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Washington New Americans Program

Report on Performance and Outcomes (ESHB 2687, Laws of 2008)

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Report to the Legislature
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OVERVIEW

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 (Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2687, Laws of 2008). The legislative authority requires annual reporting for this program's outcomes and performance measures. This report provides an overview of the development of the program, its performance measures, and program outcomes to date.

The Legislature required The Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) to contract with an organization to provide services to state residents qualified to become naturalized citizens. The Legislature appropriated \$344,000 of state general funds to initiate the program. The contractor was required to provide at least a 25 percent match of non-state funding.

All of the service delivery goals developed between Commerce and the New Americans Program contractor were met during the program's first year.

What is Naturalization?

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

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

OneAmerica: The New Americans Contractor

Commerce contracted with OneAmerica in 2008 to provide New Americans Program direct services in the Seattle area and coordinate subcontracts across the state. OneAmerica's qualifications included experience providing immigration related services to immigrant communities. OneAmerica was already part of a network of organizations that was engaged in providing citizenship workshops for legal permanent residents.

OneAmerica subcontracted with ten partner agencies to provide New Americans services throughout the state. Subcontractors provide services that include citizenship orientation and preparation workshops, staffing and volunteer coordination at events, distribution of

multilingual materials, collection of program data, and assistance with naturalization applications.

OneAmerica was required to design and implement a media campaign to make qualified residents aware of the New Americans Program. OneAmerica designed and launched a multilingual media campaign that includes public service announcements and print, radio, and television advertisements. OneAmerica also developed and is responsible for maintaining a multilingual website (wanewamericans.org) and toll-free citizenship hotline that connects immigrants interested in the program to local service providers.

A key milestone for New Americans participants is the completion and submission of the federal N-400 Application for Naturalization (N-400) to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. Once OneAmerica or their subcontractors determine that individuals meet the requirements to apply for U.S. citizenship, they assist individuals in completing their N-400 because it is a technical ten page form that includes seven pages of instructions. 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 New Americans program is focused 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.

OneAmerica also developed naturalization and democracy classes that include U.S. history, civics, and English classes that will assist applicants with their naturalization tests. Those classes meet Washington State English as a Second Language (ESL) standards set by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges.

Citizenship Day Events: Investing in Proven Methods

Citizenship Day events began prior to the New Americans program in 2004 as an annual event in Washington organized by the American Immigration Lawyers Association and partner organizations. The event proved to be an effective way to increase access to naturalization services for immigrants who are low income, or have limited or no access to immigration expertise because of their geographic location. The objective of Citizenship Day events is to use volunteer attorneys and paralegals at designated sites throughout Washington to assist legal permanent residents determine if they are eligible, assist with preparing naturalization applications, and provide those residents with resources to interview and test successfully.

OneAmerica and their subcontractors added resources to the proven Citizenship Day model. The New Americans Program provided resources for 12 Citizenship Day events at 11 sites across the state during the program's first year. Between January and June 2009 741 clients were assisted through Citizenship Day events.

OneAmerica is proud of the work that volunteers provide and the impact that volunteers have had on this program. Nearly all of the staffing of the Citizenship Day events are

volunteers, many are from the Washington Chapter of the American Immigrations Lawyers Association. OneAmerica’s community partners also recruited volunteers to interpret, make copies, help provide child care, and provide other administrative support. A total of 372 volunteers were involved, including 80 volunteer attorneys. A conservative estimate of the value of in-kind services provided by volunteer attorneys is \$84,000 according to OneAmerica’s 2008 New American’s Report.

OneAmerica connected applicants with volunteer immigration law experts so that N-400 forms were properly completed. In the first year of the program 730 legal permanent residents were assisted with completing the N400 applications exceeding OneAmerica’s contract goal of 600 completed applications.

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE AND OUTCOMES

Commerce worked with OneAmerica to meet the Legislature’s requirement to develop performance measures. During the first program year OneAmerica met or exceeded all of the measures developed for the first year of the New Americans Program.

New Americans Program First Year Goals and Results

| Goal | Target | Outcome |
|---|---|---|
| Alert qualified legal permanent residents of New Americans program | Design and launch a media campaign | New Americans campaign launched statewide |
| Distribute media materials to multiple ethnic media outlets | Distribute information to 30 organizations | Materials distributed to 80 organizations |
| Use multilingual marketing materials to make legal permanent residents aware of program | Develop and distribute 30,000 Materials | 41,200 materials developed and distributed |
| Provide a naturalization curriculum for citizens | Develop and deploy a curriculum during the program’s first year | Curriculum developed, distributed and is in use with subcontractors |
| Use Citizenship Day events to assist legal permanent residents with naturalization | Host 3 Citizenship Day events | 12 Citizenship Day events were held in 11 locations statewide |
| Help legal permanent residents make progress toward naturalization | Assist 1,000 individuals | 1,647 individuals assisted |
| Assist qualified residents submit applications for citizenship | Assist with the completion of 600 N-400 federal naturalization applications | 730 N-400 applications completed |
| Report to Commerce on program progress | Submit an annual report by August 30, 2009 | Report submitted and available at the Commerce Website |

Source: OneAmerica New Americans Program Annual Report

Reaching the target audience: New Americans media campaign

In order to provide assistance to Washington's legal permanent resident population eligible for New Americans, the contractor had to inform the population of the program. A New Americans marketing campaign was developed and implemented and a phone number, website, and list of events were created to receive customers.

The New Americans campaign included a logo, tagline, and website. The website (wanewamericans.org) was created to serve as a resource for those seeking information about citizenship. It provides information about the benefits of becoming a U.S. citizen, the naturalization process and requirements, answers to frequently asked questions, and all Citizenship Day events, orientation workshops and preparation workshops is available in six languages. Additionally, visitors to the website can sign up to receive more information on becoming a citizen, and if they are interested, in volunteering. The website generated 241,000 hits in its first year.

OneAmerica also developed a toll-free number that provides service in 20 languages. The contractor, subcontractors, and volunteers provided most services in Spanish, English, and Vietnamese.

The New Americans Program helped fund 700 radio advertisements in English, Spanish and Korean and television commercials. OneAmerica found that radio is a very effective vehicle to reach immigrant communities. Next year they plan to increase the program's presence on the radio.

Television buys were focused primarily on Spanish speaking communities. OneAmerica bought 160 television spots in Spanish on Univision in Seattle and Yakima. The radio and television campaign reached approximately three million households in Seattle, 260,000 households in Yakima and 225,000 households in the Tri Cities.

In addition to media buys, OneAmerica's communications team, which includes subcontractors and other stakeholders, contributed to 21 articles, radio and television interviews, and other features that publicized the program. High turnout at events, website visits, and phone calls indicate that the media campaign was a success in its first year. OneAmerica plans to make small adjustments to improve their marketing results next year.

Populations Served

The breadth and scope of the program's reach is reflected in the diversity of the clients served. Demographic information was gathered through client intake forms that were completed by clients at Citizenship Days and at subcontractor locations. A total of 1,337 intakes were completed.

Gender was split nearly evenly, 51 percent of clients completing intakes were female 49 percent male.

The median income for clients who completed intakes was \$30,000 and the average income was \$36,146. At least 117 clients (15.5 percent) attending Citizenship Day events appeared eligible for DSHS services as their income fell below 100 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. New Americans contractors referred 162 clients to the Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (DSHS) because they may have been eligible for their services.

Percent of Clients by Age

| Percent of program population | Age range of program participant |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 23.8 percent | 30-39 years old |
| 23.1 | 40-49 years old |
| 22.1 | 50-64 years old |
| 18.7 | 18-29 years old |
| 12.3 | 65 years old and older |

Source: OneAmerica New Americans Program Annual Report

Ages of program participants ranged between 18 and 91 years. Most New Americans clients were 30-49 years old (46.9 percent).

Legal permanent residents may become eligible for naturalization within three years of being in the country. Most program clients (52 percent) had been in the U.S. for less than ten years. One legal permanent resident had been in the United States for 50 years.

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

| Percent of program population | Time as a legal permanent U.S. resident |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 52 percent | 0-10 years |
| 34 | 10-20 years |
| 14 | 20 years or more |

Source: OneAmerica New Americans Program Annual Report

Participants included immigrants from 84 countries. Most clients were from Mexico (41 percent), 9.7 percent from Korea, 2.4 percent from Moldova, 2 percent from Ethiopia, 1.9 percent from Canada, 1.8 percent from Cambodia, 1.5 percent from American Samoa, 1.4 percent from El Salvador.

More than 50 languages were spoken by people receiving New Americans services. Interpretation services were requested by 28 percent of those completing intakes. The most common languages spoken are Spanish (47 percent of clients), Russian (12 percent), and Korean (10 percent).

CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

OneAmerica successfully teamed with media and immigrant organizations to combine resources and expertise in order to increase this program's impact. For example, Northwest Immigrant Rights Project provided assistance to clients who had technical legal questions that were asked in the federal N-400 Application for Naturalization.

- Nearly 400 volunteers provided in-kind legal, interpretation, and other services
- 1,650 immigrants in Washington state received services through this program
- 41,200 multilingual brochures and other print materials were distributed
- 241,000 hits on the New Americans Website
- 730 N-400 applications for naturalization were completed

Surveys conducted at Citizenship Days indicate that the three most significant barriers to naturalization are lack of information about naturalization, the cost of private counsel, and the \$675 filing fee that the N-400 requires. OneAmerica will work to address barriers identified in surveys by seeking a greater degree of case management, work to find solutions to the filing fee barrier, and expand the marketing campaign.

A review of performance measures set for the first phase of the New Americans Program indicates that OneAmerica exceeded contract goals for the first year of the program. The demand for the services that the New Americans Program experienced in its first year exceeded the capacity of the program. OneAmerica has developed a network of community partners made of immigration experts and ethnic media resources to assist the program in its second year.