



Best Practices and Innovations for Naturalization Workshops: Planning and Logistics

Providing high-quality, comprehensive, and affordable naturalization services to Lawful Permanent Residents, or LPRs, is a multi-faceted and complex process that often requires coordination among many individuals and organizations. To increase the efficiency of naturalization efforts, CLINIC emphasizes a naturalization model that relies on workshops or clinics to complete applications. A naturalization workshop is a one-day community event that brings professionals and trained volunteers together to assist LPRs in completing the Application for Naturalization, or N-400. Workshops are usually held at a central location in the community that can accommodate large numbers of applicants, such as a community college or parish hall. A naturalization clinic, on the other hand, is a smaller scale event that usually takes place in the organization's offices rather than an outside location.

For more information on workshops, use our toolkit at cliniclegal.org/naturalization. For a list of upcoming naturalization workshops in your community, visit the New Americans Campaign's citizenship events page at newamericanscampaign.org/citizenship-events.

Any successful workshop must be well planned and organized to make sure that both staff and volunteers are positioned to help move clients through the application process as quickly and efficiently as possible. When planning your workshop, your organization will need to consider the scope of your workshop; effective use of time by volunteers, staff, and clients; anticipating and preventing bottlenecks and slowdowns; and how to use technology for greater efficiency. Use our tips to help your organization conduct effective naturalization events.

Workshop Scope and Schedule

- Change the location of your workshops periodically to encourage geographic diversity in your clientele.
- Offer smaller workshops more frequently, and offer large workshops one or two times a year.
- Provide regularly scheduled, small (10-20 person) naturalization clinics at your organization. Having clinics on regular days and times establishes your organization as a place where LPRs know they can always go for naturalization services and will accommodate those who can't make it to workshops.
- Offer workshops geared for particular ethnic groups for greater efficiency and an ability to focus on applicants' language needs with interpreters. In this way, interpreters are not needed for every single workshop and can avoid burnout.

Intake and Reception

- Have naturalization workshop participants pre-register for events and use pre-screening to check their eligibility.
- Provide a brief orientation to applicants before they receive assistance on what the workshop event and application process will entail. Use recorded information whenever possible to make the orientation less staff-intensive and as efficient as possible.
- Invite local USCIS staff to set up a booth at the workshop and be on hand to answer questions and distribute informational materials.
- Invite local providers of English classes and citizenship test preparation classes to be on hand at the workshop to answer questions and provide information and referrals to their classes.
- Play public education videos in the waiting area of the workshop, such as a video with a mock citizenship interview.
- Provide a dedicated waiting area for family members and children of applicants with activities, toys, and movies.
- Provide clients with N-400 worksheet forms so they can gather information on their employment, addresses, and trips outside the United States for the past five years. When possible, provide the worksheet to pre-registered applicants before the workshop. Otherwise, distribute it to clients waiting to be served at the workshop.
- Identify applicants waiting in line who are comfortable using CitizenshipWorks on the computer to complete their own application. Direct them to a computer station where volunteers are available to assist them. Consider offering a discount on the workshop fee to applicants who use CitizenshipWorks to complete their N-400.
- Make several volunteers available at your event to present or review with clients the English language and civics questions and other naturalization interview related materials and information. This will help clients begin to prepare and will keep them engaged and entertained while they wait.



Workflow and Time Management

- Split the workshop into morning and afternoon sessions, with one language group served in the morning and a different language group served in the afternoon.
- Avoid crowding, long waiting times, and volunteer burnout by dividing the workshop into multiple shifts, with applicants and volunteers assigned to come at staggered times, such as 10am and 1pm.
- Have clients work on their own applications in a classroom group setting where an instructor and several volunteer aides can guide applicants through the process by using a projector. Where technology permits, the use of CitizenshipWorks, or other computer-based online platforms, can help drive efficiency and simplify the process.
- Encourage applicants to use CitizenshipWorks or other computer based platforms to complete as much of their N-400 application as possible before the event. Create a “fast lane” at your workshop for clients who have already completed large parts of their N-400, allowing them to have their application completed and reviewed more quickly at your naturalization event.
- Depending on the size of the workshop, use volunteers to staff one or more computer terminals where they can help applicants look up information needed for the application, such as a Selective Service registration number or an employer address.
- Use station captains as roaming experts at each station to provide on-the-spot technical support and reduce the workload for quality control at the end.
- Shift volunteers throughout the course of the workshop to different stations depending on where bottlenecks in processing arise.
- Provide volunteers and staff with walkie-talkies to facilitate communication in large workshop settings, especially if multiple rooms are used.

Technology

- Test all computers and technology prior to the event to be sure they are working properly. Ensure that telephone numbers for technical support are easily accessible.
- Use texting platforms at workshops to keep applicants waiting in line apprised of their place in line and approximate wait times.
- Provide applicants with a flash drive that contains citizenship preparation materials such as the 100 study questions and the N-400. Use it to store their completed N-400 from the workshop and give them the flash drive to keep at the end.
- Use a secure, land-wired connection on a desktop computer (not wireless) to avoid crashing CitizenshipWorks. Use a wireless connection (or smartphones) for other tasks such as looking up information online, i.e. Selective Service registration. Use tethering on a smartphone to establish a secure internet connection on a laptop.
- For security purposes, use a secure wireless connection (not open access) for the internet. Consider paying a modest fee for the workshop site to obtain an expanded, secure wireless connection.

Follow-up and Evaluation

- Provide those who complete the workshop with a packet of test preparation materials, such as the 100 study questions and the English vocabulary lists. Include the cost of printing these materials in the workshop fee, if needed.
- Have the agency appointment calendar available at the workshop to schedule follow up appointments for those who need one. Set up a station to offer case consultations and intake at the workshop so those who need an office appointment are better prepared.
- Survey naturalization participants and volunteers to get feedback on what worked well during the workshop and what could be improved
- Be sure to have flyers for your next workshop ready to distribute.

More Resources

Much of CLINIC's experience with conducting naturalization workshops comes from its work with the New Americans Campaign. Many of the best practices shared in this document come from their resources. For more information, visit: newamericanscampaign.org.

For more tips related to naturalization workshops, refer to our companion documents on volunteers, partnerships, and planning at cliniclegal.org/naturalization.