



Department of Commerce
Innovation is in our nature.

Washington New Americans Program

Per Chapter 329, Laws of 2008, Section 125(63)

September 2014
Report to the Legislature
Brian Bonlender, Director

Acknowledgements

Washington State Department of Commerce

Tony Hanson, Managing Director, Community Economic Opportunities Unit

Joyce Beebe, Washington New Americans Program Manager

Graham Parrington, Editor

Joyce Beebe, 360-725-4143, joyce.beebe@commerce.wa.gov

Washington State Department of Commerce

Community Economic Opportunities Unit

1011 Plum St. SE

P.O. Box 42525

Olympia, WA 98504-2525

www.commerce.wa.gov

For people with disabilities, this report is available on request in other formats. To submit a request, please call 360-725-4000 (TTY 360-586-0772)

Executive Summary

The Washington New Americans Program (WNAP) provides a crucial bridge to citizenship for immigrants in Washington State. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, the program continued to see a high demand for services while funding remained flat and the availability of volunteer attorneys to provide pro bono services decreased.

In FY 2014, WNAP exceeded program goals and served clients in a wider geographic area by expanding the roving attorney clinics and by using technology to increase efficiency. Continuing to ensure that eligible legal permanent residents can become citizens is not only vital for immigrant families, but also beneficial for the future of all Washington communities.

Naturalization promotes economic growth because citizenship is correlated with expanded access to jobs and self-employment, increasing income by an average of 14.6 percent for naturalized immigrants, according to research by the Economic Policy Institute.¹

With the doubling of state funding for WNAP in FY 2015, the program will increase support for subcontractors, bring in two new community organizations as subcontractors, reinstate a more robust ethnic media outreach campaign, and continue to improve Citizenship Days. WNAP will also continue to expand financial literacy education, partnerships with business and finance communities offering microloans and other financing options, roving attorney clinics, and smaller, flexible new clinics to reach isolated areas in new geographic areas.

\

¹ Shierholz, Heidi. "The effects of citizenship on family income and poverty." Economic Policy Institute. Retrieved from: <http://www.epi.org/publication/bp256/>
Washington New Americans Program

Program Performance and Outcomes

The Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) worked with OneAmerica, the program contractor, to meet the Legislature’s requirement to develop performance measures. The program met or exceeded all of the measures for FY 2014.

Table 1: New Americans Program FY 2014 Goals and Results

Goal	Target	Outcome
Help legal permanent residents make progress toward naturalization	Assist 850 individuals	3,740 individuals assisted ²
Use Citizenship Day events to assist legal permanent residents with naturalization	Hold 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 held at 8 locations; 5 roving attorney clinics held at 5 sites
Alert qualified legal permanent residents of New Americans Program	Implement the 2013-2014 media campaign	Media campaign launched statewide
Distribute media materials to multiple ethnic media outlets	Distribute information to 16 organizations	Materials distributed to 32 contacts in ethnic and mainstream media
Provide immigrants with the information and tools necessary to earn citizenship and participate actively in civic society	Deliver 16 hours of civics education training	Citizenship and civics curriculum were used to deliver 24 hours of education in 12 locations, serving 314 students
Assist qualified residents to submit applications for citizenship	Assist with the completion of 500 N-400 applications	630 N-400 applications completed

Source: OneAmerica's New Americans Program Annual Report

² Note: The 2013 New Americans report stated that the total number of individuals assisted was 2,712. However, that figure excluded individuals contacted and followed up with through the hotline and the Web form process. The correct total number of individuals assisted in FY 2013 was 3,823.

Introduction

Overview

This report provides a summary of the Washington New Americans Program's (WNAP) Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 activities, performance measures, and program outcomes.

WNAP was created by legislative proviso in 2008 to help legal permanent residents in the state become naturalized U.S. citizens. The Legislature appropriated \$283,000 of state general funds to continue the program in FY 2011. 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, FY 2013, and FY 2014, the Legislature appropriated \$198,000 of state general funds to continue the program, which is an 8.9 percent reduction from FY 2011. For FY 2015, the Legislature appropriated \$396,000, increasing the amount of state general funds for the program by 100 percent.

WNAP met all of the service delivery goals developed between the Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) and OneAmerica, the program contractor, during FY 2014. OneAmerica subcontracted with six partner agencies. One subcontractor focused mostly on outreach and education with a small amount of naturalization services. The remaining five subcontractors provided naturalization services only.

The program served 3,740 legal permanent residents from 79 countries in FY 2014. The vast majority of client households had incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines (88 percent of subcontractor clients and 67.5 percent of Citizenship Day clients). The average household income of those served in FY 2014 was \$20,732.35 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 a federal N-400 Application for Naturalization form (N-400) to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). After the application is approved the applicant must complete an 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. Completing the naturalization process often takes several years.

OneAmerica Services and Activities

Commerce continued to contract with OneAmerica in FY 2014 to provide the WNAP direct services in the Seattle area and coordinate subcontractors and their work across the state.

OneAmerica assisted one subcontractor to become Board of Immigration Appeals accredited, who then began offering full in-office legal services in FY 2014. They have assisted another three community organizations with their applications for Board of Immigration Appeals accreditation. Two of these organizations will be program subcontractors in FY 2015.

Subcontractors conducted pre-screening interviews to determine if a client was eligible to naturalize, assisted clients with completing the N-400 application, assisted with Citizenship Day planning, provided staff to help run Citizenship Day events, distributed multilingual WNAP materials, partnered with OneAmerica to offer civics and financial literacy education, assisted with responding to hotline calls, and collected data for the program.

2014 Challenges

Some subcontractors have implemented small fees in order to maintain services with limited funding. The fees 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 naturalizing the entire family.

WNAP 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. The residual effect of a robust ethnic media campaign lasted through much of fiscal years 2012 and 2013. However, in FY 2014 the drop in these outreach efforts has been much more evident in the number of clients served.

The release of a new version of the N-400 citizenship application form in February 2014 presented a significant challenge for the program. The form was expanded from 10 to 21 pages, with a number of additional questions and more detailed explanations required. The primary impact of this change has been to dramatically increase the amount of time it takes to provide application assistance to each client, both at events and workshops and in-office through the subcontractors. This has resulted in a decrease in the number of completed applications since February.

It has also required a large investment of time and resources to revise many of program materials and supplies, as well as train staff and volunteers on the new form. Looking forward to next fiscal year, OneAmerica plans to address these challenges by recruiting more volunteers

for each event and holding additional roving attorney clinics to supplement the number of applications completed at Citizenship Days.

2014 Successes

WNAP subcontractors met all program targets, providing naturalization services to 921 immigrants and completing 367 N-400 applications. They served clients from 68 different countries and 44 language backgrounds. Subcontractors provided 70 staff members to assist with Citizenship Day events and roving attorney clinics.

WNAP continued a comprehensive multilingual ethnic media campaign to make qualified residents aware of the program, with special focus around the Citizenship Day events and the availability of services across the state.

The program helped 276 children under 18 years old derive citizenship through their parents under the Childhood Citizenship Act of 2000. Children who are legal permanent residents can derive citizenship if the parent with legal and physical custody naturalizes. These children automatically derive citizenship and can immediately file for a U.S. passport or a N-600 application, and can exercise all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

The cost of naturalization is a significant barrier to many eligible immigrants across the state. To mitigate these costs, WNAP assisted qualified applicants with fee waivers. In FY 2014, fee waiver screenings and application assistance were provided at all Citizenship Day events and roving attorney clinics. Fee waiver assistance is also offered by all subcontractors who provide in-office application assistance. For applicants who do not qualify for fee waivers, WNAP provided information about microloans to help pay the application fee in regions where they are available.

Additionally, WNAP pursued additional partnerships with credit unions to provide supportive financing through microloans, and continued to foster a strong partnership with the Washington Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association, which provides pro-bono attorney services.

Prior to this year, citizenship loans were available from Express Credit Union in the King County Area and Gesa Credit Union in the Tri-Cities area. This year, a partnership was developed with Lower Valley Credit Union in the Yakima Valley. Early next fiscal year this partnership will launch a new citizenship loan product for eligible applicants in the Yakima Valley area, which has one of the highest densities of legal permanent residents eligible for citizenship.

The N-400 Application

A key milestone for WNAP participants is the completion and submission of the N-400 application to USCIS. Once OneAmerica 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 WNAP 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

WNAP partners presented 12 two-hour civics modules with subcontractors and other community organizations. The modules were presented to 314 students, with an average of 26 students in each class.

In low-English proficient communities, information was presented in the community's first language to enhance the learning experience and potential for active, participatory learning. The program added participatory activities, visual aids, and volunteers to further assist students. These groups face the most challenges in naturalizing and are often the most in need of services. Producing handouts in languages other than English has improved the student experience, and the program continues to offer more non-English workshops (this year in Chinese and Spanish).

Financial Literacy

The WNAP launched a pilot effort in the fall of 2013 to include basic financial literacy education in the civics curriculum to reduce the number of students who are unable to complete the naturalization process due to lack of financial resources.

The financial literacy 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 to more in-depth financial services when needed.

Funded by two regional private foundations, the pilot program focused on banking, budgeting, accessing financial services, understanding and repairing credit, and avoiding scams.

OneAmerica staff and volunteers delivered both one-time workshops covering basic financial topics, as well as in-depth, six- to eight-session courses that covered a broad array of topics. This curriculum has been integrated into the WNAP's civics program. Since the fall of 2013, WNAP has provided financial literacy instruction to 637 immigrants (including the 314 students in the citizenship classes).

Citizenship Day Events

WNAP provided resources for eight Citizenship Day events at eight sites across the state. Between October 2013 and April 2014, 404 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. WNAP'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 83 volunteer attorneys provided 754 hours of pro bono legal assistance with an estimated value of \$188,500. The 364 paralegals, interpreters, and general volunteers who volunteered at Citizenship Day provided over 3,164 hours (or almost 132 full days) of service.

Electronic Completion of Forms

The new N-400 application includes barcode technology that allows for faster processing of completed forms if they are filled out electronically, so WNAP is increasing its capacity to complete applications in this format rather than by hand. Forms were completed electronically at four out of the eight Citizenship Day sites and all five of the roving attorney sites. Depending on venue capacity, this is an area WNAP will continue to develop during future Citizenship Days. In addition, the program is still experimenting with finding the best system to save the forms as clients move through the different workshop stations. For the 2014 Citizenship Day, a combination of secure USB drives and Dropbox, a cloud storage service, were used.

Roving Attorney Clinics

During FY 2014, WNAP and Washington Chapter of the American Immigration Lawyers Association continued the roving attorney clinics introduced last year. Five roving attorney clinics were conducted over five days at five sites across the state. Between July 2013 and May 2014, 126 clients were served and 68 of these clients were able to complete N-400 applications.

The clinics 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 clinics are an important tool alongside major Citizenship Day events and have allowed the program to serve a greater number of areas in FY 2014. 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.

Reaching the Target Audience: WNAP Media Campaign

WNAP increased the use of community partnerships, social media, and earned media. Interactive strategies were employed, such as appearances on community radio call-in shows, an expanded email sign-up list, and social media campaigns. WNAP also sought out new public and private partners who can assist to reach new audiences.

Program client surveys continue to indicate that radio and television outreach are critical to drive turnout at Citizenship Day events. With increased resources for FY 2015, WNAP plans to resume a more robust paid advertising campaign.

New Americans Website

The WNAP website, www.wanewamericans.org, serves as a resource for people seeking information on naturalization and WNAP. The website includes information about the benefits of becoming a U.S. citizen, the naturalization process, and upcoming roving clinics and other program-wide events. Citizenship Day event information is available in six languages, and other resources and links are added in additional languages as needed. The website also publishes success stories of past clients, helping reduce fear and uncertainty around the naturalization process. Website visitors can sign up to receive more information on upcoming events, email program staff, and sign up to become volunteers. In FY 2015, the program plans to add additional content in other languages, including Arabic.

For the first three and a half months of FY 2014, a problem with website analytics prevented accurate data collection, which resulted in an artificially low number of hits in these months and makes full evaluation of the website traffic difficult. OneAmerica changed analytics programs and now uses Google Analytics, which uses a slightly different set of measures to report website traffic. This change prevented accurately comparing website usage this year to previous years. Despite a reduction in recorded website traffic, the WNAP website continued to be an important tool for providing valuable information about the citizenship process. Over the span of nine months, 4,969 sessions and 10,069 page views were recorded.

Citizenship Hotline

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 2014, WNAP received 1,960 requests for information about naturalization, which is on track with the number of calls received in FY 2012 and FY 2013. In addition, program staff responded to 189 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. A community survey revealed that additional languages are needed, such as Burmese and Farsi, to serve Washington's

linguistically diverse population. In FY 2015, these languages will be added to the hotline and WNAP outreach materials.

Text Message Campaign

This is the third year of OneAmerica's text message campaign. This service provides a date and location of the nearest Citizenship Day event when individuals text the word "citizen" to a designated number. This service is also offered in Spanish. The program is in the process of updating outreach materials and plans to expand the use of the text message campaign during FY 2015. Since more than half of the hotline callers have limited or no email access, text messaging is an effective tool.

Media Campaign Implementation

A comprehensive ethnic media campaign was implemented from July 2013 through June 2014, with a special focus on the October 26 and April 26 Citizenship Days, and Financial Resource Day on March 22. OneAmerica partnered with the City of Seattle's Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs to gain access to additional ethnic media partners. In FY 2014, the WNAP distributed press releases and multilingual materials to 1,492 contacts at 32 outlets in ethnic and mainstream media.

OneAmerica continued to reach out to local, statewide, and national media outlets to secure earned media coverage of WNAP, including pre- and post- event coverage. WNAP employs press releases, direct follow-up, and media kits to ensure that appropriate news outlets are aware of program activities. Press releases and media kits were distributed to media across the state in the lead up to Citizenship Day and roving attorney clinic events. These efforts resulted in free earned media stories about the WNAP during FY 2014, including articles and television news stories in the Walla Walla Union Bulletin, the Yakima Herald, and KNDU TV in the Tri-Cities.

In addition to earned media with mainstream outlets, OneAmerica secured interactive earned media coverage through WNAP program staff and volunteers participating in popular call-in shows in Spanish, and by connecting naturalized former clients with reporters to discuss the impact that citizenship has had on their lives. A new attorney partner this year connected the program to a Chinese language radio station that was able to announce the October event on-air.

WNAP purchased eight print advertisements and four web-based print advertisements in six local ethnic newspapers. WNAP was also able to obtain free advertising through calendar announcements and free ads placed by supportive publications.

WNAP focused the bulk of its efforts on radio as well as Univision, the two outlets that have been found to be most effective based on client exit surveys. In FY 2014, 513 radio ads and 162 television advertisements were purchased.

Printed materials such as multilingual flyers and posters have played an increasingly important role in the program's outreach. This year 14.8 percent of Citizenship Day clients reported hearing about the event through flyers or posters, second only to word of mouth in terms of effectiveness. A total of 30,595 multilingual print materials were distributed over the course of FY 2014, in nine different languages.

The WNAP's postcard campaign was updated and distributed in seven languages. The postcards contained information on the services offered through WNAP, including the website and hotline number. In FY 2015, WNAP plans to include printed materials in additional languages, possibly including Arabic, Farsi, Tagalog, and Burmese.

These materials were heavily distributed in the target communities through WNAP subcontractors, community partner organizations, volunteers, community events, local businesses, and OneAmerica staff. Engaging new partners in the public and private sectors has been important in terms of material distribution, such as having school districts send flyers home with children in English as a Second Language programs. Whenever possible, staff or volunteers attended community resource fairs and other events to engage potential applicants and distribute materials.

Populations Served

Client intake forms completed at Citizenship Day events and subcontractor locations provided demographic information on program participants.

A total of 3,740 immigrants received services through WNAP in FY 2014. As in past years, more women (56.3 percent) were served by WNAP than men (43.7 percent). At least 67.5 percent of clients from Citizenship Day events and 88 percent of clients served by subcontractors were at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. WNAP referred 384 eligible clients receiving public benefits for services to the Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance at the Washington Department of Social and Health Services.

The average income for clients who completed intake forms was \$20,732.35, in line with the average income the previous year, and the average household size was three. The largest household served had 13 members and an income well below 100 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. These income data illustrate the importance of offering fee-waiver assistance to help lower-income applicants access citizenship and benefit from the program.

Table 2: Percent of Clients by Age

Percent of Program Population	Age Range of Program Participant
49.1	30-49 years old
22.1	50-64 years old
16.8	18-29 years old
12.0	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 old. The largest age group of WNAP clients were 30-49 years old (49.1 percent). Immigrants may become eligible for citizenship within three to five years of holding legal permanent resident status. Over half of the program clients (56.3 percent) had been in the U.S. for less than nine years. One legal permanent resident had been in the country for 58 years.

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

Percent of Program Population	Time as a Legal Permanent Resident
56.3	0-9 years
24.6	10- 19 years
19.1	20 years or more

Source: OneAmerica's New Americans Program Annual Report

Participants included immigrants from 79 countries. The top five countries of origin were Mexico (33 percent), China (15.2 percent), Ukraine (6.5 percent), Vietnam (6.5 percent), and Russia (5.2 percent). The top five language backgrounds represented were 37.5 percent citing Spanish as their primary language, 14.4 percent Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, or unspecified dialect), 13.7 percent Russian, 5.8 percent Vietnamese, and 5.7 percent English.