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# Washington New Americans Program

*Report on Performance and Outcomes (ESSB 6444, Laws of 2010)*

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Report to the Legislature  
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## Acknowledgements

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# Introduction

## **Overview**

This report provides a summary of the Washington New Americans Program's fiscal year 2013 activities, its performance measures, and program outcomes required by the program's legislative authority.

The Washington New Americans Program was created by legislative proviso in 2008 to help legal, permanent residents in the state become naturalized U.S. citizens.<sup>1</sup> The Legislature appropriated \$283,000 of state general funds to continue the program in FY 2011.<sup>2</sup> However, budget cuts reduced the initial 2011 appropriation to \$253,000 by the end of the fiscal year, an 11 percent reduction.

For FY 2012 and FY 2013, the Legislature appropriated \$198,000 of state general funds to continue the program, which is an 8.9 percent reduction from FY 2011.

The Washington New Americans Program met all of the service delivery goals developed between the Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) and OneAmerica, the program contractor, during FY 2013.

This program served 2,712 legal permanent residents from 89 countries. At least 72.1 percent of client households were at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. The average household income of those served in 2013 was \$19,097.88 and the average household size was three.

## **What is Naturalization?**

Naturalization is the legal process that a foreign national can use to become a U.S. citizen. To qualify for naturalization, an applicant must have held legal permanent U.S. residency (a green card holder) for three to five years. The first step of naturalization is submission of an application to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. After the application is approved the applicant must interview, pass an English language test, and pass a civics test. The applicant is then qualified to take the oath of loyalty and become a U.S. citizen. It can take a few years for applicants to complete the naturalization process.

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<sup>1</sup> Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2687, Laws of 2008

<sup>2</sup> Engrossed Substitute House Bill 6444, Laws of 2010, 1<sup>st</sup> Spec. Sess.

## Program Accomplishments

### **Program Performance and Outcomes**

Commerce worked with OneAmerica to meet the Legislature’s requirement to develop performance measures. The Washington New Americans Program met or exceeded all of the measures for FY 2013 despite cuts from funding sources and drop in donations due to the economic downturn.

**Table 1: New Americans Program FY 2013 Goals and Results**

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
Help legal permanent residents make progress toward naturalization	Assist 850 individuals	2,712 individuals assisted
Use Citizenship Day events to assist legal permanent residents with naturalization	Host 2 Citizenship Day events at a minimum of 8 statewide locations and 2 roving clinics at a minimum of 2 locations	8 Citizenship Day events were conducted over 2 days at 8 statewide locations; 6 “roving attorney” clinics were conducted over 6 days at 5 sites across the state
Alert qualified legal permanent residents of New Americans Program	Implement the 2012-2013 media campaign	Media campaign launched statewide
Distribute media materials to multiple ethnic media outlets	Distribute information to 16 organizations	Materials distributed to 96 organizations
Provide immigrants with the information and tools necessary to not only pass the test to become a citizen, but also to integrate and participate actively in civic society	Deliver 16 hours of civics education training	Citizenship and civics curriculum were used in 16 locations, serving 688 students
Assist qualified residents to submit applications for citizenship	Assist with the completion of 500 N-400 federal naturalization applications	705 N-400 applications completed

*Source: OneAmerica’s New Americans Program Annual Report*

## **OneAmerica Services and Activities**

Commerce continued to contract with OneAmerica in FY 2013 to provide the Washington New Americans Program direct services in the Seattle area and coordinate subcontractors and their work across the state. OneAmerica's qualifications include experience providing immigration-related services to immigrant communities. OneAmerica continues to be part of a network of organizations that engages in providing citizenship workshops for legal permanent residents.

OneAmerica subcontracted with six partner agencies. One had an outreach and education subcontract and the remaining five subcontractors provided naturalization services. OneAmerica provided technical assistance and training to allow two subcontractors to pursue a higher level of legal capacity, which allowed one subcontractor to obtain Board of Immigration Appeals accreditation and to begin offering full in-office legal services starting in FY 2014.

Subcontractors provided citizenship orientation and preparation workshops, coordination and staffing at events, partnership with OneAmerica to offer their civics education module, distribution of multilingual materials, program data collection, and assistance with naturalization applications.

### **2013 Challenges**

The Washington New Americans Program subcontractors continued to face difficulties in the 2013 fiscal year due to funding uncertainty and budget cuts that have necessitated staff cuts and the implementation of sliding-scale fees in many programs. While programs have been able to maintain a basic level of services since the funding cuts in 2010- 2012, the lower level of funding is a struggle for community-based subcontractors and has resulted in the contraction of services and the loss of staff. Even the small fees implemented by subcontractors have caused hardship for some clients who already face difficulty paying application fees. Although no one is turned away because of inability to pay, the added costs still strain family resources and often result in families choosing to move forward with only one citizenship application rather than the entire family naturalizing. New Americans has kept funding for subcontractors steady to offset cuts to other funding sources and a drop in private donations. However, maintaining this funding for partners strains the program's ability to continue other program elements, such as the ethnic media campaign, without additional funding.

### **2013 Successes**

Washington New Americans subcontractors met all program targets, providing naturalization services to 956 immigrants and completing 366 federal N-400 Applications for Naturalization. They served clients from 71 different countries and 57 language backgrounds. Subcontractors provided 69 staff members to assist with Citizenship Day events and roving clinics, and distributed 25,419 multilingual materials. A number of subcontractors stated in their final

reports that Washington New Americans funding had been instrumental in keeping their naturalization programs running.

The Washington New Americans Program continued a comprehensive multilingual ethnic media campaign to make qualified residents aware of the program, with special focus around the Citizenship Day events.

The program helped 408 children under 18 ‘derive’ citizenship through their parents under the Childhood Citizenship Act of 2000. This was an increase of 38.5 percent from FY 2012. Children under 18 who are legal permanent residents are able to derive citizenship when their parent with legal and physical custody naturalizes. These children automatically derive citizenship and can immediately file for a U.S. passport or an N-600 application, and can exercise all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

### **The N-400 Application**

A key milestone for Washington New Americans participants is the completion and submission of the N-400 application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Once New Americans subcontractors determine that an individual meets the requirements to apply for U.S. citizenship, they assist that individual in completing their N-400. Application review and approval takes an average of six months, so an error or omission in the N-400 can delay naturalization by a year or more. The Washington New Americans Program focuses on ensuring that the application is completed properly so that the applicant can move to the next steps – an interview, and English language and civics testing.

### **Citizenship Schools: A Civics Curriculum**

Washington New Americans organizers presented 16 two-hour civics modules in partnership with subcontractors and other community organizations. The modules were presented to 688 students, with an average of 49 students in each class. Language barriers were the most noticeable difficulty, and translators were on site in some areas. In low-English proficient communities, the program added additional participatory activities, visual aids, and additional volunteers to assist students. Producing hand-outs in languages other than English has improved student experiences, and the program continues to provide more workshops in languages other than English (this year including Chinese, Korean, Russian, and Spanish). These steps increased the program’s ability to effectively serve legal permanent residents who struggle with English or who have little exposure to formal education.

### **Financial Literacy and Integration**

Over the past several years, it has become clear that the application fee is a significant barrier to citizenship for many clients. Many clients who did not qualify for a fee waiver but were still low income were unable to save the money to apply. In response, in FY 2013 the Washington

New Americans Program began a pilot financial literacy curriculum that is integrated into the civics program. The curriculum is designed to help immigrant communities understand the U.S. financial system, learn how to access resources like microloans and savings tools, and connect them to more in-depth financial services when needed. The program will focus on having a bank account, budgeting, accessing financial services, understanding and repairing credit, and avoiding scams. It will have tracks aimed at legal permanent residents, the general public, youth, and entrepreneurs. After six months of testing individual modules, a four-lesson curriculum will be piloted in the fall of 2013. This project is funded by two regional private foundations.

### **Citizenship Day Events: Investing in Proven Methods**

The Washington New Americans Program provided resources for eight Citizenship Day events at eight sites across the state. Between October 2012 and April 2013, 388 clients were served through Citizenship Day events.

Nearly all of the staffing of the Citizenship Day events was by volunteers, many from the Washington Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association (AILA). The Washington New Americans Program's community partners also recruited volunteers to interpret, copy documents, help provide childcare, and provide other administrative support. A total of 447 volunteers were involved. The 106 volunteer attorneys provided 1,007 hours of pro bono legal assistance with an estimated value of \$251,750. The 447 paralegals, interpreters, and general volunteers who volunteered at Citizenship Day provided over 4,743 hours (or almost 198 full days) of service.

### **Roving Attorney Clinics**

During FY 2013, Washington New Americans and AILA continued to expand the roving attorney clinics introduced last year. Six roving clinics were held at six events at five sites across the state. Between August 2012 and May 2013, 150 clients were served and 87 of these clients were able to complete N400 applications. The smaller number of required volunteers allows Washington New Americans Program to increase the number of clinics, reach smaller communities, or tailor clinics to serve the specific needs of particular communities, such as elderly Chinese immigrants, Tigrinya speakers, or low-English proficient adults.

These clinics are smaller and serve groups between 20 and 50 people. They can be organized in low-service density areas or to serve populations with special needs, such as military families, particular language groups, potential citizens with disabilities, and others. The smaller size of the volunteer pool needed to plan and execute a roving attorney clinic also makes it possible for single firms to sponsor a clinic and for clinics to be organized more quickly and more frequently than the traditional Citizenship Day event. These clinics are an important tool alongside major Citizenship Day events and have allowed the program to serve a greater number of areas in FY 2013 with limited resources. Roving attorney clinics feature intensive

pre-event outreach to speed client turnover, and require fewer attorneys –two to three attorneys, four to six paralegals, and a local coordinator to staff and plan the event. The dates are scheduled around attorney availability, and attorneys who have not previously volunteered through Citizenship Day are encouraged to become involved in the program.

### **Reaching the Target Audience: Washington New Americans Program Media Campaign**

The Washington New Americans Program’s outreach and marketing campaign has employed innovative strategies to ensure that potential new Americans have access to citizenship. The program has increased the use of community partnerships, social media, and earned media to compensate for lost formal advertising. The program has found interactive strategies such as appearances on community radio call-in shows to be particularly effective, as well as expanding email sign-up lists and social media campaigns. In addition, efforts to use “new media” sources have helped to reach a younger group of potential citizens. However, the reduced ability to use mass media sources to communicate the Washington New Americans Program message has made it harder to reach some groups, such as those living in rural areas. Program client feedback demonstrates that radio and television continue to be an extremely effective tool to inform and motivate potential clients and the hope is to restore these critical program elements in the future.

The Washington New Americans website, [www.wanewamericans.org](http://www.wanewamericans.org), continues to serve as a resource for people seeking information on naturalization and the program. The website includes information about the benefits of becoming a U.S. citizen, requirements and process for naturalization, and answers to frequently asked questions. Citizenship Day event information is available on the website in eight languages. Additionally, Web visitors can sign up to receive more information on upcoming events, email program staff, and sign up to become volunteers.

The website also shares success stories of past clients, helping reduce fear and uncertainty around the naturalization process. In FY 2013, the program expanded and improved the interactivity and content of the website, and updated the referral and resources section to include financial education, tax assistance referrals, and information about the fee waivers.

During May and June 2013, a problem with the website analytics prevented the program from collecting information about Web traffic. This resulted in an artificially low number of hits in these months and makes full evaluation of the website traffic difficult. However, excluding those months, website traffic increased over the previous fiscal year, with the number of page views up more than 15 percent, from 133,168 to 154,127. Total hits and Web sessions remained virtually steady even in the absence of Web traffic data for May and June. The strength of web traffic can likely be attributed to the continued success of off-line marketing and outreach, and an expanded presence in social media and text messages driving people to the website.

The multilingual toll-free citizenship hotline continues to be a core element of the program and a critical tool for connecting community members to citizenship information and referral. In FY 2013, Washington New Americans received 2,049 requests for information about naturalization, which is on track with the number of calls received in fiscal years 2012 and 2011. In addition, program staff responded to 245 information requests through Web form contacts. The hotline provides service in 20 languages and was staffed by the contractor, subcontractors, and community partners who are fluent or native speakers of the languages offered. The program continued to use a Web-based telephone service, which notified hotline staffers when a new message was logged. This allowed staffers to respond to the message in the language requested.

The Washington New American Program's text messaging service provides a date and location of the nearest Citizenship Day event when individuals text the word "citizen" to 69302. In 2012-2013, the text message campaign remained fairly consistent with last year's numbers. The program will continue to expand this tool and refine how text messages can most effectively be used to attract clients.

Over half of the callers to the hotline have no email address or have limited access to a computer, but they still desire mobile information through cell phones and text messaging. Given this information, the text message campaign is seen as a critical way to expand access to information. It is an effective tool for reaching new clients, especially younger clients who are more comfortable with text messaging than calling a live hotline. In addition, it is effective in increasing participation in Citizenship Day events for clients who have already been identified through face-to-face outreach or the hotline.

A comprehensive ethnic media campaign was implemented from July 2012 through June 2013, with a special focus around the National Immigrant Integration Conference in September, the October 20 and April 27 Citizenship Days, and Flag Day on June 14. The ethnic media campaign included purchases of 18 print, 1,017 radio, and 167 television advertisements, and generated publicity through articles appearing in various media outlets.

The Washington New Americans Program helped fund 1,017 radio advertisements in English, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, and Korean. The radio has consistently been a powerful and cost-effective way to reach immigrant communities. The Spanish-language radio station KSVR-FM in Mount Vernon broadcasted live from the April 27 Citizenship Day event for the third year in a row, and provided almost two months of lead-up coverage to the event.

Television efforts were concentrated in communities with large Spanish-speaking populations, including 167 advertisements on Univision in Seattle, Vancouver, Tri-Cities, and Yakima. In addition, organizers based in eastern and northern Washington were able to appear on various Spanish-speaking news and talk shows to help advertise Citizenship Day and answer questions from attendees.

A total of 39,770 multilingual fliers and materials were distributed in target communities. Flyers and posters have been especially useful when community partners are able to distribute flyers to their networks. For example, organizers from Service Employees International Union Local 775 sent flyers to immigrant members along with a success story of a member who had naturalized through the program, and a Head Start Program in Grant County sent flyers home with all non-citizen families prior to the April Citizenship Day. These partnerships with local community institutions with deep roots continue to be an excellent way to reach new eligible legal permanent residents. In addition, flyers and posters placed at community meeting places such as religious institutions, ethnicity-specific grocery stores, and community organizations are also effective ways to reach new clients.

### Populations Served

Client intake forms completed at Citizenship Day events and subcontractor locations provided demographic information on program participants. A total of 2,712 immigrants received services through Washington New Americans in FY 2013.

Once again, more women were served by Washington New Americans this year (57.9 percent) than men (42.1 percent).

The average income for clients who completed intake forms was \$19,097.88 and the average household size was three. This average income level is lower than in previous years, likely because FY 2013 was the first year in which the Washington New Americans Program offered assistance completing fee waivers during the entire program year, which meant that lower-income clients were able to benefit from the program.

At least 72.1 percent of clients from Citizenship Day events and subcontractor services were at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. The Washington New Americans Program referred 457 eligible clients to the Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance at the Washington Department of Social and Health Services.

Table 2: Percent of Clients by Age

Percent of program population	Age range of program participant
41.5	30- 49 years old
24.8	50- 64 years old
18	18- 29 years old
15.7	65 years old and older

Source: OneAmerica's New Americans Program Annual Report

The ages of program participants ranged between 18 and more than 65 years. Most Washington New Americans Program clients were 30- 49 years old (41.5 percent). Immigrants may become eligible for citizenship within three to five years of holding legal permanent resident status. Most program clients (58.7 percent) had been in the U.S. for less than nine years. One legal permanent resident had been in the country for 56 years.

**Table 3: Percent of Clients Served, Time Residing in the U.S.**

Percent of program population	Time as a legal permanent resident
58.7	0-9 years
24.6	10- 19 years
16.7	20 years or more

*Source: OneAmerica's New Americans Program Annual Report*

Participants included immigrants from 89 countries. The top five countries of origin were Mexico (25.7 percent), China (15.9 percent), Ukraine (8.0 percent), Vietnam (6.8 percent), and Russia (4.6 percent). The top five language backgrounds represented reflected the top five countries of origin, with 31.9 percent citing Spanish as their primary language, 14.5 percent Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, or unspecified dialect), 11.7 percent Russian, 6.1 percent Vietnamese, 4.4 percent Ukrainian. English was the 6th most common primary language at 4.1 percent.

## Conclusion

Despite budget cuts, the Washington New Americans Program has thrived and provided a critical bridge to services for immigrants in Washington State. At the current level of funding, the program was able to serve a record number of clients in a wider variety of areas by expanding roving attorney clinics and by using technology to extend the efficiency and reach of the program to serve communities with special needs and communities in under-served, isolated areas. Expansion will continue in FY 2014 in new areas, such as financial literacy education, access to microloans, and using small, flexible clinics to reach isolated areas.

The Washington New Americans Program successfully teamed with media and immigrant organizations to combine resources and expertise, meet program goals, and improve the results of the Washington New Americans Program.

- The Washington New Americans Program met or exceeded all FY 2013 goals.
- A total of 492 volunteers provided in-kind legal, translation, and other services.
- The program provided services to 2,712 immigrants.
- More than 39,770 multilingual outreach and informational materials were distributed.
- The total number of page views on the website increased from 133,168 in June 2012 to 154,127 in June 2013.
- The program assisted in the completion of 705 N-400 applications for naturalization.
- A majority – 72.1 percent – of those served were at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.
- The average household income of those served was \$19,098.
- The median household size of Washington New Americans Program clients was three.