



21st Anniversary
Citizenship Day
9.17.26



AILA CITIZENSHIP DAY - BEST PRACTICES IN PLANNING AN EFFICIENT CITIZENSHIP DAY EVENT

Panelists:

- Caroline van der Harten, AILA National Pro Bono Committee Chair, Oregon Chapter
- Tamara Bloom, Managing Attorney, Community Events, CUNY Citizenship Now!, NY Chapter

AILA Citizenship Day
Training Series



Choosing the Right Event Model

- Design events around your chapter's capacity
- Appointments, walk-ins, or a hybrid
- Complexity of Cases
- Partner roles and decision-making structure

Event Planning: Format & Technology

- In-person vs. virtual events
- Handwritten forms vs. PDFs or case-management tools
- Weigh tech needs and limitations
- G-28 representation vs. pro se assistance
- Complete the preparer section correctly



Event Planning: Partnerships

- Partner with non-profits, CBOs, local government and pro bono firms
- Define each partner's role and responsibilities & agree on best practices to be used
- Build partnerships early in the planning cycle



Outreach: Applicants & Volunteers

- **Outreach Strategy**

- Applicants
- Volunteer Recruitment

- **Applicant / Volunteer Recruitment**

Ratios:

- Manage expectations on the # of volunteers and applicants to be assisted



Best Practices: Working With Volunteers

- **Volunteer Roles based on immigration experience and special skills**
- **Required Volunteer Training**
- **Required Volunteer Agreement (confidentiality, privacy, no UPL, etc.)**
- **Malpractice Insurance: considerations and expectations**
- **Volunteer Appreciation**



Event Planning: Designing an Efficient Applicant System (Pre, During and Post-Event)

- **Prioritize Applicant Preparedness (Documents and Info Needed Checklists)**
- **Cap Applicants based on capacity / complexity/ availability of volunteers**
- **Timing: Consider volunteer lunch/breaks, expected time at event, waitlist if overflow?**
- **Importance of best practices, quality control, Supervision & managing expectations (Decide early!)**
- **Clear take-home instructions for Applicants**



Event Planning: Intake & Applicant Preparation

- **Best Practices: Appointment Pre-Screening to Applicant Readiness (documents/info 'required' to be assisted or follow-up)**
- **Intake must match the chosen event model & goal (consults vs completed applications? Complexity of cases vs 'clean' cases?)**
- **Appointments only? Walk-Ins? Hybrid?**
- **Extras: Copies of LPR card? Documents to include with mailing? Completed package?**
- **Communicate the model and expectations clearly to Applicants (overall time, what to bring, what to expect, etc.)**



Event Flow: Traditional Stations & Capacity for Additional Assistance

- Sign-In (copy LPR card) > Screening > N-400 > Fee Waiver > Final Review/Checkout (>Packaging)
- Capacity for Additional Assistance
 - FOIAs, I-90s, On-site benefits letters with local DSS
- 'Special Review' Station: Complex crime, immigration, taxes, N-648s?
- Balanced to ensure enough supervision, expertise, efficiency



Volunteer Utilization

- **Recap > Required: Registration & Volunteer Training & Signed Volunteer Agreement**
- **Legal and Logistical: Pre-Designate Legal Supervision / Event Management**
 - **1 Dedicated Legal Services Supervisor: Decider on legal issues, legal, procedural, best practice decisions**
 - **1 Designated Event Manager (Non-Legal): Space issues, manage bottlenecks, move furniture, overall event flow and logistics**
- **Language Needs**
- **Ratio of Station Supervisors to Volunteers and Legal Supervision**
- **NON-Legal Logistical Support: Copies, ushers, dedicated interpreters, waiting areas, runners**
- **Optimizing Expertise or Special Skills without overwhelm or flooding**
 - **Consider the level of nuance and experience needed to review collateral issues and documents (Complex crim/immig, taxes, Public benefits fraud, underlying LPR issues)**
- **Complete accurate case notes or other administrative tasks**

Best Practices: Considerations

Scope of Services & Triage

- Limited Scope: pro se (no representation); N-400 completed vs. screening only; referrals
- Triage: Representation needed vs. Strong pro se candidate — not one size fits all

Eligibility & Preparedness

- English Requirement — if no and no exception applies, move forward?
- Baseline docs to assist / release form (80–90% complete): LPR card, passports, certified dispositions, taxes, addresses, employment, trips
- N-648? 3-year rule?; Refer out if criminal or complex immigration history → Special Review Station? Supervisor Review?

Consistent, Accurate, Legible, N-400 (and I-912) Form

- Resources and checklists available? Annotated form, System for completing nuanced crim/immig questions

Stop & Refer Triggers

- How to handle NOT eligible due to serious red flag vs just missing documentation

Last Minute Updates & Referral Resources

Communicating Deadlines or Last-Minute Legal Updates

- Applicants: Orange Warning Sheet (e.g., Deadlines re. exam, fees, form version changing)
- Volunteers: 'Legal Updates' Supplement in addition to training or materials already provided

Referral Resources

- General or Directed — Warm Referrals?
- Free or low cost: www.immigrationlawhelp.org
- Private: AILA Lawyer Search, Bar Associations

Final Takeaways and Planning Checklist

- **Timeline**
- **Best Practices**
- **Planning Checklists**

Thank You

- Thank you to our panelists and attendees
- Upcoming Citizenship Day trainings
- Where to find materials and recordings

