s naturalization work. One major advantage is that texting is more effective than calling or emailing, as applicants receive and respond reliably to texts above all other methods of communication. Texting decreases the amount of time that staff need to spend trying to obtain information from applicants. It also allows organizations to quickly disseminate information that does not require discussion, such as workshop locations, appointment times, and lists of necessary documents. Finally, texting allows organizations to send information when it is convenient for them, while also allowing applicants to receive the information on a different schedule, which is distinctly unlike a phone conversation.

“Texting has proven to be very effective because many of our clients work and are very busy, so texting is often the best way to reach them. We can tell that it is effective because we spend less time trying to contact our clients over the phone, and instead are able to reach them through text, where they can respond at their leisure.”
- Esperanza Immigration Legal Services

“The response to text is 99% versus a phone call which is below the 50% response rate, or even lower.”
- Boat People SOS – Houston

How Organizations Use Texting in a Naturalization Context

1. Texting Before a Workshop to Boost Turnout

Texts are great ways to remind applicants about their upcoming naturalization appointment or their assigned timeslot for a naturalization workshop. If organizations include the date, time, and address in texts, applicants can easily save the information on their phone for easy reference. It is also much easier to communicate the spelling of street names and cities through text than through a phone call. Many organizations use either an automated appointment reminder system or a mass texting approach to remind applicants of upcoming services, depending on how they structure their workshops or in-office appointments. Generally, organizations send outgoing texts to applicants once they register them for a workshop or appointment, and then again 1-2 days before the workshop or appointment.

“We text message clients the day before to confirm their appointments utilizing the GoReminders system. If a client is unable to keep their appointment, we can then schedule another appointment in their place.”
- Chaldean Community Foundation

2. Texting to Boost Preparedness

Reminding applicants of an upcoming workshop often leads not only to a larger percentage of registrants attending, but also to more applicants coming with all of the necessary documents and information. Allowing for communication through text also opens up an opportunity for applicants to have their questions answered in advance. This can be especially helpful when potential applicants send questions through Facebook Messenger in response to an ad that the organization placed on Facebook, for instance.

“We sent text messages to remind clients of their appointments. It was a good way to engage with clients and a way ensure they come prepared.” - Korean Resource Center

“We contact individuals that have registered for a workshop via email and via text. We have noticed that participants that confirm their attendance are better prepared on the day of the event.” - NALEO Educational Fund – North Carolina

TEXTING TO BOOST PREPAREDNESS CASE STUDY:

One New Americans Campaign partner, CUNY Citizenship Now!, recently experimented with a texting system to boost the percentage of applicants who arrive to naturalization workshops with all of the required documents and information. In the spring and summer of 2019, they experimented with a series of five texts, which they sent to applicants registered for each naturalization workshop. They sent a different text every two to three days over a 10-15 day period preceding the workshop. Each text encouraged applicants to gather a different portion of their information and documents before arriving to the workshop. Of the applicants who received the series of texts during the pilot, almost 82% were able to complete their application during the one-day workshop, which was a 6% increase over the applicants who did not receive the five-text series.

Below are some examples of the texts in their series:

“[Applicant Name], Trips, employment, and residence take the longest to complete at the event. Bring the info in this document, and you will save time at the event: <http://www1.cuny.edu/sites/citizenship-now/wp-content/uploads/sites/12/media-assets/Citizenship-Preparation-Sheet-ENG-SPA.pdf>”

“Get ready for your next appointment! Please list: Your previous jobs and/or schools and how long you worked/studied at each place (for the past 5 years, or 3 years if you are married to a U.S. citizen); the addresses where you lived for the past five years (3 years if you are married to a U.S. citizen).”

“[Applicant Name], Married, divorced, or have children? Bring the following at your next appointment:

- Marriage certificate
- All divorce records
- Ex-spouses (name, date of birth, country of birth, date of marriage)
- Children’s information (date of birth, addresses, A-numbers)”

3. Texting After a Workshop to Bring More Applicants to the Next Event

There are many reasons to follow up with applicants after a naturalization workshop. Word of mouth is one of the most common ways applicants find out about non-profit naturalization services. If applicants know when the next workshop is, they can encourage their friends and family members to attend. Texting after a workshop also allows any applicants who were not able to attend to reschedule themselves for the next event. For both of these reasons, texting after a workshop leads to increased attendance numbers at the next event.

“We text all the people who registered for the event that we just completed when we are about to have another event (for example, we texted the participants who registered for April 13 to let them know about our April 27 event). Registrations for the next event usually spike up after we do this.” - Asian Law Alliance

“We text reminders about upcoming naturalization workshops and images of flyers and materials that can easily be shared from past naturalization clients to prospective clients.” - Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center

4. Texting to Keep in Touch with Applicants Throughout the Naturalization Process

Organizations use texting to easily communicate with applicants throughout the naturalization process. Texting is an effective way for self-file applicants to communicate with organizations about their stage in the naturalization process, and to ask for help with any issues that they encounter. Some organizations connect applicants that they are representing with the individual case manager or attorney working with them and use texting as one way to communicate about the particulars of their case. Applicants with smartphones can send pictures of any documents that they receive from USCIS and need help understanding, so that organizations can quickly see the details of the request. Due to privacy and security concerns, organizations should be careful to not send any confidential information through unencrypted texting systems.

“We send an automatic message to follow up on each step of citizenship process (e.g., biometrics, interview) and encourage applicants to reach out if they have any questions.” - NALEO Educational Fund – Los Angeles

“Texting photos is also helpful when a client can’t describe a letter they’ve received from USCIS for instance.” - Asian Counseling and Referral Service

5. Texting to Increase Civic Engagement

Texting has proven an effective tool to foster civic engagement with naturalization applicants not only during the citizenship application process, but afterwards as well. The New Americans Campaign began a civic engagement pilot program in 2017. Its purpose is to build a naturalization-to-voter pipeline for new Americans served by Campaign partners and to increase the number of new citizens who register to vote at the first opportunity after they naturalize.

As part of the program, Campaign partners regularly text naturalization applicants throughout the lengthy period between when they help an LPR community member complete their naturalization application

and when the community member takes their oath of allegiance to the United States. The text messages are in the applicant's preferred language, culturally competent, and either inquire about the current application phase or request the applicant take a civic engagement action such as promoting an upcoming naturalization event. The best text messages are short, simple, and limited to one question or request per text message. The organizations complete their text series by connecting recently naturalized citizens with civic engagement opportunities, including information about voter registration and voting.

"We not only remain in close communication with applicants during the citizenship process (over a year), but also after they become citizens. We build the relationship with the client over this time so that when they are done with the process, we can keep in communication with them regarding civic engagement, volunteer opportunities, or other work we are doing. With the number of clients we see, it is important that we continue the relationship, and texting is the best, easiest, and cost effective way to do it."
- Boat People SOS – Houston

"This year we texted all 200 confirmed new citizens in our database from the last 3 years with a reminder to register to vote. So far we have experienced a high response rate." - OneAmerica

Getting Started with Texting

For many organizations, the easiest way to incorporate texting into their naturalization work may be gradually – by considering which components of their communication are currently done by phone, email, or mail, and trying them out through texting instead. Once organizations understand the volume of texts that they will be sending each month, they may choose to switch to a platform that allows them to better manage their applicant contacts; categorize applicants by language or step in the naturalization process; or run reports. Before texting them, organizations should be sure that they have consent from their applicants (see below for more information about consent to text).

"We started low tech using GoogleVoice because it's free and simple. It's ok to start in small, manageable ways."
- South Asian Network

"Think about how you can incorporate texting into your existing workflow." - Michigan Immigrant Rights Center

Discerning if Texting is Appropriate for an Organization's Clients

Organizations may shy away from incorporating texting into their communication because they are unsure if applicants will appreciate receiving information via text. However, keep in mind that texting is now part of the lifestyle of immigrants of all ages, including seniors. New Americans Campaign civic engagement pilot program partners consistently report their pleasant surprise that even their older clients respond to texts in their native language. One sure way to know whether applicants will appreciate communicating via text is to ask them. Many organizations find that the majority of their applicants prefer texting to email or calls.

“Include a ‘preferred method of communication’ on your intake sheet. If a client tells you that they rarely use email, and much prefer texting, then you know this is the best way to keep in touch with them.”
- Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center

Allocating Staff and Resources for Texting

Most organizations find that the best way to manage texts from applicants is for at least one staff member or volunteer to spend a bit of time each day sending or responding to texts. Organizations that serve hundreds of naturalization applicants each quarter report having up to five staff with access to the texting platform – though none use it full-time. In terms of financial costs, organizations find that staff time is the most expensive part of texting, with costs for the technology and texts themselves relatively minimal. For more information on pricing for various texting platforms, see the Reviews of Selected Texting Platforms section below.

“Have at least one staff member dedicated to checking the texting service and replying daily.” - Catholic Migration Services

“We use the texting app almost daily and we text clients several times during the process.” - International Institute of Minnesota

Sample Texts and Partner Tips on Texting

To reduce time and effort, many organizations have created lists of commonly used outgoing texts along with frequently used responses. An example of these texts, translated into several languages, is available at the end of this toolkit. Campaign organizations also offer the following advice for others integrating texting into their naturalization work:

- *“Text regularly and do it in your clients’ preferred language. Don’t make the texts too long and make each about a single subject.”* - Employee Rights Center
- *“Using the person’s name in your text message is really important because it alerts them that this isn’t just spam. I also like to keep it short and start with something that alerts the individual to who is messaging them, for instance: “Reminder Citizenship Workshop: Hi Rima, you’re registered for the workshop at 5pm at Monday May 11. Thank you! -Kayla”* - International Rescue Committee - San Jose

Considering Which Type of Texting Approach Is a Best Fit for an Organization

The way many of us think of texting is as we do today with our family and friends: an individual cell phone sending a message to another cell phone. However, this method is not the only option for organizations to text with their naturalization applicants or new citizens. Rather, there are many ways to use online platforms to make the process easier and to make managing incoming and outgoing texts more organized. Organizations will see two main functionalities described by different platforms: peer-to-peer messaging, and broadcast messaging, also known as mass texting. As reported to ILRC in a May 2019 survey, half of the partners texting their clients send both peer-to-peer messages and broadcast messages, 42% send only peer-to-peer messages, and 8% send only broadcast messages.

The below chart explains the difference between these two functionalities:

	PEER-TO-PEER MESSAGING	BROADCAST MESSAGING
Description	Person to Person: One phone number messaging another phone number, through a platform or app	Application to Person: A platform messaging many phone numbers at once
Sending Process	A staff or volunteer must click to send each message one by one	A staff or volunteer may send one message to multiple people with one click
Applicant Experience	Applicant receives an individual text message on their phone that looks like it was sent just to them. It is usually from a 10-digit number.	Applicant receives an individual text message on their phone that looks like it was sent just to them. It is sent from either a 6-digit number or a 10-digit number. (Note: This is different from the experience of a “group text” on a cell phone, in which the recipients all know that they are part of a group message and can see each other’s responses and phone numbers.)
Opt-in Requirement	A best practice, but not mandated by law	A best practice, and legally required

Opt-in Requirements

It is a best practice and may be a legal requirement to ensure that organizations have their applicant or constituent’s permission before texting them. All staff involved in texting should understand text message

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laws, regulations, and compliance. This section contains background details on texting regulations. Please note it is for informational purposes only and is neither intended as nor should be substituted for consultation with appropriate legal counsel.

Text messages are regulated by the U.S. Federal Communication Commission (FCC) and the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA). For broadcast messages, the TCPA requires non-profits to have “prior express consent” for every contact called or texted.¹ A contact gives prior express consent to be called or texted when he or she provides the contacted phone number to the organization calling or texting, and there is some relation between the communication and the reason for which the contact provided that number. As a best practice, organizations should only text contacts that have consented to texting even if they are only using a peer-to-peer platform and not sending broadcast messages.

“Make sure people opt-in to be in compliance with regulations.” - NALEO Educational Fund – Los Angeles

Obtaining Consent to Text Applicants

Organizations should document how they have secured consent, and may want to ensure applicants opt-in to texting in writing even if technically it is not required in all circumstances. An organization may secure prior express written consent when applicants opt-in to texting using a keyword campaign, web form, or paper form such as an intake form. An easy way to gather consent on paper forms is to add a checkbox that applicants can check to sign up for text messages (see a sample intake form at the end of this toolkit that includes opt-in language for texting). Be sure to store completed forms in a safe place for reference.

“We sign people up for texting through google forms. We have a sentence on the form that asks for consent to receive texts about a particular workshop.” - Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Atlanta

“We have a short sentence on the intake sheet that authorizes us to message them via mass text, with their consent. If we are doing a screening via phone, we get consent for individual texting then and then get consent for mass texts when they come in person.” - Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles

¹ 47 C.F.R. § 64.1200. For-profit businesses must have “prior express **written** consent” of the texted party before sending a broadcast message (unless they are texting on behalf of a non-profit).

² Commission’s Report and Order, CG Docket No. 02–278, FCC 03–153, “Rules and Regulations Implementing the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991.”

³ 47 U.S.C. § 227(a)(4)(C).

Removing Applicants from Text or Call Lists

The FCC has declined to extend both the national do-not-call requirements and the company-specific do-not-call rules to non-profits, as well as the caller ID transmission requirements, to non-profits.² The TCPA also specifically excludes calls or messages made by non-profit organizations from the definition of telephone solicitation.³ As a result, non-profits are not required to scrub their contact lists against the national do-not-call registry. However, it is still a best practice for any organization to voluntarily honor the specific unsubscribe and do-not-call requests of contacts.

TIP: For more information on broadcast messaging compliance, the texting platform Simple Texting has developed the following guide that organizations may find helpful: <https://simpletexting.com/in-depth-guide/the-complete-guide-to-sms-compliance/>



Considerations When Choosing a Texting Platform

For Campaign organizations that have not yet incorporated texting into their communication systems, the most common reasons they report are that they have not had the time to research and set up a program, or that they have not had the time to find a platform that best fits their needs. The description of various platforms below should provide a good overview of the capabilities of different platforms and allow organizations to get started with a platform that fits their needs.

“We think other organizations should choose a system that fits their budget, needs, and takes into consideration how many staff members are available to respond to messages.” - CUNY Citizenship Now!

Over 60% of Campaign organizations that responded to the May 2019 survey reported that they only use one text messaging platform. It is possible to use more than one platform for texting, though organizations will likely want to limit the ways they text for logistical reasons.

Questions to consider when choosing a texting system that is appropriate for an organization's naturalization or civic engagement work:

- How many applicants will the organization text each month? How many texts will they send each month?
- Will they want to text in different languages?
- Will they want to send or receive photos (of documents, or of happy naturalized clients at their oath ceremony or a voting booth, for example)?
- How many staff or volunteers will they plan to have texting? Is it important that the staff or volunteers be able to share the texting responsibility with each other?
- How important is it for this tool to integrate with their client database or other system?
- Will they mostly use texting to ensure that applicants confirm and attend their appointments?
- Will they want to send the same text to multiple recipients at once (broadcast messaging)?

“Make sure that your texting platform can handle the languages you want to text in.” - National Korean American Service and Education Consortium – Virginia

Commonly Used Texting Platforms

There are dozens of texting platforms currently available, and partners in the New Americans Campaign use over 20 different texting platforms as of the date of this toolkit. Yet, only a few platforms have risen to the top as best fits for non-profit naturalization providers. They can be divided into three categories: platforms built for texting management through a computer, systems that allow texting as one component but are not built to exclusively manage text messaging, and phone or web-based messaging apps. See below for a list of commonly used platforms.

Platforms Built for Texting Management through a Computer

- EZ Texting (used by 11% of Campaign organizations)
- Sonar (used by 9% of Campaign organizations)
- ThruText, formerly known as Relay (used by 9% of Campaign organizations)
- Simple Texting (used by 8% of Campaign organizations)
- Hustle (used by 6% of Campaign organizations)
- Appointment Reminder Platforms such as AppToto, GoReminders, and Simply Book Me (used by 6% of Campaign organizations)

Systems that Allow Texting as One Component

- Google Voice (used by 38% of Campaign organizations)
- Organizations' existing VOIP phone systems (used by 5% of Campaign organizations)
- Organizations' existing case management systems (used by 5% of Campaign organizations)

Phone or web-based Messaging Apps

- Phone-based messaging apps such as Whatsapp, WeChat, Kakao (used by 26% of Campaign organizations)
- Facebook Messenger (used by 12% of Campaign organizations)

Reviews of Selected Texting Platforms

GoogleVoice:

Website: <https://voice.google.com/u/0/about>

Overview: GoogleVoice allows organizations to send peer-to-peer text messages through a number with a local area code. It also has many calling features.

Pros: The system is free, and texts appear in a similar interface to gmail, with which many organizations or staff may already be familiar. Some organizations may already use the voicemail and call forwarding features of GoogleVoice for prescreening, so adding the text capability may be an easy transition.

Cons: GoogleVoice's technical support is mainly in the form of an online manual. There is no support center that organizations can call for help. GoogleVoice also does not integrate with any case management systems or other platforms.

Pricing: Texts sent through GoogleVoice are free, though there may be a limit to the number that each account can send.

Recommendation: GoogleVoice is a great starting point for organizations that want to try texting applicants without the risk of entering a paid plan. It is likely not the best option for organizations that text with a high volume of applicants, or organizations that want to send broadcast messages.

"To me GoogleVoice was a good entry point because it has no cost. I was previously really skeptical of texting tools improving our services and now I can't see what I would do without it."
- Asian Counseling and Referral Service

Sonar:

Website: <https://www.sendsonar.com/features>

Demo video: <https://vimeo.com/146788256> (password is MessageMe)

Pros: Sonar has the ability to text with individual applicants, categorize their responses, send canned messages that can be shared among organizations, and send mass text messages. It has an intuitive interface. The system also has automation capability, which automatically responds to applicants based on what they text. Other features include integration with a calendaring application called Calendly to schedule applicants for appointments, and sending automatic away messages for staff that are out of the office. Sonar is set up for integration with Salesforce, Shopify, Slack, Woopra, Zapier, and Zendesk.

Pricing: Sonar has several plans available. Organizations that only need peer-to-peer messaging would be best suited by the \$29/month/user plan, and organizations that would like to use mass texting would be best suited by the \$55/month/user plan, with discounts if paid annually. Text messages are an additional charge: 2.5 cents per text. This platform is willing to offer special pricing to organizations that plan to send out large numbers of texts (50,000+ texts/year) or have 10+ users.

Cons: Sonar is a startup company that has only been operating for 5 years, though they have over 200 customers and 10 full-time staff. Their pricing is slightly higher than platforms with fewer features.

Recommendation: Sonar is a robust platform built for texting management through a computer. It is most appropriate for organizations that text frequently with their applicants including through mass messaging, appreciate the ability to assign text conversations to different staff or volunteers, and want to use the categorization and reporting features.

“Sonar has worked really well for us. It is a great tool for both one on one text communication and mass texting. Their customer service also seems to be quite responsive to help us with technical issues.” - OneAmerica

EZ Texting:

Demo Videos: <https://www.eztexting.com/why-ez-texting/video-tour>

Overview: EZ Texting is primarily a mass texting system that also offers peer-to-peer messaging. It also includes features such as keyword campaigns, that allow organizations to sign up new applicants for texts by encouraging them to send a message to a 6-digit number.

Pros: This platform is used by the largest number of Campaign organizations of all of the computer-based systems specifically designed to manage texts. Their customer service is friendly and easily accessible by phone or chat on their website. Contacts can be uploaded through an Excel list or can add themselves by texting a keyword to the organization’s shortcode number. EZ Texting can integrate with several databases and platforms, including AWeber, Constant Contact, EventBrite, Highrise, Infusionsoft, iContact, MailChimp, PieSync, Salesforce, and Zendesk.

Cons: Unlike several of the other platforms reviewed here, EZ Texting sends broadcast messages from a

shortcode – a 5 or 6-digit number rather than a 10-digit phone number. This makes it so that organizations cannot have their texts come from a phone number with their same area code, which makes texting feel a bit more impersonal than texting from a recognizable phone number. The company does not recommend using broadcast messages for back and forth communication. They do have a peer-to-peer option (“EZ Chat”) that sends messages from a 10-digit number, though these messages are kept in a separate inbox from mass texts.

Pricing: EZ Texting offers several plans that are appropriate for most naturalization service providers. They offer a free 14-day trial that includes 100 free messages and one keyword. After the trial ends, organizations can choose a pay-as-you-go plan that charges 5 cents per message, or a \$49 per month plan that allows for 1,000 messages and one keyword, with additional texts charged at 4.5 cents per message. Adding the peer-to-peer texting option is an additional \$25 per month, though organizations may swap out the keyword functionality for the peer-to-peer functionality for no additional cost above the monthly plan.

Recommendation: This platform will likely work well for organizations that want to send mass texts and also have the benefits of a peer-to-peer platform. For organizations that send fewer than 1,000 texts each month, it is slightly more affordable than Sonar.

EXAMPLE: Florida Immigrant Coalition took advantage of a keyword campaign by encouraging interested applicants to text the word “citizenship,” “ciudadania” or “sitwayente” to the number 23559 to sign up for texts about citizenship in English, Spanish, or Haitian Creole.

Hustle and ThruText (formerly known as Relay):

Websites: Hustle: <https://www.hustle.com/> ; ThruText: <https://www.getthru.io/thrutext/>

Hustle Demo Video: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1x4fnFZBbyVrRK9Q1nnp39HHngLvZq4NG/view> ;

Relay Demo Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1LSGd1IRLj8>

Overview: These tools are both exclusively peer-to-peer texting platforms that allow for personalized texting to applicants via a computer or phone app. They are especially popular for civic engagement work and with progressive causes.

Pros: These tools both allow for organizations to quickly text with applicants and view their conversations in an easy to use online dashboard. Hustle can integrate with Salesforce and ThruText can integrate with the Voter Activation Network (VAN).

Cons: Neither platform has the capability to send out mass texts. Each text needs to be sent individually, though the platforms make the sending process a bit faster process than the texting offered through GoogleVoice. The demo videos give a good sense of this.

Pricing: Hustle’s pricing structure is not per text, but per contact. They charge 15 cents per person that an

organization has in their contacts each month, regardless of how many texts they send each person. They also have a yearly minimum of 2,500 contacts (\$375). They do not charge per user. ThruText has three pricing plan options: 8 cents per outgoing message, 25 cents per month for each messaged contact, or \$1.50 per contact per year. There is an additional set-up fee as well.

Recommendation: These systems work best for organizations that do not need the capacity to send mass texts, but are looking for the ability to manage all of their text conversations at once in an easy to visualize online dashboard.

“We text our clients and volunteers on a regular basis for confirmations, updates, reminders, and follow-ups, and we also send images to prepare clients and volunteers. Since using ThruText we’ve had an increase of in-depth conversations on where a client is in the citizenship process.” - Orange County Communities Organized for Responsible Development

Phone-based messaging apps:

Overview: There are many smartphone-based messaging apps that allow individuals to send messages to each other while connected to wifi or using a data plan. This is a commonly used method for Campaign organizations to text with applicants, though most organizations use it in addition to other platforms rather than as their sole texting method. The most commonly used app is Whatsapp, which immigrants from many countries of origin use to also communicate with family and friends in their home countries. New Americans Campaign partners have also reported using WeChat, Kakao, and even regular text messaging through a cell phone to communicate with naturalization applicants.

Pros: Most of these apps are free to use to send unlimited messages. Some messaging apps allow senders to deliver messages to multiple people at once.

Cons: Because these apps are only available on mobile phones, organizations either need to purchase mobile phones for their staff or ask their staff to use their personal mobile phones to communicate with applicants. There is no computer-based management system available with most of these apps, so the responsibility of replying to each applicant is non-transferrable between staff or volunteers.

Recommendation: These options are easy to start with, though not recommended for organizations to use long-term because they do not allow organizations to easily manage a high volume of conversations. Organizations may want to consider investigating business accounts on some of these platforms for an alternate way to communicate with their constituents.

“Our volunteers send out texts via WhatsApp to minimize cost for our students. Our volunteers send group and individual messages to remind students of upcoming class starts and registration, coordinate special events for the classes and schedule appointments.” - Ser y Hacer – Galveston

Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles Prewritten Text Messages and Schedule

Note: Visit the NAC Resource Portal to see these messages in Khmer, Korean, Tagalog, Thai and Vietnamese: https://www.newamericanscampaign.org/portal/search/?fwp_search=text

Prior to Appointment (2 days before a workshop)

Description	English	Chinese	Spanish
Appointment Message	Hi, this is Advancing Justice - LA. We would like to remind you about your appointment at 1145 Wilshire Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90017 on {{date}} @ {{time}}. To confirm, please reply YES or NO.	您好, 這裡是亞美公義促進中心-洛杉磯。我們想通過這則短訊提醒您來我們辦公室1145 Wilshire Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90017, 參加填寫入籍表格的活動。您的□ □時間是 {{date}} @ {{time}} 如您能準時赴約, 請回覆YES, 不然就回覆NO.	Hola, somos Advancing Justice - Los Angeles. Queremos recordarle de su cita para completar su solicitud de ciudadanía en nuestra oficina, 1145 Wilshire Blvd. LA CA 90017 la fecha {{date}} @ {{time}}. Por favor, confirme con una respuesta "YES" o "NO." ¡Gracias!
Appointment Confirmation	Thank you, we will see you then! Do you have any questions about what you'll need to bring to the appointment?	謝謝! 到時候見。對於需要帶的相關文件, 您還有疑問嗎?	Gracias, ¡nos veremos entonces! ¿Tiene alguna pregunta sobre lo que necesita traer a la cita?
Appointment Cancellation	Thank you for letting us know. If you want to reschedule, please call {{hotline}}.	感謝您提前告知我們。如您需要重新預約, 請撥打800-520-2356.	Gracias por hacernos saber. Si desea una nueva cita, llame a 888-349-9695.

After Filing (2 weeks after workshop)

Description	English	Chinese	Spanish
Filing	Hi, this is Advancing Justice - LA. We helped you with your citizenship application in {{month}}. Did you mail in your application to USCIS? Please reply YES or NO.	您好, 這裡是亞美公義促進中心-洛杉磯。我們在 {{date}} 幫您填了入籍申請表格。您已經寄給移民局了嗎? 請回覆YES或NO.	¡Saludos, de Advancing Justice-LA! Le ayudamos con su solicitud de ciudadanía el {{date}}. ¿Ya envió su solicitud de ciudadanía a inmigracion?
Filing Yes	Great! Let us know if/when they schedule you for your biometrics appointment. If you have any questions about the process, send us a message.	太棒了! 如您收到打指紋的通知, 請告知我們。如您對申請過程有任何疑問, 請給我們發短信。	¡Genial! Por favor háganos saber cuando le hagan una cita para tomarse las huellas. Si tiene preguntas acerca del proceso, mándenos un mensaje.
Filing No	Let us know if you need to schedule a follow-up by calling us at: {{hotline}}	如您需要更新, 請撥打 800-520-2356.	Por favor háganos saber si necesita una cita de seguimiento con nosotros, llamando al: 888-349-9695.

After Filing / Biometrics (1-2 months after workshop)

Description	English	Chinese	Spanish
Filing + Biometrics Combined	Hi, this is Advancing Justice - LA. We helped you with your citizenship application on {{date}}. Did you mail in your application to USCIS and have you gone to your biometrics appointment? If YES, when did you go in for your biometrics?	你好，這裡是亞美公義促進中心-洛杉磯。我們在 {{date}} 幫您填了入籍申請表格。你是否已經 <input type="checkbox"/> 移民局遞交申請並且打了指紋呢？ 是的話，您是何時打的指紋呢？	¡Saludos, de Advancing Justice-LA! Le ayudamos con su solicitud de ciudadanía el {{date}}. ¿Ya envió su solicitud de ciudadanía a inmigración y asistió su cita de huellas? Si ya fue, ¿cuándo tuvo su cita de huellas?
Biometrics Pending	Great! Biometrics are usually scheduled 1-2 months after you've mailed the application. Let us know when you receive your appointment.	太棒了! 打指紋的時間一般是您寄出入籍申請一至兩個月之後。如您收到打指紋的通知，請告知給我們。	¡Que bueno! La confirmación de cita para las huellas normalmente llega 1-2 meses después de enviar la solicitud. Háganos saber cuando reciba su cita.
Biometrics Yes	The interview will take place 6-8 months after the biometrics appointment. You can check the status of your case by visiting: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/ . Let us know when you've been scheduled for an interview. Thank you!	面試時間一般是您打完指紋6-8個月後。您可以通過 https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/ , <input type="checkbox"/> 詢申請進度。如您已收到面試通知，請告知我們。謝謝!	La entrevista se llevará a cabo de 6-8 meses después de la cita de huellas. Puede obtener mas información sobre su caso visitando: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/ . Háganos saber cuando tenga su entrevista o si tiene alguna pregunta.
Biometrics No	You can check your case status at: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/ . If more time has passed, please call USCIS: 800-375-5283	你可以通過 https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/ , <input type="checkbox"/> 詢您的申請進度。如果超過平均等候期，請諮詢移民局客服：800-375-5283	Puede obtener mas información sobre su caso visitando: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/ .

Interview (6 months after workshop)



Description	English	Chinese	Spanish
Interview	Hi, this is Advancing Justice - LA checking in about your progress toward US Citizenship. Have you been scheduled for an interview with USCIS? Please reply YES or NO.	您好，這是亞美公義促進中心-洛杉磯。我們想了解一下您的入籍申請進度。您收到移民局的面試通知了嗎？請回覆YES或NO。	¡Saludos, de Advancing Justice-LA! Le ayudamos con su solicitud de ciudadanía y queremos saber sobre su progreso ¿Ya tuvo su entrevista con USCIS? Por favor, confirme con una respuesta “YES” o “NO.” ¡Gracias!
Interview Yes, When	Great! Did it already take place? If YES, have you already received a decision?	太好了！您已□面試了嗎？是的話，你收到面試結果了嗎？	¡Que bueno! ¿Ya fue a la entrevista? ¿Que fue el resultado?
Interview Yes, Upcoming	Great! When is your interview? Don't forget to review the civics/history questions and the Form N-400, Application for Naturalization. Let us know if you have any questions and tell us about your experience after the interview. Good luck!	太好了！您的面試日期是什麼時候？不要忘記溫習公民/歷史問題和N-400公民入籍表格。如果你有任何問題，請告知我們。面試之後，請您跟我們分享一下您的面試體驗。祝您好運！	¡Que bueno! Acuerde de revisar las preguntas civicas y su solicitud en preparación para la entrevista. Avisenos si tiene alguna pregunta y despues de la entrevista cuentes como fue su experiencia. Buena suerte.
Interview No, 1-4 Months	The interview will take place 6-9 months after the biometrics appointment. You can check the status of your case by visiting: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/ . Let us know when you've been scheduled for an interview. Thank you!	面試通常是在打完指紋6-9個月後，你可以通過 https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/ ，□詢您的申□進度。如果您收到面試通知，請告知我們。謝謝！	La entrevista se llevará a cabo de 6-9 meses despues de la cita de huellas. Puede obtener mas información sobre su caso visitando: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus . Háganos saber cuando tenga su entrevista o si tiene alguna pregunta.
Interview No, 5-8 Months	The interview will take place 6-9 months after the biometrics appointment. You can check the status of your case by visiting: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/ . Don't forget to review the civics/history questions and the Form N-400, Application for Naturalization. Let us know when you've been scheduled for an interview. Good luck.	面試通常是在打完指紋6-9個月後，你可以通過 https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/ ，□詢您的申請進度。不要忘記溫習公民/歷史問題和N-400入籍申□表格。如果您收到面試通知，請告知我們。祝您好運！	La entrevistase llevará a cabo de 6-9 meses despues de la cita de huellas. Puede obtener mas información sobre su caso visitando: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus . Acuerde de revisar las preguntas civicas y su solicitud en preparacion para la entrevista. Háganos saber cuando tenga su entrevista o si tiene alguna pregunta.

Oath Ceremony (1 month after interview)

Description	English	Chinese	Spanish
Oath	Hi, this is Advancing Justice - LA checking in about your progress toward US Citizenship. You should've received a decision from USCIS. Have they scheduled you for your Oath Ceremony?	您好, 这里是亞美公義促進中心-洛杉磯, 正在了解您的公民申請進度。這時候您應該收到移民局的決定。您是否收到移民局的入籍宣誓通知呢?	Hola, este mensaje es de Advancing Justice - LA. Ya debería haber recibido una decisión de USCIS. ¿Ya recibio la cita para su Ceremonia de Juramento?
Oath Yes	Congratulations. Don't forget that once you've been sworn in as a US Citizen you have the right to register to vote. You can do that in-person at the ceremony or online.	恭喜您! 請勿忘記, 一旦宣誓成為美國公民, 您便有權登記投票。您可以在儀式當天或在網上登記。	Felicidades. No olvide que una vez que haya juramentado como ciudadano estadounidense, tiene derecho a registrarse para votar. Puede hacerlo en persona en la ceremonia o en línea.
Oath No	USCIS will schedule you for an Oath Ceremony between 1 - 2 months after your interview. Check your case status at: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/ . If more time has passed, please call USCIS: 800-375-5283	移民局會在面試完1-2個月後安排您參加入籍宣誓。您可以通過 https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/ , 查詢您的申請進度。如超過以上的時間, 您可以諮詢移民局客服800-375-5283。	USCIS lo programará para una ceremonia de juramento entre 1 y 2 meses después de su entrevista. Verifique el estado de su caso en: https://egov.uscis.gov/casestatus/ . Si ha pasado más tiempo, llame al USCIS: 800-375-5283

Congratulations / Voter Registration Information (after oath ceremony date)

Description	English	Chinese	Spanish
Congrats	Congratulations on becoming a US Citizen! We are thrilled to have been a part of your process. Remember that as a new citizen you now have the right to vote. Click here to get registered online: https://registertovote.ca.gov/ . If you have any questions or need help registering, we're here to help!	恭喜您成為美國公民! 我們很高興能陪您一起度過這個旅程。請記住, 作為新公民, 您現在有權投票。點擊此處在線註冊: https://registertovote.ca.gov/ 。如果您有任何問題或需要幫助註冊, 我們隨時為您提供幫助!	¡Felicidades en ser ciudadano! Estamos encantados de haber sido parte de su proceso. Recuerde que como nuevo ciudadano ahora tiene derecho a votar. Haga clic aquí para registrarse en línea: https://registertovote.ca.gov/ . Si tiene alguna pregunta o necesita ayuda para registrarse, ¡estamos aquí para ayudarle!

	
ELIGIBILITY	FEE WAIVER
LANGUAGE EXEMPTION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 50/20 <input type="checkbox"/> 55/15 <input type="checkbox"/> 65/20	

Applicant Intake Form

Formulario de asistencia



EVENT DATE: _____
EVENT TYPE:
<input type="checkbox"/> WORKSHOP <input type="checkbox"/> PREPARATION CLASS <input type="checkbox"/> IN OFFICE APPOINTMENT
REGISTRATION #: _____

Residency Card A# <i>Número de residencia#</i>		Date of Legal Permanent Residency <i>Fecha en que obtuvo su residencia</i>	
First Name/Nombre		Middle Name/Segundo nombre	Last Name/Apellido
Gender/Género	Date of Birth/Fecha de nacimiento	Country of Origin/País de origen	
Address/Domicilio		City/Ciudad	County/Condado
State/Estado	Zip Code/Código postal	Telephone/Número de teléfono <input type="checkbox"/> Cell	Email/Correo electrónico
Current Marital Status/Estado civil actual			
If married - Spouse's Immigration Status Current Marital Status <i>Si casado(a) - estatus migratorio de su cónyuge</i>			
How many children do you have under the age of 18? <i>¿Cuántos hijos/as tiene menores de 18 años?</i> <input type="checkbox"/>		How many non-citizen children under 18 years of age do you have? <i>¿Cuántos hijos/as no-ciudadanos menores de 18 años tiene?</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	
How many people live in your household? <i>¿Cuántos personas viven en su hogar?</i> <input type="checkbox"/>		What is your annual income? <i>¿Cuál es su ingreso total anual?</i>	
What is the household annual income? <i>¿Cuál es el ingreso total anual de su hogar? (Optional)</i>		<input type="checkbox"/> <\$2,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$2,000 - \$12,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$12,001 - \$25,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$25,001 - \$50,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$50,001 - \$75,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$75,001 +	
Do you receive any type of means tested benefits? <i>(Subsidized Housing, Supplemental Social Security (SSI), Medicaid, Food stamps etc.)</i>		<i>¿Recibe algún tipo de asistencia pública?</i> _____	
If so, which? / Si recibe, ¿cuál(es)?			
Why did you decide to become a citizen? <i>¿Por qué decidió convertirse en ciudadano?</i>			
How did you hear about the event? <i>¿Cómo se enteró sobre el evento?</i>		Would you be willing to share your citizenship story? <i>¿Estaría dispuesto usted a compartir su historia de ciudadanía?</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Get text message updates! By checking this box, I am agreeing to get updates from BONDING AGAINST ADVERSITY.* <i>Reciba alerta de texto! Al marcar esta casilla, estoy de acuerdo en recibir actualizaciones de parte del Fondo Educativo NALEO.*</i> *Standard MSG & data charges may apply. <i>*Pueden aplicarse cargos de data y mensajería.</i>			

STAFF USE ONLY: Intake Form collected at: <input type="checkbox"/> Eligibility <input type="checkbox"/> Applications <input type="checkbox"/> Quality Control <input type="checkbox"/>			
Packaging			
IS APPLICATION RECOMMENDED FOR FILING: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO			
Notes: Describe what documents (if any) the applicant is missing, or why this application is not recommended for filing: _____			
N-400 COMPLETED: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		Scanned: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	
I-912 COMPLETED: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO			
I-942 COMPLETED: <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		Staff Initials: _____	

Toolkit compiled for the New Americans Campaign by the Immigrant Legal Resource Center

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Thanks to those who contributed to this document:

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