

# A Case Study in Innovative Partnerships: How Human Services Agencies Can Help Increase Access to U.S. Citizenship

*A Best Practices Series Toolkit*

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## 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 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 CASE STUDY

Partnerships with local government can generate significant increases in the number of eligible lawful permanent residents (LPRs) who apply to become U.S. citizens. This case study of the New Americans Campaign's unique partnership with human services agencies in three San Francisco Bay Area counties provides a roadmap for similar partnerships nationwide.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Naturalization improves the outcomes of immigrants, their families, and their communities by enhancing immigrant incomes, human capital, mobility, and civic engagement. However, of the roughly 13 million LPRs in the United States today, about 9 million are eligible to naturalize and have not.

To meet this challenge, across the San Francisco Bay Area in Santa Clara, San Francisco, and San Mateo counties, the New Americans Campaign has organized “mega-workshops” in partnership with local human services agencies. Through these workshops, Campaign partners have managed to serve thousands of immigrants seeking naturalization free of charge over just a few days. Since partnering with human services agencies, New Americans Campaign CBOs report increased success in terms of turnout, attendee preparedness, and access to eligible low-income lawful permanent residents. Partnerships with human services agencies have yielded up to, and at times exceeded, tenfold increases in the number of LPRs receiving naturalization assistance in one sitting.

## INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIPS: HOW HUMAN SERVICES AGENCIES CAN HELP INCREASE ACCESS TO U.S. CITIZENSHIP

Research finds that naturalization<sup>1</sup> improves the outcomes of immigrants, their families, and their communities by enhancing immigrant incomes, human capital, mobility, and civic engagement.<sup>2</sup> However, it is estimated that of today's roughly 13 million lawful permanent residents (LPRs), about 9 million are eligible to naturalize and have not.<sup>3</sup> One barrier to naturalization is the application processing fee, currently at \$680. Evidence shows that increases in application fees over time have been associated with a decrease in naturalization among LPRs with low education levels and incomes, an increase in the average years of waiting before applying for citizenship, and a change in the national origin composition of applicants, primarily resulting from fewer Mexican LPRs applying for citizenship.<sup>4</sup>

In 2008, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) introduced a fee waiver for low-income LPRs with family incomes below 150% of the federal poverty line. However, the fee waiver has not been widely publicized by USCIS and many of those eligible have not heard of it. Not wanting to waste this opportunity, the New Americans Campaign has taken on the challenge of raising awareness and increasing the use of the fee waiver among eligible LPRs. Led by the Immigrant Legal Resource Center, the New Americans Campaign is a nonpartisan, groundbreaking national network of legal-service providers, faith-based organizations, businesses, foundations, and community leaders working in 18 metropolitan areas across the United States to help lawfully qualified permanent residents become American citizens.

*“Community Engagement is one of our core values at the Human Services Agency and we are proud to partner with local service providers to offer the citizenship workshops. Participating in the past citizenship events has not only shown foreign born residents of the county that HSA is here to help and support them, but it has helped in bringing the community together as well. A community eager to help their neighbor will continue to thrive, and that’s why we participate in these workshops.”*

*– Iliana Rodriguez, Director,  
County of San Mateo Human Services Agency*

One strategy Campaign partners have adopted with great success is partnering with local government and human services agencies to inform low income immigrant clients about the fee waiver and local naturalization workshops intended to guide eligible LPRs through the process of applying for citizenship. According to Campaign partners, targeted outreach to immigrants in human services agency client databases has resulted in unprecedented turnout at application assistance workshops, greater applicant preparation, and access to a hard to reach population less likely to naturalize. This case study focuses on these “mega-workshops” drawing hundreds to over a thousand attendees.<sup>5</sup>

## I. The Challenge We Face: Reaching the Community

In the past, New Americans Campaign community based organizations have offered free naturalization workshops, but struggled at times with attendee turnout, eligibility, and preparedness. Using traditional outreach methods, such as ads in newspapers and radio, the Services, Immigrant Rights, and Education Network (SIREN) in Santa Clara County estimated that they could bring in about 75-100 participants in one weekend. Meanwhile, the International Institute of the Bay Area's (IIBA) Redwood City Office had been hosting monthly workshops drawing about 20-40 participants for years. At times, attendance was larger, such as just before the application form changed or the fee increased significantly. At other times, turnout was more disappointing, especially when events were held where the organization was less established, such as when the IIBA organized a workshop in Daly City that only drew 4 participants. Even when there was a healthy turnout, a broad outreach strategy meant that many people who showed up were not eligible or prepared to apply for citizenship. They either did not meet basic requirements, were not prepared to pay the \$680 application fee, or did not bring the necessary documentation to complete their application during the workshop.

It is estimated that about one third of the roughly 9 million current lawful permanent residents eligible for citizenship in the United States are eligible for the USCIS naturalization fee waiver.<sup>6</sup> However, Campaign partners noticed that many of the waiver-eligible LPRs attending workshops did not know about it, and started to think about how to best reach those who qualified. LPRs who receive a means-tested public benefit (such as Food Stamps)<sup>7</sup> are by definition low income and therefore eligible for the fee waiver if they can show proof that they receive the benefit. In 2013, SIREN approached the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency to see what they could do to get the word out among their clients: the human services agency partnership practice was born.

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## II. Human Services Agencies Offer a Solution

Human services agencies maintain databases of client program participation, contact information, and foreign born status. They can also provide clients with verification of receipt of public benefits letters that serve as evidence for naturalization fee waiver applications. By partnering with local human services agencies, CBOs can directly target immigrants eligible for naturalization fee waivers with specific information that increases the likelihood that they will arrive at a workshop prepared to complete their applications.

At the time of this report, human services agencies in Santa Clara, San Mateo, and San Francisco County in the Bay Area had partnered with New Americans Campaign CBOs on multiple mega-workshops, each county partnership with its own particular model.<sup>8</sup> Table 1 details the track pursued by each county,

which included a mix of mailers, automated telephone calls (robo-calls), and onsite support. In Santa Clara, the focus was on robo-call invitations. The robo-calls were about 60 seconds each, and informed clients about an upcoming free citizenship workshop: the location, time, and a number to call for more information on the event details, eligibility, and documentation required. They were also able to send out thousands of text messages and emails, though fewer clients provided an email address. Denise Boland, Director of the Department of Employment and Benefits Services in the Santa Clara County Social Services Agency explained, “We started out by just doing flyers in offices and things like that, but

### HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY CONTRIBUTIONS TO OUTREACH

- ✓ Mailers with invitation letter, verification of benefits letter, and flyer
- ✓ Robo-call reminders
- ✓ Onsite printing of verification of benefits letters
- ✓ Connections with local officials to secure space and publicity

recently what we have been doing, and have found effective, is to do robo-calls. [...] We use this for our on-going work with clients, to remind people of their appointments, as well as information we are missing to continue benefits, and we have found that effective. Two years ago we offered this service for Citizenship Day and attendance tripled.”

In San Francisco, the model evolved. Instead of robo-calls, the agency sent out mailers to clients that included a personalized verification of receipt of public benefits letter, an invitation to the workshop with information on eligibility and how to prepare, and another letter explaining

the verification of benefits letter in the client’s native language. To satisfy requirements for the USCIS citizenship application fee waiver, the letter included the client’s name, the means-tested public benefit program(s) in which they were enrolled, their starting date of service, and a client ID number that would allow the agency to look up the client again if necessary. Including the verification letter in the mailer eliminated the need for qualified LPRs to make an appointment at the agency to obtain the letter and highlighted their eligibility for the substantial \$680 fee waiver. While the verification letters were printed in English for the application, the invitation letters were sent out in Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Tagalog and specifically referenced the verification letter so those who could not read it would understand its importance. To lessen the likelihood of fraud, verification letters were printed out on security paper that precluded photocopying. The Human Services Agency of San Francisco also sent a staff person to the workshop on the day of the event to print out verification letters for clients who had lost or forgotten them. At the first workshop with over 1,000 attendees, they printed about 100 letters onsite. Once the verification letter template and database query were created, it was very easy for the agency to replicate the process for the second workshop.

Finally, in San Mateo County, the role of the human services agency in the partnership evolved again, this time expanding to include robo-calls, mailers, onsite workshop letter printing, and support finding a location and providing lunch for volunteers. Here the agency sent a direct mailer to clients, which included a verification of benefits letter based on the one used in San Francisco as well as invitation letters in English and Spanish with information about the event, the verification letter, and eligibility requirements. Closer to the event date, the agency organized robo-call reminders to clients who provided a phone number using its own in-house system. Like in San Francisco, the San Mateo agency was able to send a staff person on the day of the workshop to print verification letters onsite. In reference to providing the verification of benefits letters to clients, either mailed or onsite, Sheryl Muñoz-Bergman, Director of Programs at the IIBA in San Mateo County stressed, “Many of the participants in the public benefits programs are seniors and people with disabilities, medical issues, and fragile health situations, so to be able to save them an extra trip back to the office during the weekday is a significant benefit for people.” In addition to this, the agency in San Mateo County put Campaign partners in touch with representatives from the county Board of Supervisors who helped obtain locations for the workshops, waive the facility fees, and support the event through media releases and appearances at workshops. Senior Executive Analyst at the San Mateo Human Services Agency, Edwin Chan, noted, “This collaborative model allows both the county and our non-profit partner [New Americans Campaign] to leverage our resources together for the greater community. Both of us share the same goal to serve the community and this is an excellent model that could be replicated by other counties.”

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*–Edwin Chan, Senior Executive Analyst,  
County of San Mateo Human Services Agency*

Identifying the target population within the client database did bring challenges due to the limited data on immigration status that these agencies collect. The goal is of course to reach LPRs who are 18 or older and who have had their green card (LPR status) for at least 5 years, the minimum required for naturalization (though LPRs married to U.S. citizens can naturalize after 3 years). The Santa Clara County agency identified about 30,000 clients who were foreign born. This was a wide net that led to the contact of immigrants outside of the target population, including those who had already naturalized or had not been a green-card holder for at least 5 years. In San Francisco County, the agency originally targeted 30,000 foreign born non-citizen residents, and in the second year narrowed contacts to about 25,000 by eliminating about 5,000 youth under the age of 18. The San Mateo County agency was able to identify foreign-born clients who were not citizens in its system, and contacted about 2,500 clients in Daly City

and 1,000 in Redwood City. Since agency databases precluded a more focused outreach to eligible LPRs, CBOs included a phone number to call for more information, and when they sent mailers, included basic information on eligibility and how to prepare for the workshop.

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### III. Local Government Resources Support Success

In addition to support with outreach, New Americans Campaign CBOs worked with government agencies and other community partners to secure a number of other workshop resources, including facilities, food and water, and publicity. In Santa Clara and San Mateo, Campaign partners worked directly with the human services agency, local government, and businesses to secure workshop resources, while CBOs in San Francisco coordinated their efforts as part of the San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative, a \$1.2 million three-year initiative overseen by the San Francisco Office of Civic Engagement and Immigrant Affairs (OCEIA) to support naturalization among eligible LPRs.

#### RESOURCES LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAN PROVIDE TO ENSURE A SUCCESSFUL WORKSHOP

- ✓ Large, open location space, tables and chairs
- ✓ Volunteers (to run stations, assess eligibility, help fill out forms, translate and interpret)
- ✓ Copiers, printers, paper
- ✓ Water, snacks, and lunch for volunteers
- ✓ Sufficient restroom facilities to accommodate large number of attendees
- ✓ Custodial work and overtime
- ✓ Security
- ✓ Publicity and appearances by local elected officials
- ✓ Registrar of voters or election department staff to educate participants about future voting rights
- ✓ Parking or access to public transportation
- ✓ Information about other programs (such as health care)

*Federal government agencies such as the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the Selective Service, and the U.S. Postal Service can provide resources as well (ESL and civics study materials, verification of Selective Service registration, mail drop)*

### ***Physical Space and Services***

Campaign CBOs worked with a number of community partners to secure a location space for the workshops, including human services agencies, local government officials, school districts, and churches. In Santa Clara, the human services agency was able to offer its office as a location for the first workshop, which included a computer lab and large open space to set up stations with tables and chairs. According to SIREN, this was a very successful event in part because the space was a place clients had already visited before and trusted. It was also built to accommodate people with different abilities and mobile needs. However, because the office is not open on weekends and staff need to be paid for overtime if the workshop continues past normal business hours, the second two workshops in Santa Clara County were held in other locations: a local church and community college.

In San Francisco and San Mateo counties, Campaign CBOs worked with local government officials to secure workshop locations, with facilities fees waived or paid for by other community partners. In San Francisco, the OCEIA worked with the Mayor's office to procure the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, a large, well known space near public transit. Here, the OCEIA paid for janitorial services and security. In San Mateo, the IIBA and the human services agency worked with the county Board of Supervisors to secure locations through the school district with most of the facilities costs waived. The first workshop was held in a local high school in a large gym, while the second one was held in an adult school. The high school waived custodial overtime charges, while the human services agency was able to cover the custodial overtime charges in the adult school, which a spokesperson said were minimal.

### ***Volunteers***

Well trained volunteers are also integral to a successful workshop, and New Americans Campaign CBOs handled most of the recruitment and training. Volunteers are needed on the day of the workshop to run workshop stations, assess immigrant eligibility for citizenship, help participants fill out forms, and provide translation and interpreter services. In some cases, human services agency and other government staff volunteered to help on the day of the event. Campaign CBOs in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties trained about 150 volunteers for each workshop, while San Francisco county workshops drew on 400 volunteers.

Since volunteers generally work at the workshop all day, workshop partners also need to provide them with water, snacks, and lunch. In Santa Clara, these generally were provided in the form of in-kind donations from local businesses. In San Francisco, the Public Utilities Commission provided water, and in San Mateo, the human services agency was able to cover the cost of lunch. In the first workshop, the San Mateo Human Services Agency worked with a caterer, and in the second workshop was able to provide lunch through a catering business owned by the agency that helps clients going through

rehabilitation work to learn job skills. According to the San Mateo Human Services Agency, lunch was the largest cost it covered on the day of the event, budgeting about \$1,600 for 100-150 volunteers.

### *Publicity*

Local government partners also supported Campaign CBOs through publicity and media campaigns. The San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative, managed through the San Francisco OCEIA, widely advertised workshops on TV and bus ads. The mayor of San Francisco, Ed Lee, also made an appearance at one of the workshops. In Santa Clara, Campaign CBOs purchased PSAs and advertising in local ethnic media and radio stations. In San Mateo County, supervisors in the districts where workshops were held did a media release and made appearances on the day of the event. According to Edwin Chan, Senior Executive Analyst at San Mateo County Human Services Agency, “It is important to get political buy-in from the local elected officials as they are the voice of the community. Their support gives credibility to the work that we do and they also help us with the community outreach.”

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## **IV. Evidence of Success**

Since 2013, New Americans Campaign affiliates have organized seven mega-workshops across the Bay Area in Santa Clara, San Francisco, and San Mateo counties in partnership with local human services agencies. Through these workshops, Campaign partners have managed to serve thousands of immigrants seeking naturalization free of charge over just a few days. Since partnering with human services agencies, New Americans Campaign CBOs report increased success in terms of turnout, attendee preparedness, and access to eligible low-income lawful permanent residents. With a population of tens of thousands of immigrant human services clients, Santa Clara County organizations increased their typical turnout of about 75-100 immigrants in one weekend to three mega-workshops over the course of a year that drew 1,400 attendees the first time, 800 the third time, and about 300 in a smaller workshop targeting Spanish speakers in between. In San Francisco, another county with tens of thousands of low-income immigrant human services clients, Campaign partners launched two mega-workshops over the course of two years, each drawing over 1,000 attendees. In San Mateo County, where workshops targeted thousands of immigrant human services clients in two particular districts, CBOs found their turnout increase from about 20-40 in monthly workshops in Redwood City to over 200 attendees. Meanwhile, a Daly City workshop attracted 400 attendees, up from a particularly poorly attended 4-person workshop before the partnership.

Campaign partners also indicated that attendees at the mega-workshops tended to be more prepared than those who attended their regular, smaller workshops, especially when they were able to include information on eligibility and necessary documentation for the application in mailers before the



workshop. Including the verification of benefits letter in the mailers and providing onsite printing of letters also helped by eliminating another barrier to a complete application and fee waiver on the day of the workshop.

Finally, CBOs indicated that outreach to human services clients increased awareness of the fee waiver among low-income, senior, disabled, and other immigrants receiving public benefits, removing a large obstacle to citizenship among this population. Sheryl Muñoz-Bergman, Director of Programs at Campaign partner International Institute of the Bay Area in Redwood City emphasized, “This new partnership with the county, both the Board of Supervisors and the human services agency, really made a very significant difference in terms of turnout. We saw more participants at the event who qualified both for naturalization and for the fee waiver, and these applicants probably wouldn’t have come out and applied to become U.S. citizens if it hadn’t been for that targeted outreach. This is a population that we haven’t been able to reach using more traditional outreach methods.” As Campaign partners continue to host workshops across these communities, they hope their partnership with human services and local government will increase access to citizenship among these vulnerable communities.

*“We saw more participants at the event who qualified both for naturalization and for the fee waiver, and these applicants probably wouldn’t have come out and applied to become U.S. citizens if it hadn’t been for that targeted outreach.”*

*– Sheryl Muñoz-Bergman, Director of Programs,  
International Institute of the Bay Area*

## V. Lessons Learned and Looking Ahead

Due to the success of the workshops, county human services agencies continue to work with New Americans Campaign CBOs to refine and improve outreach to clients. Two of the biggest challenges have been narrowing outreach to the target population and anticipating client response. As mentioned earlier in this report, human services agencies are limited in the data they collect on client immigration status, precluding a targeted outreach to LPRs. Wide outreach can lead to the unnecessary contact of those who have already naturalized and false hope for those who are not yet eligible. Some counties were able to identify and eliminate citizens from their outreach. In addition to this, Campaign CBOs are working with agencies to try to limit contact based on client time on public benefits, the idea being that those who have been on public benefits for at least five years are more likely to have met the five-year residency requirement.

Campaign partners have also had difficulty anticipating client response to agency outreach. The first workshops organized in each county attracted considerably more attendees than expected, leading to

some being turned away from service that day. In the first event in Santa Clara County, the workshop attracted about 1,400 attendees, overwhelming the capacity of the agency office where the event was located. While they expected to serve people between 1pm and 7pm, they were still working at 8:30pm, indicating the need for a full day of service. Likewise, in San Francisco, Campaign partners had the capacity to serve about 1,000 attendees, but on the day of the first workshop, about 2,400 arrived. Due to the overwhelming response, establishing a good workshop flow and preparing for long wait times became a priority. In subsequent letters, potential attendees in San Francisco were informed of the need to prepare for long wait times by bringing food and water. Campaign partners have also begun to pre-plan follow-up workshops to handle overflow from very large turnout.

A trial workshop with outreach to a smaller population may be tempting at first, but partners should be careful not to limit the target population to the point where it jeopardizes event turnout. A workshop in Contra Costa County targeted only 150 human services client households for outreach and subsequently only attracted about 20-30 attendees. Based on these few cases, contacting at least 1,000 households is advisable for turnout numbers in the hundreds.

Answering client questions leading up the event also proved challenging due to the overwhelming number of phone calls to CBOs, who fielded questions for months. In San Francisco, a human services analyst included his phone number on the verification of benefits letter in case USCIS adjudicators had questions about the letter itself, but was inundated with calls on numerous immigration and caseload

issues for about two weeks, with calls continuing for about a year after. There is no easy way to ensure that calls about the naturalization application are directed only to the CBOs, and calls about the public benefits only to the human services agency. Aside from being prepared for a large volume of calls, organizations and agencies providing phone numbers in outreach materials should be prepared with referral lists to field

*“If you can help 1,000 people come closer to becoming citizens in one afternoon, that’s a pretty amazing thing.”*

*– Adrienne Pon, Executive Director,  
City and County of San Francisco Office of Civic  
Engagement & Immigrant Affairs*

calls about naturalization, other immigration issues, as well as public benefits information and caseload updates. Training in how to answer or direct predictably recurring questions may also help field calls efficiently. Due to the overwhelming number of phone calls received in previous years, Santa Clara Campaign partners are planning to include a website in the next robo-call script where clients can access basic information on easily answered questions. Other Silicon Valley Campaign partners have used the free Google Voice system to allow staff and volunteers from several CBOs to field incoming calls in multiple languages.

Campaign partners and agencies continue to innovate and improve on previous models. In Santa Clara, the agency hopes to work with CBOs to improve and shorten robo-call scripts by previewing what the call will sound like before final approval. A script that looks short on paper actually feels a lot longer listening on the phone and could lead to hang ups before important information is communicated. Meanwhile, Campaign partners in Santa Clara hope to make this a broader local government initiative by working with the county Office of Immigrant Relations and San Jose Office of Immigrant Affairs to provide venues for more frequent events. They also plan to coordinate with the library system to do more outreach. In San Francisco, partners are looking into doing a series of large events in various communities across the county to make them more accessible, and working with the agency to do more targeted mailings and outreach by zip code. The agency in San Mateo has let the Board of Supervisors know that they are going to try to organize workshops in each district, which means they expect to organize at least three more workshops, with the first planned for March 2016.

*“It wasn’t a huge lift and it’s extremely important for the people we serve. It’s entirely consistent with the Human Services Agency’s mission and we were thrilled to contribute.”*

*– Trent Rhorer, Director of Human Services in San Francisco County*

## Conclusion

In summary, partnering with county human services agencies to outreach to immigrant clients can raise awareness about the naturalization application fee waiver, increase turnout and preparation at naturalization workshops, and provide access to a difficult to reach population that otherwise would be less likely to naturalize. Increasing access to citizenship among this population will not only benefit them and their families, but also their communities, both economically and civically. Furthermore, once agencies develop a process for identifying and contacting potentially eligible clients, it is easily refined and repeated. As Trent Rhorer, Director of Human Services in San Francisco County said, “It wasn’t a huge lift and it’s extremely important for the people we serve. We want to eliminate any barrier that someone may have to becoming more economically self-sufficient, in addition to helping individuals access vital supports such as food and healthcare. It’s entirely consistent with the Human Services Agency’s mission and we were thrilled to contribute. It was a no brainer.”

**Table 1. Mega-Workshops in Partnership with Human Services Agencies by County**

|                               | <b>SANTA CLARA</b>   | <b>SAN FRANCISCO</b>  | <b>SAN MATEO</b>   |
|-------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <b>HSA Contribution</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Robo-calls to inform clients about event</li> <li>- Office space for first workshop</li> <li>- Volunteer staff</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mailers with invitation letter, verification letter, and flyer</li> <li>- Onsite printing of verification letters</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mailers with invitation letter, verification letter, and flyer</li> <li>- Robo-call reminders</li> <li>- Onsite printing of verification letters</li> <li>- Connection with local county officials to obtain location and waive usage fee</li> <li>- Payment of custodial overtime (\$200)</li> <li>- Cost of lunch for 100-150 volunteers (\$1,600)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Mega Workshops to Date</b> | <p>February 2013</p> <p>August 2013 (Spanish only)</p> <p>March 2014</p>   | <p>June 2014</p> <p>May 2015</p>  | <p>April 2015: Daly City</p> <p>September 2015: Redwood City</p>   |
| <b>Population Identified</b>  | ~30,000  | ~30,000 => ~25,000 once youth under 18 removed  | <p>Daly City: ~2,500</p> <p>Redwood City: ~1,000</p>   |
| <b>Turnout</b>                | <p>February 2013: ~1,400</p> <p>August 2013: ~300</p> <p>March 2014: ~800</p>  | ~2,400 first year, over 1,000 subsequently  | <p>April 2015: ~400</p> <p>September 2015: ~200</p>  |

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Naturalization is the legal process by which lawful permanent residents of the United States (sometimes referred to as “green card” holders) acquire U.S. citizenship.
- <sup>2</sup> Bratsberg, Ragan, and Nasir 2002; Enchautegui and Giannarelli 2015; Pastor and Scoggins 2012; Shierholz 2010.
- <sup>3</sup> Pastor et al. 2014; Rytina 2013.
- <sup>4</sup> Pastor et al. 2013.
- <sup>5</sup> Workshops are categorized by their turnout: we consider workshops with 25-99 attendees as medium-sized, and attendance of 100 or greater as large. A large workshop with anywhere between 300 and 2,000 attendees is categorized as a mega-workshop.
- <sup>6</sup> Pastor et al. 2014.
- <sup>7</sup> The current formal name of the Food Stamps program is the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), though the term “Food Stamps” is still commonly used as shorthand for the program.
- <sup>8</sup> CBOs in other Bay Area counties, including Contra Costa and Napa, also partnered with their local human services agencies, but this report focuses on mega-workshops with 300 participants or more.

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August 19, 2015

“Name”  
“Address”  
“City”

Verification Letter of Assistance

Client Name: “Name”

This is to verify that the above named client is currently an active participant of the San Mateo County Human Services Agency (HSA). The client is currently receiving public assistance through HSA for the “CalFresh” (Food Stamps) program starting on “Date”.

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact [REDACTED] at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,



Iliana Rodriguez  
Agency Director  
Human Services Agency



Dear Human Services Agency client:

Are you interested in becoming a U.S. citizen? If so, you are invited to a Free Citizenship Workshop on February 27th, 2016 at the Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, 99 Grove Street, San Francisco. Registration for the event will be from 9:30 am to 12:30 pm. This event is **optional** for green card holders who wish to apply for citizenship.

The workshop is sponsored by Mayor Edwin Lee, the San Francisco Office of Civic Engagement & Immigrant Affairs, San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative, and local philanthropic foundations.

**THIS EVENT IS FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH A VALID GREEN CARD WHO:**

- have had their green card for AT LEAST 4 years and 9 months - **OR** - are married to a U.S. Citizen and have had your green card for AT LEAST 3 years; and
- are over the age of 18 and would like to apply to become a U.S. Citizen; and
- are able to attend the workshop in person.

The workshop offers FREE help with filling out naturalization forms, legal consultations provided by immigration experts, and FEE WAIVER assistance. There will also be a Resource Fair where you can find out more information about other community services available in San Francisco.

Be sure to read all of the enclosed information. **Because you receive public benefits from the Human Services Agency, you may not have to pay the \$680 naturalization form filing fee. Please bring with you the attached Verification Letter of Assistance as proof that you may qualify for a fee waiver.**

A Citizenship Application Preparation Form is enclosed. Review and complete this form before coming to the Workshop and bring with you:

- ✓ The attached blue letter called the "Verification Letter of Assistance."
- ✓ Everything listed under the "**Documents to Bring**" section on the workshop flyer on the back of this page.

If you have questions, please visit [www.sfcitizenship.org](http://www.sfcitizenship.org) or call 415-662-8901. We look forward to seeing you at the Free Citizens Workshop on February 27th, 2016.

Sincerely,

Trent Rhorer  
Executive Director

**NOTE:** There may be a long wait time between registration and receiving assistance, so please plan to spend the entire day with us. It may be a good idea to bring food for you and your family. There will be no food or refreshments for sale at this event.

## **Contributors:**

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