

CITIES FOR CITIZENSHIP

2016 IMPACT REPORT



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was written by Maggie Corser. It was edited by Kate Terenzi and Andrew Friedman from the Center for Popular Democracy, and Sarah Mesick and Joshua Hoyt from the National Partnership for New Americans. This report, as well as the work of the Cities for Citizenship Initiative, was made possible through the generous support of Citi Community Development.

Cities for Citizenship is a major national initiative aimed at increasing citizenship among eligible US permanent residents and encouraging cities across the country to invest in citizenship programs. It is chaired by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, with support from the Center for Popular Democracy and the National Partnership for New Americans. Citi Community Development is the Founding Corporate Partner.

To learn more, visit CitiesforCitizenship.com.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS



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Cities for Citizenship

2016 Impact Report

Executive Summary

The C4C initiative is premised on the idea that when municipal leaders develop and fund naturalization efforts to encourage eligible residents to apply for US citizenship, it produces substantial economic and civic benefits for all of their constituents.

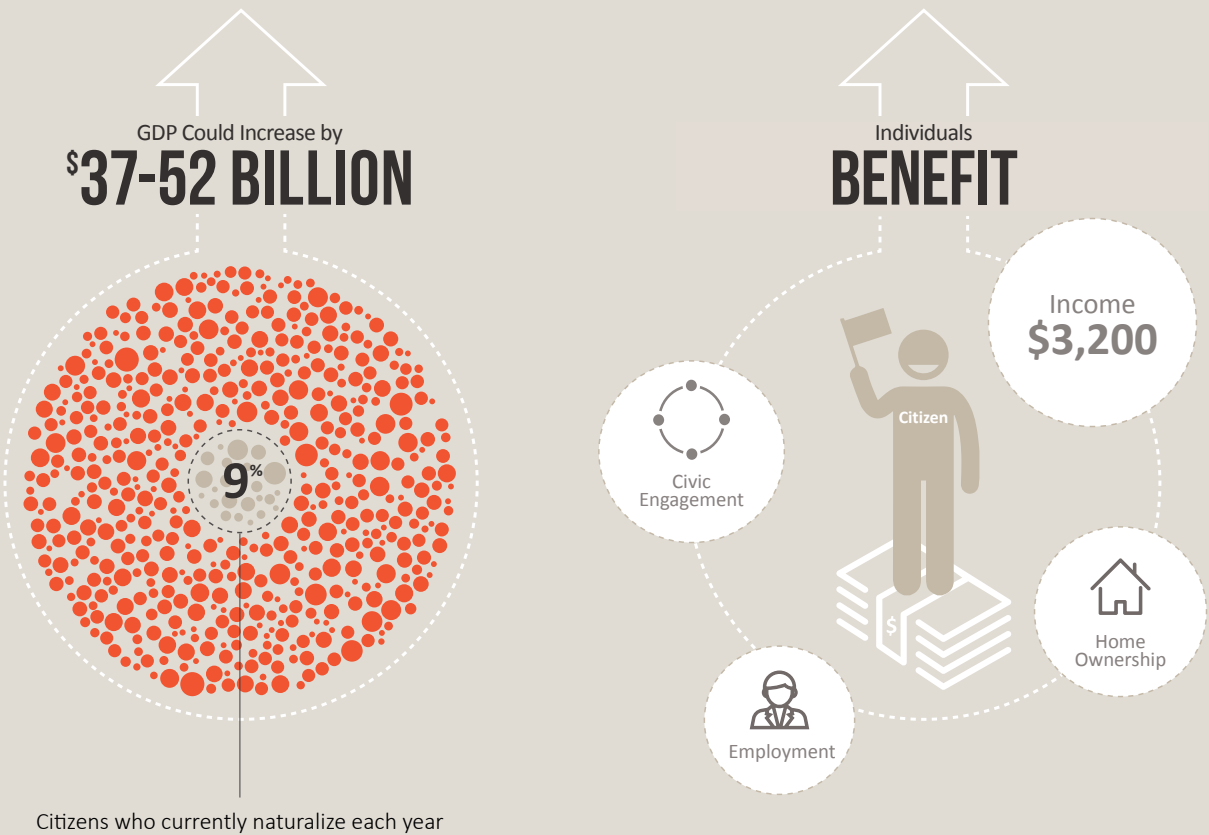
The United States is currently home to 8.8 million legal permanent residents who are eligible to naturalize. Naturalization has well-documented benefits for those eligible, as well as for the cities and counties where they live. When eligible residents become US citizens, it not only boosts local economies and raises tax revenue, but also contributes to the financial security and civic engagement of immigrant families. Despite the benefits of naturalization, less than nine percent of eligible legal permanent residents become US citizens each year. Cities and counties have an important role to play in both encouraging eligible residents to apply for citizenship and removing barriers faced by many in what can be a long and complex naturalization process.

Founded in 2014, Cities for Citizenship (C4C) is a major bipartisan national initiative, with municipal partners in 38 cities and counties, designed to increase citizenship among eligible US permanent residents. C4C is chaired by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, with support from the Center for Popular Democracy, and the National Partnership for New Americans, and the Founding Corporate Partner, Citi Community Development.

2016 saw a surge in interest and applications by legal permanent residents (LPRs) with over 970,000 people applying for citizenship (a 24 percent increase in citizenship applications over 2015). In 2016, the C4C initiative reached over 9,700 legal permanent residents who pursued citizenship/initiated the citizenship process. As detailed in the report, tens of thousands of additional participants were served by C4C, whether completing fee waiver applications to ensure naturalization was not a financial burden, attending financial education workshops, visiting one of 400+ “Citizenship Corners” at local libraries around the country, or attending citizenship related programming. C4C enabled rich, cross-city learning and collaborations, and cities and counties found it especially helpful to learn how other places handle implementation or funding challenge and cross-agency collaboration and identify replicable models. This report highlights the successes of the program in 2016, identifies lessons learned, and highlights innovative approaches—including case studies from New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle, and San Francisco—that can be replicated among the growing network of partner cities and counties in the coming years.



Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti Children's Naturalization Ceremony, September 17, 2015 (Photo Credit)



Introduction

The United States is currently home to 8.8 million legal permanent residents who are eligible to naturalize. Naturalization has well-documented benefits for those eligible to naturalize as well as for the cities and counties where they live. When eligible residents become US citizens, it not only boosts local economies but also contributes to the financial security of immigrant families. After naturalizing, individual earnings increase by an average of eight percent (or \$3,200) while rates of employment and homeownership go up.¹ Those individual earnings translate into sizable federal, state, and city tax revenue that cities can then put to good use for public programs and services. Research has found that if all individuals eligible to naturalize in the U.S. became citizens, the country would see a \$37–52 billion boost.² Becoming US citizens often enables immigrants to more fully engage in civic life as it enables them to participate in our democratic system and make their voices heard by voting in state and national elections.

Despite the benefits of naturalization, every year less than nine percent of eligible legal permanent residents (LPRs) become US citizens.³ Community members often face challenges navigating the naturalization process in their non-native language and securing funds for application fees. Other eligible community members may be unaware of the benefits of becoming a US citizen or the resources available to support them through the process. Cities and counties have an important role to play in both encouraging eligible residents to apply for citizenship and removing barriers faced by many in what can be a long and complex naturalization process.

Founded in 2014, Cities for Citizenship (C4C) is a major national initiative with municipal partners in 38 cities and counties. C4C was created to both increase citizenship among eligible permanent residents and encourage cities around the country to invest in citizenship programming. The initiative is premised on the idea that when municipal leaders develop and fund naturalization efforts, it produces substantial economic and civic benefits for all of their constituents.

C4C is chaired by New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, with support from the Center for Popular Democracy and the National Partnership for New Americans. Citi Community Development is the Founding Corporate Partner.

2016 and early 2017 saw a surge in interest among cities to develop naturalization programs. The National Partnership of New Americans' analysis of United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) data shows that 971,242 people applied for citizenship in 2016. This represents a 24 percent increase in citizenship applications over the prior year (2015).⁴ In addition, C4C's network of municipal partners grew by 46 percent in the first six months of 2017.

During a time of significant transition at the federal government level, cities are demonstrating enormous leadership in advancing naturalization for those who are eligible—both as a means of harnessing the economic benefits stemming from higher earnings and tax revenues, and as a way to promote a robust and representative democracy. C4C has emerged as a powerful gathering point for cities and counties to demonstrate their commitment to supporting their local immigrant communities.

As C4C enters its fourth year in 2017, the initiative seeks to evaluate its impact on both the national and local level. In particular, this report will highlight the successes of the program in 2016, identify lessons learned, and highlight innovative approaches at the city and county-level that can be replicated among the growing network of partner cities and counties.

Overview of C4C

What began in 2014 as a national initiative with three founding city partners has grown quickly to include 38 participating cities and counties around the United States. These cities are at the forefront of a growing movement to promote naturalization and provide important testing grounds for innovative approaches to immigrant community integration and support.

National Coordination and Technical Assistance

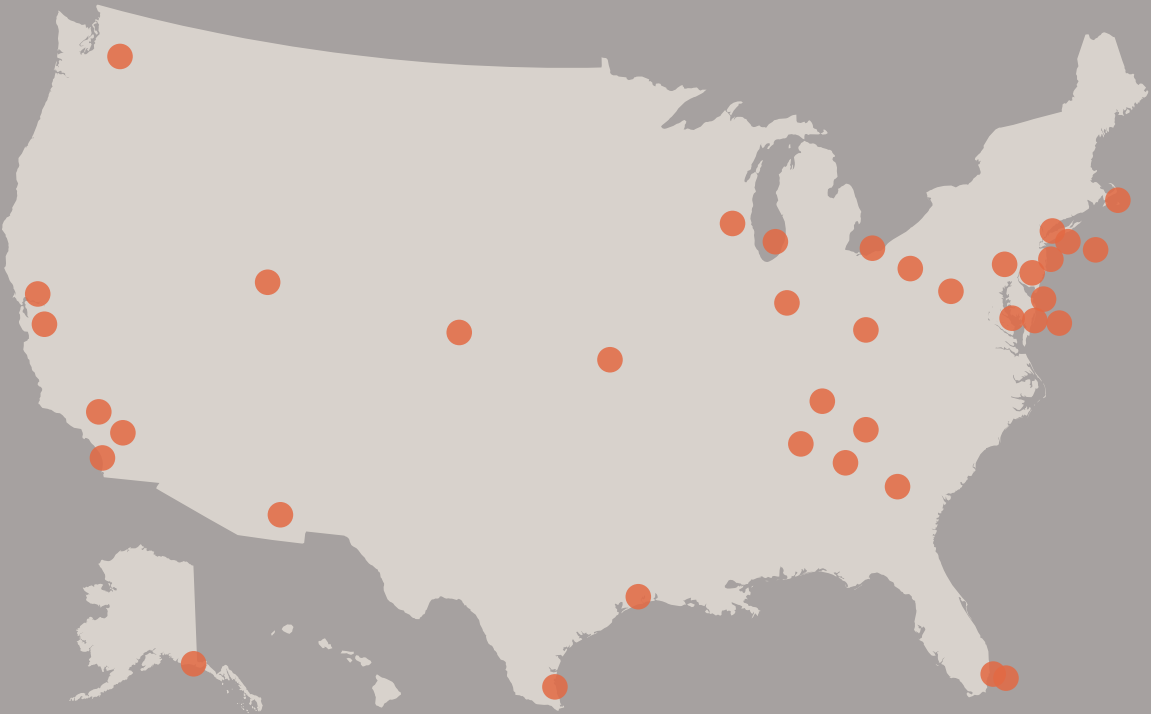
These local efforts are coordinated at the national level by the National Partnership for New Americans and the Center for Popular Democracy. C4C partners closely with the AFL-CIO, the National Association of Latino Elected Officials, the National Federation of Credit Development Unions, Welcoming America and 32BJ SEIU. These labor and community organizations play an important role in connecting immigrant communities to municipal governments.

C4C provides a range of technical support to participating cities and counties. C4C partners with national research institutions and academics to provide the most up-to-date city-level data on how many community members are eligible to naturalize. In addition, C4C hosts webinars on topics ranging from minimizing the barriers to naturalization to looking at citizenship as a means of financial empowerment. The initiative also publishes [toolkits](#) and [technical guidance](#) for cities and counties seeking to develop naturalization initiatives. C4C tracks and shares information on relevant policy changes, such as changes to naturalization fees which have wide-reaching impact for the field and cities and counties’ outreach efforts.

In 2016 C4C hosted the first National C4C Municipal Gathering in Nashville, Tennessee that brought together 75 municipal and national leaders representing 42 cities and counties ranging geographically from Anchorage, Alaska to Atlanta, Georgia. The C4C Municipal Gathering focused on the topics of naturalization, financial empowerment, and immigrant integration. Participants learned about integrating financial inclusion and empowerment in the naturalization process; practices and policies at the municipal and state levels that encourage immigrant integration; strategies for scaling up naturalization efforts; and building citizenship programs’ capacity through community navigators and partnerships with legal services. National leaders joined the convening and shared their expertise. These leaders included Laura Patching, the Chief of the Office of Citizenship at USCIS, Alejandro Celorio Alcántara, the Head of Section for Hispanic and Migration Affairs at the Embassy of Mexico, Nisha Agarwal, Commissioner, New York City Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, and Tara Raghuveer, Deputy Director, National Partnership for New Americans.

Since the National C4C Municipal Gathering, eleven new localities have joined the C4C initiative, increasing the total number of municipal partners to 38 cities and counties.

As of June 2017, the C4C Initiative spans across 38 participating cities and counties:



Anchorage, AK	Detroit, MI	Miami-Dade County, FL	Salt Lake County, UT
Atlanta, GA	Houston, TX	Milwaukee, WI	San Francisco, CA
Baltimore, MD	Jersey City, NJ	Montgomery County, MD	San Jose, CA
Boston, MA	Kansas City, KS	Nashville, TN	Seattle, WA
Chattanooga, TN	Knoxville, TN	New Haven, CT	South Gate, CA
Chicago, IL*	Long Beach, CA	New York, NY*	Suffolk County, NY
Cleveland, OH	Los Angeles, CA*	Paterson, NJ	Tucson, AZ
Dallas, TX	Louisville, KY	Philadelphia, PA	Washington, DC
Dayton, OH	Madison, WI	Pittsburgh, PA	
Denver, CO	Miami, FL	Reading, PA	*Indicates founding city

MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF CITIES AND COUNTIES

Since its formation, the C4C initiative has developed a replicable model that can be adapted by cities and counties both large and small. Pursuing the following activities has proven a successful strategy when establishing and growing a local naturalization initiative:

01) Identify the Eligible Population of Legal Permanent Residents

Cities and counties draw on Census data and available resources to identify how many LPRs are eligible to naturalize. This enables community outreach targeted in neighborhoods with high numbers of LPRs while also considering factors such as countries of origin and native languages.

02) Partner with Service Providers and Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations play an integral role in helping LPRs initiate and complete the naturalization process. Drawing on these groups’ long-standing relationships and trust among immigrant communities can ensure city programs are responsive and well-tailored to the needs of the community.

03) Build Relationships with Financial Institutions and Financial Empowerment Organizations

Cities and counties collaborate with banks, credit unions, and financial empowerment organizations to develop citywide plans for long-term community asset building. Activities range from offering financial empowerment classes to working with credit unions on low- or zero-interest naturalization microloans to defer the high cost of the naturalization applications.

04) Create an Office of New Americans or Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs

By creating an Office of New Americans or Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, cities and counties establish an institutional home and dedicated set of resources to drive its citizenship initiatives. This provides a more direct conduit between immigrant communities and municipal governments, and facilitates inter-agency coordination.⁵

05) Collaborate with Local Libraries to Establish Citizenship Corners

As safe and accessible community spaces, libraries serve as effective ways to provide education materials and programming to LPRs on the citizenship process. Cities can work with local libraries to establish dedicated “Citizenship Corners”—spaces with resources to support LPRs through the naturalization process.

06) Train Key City Staff, Commissioners, Department Chairs, and Volunteers on the Benefits of Naturalization for their City

Many cities and counties organize informational sessions on the benefits of naturalization to engage key stakeholders including city staff, commissioners, and department chairs. These staff are also encouraged to attend naturalization workshops and oath ceremonies to better understand the process.

07) Host Oath Ceremonies and Other Naturalization-Related Events in the Mayor’s Office

Mayors can host naturalization ceremonies at their offices or at City Hall, and deliver keynote addresses to new citizens as a way of signaling their public commit to naturalization.

08) Promote Public Awareness of Citizenship through Media

By conducting public education campaigns, and securing local media through Mayoral addresses and city activities, cities and counties can help residents get important information on the benefits and process of securing citizenship.

09) Expand Current Programming Capacity through New Partnerships

Given that many cities and counties began their initiatives with small amounts of seed funding, they often pursue creative solutions to meet their long-term naturalization staffing and resource needs. Cities and counties develop fundraising strategies in collaboration with philanthropic institutions, community-based organizations, and local financial institutions.

10) Measure Impact to Ensure Success and Expand Initiatives

Measuring the reach and impact of the C4C initiative is an important way to identify successes and lessons learned. While individual cities and counties track their own metrics, C4C national coordinating partners also measure progress through surveys and impact assessments.

Major accomplishments since C4C’s launch

Since the launch of C4C, and as a result of these coordinated activities, approximately:

- | | |
|---|--|
| • 14,000+ individuals pursued citizenship and/or initiated the citizenship process | • 1,400+ individuals participated in one-on-one financial coaching sessions |
| • 10,500+ individuals received legal assistance or referrals | • 19,500+ individuals received information on the fee waiver, financial counseling, and/or citizenship microloan assistance |
| • 8,500+ individuals attended financial empowerment classes | |

MEASURING THE IMPACT OF C4C IN 2016

In a continuing effort to measure the impact of C4C and to identify effective ways to grow and refine the initiative, C4C’s coordinating partners, the Center for Popular Democracy and the National Partnership for New Americans, conducted a 2016 impact assessment. Through a combination of surveys and interviews with participating cities and counties, they collected data on the initiative. The survey results below highlight key successes in the founding and longest-serving cities, as well as cities newer to the initiative which had relevant metrics to report.

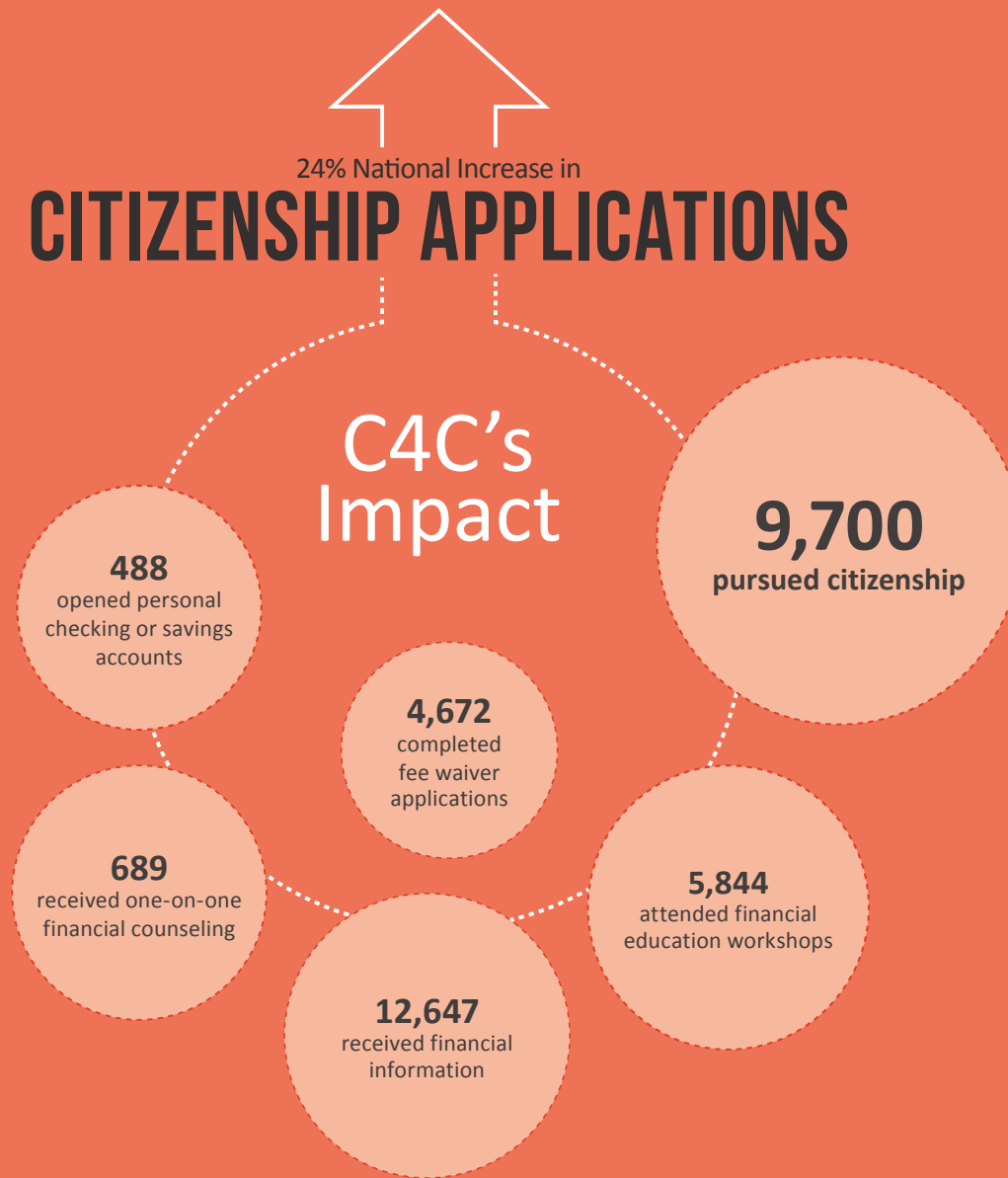
2016 At a Glance

In 2016, the Cities for Citizenship initiative focused on recruiting new partner cities and counties. **Since the beginning of 2016, C4C has successfully recruited to the network an additional 18 new cities and counties.** C4C was the leading national voice driving a message on the importance of naturalization. Their coordinated activities across dozens of cities not only raised the visibility of naturalization but equipped immigrants with resources to apply for citizenship.

2016 saw a surge in interest and applications by LPRs. That was due in part to the increased national visibility of naturalization as well as the number of local governments dedicating resources and developing initiatives that encouraged naturalization. Over 970,000 people applied for citizenship in 2016—this number represents a 24 percent increase in citizenship applications over total applications in 2015. While there is usually an uptick in naturalization applications during Presidential election years, 2016 represented a 9.2 percent spike in citizenship applications compared to 2012.⁷

Major accomplishments in 2016

In 2016, C4C helped thousands on their citizenship journey. Those interventions contributed to the leap in citizenship applications that year.



Participating cities also hosted a significant number of trainings and workshops, as well as distributing critical materials to community members:¹⁰

- Libraries with Citizenship Corners: **445**
- Materials distributed at Citizenship Corners: **31,000**
- Number of people attending citizenship-related programming: **19,155**
- Citizenship workshops hosted: **51**
- Civic engagement classes hosted: **110**
- Number of materials distributed at civic engagement classes: **49,225**

Lessons Learned in 2016

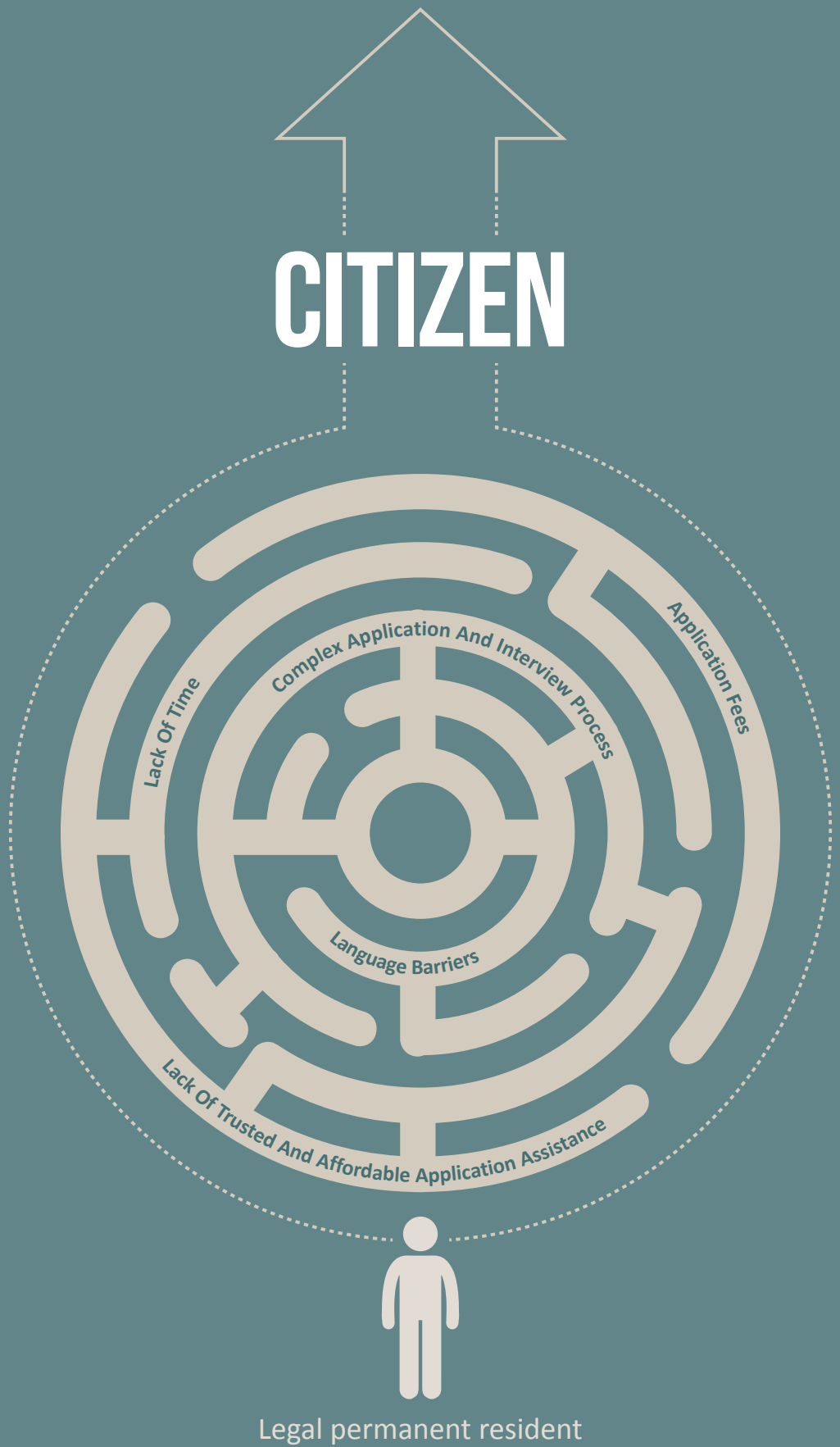
By working together, C4C's local partners have identified several key lessons that will inform their work in the coming year, as well as the work of new cities and counties.

AREAS OF SUCCESS

- 01) Partnering with Anchor Institutions:** Cities and counties were most successful when they coordinated with anchor institutions that had already established frequent contact and trusting relationships with immigrant communities. Anchor institutions ranged from local unions whose membership included large numbers of lawful permanent residents, to community-based organizations that serve and engage immigrants, to public libraries in target neighborhoods, to local service providers. Many cities and counties have found libraries to be especially effective at reaching the LPR community as free, public, and centrally located community spaces. Engaging LPRs through community institutions was a founding premise of the initiative. In many respects, cities and counties saw their 2016 successes and growth in this area as a proof of concept.
- 02) Promoting Financial Empowerment:** Immigrants, who disproportionately experience unstable incomes, are also less likely to have savings and credit histories. According to the FDIC, more than 20 percent of foreign-born non-citizen households were unbanked, while the unbanked rate for foreign-born citizens was lower even than that of U.S.-born households.¹² Naturalized citizens have higher and more stable wages, higher rates of homeownership, and are more likely to have health insurance and bank accounts.¹¹ In light of these disparities, many C4C cities are working to address the obstacles that immigrants' face in securing financial services and achieving financial stability.
- 03) Cross-City Collaborations:** Building connections and collaborations across C4C participating cities and counties has proven very impactful. When asked how the C4C initiative can best advance its work, the majority of participating cities and counties emphasized C4C's ability to facilitate this type of cross-city collaboration and exchange of best practices. Cities and counties found it especially helpful to learn how other places handle implementation or funding challenges and cross-agency collaboration, and to identify replicable models.
- For example, Boston's large collaboration with libraries and setting up 24 Citizenship Corners was a model that Pittsburgh learned from when beginning to establish Citizenship Corners of their own. New York City's NYCitizenship program has provided a useful model for San Francisco's work, and Seattle's collaboration with credit unions to create a citizenship loan was a model replicated in Tucson.
- 04) Training of Volunteers:** Cities and counties found that tapping community members through peer-to-peer programs was especially transformative. Community Navigator training programs enabled volunteers to assist their fellow community members with naturalization and translation services. In some places, like San Francisco, DACA (Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals) recipients in the DreamSF Fellows Program have acted as Community Navigators and have supported naturalization efforts at workshops and by working on-site at various community agencies.

- 05) Targeted Initiatives:** During the program development phase, cities and counties said it was important to pursue targeted initiatives designed to reach specific demographics and neighborhoods with high numbers of people eligible to naturalize. This helps ensure that limited funding is used most efficiently with the highest possible impact. Cities and counties found the map developed by Professor Manuel Pastor at the Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration especially helpful in identifying places to focus.¹³
- 06) Increasing Visibility of Naturalization:** By dedicating staff and resources towards naturalization efforts, and by entering in sustained partnership with community-based organizations and service providers, many city governments have been able to achieve new levels of trust between city agencies and local communities. Cities and counties have found that most people who are eligible to naturalize do not know they are eligible. Removing this barrier, by providing eligible LPRs with information and support through the process, has an enormous impact on community members' likelihood of applying for citizenship.
- 07) Tracking and Shaping the National Conversation on Naturalization:** Since many cities and counties are focused on shoring up resources for developing and implementing programs on the local level, participating in C4C has provided them with a useful opportunity to step back and look at national trends on naturalization. When cities and counties better understand the regional and national landscape on naturalization, it helps to inform their program development and implementation to ensure it is as effective and responsive as possible.
- 08) Connecting Immigrant Inclusion Policies with Naturalization:** For most cities and community-based organizations, naturalization is part of a broader set of immigration-related programming including service delivery, language access, civic engagement, voter registration, municipal ID programs, and access to legal counsel for immigrants facing detention and deportation. Naturalization is an important component of a broader immigrant integration and support strategy. Many C4C cities and counties have had success integrating naturalization and community defense activities. For instance, cities and counties are establishing, or considering establishing, legal defense funds for eligible immigrants who are facing unwarranted detention and deportation.
- 09) Mayors Amplifying Naturalization Message:** Cities and counties, both large and small, already have a powerful platform for reaching the public. Drawing on existing city-sponsored television and print ads, mass transit signboards, social media campaigns, public reader boards, and newsletters, can have a big impact in raising the visibility of naturalization services. It can also be helpful to run television or radio spots featuring the Mayor or other influential political figures, faith leaders, or local celebrities. Many cities and counties have found that hosting swearing-in ceremonies at which the Mayor delivers a keynote address can have a major impact on the community members in attendance, and can garner significant local media coverage.

Legal permanent residents need help navigating the complex citizenship process.



10) Coordinated Action: When the C4C network acts as a coordinated body, cities and counties felt their advocacy was more effective and gained a wider national platform. This was helpful in national advocacy around naturalization, but also underscored the importance of this work among local stakeholders.

For instance, the C4C network engaged in coordinated advocacy to urge passage of a partial fee waiver to citizenship application. In 2013, Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, together with Congressman Luis Gutierrez, penned a *New York Times* op-ed, “Priced Out of Citizenship,” that underlined the cost barrier to naturalization and called for the implementation of a more sensible fee structure. In 2014, Mayor Eric Garcetti of Los Angeles, Mayor Bill de Blasio of New York City, Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake of Baltimore, Mayor Charlie Hales of Portland, and Mayor Francis Slay of St. Louis, co-sponsored a resolution at the US Conference of Mayors which urged USCIS and Department of Homeland Security to “make policy changes that will increase the number of US citizens from the pool of legal permanent residents.” In 2016, C4C submitted a letter to USCIS during the comment period in support of a partial waiver. This waiver would lower the amount charged by the agency for immigration forms and services, including naturalization applications, in order to support low-income legal permanent residents.

Listening to the voices of C4C, Mayors, and national partners, USCIS announced a proposed rule change to their fee schedule and a restructuring of the fees the agency charges for immigration forms and services. This partial fee waiver, implemented on December 23rd, 2016, makes the citizenship applications more affordable to an estimated one million low income legal permanent residents.¹⁴

Areas for Growth

While the C4C initiative saw areas of significant and sustained success in 2016, participating cities also highlighted several important areas for growth:

- 01) Dedicating Attention to Municipal Workers and Partnerships with City Vendors:** City and county governments are often most focused on encouraging community members to naturalize. However, there are also important opportunities to focus energy and attention on their built-in constituency, namely municipal workers. In larger cities, municipal workers eligible to naturalize can number in the thousands. Cities and counties could do more in this area by encouraging municipal employees who are LPRs to naturalize and offering paid release time for city workers to attend naturalization trainings. Cities can also host naturalization fairs specifically for their employees. Further, cities and counties can encourage partners like city vendors, unions, and others to motivate their eligible employees to apply for naturalization.
- 02) Partnering with Corporations and Private Law Firms:** Cities and counties are interested in more effectively cultivating private corporations with a strong local presence as potential sponsors of naturalization initiatives. These funds can help supplement city resources and help provide “scale up” grants to organizations that already run naturalization workshops to expand their operations and increase the number of applications they process each year. Cities and counties also identified some untapped opportunities to recruit law firms and city legal department staff to provide pro bono legal support to clients at naturalization workshops.
- 03) Collecting Data and Tracking Metrics:** While some cities and counties track metrics on their activities and success, many recognize the need for more consistent and detailed data collection. Cities and counties highlighted the challenge of collecting data on their naturalization activities which are often spread across several agencies and local organizations, and may span across multiple government fiscal years.
- 04) Implementing Program Documentation and Evaluation:** There was a notable amount of turnover at city agencies working on naturalization in 2016. The agencies tasked with naturalization activities should work to improve program documentation and evaluation. This will help enable smooth transitions in the event of changes in staff assignments and roles.
- 05) Promoting Cross-Agency Collaboration:** Promoting naturalization often requires sustained inter-agency coordination and buy-in. This can take time and present a challenge to city staff who are working to promote naturalization. Cities and counties found that engaging relevant stakeholders early and often helped secure cross-agency alignment around the goals of the city’s naturalization efforts. Having the Mayor and Commissioners consistently reinforcing the importance of naturalization was also helpful in ensuring that it remained a top priority.



Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel's Naturalization Ceremony, November 8, 2016

C4C City Snapshots

Founding Cities

New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles are founding cities of the national C4C initiative. The founding cities have demonstrated enormous leadership and proven success in their naturalization efforts.

New York City



Collaboration with City Service Providers: Human Resources Administration Case Study

Beginning in 2012, the New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) started providing free citizenship and financial counseling services through monthly legal clinics at schools around the city. Following the success of those legal clinics, MOIA established consistent, community-based citizenship services by launching NYCitizenship in 2016. NYCitizenship involves innovative partnerships with the city's public libraries and the NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA), which allows MOIA to reach the most vulnerable among New York City's potentially eligible population. Among the 650,000 New Yorkers who are potentially eligible for citizenship, approximately 350,000 are HRA clients. For these individuals, obtaining citizenship status will not only help them and their families achieve overall stability, but it would also help establish greater economic security as many stand to receive a significant increase in public benefits following their naturalization.

NYCitizenship has been extremely successful, with particular success in reaching HRA clients. At the inception of this program, HRA did not anticipate a high response rate from their client base based on past program rollouts. Encouragingly, New York City government reports the response has been very high. While HRA initially thought the greatest incentive to naturalize would be the ability to receive more benefits, many of the clients reported they had considered naturalizing for many years but were unaware that free resources existed. By providing easy on/off-line resources, a direct conduit through a city agency they trusted and were already engaged with, and support through the naturalization process, NYCitizenship addressed key barriers for many New York City lawful permanent residents. Some within the city assumed that NYCitizenship would need to make a compelling case to HRA clients on the benefits of naturalizing. In reality, many HRA clients already saw the benefits. What they needed was free and easy assistance to help them navigate the naturalization process.

This program also intentionally combines citizenship programming with financial empowerment services. This helps lawful permanent residents who are in the process of naturalizing secure useful resources designed to promote financial stability. New York City provides free financial counseling services that allow individuals to sign up for bank accounts, develop budgets, and improve their credit ratings. To improve rates of participation, in 2016 MOIA partnered with Citi Community Development and the Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability (DESIS) Lab at the Parsons School of Design to refine its approach to promoting financial stability through the Designing for Financial Empowerment initiative. URL: <http://dfe.nyc/context-introduction/>. By speaking with immigrants and naturalization assistance service providers, the program team learned that LPRs pursuing naturalization were sharply focused on completing the citizenship application. In response, they developed an integrated service approach which places citizenship attorneys and financial counselors together at select libraries around the city to provide free citizenship and financial counseling services.

"Our cities' economic activity, tax bases and civic participation expand every time an immigrant family is empowered through services that support their pathway to citizenship."

New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio

"Financial inclusion is a key component to ensuring economic growth is more equitable and inclusive. Yet in the U.S., foreign-born non-residents are four times more likely to be outside of the financial system than immigrants who are U.S. citizens. Citizenship for those who are eligible not only unlocks significant economic benefits and opportunities for low-income immigrants and their communities, but provides a unique and powerful opportunity to build a strong financial identity alongside their new national identity."

*Bob Annibale
Global Director of Citi Community Development*

Chicago



Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel launched the Chicago Cities for Citizenship in 2013 as a partnership with the City of Chicago Office of New Americans (ONA), Chicago Public Library (CPL), and the Chicago Public Library Foundation with the goal of increasing citizenship among eligible residents. Since that time, 15 library branches have hosted naturalization trainings, with participating locations selected for their proximity to areas with a high concentration of immigrants.

ONA and CPL staff have also worked closely with eight community-based non-profit organizations to host monthly naturalization workshops at library “Citizenship Corners,” providing education, legal screening, application processing, and financial literacy services. These groups have included Chinese American Service League, Chinese Mutual Aid Association, United African Organization, The Resurrection Project, Erie Neighborhood House, Southwest Organizing Project, World Relief, and Centro Romero.

Some of the major accomplishments of Chicago Cities for Citizenship since it launched include:

- 2,671 individuals referred to one of 41 naturalization workshops
- 834 citizenship applications processed
- 1,937 individuals served in one of 167 financial literacy classes

On November 10, 2016, Mayor Emanuel sent a letter to Congress urging them to address the nationwide backlog of over 500,000 naturalization applications. As the Mayor has said, “Immigrants who become naturalized citizens make significant contributions to our city and our nation, but due to the application backlog, hundreds of thousands of immigrants across the country are prevented from enjoying the full rights and privileges of citizenship.”¹⁵

In December 2016, the city launched the “Chicago Is With You” Task Force in partnership with Congressman Luis Gutierrez and Senator Richard Durbin to provide additional support to immigrant and refugee communities.

Shortly thereafter, Mayor Emanuel budgeted \$1.3 million to create the Legal Protection Fund, which is building the capacity of eight supporting organizations through the National Partnership for New Americans Community Navigator model. Under Chicago’s Legal Protection Fund, 200 Community Navigators will be trained across the City of Chicago to support immigration attorneys and provide the ultimate form of relief to qualifying legal permanent residents: citizenship.

Los Angeles



In partnership with the LA Public Library and US Citizenship and Immigration Services, there are currently Citizenship Corners in the Central Library and each of the city’s 72 branches, where residents can access tools—sample test materials, instructional DVDs, and more—to assist them as they work through the naturalization process. These citizenship information corners have trained librarians who can share a schedule of citizenship workshops. Since 2013, over 74,000 individuals have been received information on the benefits of pursuing citizenship. During that same time period, over 2,900 citizenship programs were hosted through the LA Public Library system which over 37,000 attendees. Since 2015, 6,000 individuals have participated in financial education workshops. In 2015, the LA Public Library received the prestigious National Medal for Museum and Library Service in recognition of their citizenship work. The LA Public Library also has several branches that are Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) recognized.¹⁶

Los Angeles has set up two successful initiatives designed to engage the over 700,000 legal permanent residents who are eligible to naturalize.



“America is a nation of immigrants, and families from across the world have helped Chicago grow, thrive, and prosper throughout our history. Chicago would not be the great city we are today without immigration, and we remain deeply committed to opening the pathways toward citizenship for our growing immigrant population. We are proud of Cities for Citizenship’s achievements and look forward to growing our partnership as we assist as many Chicagoans as possible in navigating the naturalization process.”

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel

“American citizenship—and all of the rights, privileges and responsibilities that come with it—should be within reach for all people who love this country, have built lives here, and are invested in the future we’re building together. My Office of Immigrant Affairs has formed incredible partnerships with Cities for Citizenship and local service providers, and we are working hand-in-hand to help Angelenos navigate the naturalization process, become better educated in financial literacy, and more fully understand the resources available to them and their families.”

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti



Los Angeles Public Library Naturalization Workshop, May 2015

Endless Possibilities. Citizenship Now!

Endless Possibilities. Citizenship Now! is a campaign that provides free in-language legal assistance for LA residents seeking to naturalize. The campaign features a collaboration between Asian ethnic media and local community-based organizations, including Asian Americans Advancing Justice Los Angeles (AAJC), in order to encourage Asian Americans in LA County to naturalize. The initiative offers free weekly citizenship clinics in downtown Los Angeles and at the AAJC office where staff and volunteers can verify a person’s eligibility to become a US citizen, support people through the application process, and help apply for a fee waiver for those who cannot afford the filing fee. They offer translation and interpreting services in English, Chinese, Khmer, Korean, Spanish, Tagalog, Thai, and Vietnamese. AAJC also regularly provides workshops and clinics to train other organizations in the LA area. This initiative has secured a key funding partner in the California Community Foundation.

Protégete!...¡Ciudadanía Ya!

Protégete!...¡Ciudadanía Ya! Is a community-led effort that emerged out of Mayor Eric Garcetti’s Step Forward LA Initiative. A collaboration between immigrant rights organizations, local elected officials, the philanthropic sector, and Spanish-language media, the initiative raises awareness among LPRs and provide access to naturalization services in their community. The campaign is co-chaired by Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, Los Angeles County Supervisor Hilda Solis, Congressman Xavier Becerra, and Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia. A wide range of community-based organizations are involved including the National Association of Latino Elected Officials Educational Fund, the Central American Resource Center, the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, the Council of Mexican Federations, and Asian Americans Advancing Justice Los Angeles. The campaign works directly with the region’s largest Spanish-language media partners including Azteca America, Entravision, KVEA 52 Telemundo, Univision Radio, and Univision TV. Philanthropic partners like the California Community Foundation and Juntos Podemos/Together We Can provide financial support. The ability to work directly with media partners to target ethnic media markets and tailor an effective message in immigrants’ native language has proven especially useful in expanding the reach and public profile of the program.

Innovative Emerging Models

Many C4C cities and counties have developed innovative models to incorporate financial literacy, increase their outreach and communications through media campaigns, and expand partnerships with community organizations and municipal departments. Below are several examples from the C4C network:

Seattle



Collaboration with Juntos Avanzamos (Together We Advance) to reduce the cost of US Citizenship

In June 2016 the Seattle Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs announced a collaboration with the Seattle Metropolitan Credit Union to provide citizenship loan products. These loans are designed to help low- to moderate-income immigrants pay for their citizenship applications. Given that many immigrants are disproportionately un/under-banked and at risk for predatory lending, the initiative is also designed to increase access to reputable banking services. Among the 22,000 eligible LPRs in Seattle, over half of those individuals are low-income. Even with USCIS partial fee waivers, the \$680 application fee can be cost-prohibitive. The loans provided by SMCU are low- or no-interest, require no application fee or income requirements, and include monthly payment options. This is an especially good example of a public-private partnership that reduces barriers to naturalization and effectively

“The City of Miami Commission, led by Vice-Chairman Ken Russell and I recently passed a resolution to work with the Office of New Americans of Miami-Dade and Cities for Citizenship to provide citizenship services to the almost 500,000 eligible Miamians seeking naturalization. Studies show that those who gain citizenship are able to access a wider range of jobs, scholarships, attain economic mobility, and improve the livelihood of their families. This initiative will ensure that more proud residents of the City of Miami can realize these opportunities and thrive.”

Miami Mayor Tomás Regalado

“Dallas thrives when all of our residents are included and afforded the opportunity to succeed. In our city, where 1 in 4 of our residents was born in another country, we understand that our strength is our diversity and we stand with our residents striving to become U.S. citizens. We understand there are significant benefits associated with naturalization, such as the opportunity to earn higher wages and fuller civic participation. We look forward to being a part of C4C as we launch our local campaign through the Office of Welcoming Communities & Immigrant Affairs and Dallas Public Libraries to promote U.S. citizenship in collaboration with local community organizations.”

Dallas Mayor Michael S. Rawlings

serves the needs of the community.

The partnership in Seattle was made possible by the coordination of the National Association of Community Development Credit Unions. Many credit unions around the country are committed to serving low- and moderate-income communities in the United States. Juntos Avanzamos is a designation used by credit unions who are seeking to engage and empower Latino community members who are disproportionately un/underbanked. The National Federation of Community Development Credit Unions has led a national expansion of Juntos Avanzamos in partnership with credit union leagues and associations at the state level. It now spans 68 credit unions in 13 states. Other C4C cities and counties have considered pursuing similar partnerships with local credit unions in the Juntos Avanzamos network.

San Francisco



Building Community Partnerships to Enhance Naturalization

San Francisco has developed an innovative model known as the San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative (SF Pathways). SF Pathways is a collaboration between the City and County of San Francisco, local and national philanthropic foundations, and service providers. SF Pathways identifies new approaches, methodologies, and service delivery models to promote citizenship and civic participation among San Francisco’s citizenship-eligible immigrants. Service providers offer free legal advice, application assistance, language services, fee waiver application assistance, and other services at large group processing workshops and at many community agencies.

Volunteers have been a cornerstone of the model and a way in which city employees and community members have become engaged. Many volunteers have completed the naturalization process themselves after assisting other community members and volunteering at workshops. One such example is of a bilingual city employee who volunteered at many workshops as a Filipino (Tagalog) interpreter. As a recently arrived immigrant, he assisted countless people with their citizenship applications by conducting screenings, filling out N400s, and providing interpretation. Then, as soon as he was eligible, he completed his own application at a SF Pathways workshop. Officials report that many employees have taken that step over the years.

Now completing its fourth year of programming, San Francisco is looking to expand its reach to Legal Permanent Residents through mailers, tapping into new data, and focusing on low-income and high-need applicants. San Francisco has created strong partnerships with the local labor council and is connecting thousands of immigrant union members to naturalization services. San Francisco is partnering with financial institutions to incentivize financial education and empowerment, and has created a Fee Assistance Program for individuals not eligible for the Fee Waiver but still in need of financial support and resources. Lastly, San Francisco benefits from many of the best practices learned from other cities and engages in cross-city learning with New York City’s NYCitizenship program as well as mentoring in other cities.

Looking Forward to 2017: Plans for the coming year

In the coming year the national Cities for Citizenship initiative and its 38 municipal partners will grow and deepen existing partnerships, broaden the reach and impact of its naturalization programs, and test innovative models and cross-city collaborations. Under the direction of the Office of New Americans or the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, C4C cities and counties will use this institutional home and dedicated set of resources to drive its citizenship initiatives. Whether hosting oath ceremonies in the Mayor’s office or promoting public awareness of citizenship through its wide media reach, C4C partners will expand current program capacity. The 400+ Citizenship Corners at local libraries around the country leave the C4C initiative well-positioned to reach immigrant communities with a high concentration of lawful permanent residents and promote naturalization. In addition, cities and counties will continue to establish and build on partnerships with banks, credit unions, and financial empowerment organizations to develop citywide plans for long-term community asset building.

Considering the best practices laid out in this report, C4C cities will also continue to partner with anchor institutions with deep trust and frequent contact with immigrant communities; promote financial empowerment to address immigrants’ obstacles in securing financial services and achieving financial stability; deepen cross-city collaborations on naturalization activities; and work to increase visibility of naturalization and connect immigrant inclusion policies with naturalization initiatives. With attention to the areas of growth emphasized by C4C municipal partners, the initiative will also dedicate more attention to municipal workers and partnerships with city vendors in order to take full advantage of their built-in constituency of LPR workers. Many cities will also work to partner with corporations on “scale up” grants and with private law firms to provide pro bono legal support to clients at naturalization workshops. Finally, C4C partners plan to collect more consistent data to document and measure the impact of their ongoing naturalization efforts.

Given the uncertain terrain of federal immigration policies, many cities and counties are shifting more of their limited time and resources in support of their immigrant community members. Government officials and community-based organizations must make the case for sustained naturalization resources in the coming year. In 2017, Cities for Citizenship will play an important role in coordinating the efforts of a large and growing network cities and counties committed to supporting and empowering their immigrant communities. This year, shared learning, collective coordination on naturalization, implementation of economic empowerment models, and expanding the relationship building in the network will be critical for deepening and strengthening the C4C initiative. C4C will continue to provide technical assistance and support for current partners, and aim to expand to at least 12 new cities and counties by the end of 2017 to reach 50 total city and county partners.

Conclusion

The C4C initiative is premised on the idea that when municipal leaders develop and fund naturalization efforts to encourage eligible residents to apply for US citizenship, it produces substantial economic and civic benefits for all of their constituents. When eligible residents become US citizens it not only boosts local economies and raises tax revenue, but also contributes to the financial security of immigrant families while enabling them to more fully engage in civic life. During a time of significant transition at the federal government level, cities are demonstrating enormous leadership in advancing naturalization for those who are eligible— both as a means of harnessing the economic benefits created by higher earnings and tax revenues, and as a way to promote a robust and representative democracy. C4C has emerged as a powerful gathering point for cities and counties to demonstrate their commitment to supporting their local immigrant communities. As demonstrated in the report, 2016 brought important successes, surfaced important lessons learned, and saw innovative approaches emerge at the city and county level. These all leave the large and growing C4C initiative well positioned to replicate and build on these successes in 2017.

Notes

1

María E. Enchautegui and Linda Giannarelli “The Economic Impact of Naturalization on Immigrants and Cities.” The Urban Institute, December 2015, <http://www.urban.org/research/publication/economic-impact-naturalization-immigrants-and-cities>, VI.

2

Manuel Pastor and Justin Scoggins, “Citizen Gain: The Economic Benefits of Naturalization for Immigrants and the Economy.” University of Southern California, December 2012, <http://dornsife.usc.edu/csii/citizen-gain/>.

3

“Cities for Citizenship Toolkit 10 Strategies to Launch & Strengthen Citizenship Initiatives” 2016, <http://citiesforcitizenship.com/c4c/wp-content/uploads/C4C-Toolkit-2016.pdf>.

4

National Partnership of New Americans, Fact Sheet: Naturalization, Fiscal Year 2016 (2017).

5

Note: Over 15 cities have established such offices to date.

6

These self-reported totals are based on metrics collected by participating cities, and aggregated by Citi Community Development, since the launch of the Cities for Citizenship initiative in 2014.

7

National Partnership of New Americans, “Fact Sheet: Naturalization, Fiscal Year 2016” (2017).

8

Based on C4C participation survey results furnished by the Citi Foundation. This naturalization total includes numbers from founding cities as well as some of the larger and most active partner cities: Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Long Beach, Long Island, Madison, WI, Miami-Dade, FL, New York City, San Francisco, San Jose, Seattle, South Gate, CA.

9

Based on C4C participating survey results furnished by Citi Community Development

10

These totals include: Anchorage, Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Kansas City, Knoxville, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Madison, WI, Miami-Dade, FL, New York, Paterson, NJ, Pittsburgh, San Jose, San Francisco, Seattle, South Gate

11

María E. Enchautegui and Linda Giannarelli, “The Economic Impact of Naturalization on Immigrants and Cities” Urban Institute, December 2015, <http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/76241/2000549-The-Economic-Impact-of-Naturalization-on-Immigrants-and-Cities.pdf>, VI.

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Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, “2015 FDIC National Survey of Unbanked and Underbanked Households.” October 2016, <https://www.fdic.gov/householdsurvey/2015/2015appendix.pdf>.

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Center for the Study of Immigrant Integration (CSII), Interactive Map: Eligible-to-Naturalize Populations in the U.S, Dr. Manuel Pastor: <http://dornsife.usc.edu/csii/eligible-to-naturalize-map/>.

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National Partnership of New Americans, Fact Sheet: Naturalization, Fiscal Year 2016 (2017).

15

“Mayor Emanuel Urges Congress to Address Backlog of Naturalization Applications” City of Chicago, Press Release, November 10, 2016, https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/mayor/press_room/press_releases/2016/november/Address-Backlog-of-Naturalization-Applications.html.

16

To learn more about how to expand the Citizenship Corner model to your local library, please visit the USCIS website here: <https://www.uscis.gov/citizenship/organizations/libraries/citizenship-corners>.

C4C CITIES AND COUNTIES

Anchorage, AK

Mayor Ethan Berkowitz

Atlanta, GA

Mayor Kasim Reed

Baltimore, MD

Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake

Boston, MA

Mayor Martin J. Walsh

Chattanooga, TN

Mayor Andy Berke

Chicago, IL

Mayor Rahm Emanuel

Cleveland, OH

Mayor Frank Jackson

Dallas, TX

Mayor Mike Rawlings

Dayton, OH

Mayor Nan Whaley

Denver, CO

Mayor Michael Hancock

Detroit, MI

Mayor Mike Duggan

Houston, TX

Mayor Sylvester Turner

Jersey City, NJ

Mayor Steven Fulop

Kansas City, KS

Mayor Mark Holland

Knoxville, TN

Mayor Madeline Rogero

Long Beach, CA

Mayor Robert Garcia

Los Angeles, CA

Mayor Eric Garcetti

Louisville, KY

Mayor Greg Fischer

Madison, WI

Mayor Paul Soglin

City of Miami, FL

Mayor Tomás Pedro Regalado

Miami-Dade County, FL

Mayor Carlos Gimenez

Milwaukee, WI

Mayor Tom Barrett

Montgomery County, MD

County Executive Ike Leggett

Nashville, TN

Mayor Megan Barry

New Haven, CT

Mayor Toni Harp

New York, NY

Mayor Bill de Blasio

Paterson, NJ

Mayor Joey Torres

Philadelphia, PA

Mayor Michael Nutter

Pittsburgh, PA

Mayor William Peduto

Reading, PA

Mayor Vaughn Spencer

Salt Lake County, UT

Mayor Ben McAdams

San Francisco, CA

Mayor Ed Lee

San Jose, CA

Mayor Sam Liccardo

Seattle, WA

Mayor Ed Murray

South Gate, CA

Mayor W.H. "Bill" De Witt

Suffolk County, NY

County Executive Steven Bellone

Tucson, AZ

Mayor Jonathan Rothschild

Washington, DC

Mayor Muriel Bowser

FOUNDING MEMBERS

MAYOR
RAHM EMANUEL



MAYOR
ERIC GARCETTI



MAYOR
BILL DE BLASIO



To learn more about how to grow citizenship in your city, visit www.CitiesforCitizenship.com or email Cities4Citizenship@populardemocracy.org.