# IMPACT REPORT

I feel like I have a voice now...I can vote, I'm able to travel and I can work in government jobs. I feel good! -Am Ngeth, immigrated from Cambodia





Our Nation is enriched socially and economically by the presence of immigrants, and we celebrate with them as they take the important step of becoming United States citizens.

Biden-Harris Administration, Executive Order on Restoring Faith in Our Legal Immigration Systems and Strengthening Integration and Inclusion Efforts for New Americans (2/2/2021)

On February 2, 2021 the Biden-Harris administration issued an Executive Order supporting increasing access to citizenship. The new administration gave us a renewed sense of hope for our immigrant community, giving us momentum throughout the year.

We are excited to share the story of the Project Citizenship community in 2021 and show you all the elements that contribute to us achieving our mission to increase the naturalization rate.

# DEAR PROJECT CITIZENSHIP COMMUNITY,

We started 2021 full of hope as we welcomed a new administration and saw the promise of vaccines on the horizon. But the year brought more challenges than we expected in the form of new Covid-19 variants, political instability, climate change, and rising inequality. Though the ground beneath us sometimes felt shaky, we at Project Citizenship stood firm and are proud to report the significant impact we had this past year.

Our success was made possible thanks to our expert and dedicated staff, an involved Board, loyal volunteers, and generous donors, and we are grateful to all of them for making 2021 a success for Project Citizenship and the community we serve.

As we faced another year of pandemic restrictions, we continued to embrace technology and improve our virtual model, offering a full calendar of Zoom citizenship workshop during 2021. In this way, we continued to broaden our reach to clients who, even before the pandemic, would not have been able to attend an inperson clinic. Even as the pandemic recedes and someday disappears, we will continue to offer virtual clinics as a complement to our in-person clinics, so that we can help as many clients as possible in the way that works best for them. Amidst the tumult of 2021, we also took time to develop our three-year strategic plan and are proud to share some highlights with you on pages 4 and 5.

As you review this report, we hope that you share our energy and commitment to supporting immigrants. Our work, after all, lies at the intersection of social justice, democracy building, and economic development. We encourage you to join us in our effort to increase the naturalization rate in Massachusetts and beyond.

Sincerely,

Dr. Mitra Shavarini Executive Director



Sendahane

Brenda Diana, Esq. Board Chair



# **OUR MISSION**

Project Citizenship seeks to increase the naturalization rate in New England, with a focus on the most vulnerable and disadvantaged populations.

# **OUR VISION**

To be New England's leading organization that helps green card holders to become U.S. citizens and to develop an efficient model that can be replicated and scaled throughout the country.



Project Citizenship is a nonprofit that provides free, high quality legal services to permanent residents to help them become U.S citizens. Project Citizenship offers free workshops, eligibility screening, application assistance, legal referrals and all materials needed to apply for U.S. citizenship. In addition, Project Citizenship works collaboratively with community-based partners in Massachusetts to provide a range of support services, civics instruction, application assistance, and ESOL classes.

# **PROJECT CITIZENSHIP'S THEORY OF CHANGE**

HOPEFUL



## **IMMIGRANTS**

Assist eligible immigrants in solidifying their roots in the U.S. through citizenship



# PROJECT **FREE SERVICES**

### **SUPPORT FROM START TO FINISH**

Follow through from eligibility screening to naturalization ceremony



# LEGAL EXPERTISE

Specialize in higher-need cases such as fee waiver and disability exemptions

# **APPLICATION** ASSISTANCE

Volunteers and pro bono attorneys fill out and review citizenship applications

#### CITIZENSHIP **INFORMATION**

Present on citizenship eligibility and naturalization process, and answer questions for current and prospective clients

# UNITED FAMILIES

Bring and keep families together

### **STRENGTHENED** COMMUNITIES

Help those who wouldn't be able to naturalize on their own

# **EMPOWERED**

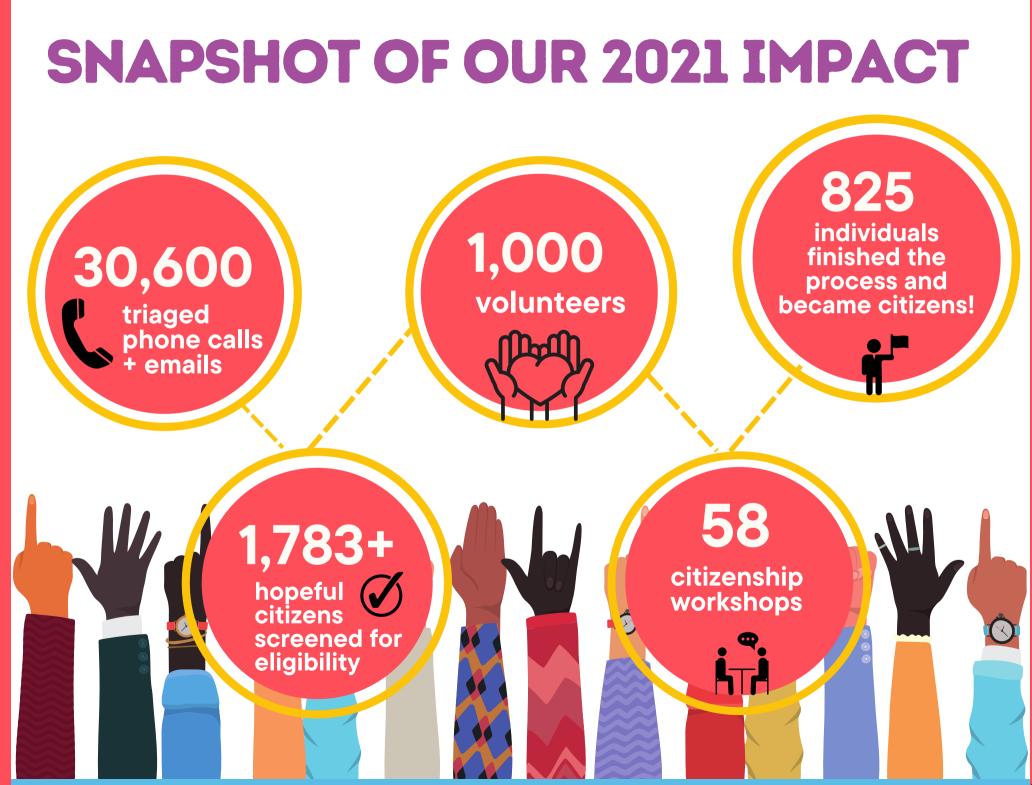


**INDIVIDUALS** The right to vote, travel, receive government benefits and feel

secure and accepted



**A UNITED COMMUNITY & STRENGTHENED** NATION



# HOPEFUL CITIZENS: WHO APPLIED IN 2021



**1,036** hopeful citizens submitted citizenship applications to USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) and received legal and support services in the process.

**95** countries

Out of the 93 countries, we had the most applicants from these **Top 10 Countries of Origin**: Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, El Salvador, Cambodia, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, China, Guatemala, and Colombia.

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# 741 individuals received financial support

There is a \$725 filing fee for a US citizenship application, which is a barrier for many of our clients. We increase access to citizenship by helping clients with fee waiver applications that allow them to apply at no cost.

# **59** approved to apply in their native language

English exceptions increase accessibility to citizenship. We supported 59 people apply in 19 different languages.

6 years old to 89 years old

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# INCREASING ACCESS TO CITIZENSHIP THROUGH DISABILITY WAIVERS

Many people who apply for citizenship have a disability that prevents them from meeting the requirements to learn English or pass the civics test. They can apply for a disability exemption waiver on a special form, known as N-648, to bypass these requirements. However, the form is complicated, and completing it correctly requires gathering proof from physicians, expert legal review, and many revisions. Then, once the N-648 has been completed and filed, volunteer attorneys are needed to represent these clients at their citizenship interviews. At Project Citizenship, we take pride in the extra time, effort, and expertise needed to support these challenging cases so that we can increase access to citizenship.

# **OUR 2021 SUPPORT:**

# **114** individuals

submitted an application with a disability exemption request.

# **95** new citizens

were successfully naturalized with a disability exemption.

# **15** oath waivers were approved

# **104** clients received pro bono legal representation at their interview

Receiving attorney representation at the interview increases an applicant's chances of being approved and that is especially true for clients with disability exemption applications.

# **5X** the amount of staff time

These 'N-648' applications require an estimated average of five-times as much staff time to complete due to their complexity and additional requirements.

**Oath waivers** require an **additional** exemption to the disability waiver. It is a hugely time intensive process, and without this extra step they would not receive citizenship.

# **CITIZENSHIP WORKSHOPS IN 2021**

We hosted 58 workshops in 2021 with a hybrid model of virtual and in-person services. The ongoing pandemic has forced our staff to rethink how we provide the highest-quality, most accessible legal services we can. We look forward to applying the lessons we have learned as we deploy our

hybrid citizenship workshop models in 2022!

# Our 2021 improvements included:

- Recording volunteer trainings reflecting our virtual model
- Recruiting volunteers across the country
- Developing client-centered materials to simplify signing finalized applications
- Increasing capacity to serve more applicants in Zoom
- Identifying tech improvements for 2022 to make virtual communications secure





On November 18, 2021, we held our first in-person workshop since the pandemic began. We served 24 applicants who were vaccinated and wearing masks. Most of our staff had never seen an in-person workshop before. Our November workshop reminded us of the joy and excitement of gathering together to accomplish a common goal. Extra special thank you to those who took the leap back to in-person with us!

# **ABOUT OUR VOLUNTEERS**

Our virtual workshops require **more volunteers** than in-person. We needed to **increase our volunteer base.** To do so, we engaged more than **10** new partners and our existing collaborators stepped up to help us meet this challenge. Our staff helped make each virtual workshop an accessible, efficient, and engaging experience for applicants and volunteers alike. Volunteers have always been the backbone of our work, and 2021 was no exception. Thank you to our fantastic volunteer partner organizations!

### Law Firms

Foley Hoag Fragomen Goodwin Procter Goulston & Storrs Latham & Watkins Morgan Lewis Nutter McClennen & Fish Ropes & Gray WilmerHale

### In-House Counsel

AbbVie AIG Apple Bank **Bain Capital** Bank of America Bloomberg **Brighthouse Financial** Citigroup **Fidelity Investments FMR LLC** IBM John Hancock MassMutual MFS Investment Management Putnam Investments TD Bank



# 73% WERE FIRST-TIME **VOLUNTEERS** SALUT! HOLA! HELLO! 12% **OF OUR VOLUNTEERS** WERE MULTILINGUAL 42% 🏮 **INCREASE IN**

VOLUNTEER NUMBERS TO MEET NEEDS

# Educational Institutions

Boston College Boston College Law School Boston University Boston University School of Law Brigham Young University Harvard Law School Harvard University Northeastern Law School Suffolk University Law School Tufts University

## Additional Collaborators

Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Boston Consulting Group Boston Scientific Cambridge Trust Company Citizens Bank Eastern Bank Eversource Fresenius HarborOne Bank Liberty Mutual Projector PSA Sun Life Financial Vertex Pharmaceuticals

# SUCCESSES FROM OUR LEGAL TEAM

Our legal team is critical to realizing our mission. In addition to overseeing the legal aspects of the citizenship application process, our legal team also submits legal comments on issues of national importance related to the naturalization process, provides trainings and presentations to community partners, receives legal referrals from community partners, and provides advice on cases with community partners.

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Delivered **16 trainings & presentations** to different providers reaching over **215 individuals** 

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Fielded legal referrals and provided advice on complicated cases with **14 different legal** organizations





- With the help of **Goulston & Storrs**, submitted comments **identifying barriers** across USCIS benefits and services in May 2021.
- Submitted comments **suggesting improvements** to the Form N-648 for **medical disability exemptions** in June and November of 2021.



Submitted first Freedom of Information Act Request for advocacy purposes in December of 2021.

# **NEW PROGRAMS & COLLABORATORS**



In November of 2021, we began our new **Cooking** with Culture series, where we invite immigrant chefs to share their cuisine via a live cooking demonstration on Zoom. We hope you'll join us as we host more demonstrations in 2022!



We partnered with a class cohort at Emmanuel College to dive deeper into our clients' stories to better understand their experiences and our impact. The students who interviewed our clients spoke many different languages, and through this project we were able to learn a lot about our clients and their citizenship stories.



In 2021, we joined the New Americans Campaign (NAC), a national citizenship campaign, as an affiliate organization. The NAC reports yearly on the national impact of naturalization support organizations and includes our numbers in their national campaign to increase naturalization rates.

# **VOICES OF 2021**

# **Volunteers**



"I volunteer because it's good for everyone, and these immigrants deserve their chance at the American Dream like everyone else. "

# DAVID

# JOSEPH

"I am a law student and first started volunteering at Project Citizenship when it was doing inperson workshops...This cause is important to me because my dad became a U.S. Citizen after immigrating from Chile. It's great to see the results and help the immigrant community."

# SHOGING

"I helped my parents fill out their citizenship application when I was a teenager. I come from a family of immigrants so the work that Project Citizenship does is important to me."

"I've always been passionate about immigration reform, and I'm in law school to become an immigration lawyer. I understand the importance of Project Citizenship's work because my family comes from immigrants who have been through the same thing."









# **Hopeful Citizens**

"It was hard when I first came here from the Dominican Republic. I had no idea that I was pregnant. I worked hard, and when I had my daughter, I got an apartment, because I wanted that for my baby. I want to stay, this has been home for years, and I'm just glad to be here."

# NATALIE

"I moved from Haiti with my family, and I want to be a citizen so I can serve my county. Doing the process inperson is helpful because I can see the process with the application."

# **ALICIA**

"I am from China, though I have many relatives who live here. I hope to become [an] American so I can stay here forever. I am grateful for the help, and hopeful too. Now is a good time for me to become a citizen."

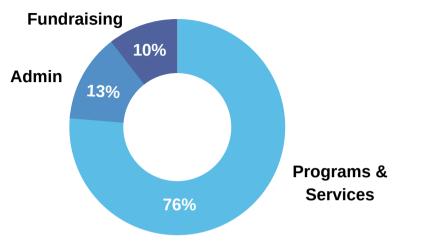
"I decided to become a citizen for the right to vote. I moved from Colombia to New York to do my PHD at Columbia University. I've been here ever since, and I think the process (of naturalization) is going well."





# **OUR FINANCIAL SUMMARY 2021**

# **2021 EXPENSES**



# Corporate Board & 13% Corporate 14% 8% 26% 39% Foundations

\$1,378,585

\$775,703

# Donor stories

SECURE THE FUTURE OF OUR COUNTRY BY HELPING SOMEONE ELIGIBLE OVERCOME THE HURDLE-FILLED PROCESS OF CITIZENSHIP - IT'S THE PATRIOTIC THING TO

ANNE POULIN DONOR to Project Citizenship\* Photo used not donor



**PROJECT CITIZENSHIP HAS A VERY GOOD RECORD OF HELPING THOSE THINKING OF APPLYING FOR CITIZENSHIP ACHIEVE IT. THEY PROVIDE SPECIFIC HELP AND FOLLOW UP.** 

THEY ARE SUCCESSFUL IN HELPING THOSE WHO WANT TO BECOME CITIZENS DO SO.

MARYA LEVENSON Professor at Brandeis University DONOR to Project Citizenship

\*Other = Lease

**Foraiveness** 

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# ADVISORY -BOARD

We are incredibly grateful for the thoughtful and invaluable support, donations, oversight, and advice that our Board of Directors and Advisory Board members provided in 2021. Thank you all, we could not do this without your dedication and support of our programs and services.

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# ADDITIONAL CITIZENSHIP COLLABORATORS



There are many organizations that help us accomplish our mission. The organizations listed below help us provide more services, decrease costs, plan new events, collect stories, and share resources. We are so grateful for our collaborators who help us advance our mission.

Emmanuel College - Storytelling & recording Boston Bullpen Project - Financial support for applications for those who don't qualify for fee waiver Commonwealth Kitchen - Cooking with culture events Baramor - Fundraiser at immigrant-owned restaurant Quincy Asian Resources, Inc. (QARI) - Sub-grantee partner for citizenship and English classes

### Worked with Community Legal Organizations:

Committee for Public Counsel Services ABCD The Right to Immigration Institute Northeast Justice Center Boston University School of Law Immigrants' Rights and Human Trafficking Program The Second Step Massachusetts Alliance of Portuguese Speakers Justice Center of Southeastern Massachusetts Catholic Charities Central West Justice Center MIRA Coalition PAIR Project Greater Boston Legal Services Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association **Provided Trainings & Presentations to:** Lawrence General Hospital Community Medical Associates Greater Lowell Health Alliance Health Equity Task Force Lynn Community Health Center Greater Lowell Health Alliance Boston University School of Law **Boston Bar Association** Bloomberg De Novo Morgan Lewis **Boston Scientific** Nutter Boston University School of Law **Episcopal Migration Ministries** Suffolk University School of Law Boston Bar Association Eversource

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#### \$164,000+

Fish Family Foundation

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#### \$10,000-\$29,999

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### **Government Support**

#### \$22,000-\$200,000+

Massachusetts Office of Refugees and Immigrants City of Boston U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services

### **Individual Donors**

\$25,000+

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A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE FISH FAMILY FOUNDATION FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF OUR MISSION

# TO EVERYONE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO OUR SUCCESS IN 2021! WANT TO GET INVOLVED?

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www.projectcitizenship.org

Check out our website to learn about ways you can help us achieve our mission to increase the naturalization rate!

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