



OPENING DOORS TO CITIZENSHIP



THE NEED FOR CITIZENSHIP SERVICES

More than eight million immigrants currently qualify for United States citizenship, based on their “green card” status, which allows them to live and work in the country on a permanent basis. Yet fewer than eight percent of them become citizens each year.¹

The journey to citizenship is a complex process with an expensive application fee; this journey is further delayed for applicants who accept help from misinformed or unscrupulous providers.

Across the country, hundreds of nonprofit organizations partner with government agencies, educational institutions, and private employers to promote citizenship and help lawful permanent residents prepare and submit their citizenship applications. To do this work successfully, these groups need a combination of outreach skills, general knowledge, technical legal expertise, convenient meeting places and a trusted reputation among newcomer populations. To increase the rate of naturalization and number of completed applications for citizenship, the **New Americans Campaign** was born.

¹ “U.S. Naturalizations 2013” and *2012 Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*, Office of Immigration Statistics, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

WHAT IS THE CAMPAIGN?

The New Americans Campaign (the Campaign) was formed in 2011 by a group of funders and national partners, including the Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC), to increase the number of eligible lawful permanent residents (LPRs) who apply to become United States citizens. The Campaign, led by the ILRC, draws together a national network of legal service providers, community- and faith-based organizations, foundations and other allies in the public and private sectors. The Campaign uses four main strategies to achieve its goals:

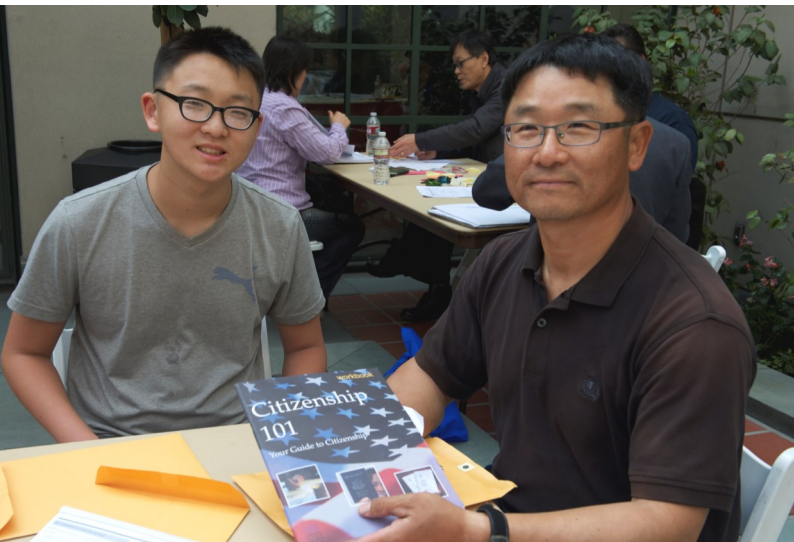
- Streamlining the naturalization process
- Increasing sustainable local capacity to help LPRs attain citizenship by providing a national infrastructure for support
- Advocating for public policies and funding that encourage citizenship
- Using strategic communication and positive messaging to bring attention to the citizenship process

The Campaign includes **national funders**, **national partner** organizations, and **local affiliates**. The six funders that established the Campaign provide leadership and resources to support ongoing efforts. National partner organizations disseminate best practices and strategies, provide training and technical assistance to local affiliates, and support local affiliates to work together and experiment with new models to accelerate naturalization. The local affiliates, numbering about 100 in communities across the United States, work in local coalitions to support LPRs through the naturalization process.

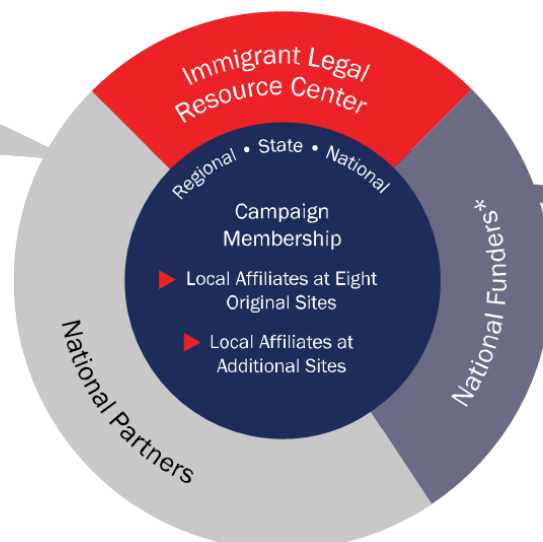
With expertise and support from the national partners, the local affiliates provide low-cost or no-cost legal counsel and assistance in completing citizenship forms, conduct community outreach and education about naturalization processes and services, and offer guidance based on LPR eligibility for citizenship. The ILRC serves as the Campaign's lead agency and coordinates the work of the Campaign. ILRC organizes discussions and trainings, facilitates opportunities for collaboration and learning among the national partners and local affiliates in the network, and provides strategic planning and implementation.

Initially eight communities were chosen to receive focused support and grant funding from the Campaign: Charlotte, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York and San Jose. Additional sites were added in 2013 and 2014.² Each site has a unique partnership of local and national nonprofit organizations working collaboratively to serve the needs of LPRs applying for citizenship. The local partners know the community and have the connections and the necessary reputation; the national organizations contribute training and expertise, as well as background knowledge of best practices. The ILRC serves as the glue connecting the eight collaborations and the national partners to each other for shared learning and mutual support.

In the first three years, member organizations of the Campaign produced over 120,000 completed applications for citizenship.



Asian Americans Advancing Justice—Los Angeles
Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. (CLINIC)
Immigration Advocates Network
International Rescue Committee
National Association of Latino Elected & Appointed Officials Educational Fund
National Immigration Forum
National Partnership for New Americans
Pro Bono Net



Carnegie Corporation of New York
John S. & James L. Knight Foundation
Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund
Grove Foundation
Open Society Foundations
The JPB Foundation

* Additional funders provide direct support to local affiliates and collaborations. A list of local funders is available on the Campaign's website, at newamericanscampaign.org/partners.

² Additional sites are the California collaborations of the East Bay Area; Napa County; Orange County; San Diego County; and San Francisco; and coalitions in the states of Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, and Washington.

CAMPAIGN IMPACTS

In 2012, the Campaign commissioned Harder+Company Community Research to evaluate whether and how the original eight Campaign sites had increased naturalization rates. The evaluation found that the campaign efforts at these sites had produced **increased numbers of completed applications**, in large part because of **beneficial collaboration**, **use of innovative approaches**, and **dynamic learning and support between national and local work**.

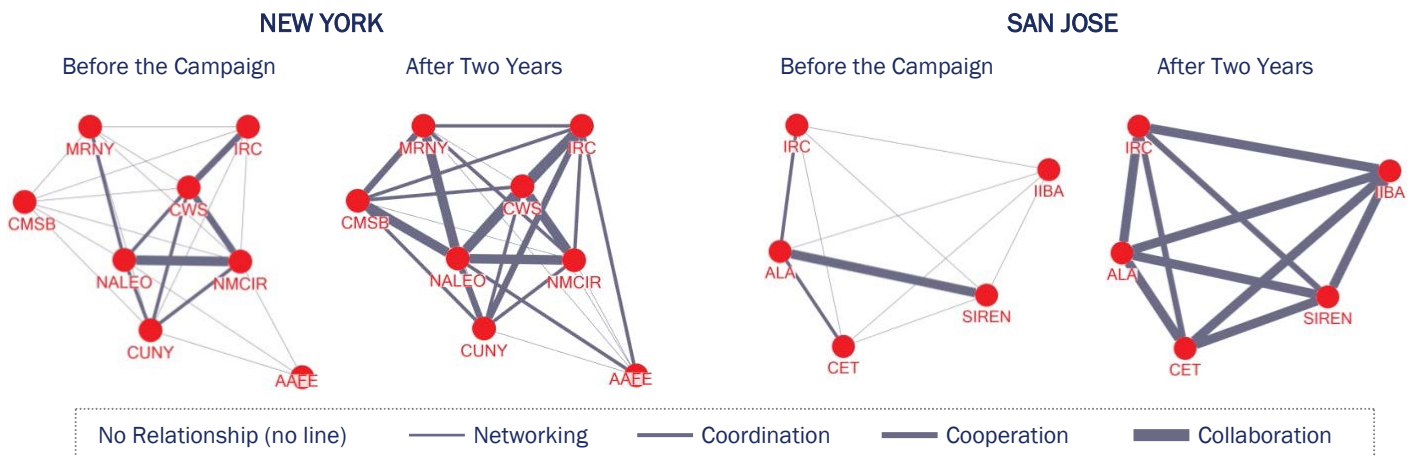


1. Increased numbers of completed applications. With funding and support from the Campaign, each site increased its 2012 rate of completed applications for naturalization over the prior year. The growth in numbers occurred for different reasons at each site, since each local collaborative planned and executed its approach to match its community's needs. Sites became more efficient in using outreach, technology and volunteers. Contrary to expectations, growth was not related to either the size of the community and number of volunteers, or to the amount of grant funding a site received from the Campaign. Over a period of two years, the local affiliates and national partners working on Campaign-funded projects in the eight sites raised the numbers of completed citizenship applications by 52%.



2. Beneficial collaboration. Collaborative work undertaken by the local affiliates at each of the eight original Campaign sites contributed to strengthened connections and greater efficiencies. This included taking on challenging projects, such as large group processing events and volunteer trainings, which required shared work across organizations. Collaborations demonstrated creative problem-solving and perseverance, which were key to their successes. Several collaborations added a new partner or strategically shared outreach responsibilities, resulting in exponential increases in these sites' ability to reach LPRs in ethnic communities. Relationship mapping done by the evaluators illustrates these stronger connections across partners.

Examples of Strengthened Connections Among Local Partners



3. Use of innovative approaches. With encouragement and grant funding from the Campaign, all eight sites tried new approaches to reach and serve LPRs, including using more innovative technology, group processing events, and expanded partnerships with businesses, public agencies and educational institutions. Use of technology had greatest success with LPRs who were familiar with computers and telecommunications, or when sites were able to provide individual coaching assistance. While group processing techniques were very successful overall, some sites encountered challenges due to logistics (e.g., difficulty finding a meeting location, recruiting adequate numbers of volunteer attorneys). These new approaches also provided local affiliates with some efficiencies in managing their teams of staff and volunteer attorneys. Sites have shared what they learned, providing the Campaign with a useful body of knowledge for dissemination to other local affiliates.



Examples of Using New Technology

Deploying new technology to support naturalization efforts is one of the Campaign's major strategies for bringing efficiency and scale to the delivery of naturalization services.

TELE-LAW: To help geographically distant individuals with their application forms, local partners used the free telecommunication apps Skype and GoToMeeting to communicate with LPRs who were using the online software CitizenshipWorks.

USE OF FREE SOFTWARE: Local affiliates used Google Voice, a free telecommunication application, to receive inquiries from and provide information to LPRs interested in group processing events. This is particularly helpful when trying to share information with a multi-lingual audience. Sites are also using free online forms and calendars to facilitate multi-partner collaboration.

E-LEARNING: With webinars, partner organizations have been able to streamline the volunteer training process and make information more accessible to the volunteers, which is critical to the success of group processing events.

Examples of New Partnerships

In **MIAMI**, the Campaign partnered with the Greater Miami and the Beaches Hotel Association to engage major hotels and other hospitality businesses in supporting hotel employees who aspire to become U.S. citizens. Through the Bethlehem Project, a special Campaign project designed for businesses that employ LPRs, the Miami area hotels offered workshops and onsite legal assistance to help eligible employees make progress on their citizenship applications.

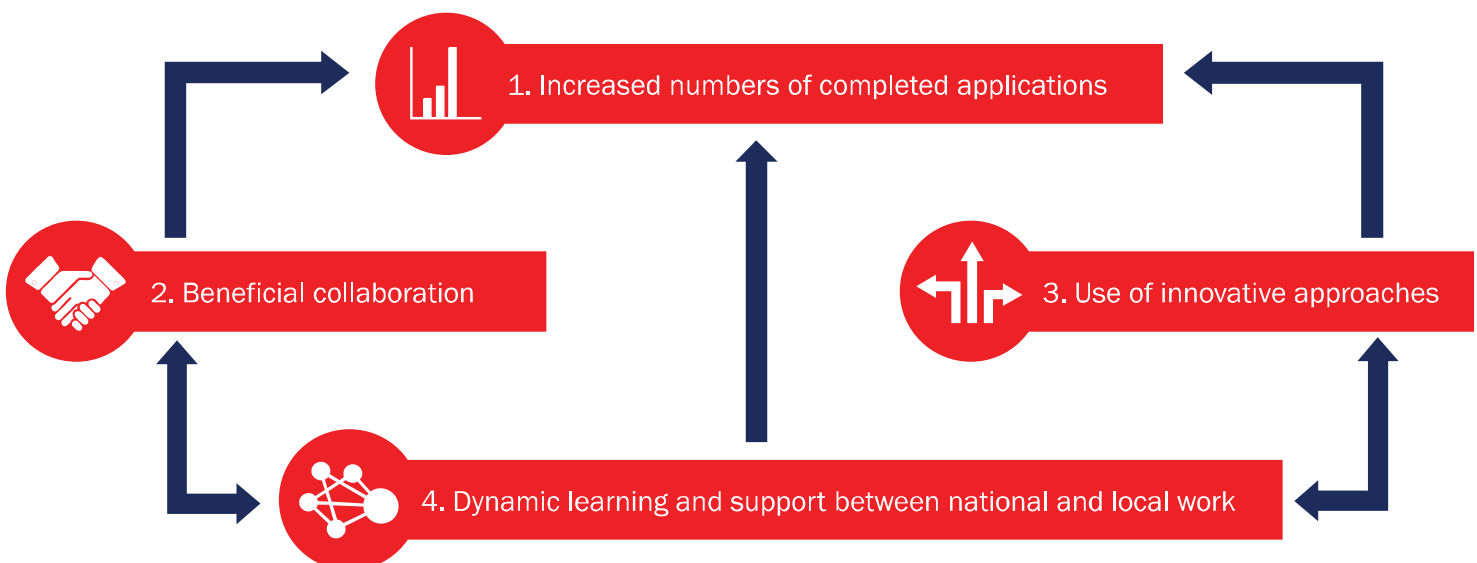
In **NEW YORK**, the Campaign's local partners collaborated with the New York City Department of Education to facilitate targeted outreach to LPR parents of children in the city's public schools.

In **SAN JOSE**, local affiliates worked with the county Social Services Agency to make "robocalls" about upcoming citizenship events to public benefits applicants who noted that they are not citizens. One event which attracted 1,000 attendees was preceded by 60,000 robocalls. The Social Services Agency also made space in their building available for naturalization processing events.



4. Dynamic learning and support between national and local work. The structure of the Campaign played an important role in the success rates at the local sites. By pushing and coaching local sites to experiment and explore new strategies, the Campaign facilitated learning that informed future work on both the local and national level. The ILRC disseminated best practices and ensured steady communication across the sites, and between sites and national partners. As a result, Campaign members embraced many opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and networking. The Campaign structure also made sure local sites had support and training for the specific types of projects they had taken on, and access to relevant technical expertise from national partners.

Inter-relationship of Campaign Impacts



Innovation with Library Partners

In **LOS ANGELES** the Campaign's local affiliates created a new partnership with the public library system to reach and serve LPRs in communities across the region at every public library branch (over 70 in total). The public libraries provide space and technology (computer labs and internet) for the general public to use to learn about naturalization and work on their applications. The success of this innovative approach caught the attention of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services' Office of Citizenship, which is now working with the Institute of Museum and Library Services to spread the "Citizenship Corner" concept to 9,000 libraries across the United States.

Local affiliates in **NEW YORK** partnered with the Brooklyn Public Library to offer workshops featuring the CitizenshipWorks online software in the library's new technology facility. The new Information Commons at the Central Library features a training lab and open workspace designed for individual and group work. The initial pilot workshop was part of a week-long series of free naturalization events sponsored by Campaign affiliates at locations throughout New York City.

In **HOUSTON**, Campaign affiliates use the Houston Public Library's mobile computer lab for citizenship education classes and application workshops. The bright red, state-of-the-art technology lab on wheels has 13 desktop computers, 20 laptops, and internet access. Using the mobile lab allows the Houston collaboration to offer naturalization workshops anywhere within the large, geographically spread-out city.



WHAT'S NEXT?

The evaluation findings point to the ongoing need to streamline the naturalization process for LPRs and identify cost-effective techniques for use by local affiliates. While group processing events and greater use of technology are promising techniques, they do not reduce the ongoing need for skilled staff in the organizations doing this work, and a network of volunteer attorneys to assist applicants. Local partners say the biggest obstacles to better services are gaps in staffing and a need for more volunteer attorneys.

Service Delivery Barriers

As identified by Local Partners

1. Limited Staffing or staff turnover
2. Challenges recruiting volunteer attorneys
3. Difficulties conducting successful outreach to LPRs

Recommended Action Steps

To continue the positive growth trends at the sites, the Campaign and its leaders need to:

- Build on sites' experimentation with group processing and technology by coordinating further testing and refinements at the site level.
- Continue to develop and strengthen relationships with public and private sector institutions and organizations that can help local partners with outreach to LPRs.
- Continue to identify and test strategies that will address cross-site issues (e.g., volunteer recruitment).



GET INVOLVED

The New Americans Campaign intends to continue transforming the way aspiring citizens navigate the path to becoming new Americans, and invites others to join in the work.

If you are a foundation or funder:

- Consider providing financial support to the Campaign.
- Inform other funders about the work of the Campaign and share this report.
- Sponsor a state-level or national cross-sector task force of leaders to raise understanding and awareness of naturalization processes and obstacles.
- Convene a discussion with your colleagues about the ways that naturalization issues impact their work in other program areas, such as economic development, education, workforce development and health and human services.
- Attend a session at a national or regional funder gathering about immigration and naturalization to learn what other funders are doing to support the issue.

If you represent a local organization, community group, or faith-based group:

- Connect with local organizations and community groups that are facilitating the naturalization process. You can find them by contacting the Campaign.
- Discuss with your staff and board members, or with other local community leaders, how naturalization issues are impacting your constituents.

If you are a business:

- Contact the Campaign to learn more about the Bethlehem Project and other ways businesses can support LPRs on their path to citizenship.
- Inform your employees about naturalization services and events in your area.

If you represent a national organization or national network of organizations:

- Discuss with your leadership team how naturalization issues are impacting your constituents and your organization's progress.
- Contact the Campaign to discuss how your organization can be involved.
- Publicize naturalization events; add links to naturalization resources to your organization's materials and website.

If you are with the media:

- Talk with local providers of naturalization assistance—there are always inspiring stories.
- Contact the Campaign for a press kit of information and to be added to the press release list.

CONTACT INFORMATION & ATTRIBUTION

For more information about the New Americans Campaign, contact Melissa Rodgers at mrodgers@ilrc.org or visit the website newamericanscampaign.org.

For more information about the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, which leads the Campaign, visit the website www.ilrc.org.

Evaluation findings are extracted from the full evaluation report *Opening Doors to Citizenship: An Interim Evaluation of the New Americans Campaign* by Harder+Company Community Research (November 2013).

This publication was written and produced by Informing Change. www.informingchange.com.



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