

Putting Out the Welcome Mat: The Power of Citizenship to Connect Communities

April 13, 2016

The webinar will begin shortly. If you experience a problem signing on, please contact the Webex Technical Support Line at [1-866-229-3239](tel:1-866-229-3239) for direct assistance.



WELCOMING
Refugees

The Welcoming Refugees Project is supported by the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR/ACF/DHHS)



Today's Speakers



Leya Speasmaker
Catholic Legal
Immigration Network,
Inc



Susan Downs-Karkos,
Welcoming America



Homa Naficy
Hartford Public Library



Stephanie Ali
New American Pathways

Session Objectives

By the end of this webinar participants will:

- Understand the importance of citizenship to new Americans and receiving communities
- Apply new strategies for incorporating receiving communities for greater impact
- Learn how to collaborate with community partners to strengthen citizenship work
- Recognize the role of legal services in their communities

Agenda

- **Understanding the Importance of Citizenship**
Leya Speasmaker, Field Support Coordinator & Integration Program Manager, CLINIC
- **Receiving Community Engagement and Citizenship**
Susan Downs-Karkos, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Welcoming America
- **Promising Example: Hartford Public Library Immigration & Citizenship Program**
Homa Naficy, Chief Adult Learning Officer
- **Promising Example: New American Pathways**
Stephanie Ali, Communications and Policy Coordinator
- **Moderated Discussion**
- **Resources and Call to Action**

Understanding the Importance of Citizenship

Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.

Citizenship Benefits

- Full Civic Participation
- Right to Vote
- More Employment and Educational Opportunities
- Derivative Citizenship for Children
- Travel Benefits
- Protection from Deportation
- Right to Immigrate Family Members
- Preservation of Social Security Income (SSI) benefits

Results from Increased Rates of Citizenship

Civic, economic and linguistic integration can lead to:

- More families invested in the community
- More families volunteering and serving
- Better representation in civic leadership positions
- More income and property taxes paid
- Increased parental involvement in schools
- More voters

Potential Barriers in Applying for Citizenship

Reasons refugees and immigrants might not apply:

- Cost
- Perception of a process that may seem imposing or complex
- Lack of understanding of the eligibility requirements
- Lack of culturally appropriate services
- Citizenship can occur 5 years after arrival
- Ability to access authorized legal services

Reminders about Authorized Legal Service Provision

- Citizenship applications are complex
- The wrong help can hurt
- Notarios cannot provide legal immigration services
- Citizenship applicants should always consult with an immigration attorney or a BIA Recognized agency with Accredited staff members



Important Roles for the Receiving Community in the Citizenship Application Process

- Provide facts and resources about citizenship
- Provide support and encouragement throughout the process
- Offer ESL and Citizenship test preparation classes
- Offer authorized legal immigration services
- Offer referrals to authorized providers or to outside classes
- Serve as a bridge to the receiving community

Citizenship and the Receiving Community

Welcoming America

The Benefits to Citizenship Programs

- Improved community climate, where immigrants feel more welcomed and participate civically
- Increased local visibility of program and achievements
- Strengthened program credibility, new champions
- Ability to attract additional resources
- Improved participant outreach and demand for citizenship services

Receiving Communities Approaches



A Transformation Experience

“I’ve learned a lot through this volunteer experience about what people from different countries are really like. These are the kindest, warmest people I’ve met.”

– Gerald Spence, Volunteer

“I want to thank Laura in a special way. She offered her time to prepare me for a second interview[...] I really feel American now [that I am a citizen].”

– Saba, Refugee Participant



Building Meaningful Connections

- Recruit volunteers from a broader range of backgrounds
- Consider a citizenship mentoring component
- Consider classroom activities that engage the receiving community
- Nurture your volunteers and help them share their experiences broadly



Engaging Mainstream Leaders

- Consider local leaders from diverse sectors
- Engage in the classroom, at citizenship events
- Have a strategy for ongoing engagement and communication



Photo Credit: Welcoming Colorado, City of Beaverton

Incorporating Communication Strategies

- Share stories of New Americans and their volunteers
- Engage local media
- Consider citizenship ceremonies a golden communications opportunity
- Use photos and stories in your other collateral



Promising Example: Immigration & Citizenship Program

Hartford Public Library

Partner

Find a USCIS Field Office near you
<http://www.uscis.org>

Contact the Community Relations Officer

Other partners will vary depending on location and enhancements

- Library
- Park
- City Hall
- The Capitol

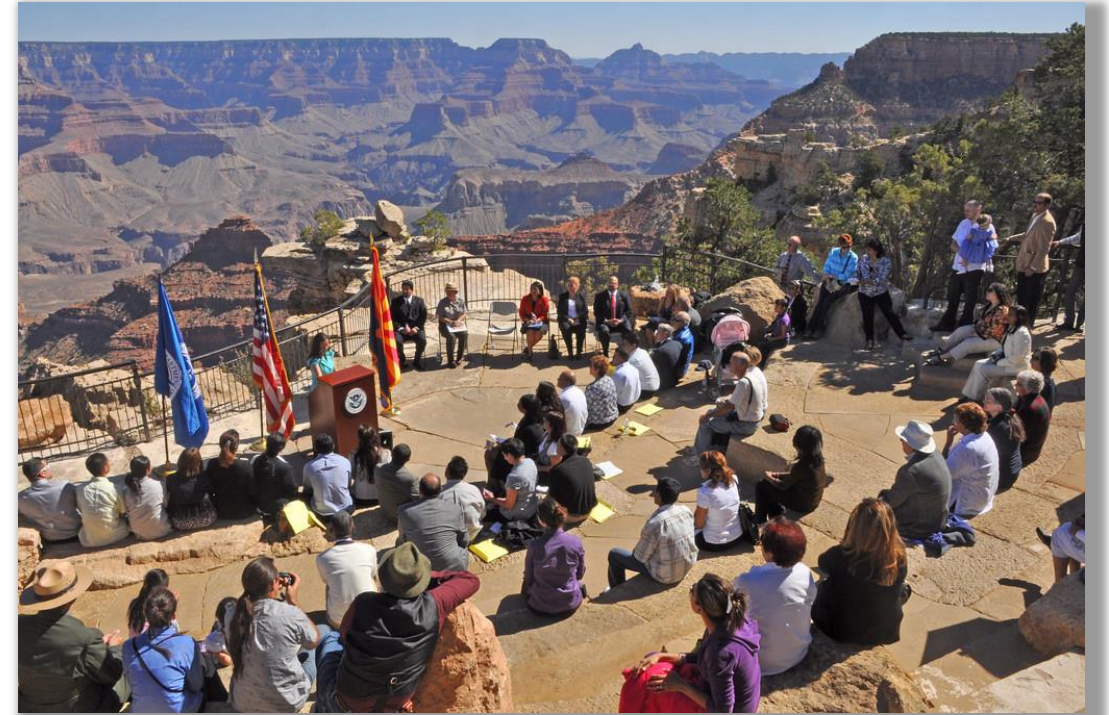


Photo Credit: Grand Canyon National Park

Location/Space

- Security
- Court set up
- Seating
 - Candidates
 - Candidates' friends 7 family
 - Speakers
- Voter registrar
- Children activities
- Presentation of the colors (seating)
- Choir (seating)
- Passport services
- Reception

Select a date

What do you want to highlight?

A date, a theme, a person?

- Constitution Day (September 17)
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Flag day (June 14)
- Welcoming Week (Week of Sept. 17)
- World Refugee Day (June 20)
- Adoption Month (October)
- Library Week (April 10 – 16)



Speakers

- Master of Ceremonies - USCIS field officer
- Opening welcoming and closing remarks
- Keynote
- Pledge of Allegiance



Enhancements

- Choir/singer
- Presentation of the colors
- Gifts / favors
- Flag Bunting
- Reception



Promising Example

New American Pathways

A Path to Citizenship

- Our office includes three BIA accredited immigration specialists, who process over 280 permanent residency applications and 230 citizenship applications per year
- Through a new grant from USCIS, in partnership with Literacy Action, we will increase applications by 100 over the next two years
- Literacy Action will focus on civics and English language tutoring to help improve passage of citizenship exam for applicants

Citizenship – Critical Partnerships

- Welcoming Atlanta – city has placed “Citizenship Corners” in all public libraries and recreation centers
- Latin American Association and GALEO – educating and encouraging communities on citizenship benefits and access, host Citizenship Day annually to process hundreds of files



Voter Registration & Engagement

- In partnership with ProGA coalition, work at USCIS ceremonies, local sites (like MARTA stations, temples, etc) and festivals to register new Americans to vote
- All newly-registered voters given take-home info about voting in Georgia
- Get Out the Vote effort includes mailed letters before election dates, partnering with organizations for door-to-door campaigns



Educating New Citizens

- Advocacy education – Hosted first in series of Advocacy 101 workshops for ethnic community leaders to better educate their communities in advocating for themselves
- Day at the Capitol – Annual New Americans Celebration at the State Capitol invites new Americans to learn and practice outreach with elected officials
- Localized Education Events – Goals for 2016 include specialized events for communities within their places of worship, How-To workshops for voting and Government 101

How to Get Started

Learn more about citizenship requirements (<https://www.uscis.gov/>)

Volunteer in a citizenship test preparation program or ESL Program

Serve as a conversation partner (check your local library)

Ensure your library has a Citizenship Corner

Attend a citizenship oath ceremony

Refer potential applicants to authorized service providers

(<https://www.justice.gov/eoir/recognized-organizations-and-accredited-representatives-roster-state-and-city>)

Moderated Discussion



Citizenship Navigator Project

This free program is designed especially for refugee resettlement staff

Citizenship Navigators receive:

- A dedicated hotline for answering questions about citizenship and BIA Recognition and Accreditation applications
- Trainings on citizenship and how to offer authorized legal immigration services
- Dedicated assistance for BIA Recognition and Accreditation applications
- Training materials on citizenship to use in your local community
- Access to a nationwide texting campaign providing information on citizenship to refugees and asylees

Sign up for information and notifications at cliniclegal.org/citizenshipnavigator

Resources

CLINIC Resources

- Citizenship Toolkit: https://cliniclegal.org/clinic_toolkit/citizenship
- Creating a Citizenship Test Preparation Program: <https://cliniclegal.org/resources/comprehensive-citizenship-preparation-program-toolkit>
- Partnership Toolkit: <https://cliniclegal.org/resources/toolkits/partnership-toolkit>

Federal Government Resources

- BIA R&A Roster: <https://www.justice.gov/eoir/recognition-accreditation-roster-reports>
- Find an ESL or Citizenship Test Preparation class: <https://my.uscis.gov/findaclass>



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Photo Credit: US Marine Corps

Recorded Webinars & Other Resources

The screenshot shows the homepage of the Welcoming Refugees website. At the top left, the logo reads "WELCOMING Refugees" with "WELCOMING" in blue and "Refugees" in white on a red ribbon. To the right is a navigation menu with links: "Learn", "Connect", "Share Your Story", "About the Project", and "Blog". The main banner features a teal background with the text "THE POWER OF CITIZENSHIP TO CONNECT RECEIVING & NEWCOMER COMMUNITIES" and "April 13 | 1PM EST". Below this is a red ribbon with "REGISTER NOW" and a right-pointing arrow. The banner image shows a diverse group of people, some with their hands raised in a gesture of welcome. Below the banner are three sections: "Toolkits" with a dark blue box containing the word "REFRAMING"; "Latest Resources" with the text "Building Bridges to Welcome LGBTI Refugees"; and "From the Blog" with a small image and the text "Celebrating Welcoming".

New Resource: Volunteer Recruitment Video



<http://bit.ly/refugeevolunteervideo>

WELCOMING WEEK

September 16-25, 2016



Soccer Without Borders



Kentucky Refugee Ministries

Repair the World - APRIL 15-30, 2016



<http://werrepair.org/passover/>

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