

TOOLKIT

Engaging Airport Authorities About Providing Naturalization Information in Airports

Introduction

This toolkit provides a practical step-by-step guide to help organizations offering naturalization services, advocacy, or outreach engage their nearby international airport authorities to promote naturalization. Many organizations have had success working with airports to display signage, public service ads, videos, and written materials for Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) who are traveling and may be interested in naturalization information.

Background

The “[Red, White and Blue: Time for Citizenship](#)” (RWB) campaign is an initiative of the [New Americans Campaign](#) (NAC). It was created after the publication of a [NAC study](#) showing that about 44 percent of LPRs (approximately 3.9 million people) who are eligible to naturalize travel outside the United States at least once a year. Based on this research, the RWB campaign was created to promote naturalization and disseminate citizenship information at airports. Before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, two RWB member organizations, OneAmerica in Seattle and Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Atlanta, had worked with their respective nearby international airports to create public service video announcements for travelers.

In 2021, more than sixty organizations, including RWB partners and other groups active in naturalization, authored a letter to U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) with practical recommendations on what CBP could do to promote naturalization at ports of entry. CBP responded to the letter and subsequently joined with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and RWB to collaborate on two separate programs. One program was to provide naturalization information (video and written brochures) at 12 pilot airports in the passport and international baggage claim areas, and the second program was to update the CBP website to increase access to naturalization information. Both programs were fully implemented.

While the CBP naturalization programs show progress, there is more they can do to disseminate information on naturalization. In particular, the program providing naturalization information at the twelve pilot airports could be expanded in multiple ways. It is currently limited to the passport and international baggage claim areas, and future expansion could allow naturalization information to be presented in additional sections of the airport. Further, with the program only in place at 12 international airports in the U.S., further expansion to additional airports in the U.S. is another opportunity to broaden its reach. This toolkit is for local and regional naturalization organizations interested in engaging their local airports to build on this progress and expand access to naturalization information in airports.

Step-By-Step Process for Local Airport Engagement



1. Determine who operates your nearby international airport.

- a. International airports are not owned and operated by the federal government but rather by other public entities. In many cases, a state, regional, or local airport authority operates the airport. This information can be found via a simple web search.
- b. A CEO or executive director of an airport authority, along with a large number of staff, typically oversees the day-to-day operations of international airports.

2. Contact the entity that operates the airport.

- a. Ultimately, it is a good idea to establish a working relationship with the local airport authority or governing entity that operates the airport. The governing airport authority is best situated to be able to implement the programs to provide naturalization information at the airport.
- b. It is often helpful to extend outreach to city leadership directly, so they are informed of your engagement and goals. Most airports are owned and operated by public entities such as state, regional, or city governments through airport authorities.
- c. Many cities have an Office of Immigrant Affairs or similar entities aimed at immigration inclusion and integration. Outreach to those offices can also be helpful in creating or expanding the provision of citizenship information at nearby airports.

3. Explain the “why” and “what” of providing citizenship information at airports.

Why:

- Studies show that a large number of LPRs travel internationally every year.
- International airports are appropriate places to be reminded to naturalize.
- CBP has successfully initiated a pilot program to provide naturalization information at 12 international airports in the passport and international baggage claim areas.
- An expanded effort would provide such information in more airports and in additional areas of the airport.
- Naturalization has both individual and public benefits such as wage gains, employee retention, upward mobility, increased tax contributions, and civic engagement.

What: *(There are several options—one, some, or all of them can be utilized in a particular airport.)*

- Issuance of Public Service Announcements (PSAs), including video on airport monitors and audio announcements.
- Installation of fixed visual displays, including signage and murals.
- Display of naturalization brochures at key locations in the airport.
- Utilizing multilingual naturalization resources. Examples that partners have already developed can be found [here](#).
- Provision of contact information for local naturalization service providers.
- Equipping self-service kiosks at the airport with naturalization information.

4. Work with the airport authorities to identify the best location and manner for installing and/or providing naturalization information.

- a. Depending on which naturalization projects are being pursued, it is important to identify the best locations to provide that information.
- b. For video or audio PSAs, establish how often the information will be repeated (every 15 minutes, 30 minutes, hour, etc.) The more often, the better.
- c. For written materials, it is critical that they are placed in visible locations that catch people's attention. Avoid placing materials where they are hidden behind obstacles or obstructed by baggage, carts, or other signage, or impede cleaning personnel.
- d. Providing signage about the written materials increases their visibility.

5. Provide the airport with the PSA/signage/brochure/video/ service provider information to distribute, or create information and materials with the local jurisdiction and/or the airport.

- a. Naturalization materials can be sourced in many ways: developed jointly with the city and/or airport, secured from USCIS or other federal agencies, shared by the NAC or other partners, or self-created by your organization.
- b. The city may want the mayor to be the spokesperson for a video or audio PSA.
- c. The NAC has [samples](#) of past naturalization PSAs that can be shared.
- d. Local naturalization service provider information should be made available in the same location as the naturalization brochures and should include contact information (email, phone, etc.).

Note: CBP probably will not allow you to place local naturalization service provider information in the areas of the airport under their control (passport/customs and international baggage control areas). Federal regulations only permit displaying federally recognized service providers, which carries additional requirements. However, areas of the airport outside of CBP control do not have these restrictions.

e. A clear plan of action and the responsible individual(s) who will set up, maintain, and restock the printed materials must be established. This would most often be someone working at the airport, given their proximity and the ease of monitoring the situation. Someone from the local naturalization service provider should also be identified as the point of contact if there are complications. This person(s) would also be responsible for providing input on 6.c. below.

6. Measure the effectiveness of any naturalization projects at airports.

a. Regularly check that PSAs and other projects are still being promoted. Conduct airport visits to validate the continued provision of the naturalization information.

b. Measure the frequency and location of audio and video PSAs. Determine whether opportunities exist to expand the PSAs to different areas of the airport or to increase their frequency.

Note: The goal should be that anyone traveling through the airport will see/hear the PSA at least once and preferably multiple times.

c. Determine how often the naturalization brochures are being picked up. This can be done by measuring how often packets of brochures are being replenished at a particular location. In making these determinations, it is helpful to note whether certain brochures are picked up more frequently than others or whether there have been documented periods where no brochures are available (due to inadequate restocking).

d. Organizations receiving new naturalization clients should ask where the clients learned about the organization's services, either verbally or via written or electronic survey. When making that inquiry, organizations should include "Through naturalization information provided at the airport" as an option or prompt.

7. Maintain ongoing contact with airport authorities and conduct regular follow-up visits even after the project(s) has/have been completed.

a. It is important to sustain the relationship with airport contacts to ensure the continued provision of naturalization information. Maintaining contact is helpful for follow-up purposes and allows for new opportunities to expand existing projects. Furthermore, as management and staffing of the airports change over time, ongoing meetings allow projects and contracts to continue, and it will not become necessary to start from scratch in reestablishing airport contacts.

b. Some RWB members have found that engagement with local airports has led to other collaborations, including naturalization workshops at the airport, and the provision of airport meeting spaces for other activities of the RWB member organization.

8. Participate in RWB meetings.

- a. Members of the “Red, White and Blue: Time for Citizenship” campaign (RWB) meet regularly to share updates, engage in planning and strategy, and encourage one another. Email nac@ilrc.org to learn more about the RWB campaign.
- b. The RWB meeting is a place to learn from other RWB organizations about progress and best practices with their local international airport naturalization projects.
- c. The RWB meeting is also a place to strategize about opportunities to improve or expand airport naturalization projects, as well as potential opportunities to share naturalization information at other ports of entry.

This toolkit was developed by the National Immigration Forum and the New Americans Campaign.

About the National Immigration Forum

Founded in 1982, the National Immigration Forum (the Forum) is a nonpartisan advocacy organization that builds trusted relationships to create a shared vision for immigration. The Forum works across the political spectrum to convene different perspectives, bring new allies into the conversation, and advance constructive and compassionate immigration policies that serve America’s interests.

About the New Americans Campaign

The New Americans Campaign is the leading collaborative devoted to increasing rates of naturalization among eligible residents. Over nine million lawful permanent residents are eligible for citizenship, yet less than one million apply to naturalize each year. By promoting fair naturalization policies and connecting permanent residents to our network of trusted legal advisors and naturalization experts—at more than 200 organizations across 20+ cities nationwide—we are transforming the way aspiring citizens become new Americans.

If you have questions, please reach out to the New Americans Campaign (NAC) at nac@ilrc.org

