U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

FY 2016 Citizenship and Integration Grant Program: Citizenship Instruction
Funding Opportunity DHS-16-CIS-010-001
Questions and Answers

Last updated: 3/23/2016

Categories:

About the Grant Program

Q1. **What is the purpose of the FY 2016 Citizenship and Integration Grant Program: Citizenship Instruction funding opportunity?**
A1. The purpose of this funding opportunity is to support the efforts of community-based organizations to establish new citizenship instruction programs or expand the quality and reach of existing citizenship instruction programs.

Q2. **Where can I send questions?**
A2. You may send questions about the grant program to citizenshipgrantprogram@uscis.dhs.gov. For questions about Grants.gov, you may email support@grants.gov or call 1-800-518-4726. The Grants.gov Contact Center is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Q3. **Is there a list of current USCIS grant recipients available?**
A3. Yes. You can find a list of current and previous grant recipients on the Citizenship Resource Center Web page.

Back to the top

FY 2016 Citizenship and Integration Grant Program: Citizenship Instruction
Funding Opportunity DHS-16-CIS-010-001
Questions and Answers

<u>**Eligibility**</u>

<u>General Eligibility</u>

Q1.   **Does my organization need to demonstrate 501(c)(3) status or is it acceptable to simply be a nonprofit organization?**
A1.   Under this funding opportunity, your organization must be a nonprofit with 501(c)(3) status, other than institutions of higher education. Your organization must be local in scope and service delivery area.

Q2.   **My organization has a pending application for 501(c)(3) status. May I apply for this funding opportunity?**
A2.   If your organization does not currently have 501(c)(3) status you may not apply.

Q3.   **My organization is an awardee or sub-awardee under the FY 2014 Citizenship and Integration Grant Program. May I apply for this funding opportunity?**
A3.   No. Current and former awardees and sub-awardees under the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program and the Citizenship Grant Program are not eligible to receive funding.

Q4.   **My organization is an awardee or sub-awardee under the FY 2015 Citizenship and Integration Grant Program. May I apply for this funding opportunity?**
A4.   No. Current and former awardees and sub-awardees under the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program and the Citizenship Grant Program are not eligible to receive funding.

Q5.   **May a state agency apply as the primary applicant?**
A5.   No. Only non-profit organizations that have 501(c)(3) status may apply to this funding opportunity.

Q6.   **I am an individual providing citizenship services to immigrants. May I apply for this funding opportunity?**
A6.   No. Only organizations are eligible to apply under this funding opportunity.

Q7.   **Are for-profit entities eligible to apply?**
A7.   No. Your organization must have 501(c)(3) status at the time of application.

Q8.   **We provide citizenship instruction and have our own assessment process, but we do not yet use a nationally normed standardized test. Are we still eligible for this grant?**
A8.   Yes. You do not need to have past experience using a nationally normed standardized test. You must currently offer and have at least one year experience providing English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in a classroom setting that follows a curriculum. However, your program design for this grant program must indicate that you will use a nationally normed standardized test of English proficiency for student placement and assessment.

FY 2016 Citizenship and Integration Grant Program: Citizenship Instruction
Funding Opportunity DHS-16-CIS-010-001
Questions and Answers

Organizations with Multiple Offices

Q9. **We are a college with multiple locations, and we have the same federal ID number. Will you accept more than one application from us using the same federal ID number?**

A9. Under this funding opportunity, your organization must be a nonprofit with 501(c)(3) status, other than institutions of higher education. As a college, your organization would be considered an institution of higher education, and therefore ineligible for this funding opportunity.

BIA Accreditation and Recognition

Q10. **Is my organization (and any sub-awardees) required to be recognized by the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA)?**

A10. Under this funding opportunity, you are not required to be BIA-recognized or to have BIA-accredited staff. At the time of application, under grant funding opportunity DHS-16-CIS-010-001, we will consider applications that include the cost of BIA training for staff with the ultimate objective of obtaining BIA accreditation.

[Back to the top](#)

Grant-Funded Activities

Q1. **Are the awards a one-time opportunity, or will there be a chance for grant recipients to renew the funding?**

A1. The performance period is two years. There is no option to renew funding after two years.

Citizenship Instruction

Q2. **The [notice of funding opportunity](#) states that organizations must provide services to lawful permanent residents only. If my organization also serves other immigrants, should my organization place lawful permanent residents in a class by themselves?**

A2. Organizations must adequately demonstrate that only lawful permanent residents will receive services funded by this grant.

Q3. **Can my organization provide general ESL classes or Adult Basic Education under this funding opportunity?**

A3. No. This grant funds citizenship instruction to prepare lawful permanent residents for naturalization. You must demonstrate that your organization will offer integrated citizenship instruction that prepares lawful permanent residents for the naturalization test and interview that includes:
- o Instruction in U.S. history and government;
- o ESL instruction in reading, writing, and speaking; and
- o Instruction on the naturalization process and eligibility interview.

Q4. **We currently offer ESL classes, and many of our citizenship students participate in those same classes. Our ESL classes are funded through other grants. Will that arrangement allow us to provide services to individuals who are not lawful permanent residents?**

A4. You must ensure that grant-funded citizenship preparation services are provided to **only** lawful permanent residents. This requirement does not affect other programs that are funded by other sources.

Q5. **There is a requirement that students must be assessed using a nationally normed standardized assessment test. What does this mean?**

A5. In the context of citizenship education, this refers to specific tests used to determine a student's English language proficiency. A list of standardized tests that the Department of Education has determined to be suitable is available in the Federal Register and on page 12 of the notice of funding opportunity.

Q6. **Are all students and clients required to take the nationally normed standardized test regardless of their English proficiency level?**

A6. All students enrolled in citizenship instruction classes under this grant program must take the standardized test.

Q7. **How should I balance USCIS's minimum instructional hour requirements with the instructional hours required by the vendors of nationally normed standardized tests?**

A7. The minimum instructional hour requirements for this grant program are listed in the notice of funding opportunity (see page 3). You may offer more instructional hours than the minimum requirement. A greater number of instructional hours may correspond better with test vendor requirements. However, you still must use a nationally normed standardized test of English proficiency for the citizenship instruction program, even if you offer a class with fewer instructional hours than the test vendor recommends.

Q8. **Is my organization required to use paid instructors to teach citizenship classes?**

A8. Yes, you are required to use at least one paid instructor. It is envisioned the majority of grant funds will be dedicated to paying the salary of a qualified instructor or instructors. Paid citizenship instructors must have at least one year of experience teaching ESL or citizenship to adults and:
- Hold a degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL); and/or
- Hold TESOL certification from a state licensing agency; and/or
- Provide substantial documentation of experience in TESOL instruction in a classroom setting for a program that has a structured curriculum.

Using volunteers can enhance a program's service offerings, but volunteers must have adequate training and support. If you propose to use volunteers to teach citizenship instruction, you must demonstrate that the program has a comprehensive volunteer-training program and sufficient program oversight by a paid lead teacher who is qualified to manage and oversee an education program. A paid lead teacher must supervise the volunteers.

Q9. **Are all citizenship teachers required to have one year of teaching experience?**
A9. All citizenship teachers that will lead classroom instruction under this grant must have at least one year of experience teaching ESL or citizenship to adults and:
- Hold a degree in TESOL; and/or
- Hold TESOL certification from a state licensing agency; and/or
- Provide substantial documentation of experience in TESOL instruction in a classroom setting for a program that has a structured curriculum.

Q10. **May I propose to use volunteers as citizenship teachers?**
A10. Yes. However, all paid and unpaid teachers that will lead classroom instruction under this grant program must have at least one year of experience teaching ESL or citizenship to adults and:
- Hold a degree in TESOL; and/or
- Hold TESOL certification from a state licensing agency; and/or
- Provide substantial documentation of experience in TESOL instruction in a classroom setting for a program that has a structured curriculum.

Also, a paid lead teacher or a paid education program coordinator must supervise volunteer teachers. If volunteers do not have requisite experience, we encourage you to use these volunteers to provide tutoring or to assist teachers in the classroom.

Q11. **Are we required to provide an equal number of hours of citizenship instruction for every week of the cycle?**
A11. No. You are not required to provide an equal number of hours of citizenship instruction for every week of the class cycle. However, most successful applicants have a fixed schedule that does not vary from week to week. If you propose to provide a varying number of hours per week, please note this in the class cycle table in the project abstract, and explain the schedule in the project narrative.

Q12. **Is my organization required to offer more than one level of citizenship instruction?**
A12. No. However, we have observed that successful citizenship instruction programs offer more than one class level to meet the different instructional needs of students. Applicants offering a multi-level class should explain how the different levels will be managed in the classroom. Most successful applicants offer leveled instruction.

Q13. **May my organization offer only one level of instruction under this grant program and refer students to other providers for all other levels?**
A13. Yes, as long as you meet the minimum 125 total newly enrolled students over the course of the grant period.

Q14. **Can we count tutoring hours towards the number of instructional hours that we are required provide for each class?**
A14. No. Only classroom instructional hours can be counted towards the requirement.

Q15. **Can students receiving tutoring be counted towards the enrollment goal?**
A15. No. Only students enrolled in classroom instruction can be counted towards the requirement. Tutoring can be used to supplement classroom instruction.

FY 2016 Citizenship and Integration Grant Program: Citizenship Instruction
Funding Opportunity DHS-16-CIS-010-001
Questions and Answers

Enrollment Requirements

Q16. **Can my organization provide grant-funded services to individuals with any legal immigration status?**

A16. No. Individuals receiving services under this grant program must be lawful permanent residents. You must demonstrate how you will verify and document that only lawful permanent residents will receive grant-funded services.

Q17. **Do individuals who received Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) qualify for services under this grant program?**

A17. No. You may serve only lawful permanent residents with this grant funding.

Q18. **Can organizations limit services based on national origin, ethnicity, religion, or language?**

A18. No. You must serve eligible participants regardless of their ethnic or religious backgrounds, national origin, or the language they speak.

Q19. **A lot of the individuals we serve are exempt from the English language requirement. Can we still serve them with this grant funding?**

A19. Applicants may propose to serve students who are exempt from the English language requirement. However, the majority of the citizenship instruction provided through this grant should include both an English component and a civics (U.S. history and government) component. Enrollment for students in classes not conducted in English will not count towards enrollment goals.

Q20. **Does USCIS require applicants to screen for income eligibility?**

A20. No. There are no income eligibility requirements under this funding opportunity.

Q21. **Does USCIS plan to collect client names and personal data?**

A21. We will not collect client names in quarterly reports. However, we may collect alien registration numbers for all lawful permanent residents receiving services with this grant funding. We may use these numbers to track naturalization outcomes during and after the period of performance (see page 28 of the notice of funding opportunity).

Q22. **My organization uses an open enrollment system for classes. Is that allowed under this program?**

A22. No. You must have managed enrollment under this grant program and must provide citizenship instruction over an 8 to 15 week class cycle. A class cycle is defined as a period of time with beginning and end dates during which class meetings are held on a frequent basis.

Q23. **How many lawful permanent residents must my organization serve with the funds and time allotted?**

A23. Over the two-year period of performance, you must provide citizenship instruction to at least 125 lawful permanent residents. If you propose to serve significantly more than the minimum number required, you should rely on your experience to set goals that are realistic and demonstrate a reasonable plan to achieve these goals.

Q24. **For the program goals on page 14 of the notice of funding opportunity, who can we count towards the number of lawful permanent residents that enroll in citizenship education classes (goal 1)?**

A24. You can count all individuals receiving grant-funded services (citizenship instruction conducted in English) toward the goals for the number of permanent residents who enroll in citizenship classes.

Q25. **We are a smaller organization and would like to apply for less than the maximum award amount. If we apply for half of the maximum award amount, are we still required to meet the outcomes of 125 students enrolled and post-tested?**

A25. Yes. You may request less than the maximum award amount of $100,000. However, all applicants must enroll 125 lawful permanent residents in citizenship classes and show 80% of post-tested students achieve measurable educational gains over the two-year performance period.

Q26. **Is there a requirement that individuals served have to naturalize during the grant performance period?**

A26. No. There is no requirement that the students and clients served through this grant program must naturalize within the grant performance period.

Charging Fees

Q27. **Is my organization allowed to charge a fee for services?**

A27. Yes, you may charge a nominal fee for services under this grant, but total charges to one permanent resident cannot exceed $50. If your organization proposes to charge for services under the grant program, please present a justification for these fees, including a detailed explanation of how your organization will use the fees to enhance the program.

Back to the top

Application

Q1. **What happens if my organization submits more than one application?**

A1. If you submit multiple applications, we will contact you before we begin our review to confirm which application you want to include in the review process. We will not review the other applications.

Q2. **Can I submit letters of support?**

A2. No. You should not submit any documentation other than what is requested in the notice of funding opportunity. We will not consider letters of support.

Q3. **Should I attach a copy of citizenship education materials that my organization has developed, or should I just describe the materials?**

A3.   You must include a description of the materials to be used for each class (see page 12 of the notice of funding opportunity). You must also attach the proposed curriculum (see page 13 of the notice of funding opportunity).

Q4.   **If we submit our application early and forgot a document, will we be informed before the application deadline so we have time to fix it?**
A4.   We will not review any applications before the deadline. If you forgot a document, you may submit a revised copy of your application package as long as you submit it before the deadline. After the application period is over, we will contact applicants to ensure that we review the correct application package.

Q5.   **Is a letter of intent required?**
A5.   No. There is no requirement that you submit a letter of intent.

Back to the top

_____

Budget

Q1.   **Am I required to submit both a budget narrative and a budget table?**
A1.   Yes. For more information, see Section 8 of the notice of funding opportunity.

Q2.   **My organization is the primary applicant and proposes to work with several partners who will provide additional direct services and receive a portion of the grant funds. Should I submit one combined budget narrative or separate budget narratives?**
A2.   You must submit a budget narrative and table for your organization and a separate budget narrative and table for each sub-awardee. Provide the same level of detail for all budget narratives and budget tables.

Q3.   **Is my organization allowed to subcontract services?**
A3.   Your organization and any proposed sub-awardees must provide direct services and must demonstrate the ability to successfully manage and provide all aspects of the grant-funded project, including financial management.

Q4.   **May I list sub-awardee costs as contractual costs?**
A4.   No. You must present costs for the sub-awardee organization in a separate budget narrative and table. You should provide the same level of detail in the budgets for both the primary applicant and the sub-awardee.

Q5.   **Do volunteer hours count as an in-kind contribution?**
A5.   Yes.

Q6.   Which budget category includes facility rental costs?
A6.   You should include facility rental costs under "Other Direct Costs" (see Section 8.h of notice of funding opportunity). Facility rental costs should not be more than 20% of the total approved budget (see page 21 of the notice of funding opportunity).

Q7.   How do I demonstrate my organization's approved fringe benefit rate?
A7.   If a cognizant federal agency has negotiated or approved your fringe benefit rate, provide a copy of the agreement. If no rate agreement exists, provide a breakdown of the amounts and percentages that comprise fringe benefit costs such as health insurance, FICA, retirement insurance, and taxes. Identify the base for allocating these fringe benefit expenses. (See Section D.8.c of the notice of funding opportunity.)

Q8.   Can I apply for less than the maximum award amount?
A8.   Yes.

Q9.   May I include costs for interpreters and translators? If so, what budget category would those fall under?
A9.   Yes. You may include costs for interpreters and translators under the "Contractual" budget category. However, these costs should be reasonable and justified in the project narrative. When possible, your organization should employ staff with knowledge of the language used by the majority of the lawful permanent residents served in the community.

Q10.   What portion of the grant funds should go to the sub-awardee?
A10.   You should ensure that proposed costs reflect the activities described in the project narrative, and that the budget reasonably balances the costs between the citizenship instruction program and the naturalization application services program.

Q11.   Can we include costs for mileage for staff?
A11.   Transportation costs for employees and volunteers are allowed under this grant. (See page 21 of the notice of funding opportunity for more information.)

Back to the top

Evaluation

Q1.   Will USCIS favor organizations with limited resources over organizations with substantial resources that do not necessarily need additional funding?
A1.   No. An organization's net worth is not one of the evaluation criteria for the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program.

Q2.   What point values will USCIS use to evaluate applications?
A2.   You can find the evaluation criteria and corresponding point values on pages 23 and 24 of the notice of funding opportunity.

Q3. **How can I obtain feedback about my organization's application so that I am better prepared to apply in the future?**

A3. After we announce the FY 2016 grant recipients, applicants who did not receive a grant may request a written summary evaluation and score breakdown by sending an email to: citizenshipgrantprogram@uscis.dhs.gov. We will send you the results within 60 days from the date we receive the written request.

Q4. **If my organization received a USCIS grant in the past, do I receive preference over organizations applying for the first time?**

A4. Former awardees and sub-awardees under the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program and the Citizenship Grant Program are not eligible to receive funding with this opportunity.

Q5. **Will the use of technology in the classroom impact how USCIS rates my application?**

A5. During the technical review process, we will not assign points for the use of technology. However, before making an award, we may consider several strategic program priorities, including whether an application incorporates the use of technology in the citizenship instruction classroom (see page 25 of the notice of funding opportunity).

Q6. **May I request a top-scoring proposal from the FY 2015 grant program?**

A6. You may submit a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to view a top-scoring proposal from the FY 2015 grant program. However, the grant program requirements for this funding opportunity are different from the funding opportunity last year, and a proposal from last year will not exactly match the requirements of the current notice of funding opportunity. Keep in mind that it may take more than a month to obtain a response to a FOIA request.

Q7. **The notice of funding opportunity states that USCIS may consider whether an application, when balanced with other potential awards and current grant recipients, represents a diverse geographic area (see page 25). What does this mean?**

A7. When making an award, we may consider the balance of geographic areas represented by the applicants and current grant recipients. We seek to maximize the number of permanent residents across the United States who can receive services through this grant program.

Q8. **When making awards, does USCIS consider the needs of the region and the existing services in that region?**

A8. It is your responsibility to demonstrate and provide evidence of your community's need for citizenship preparation services. We may consider whether an application, when balanced with other potential awards and with current grant recipients, represents a diverse geographic area.

Q9. **Does USCIS prefer to fund organizations in a particular region in the United States?**

A9. No. You must demonstrate and provide evidence of your community's need for citizenship preparation services. We may consider whether an application, when balanced with other potential awards and with current grant recipients, represents a diverse geographic area.

Q10.   Does USCIS award any points for the project abstract?
A10.   We will not give points specifically for the project abstract, but reviewers will consider sections of the project abstract (such as the class table) when scoring an application.

Q11.   Can you suggest a website that can help us specifically research lawful permanent resident populations? In the past, we have lost points because we've only been able to break down data by foreign-born populations.
A11.   For data on lawful permanent residents, you may check the DHS Office of Immigration Statistics. Please note that the sections on community need in this year's notice of funding opportunity ask you to discuss the lawful permanent resident population that your organization *currently serves* and that population's need for citizenship instruction services (see pages 11 and 23 in the notice of funding opportunity).

Back to the top

Grants.gov Requirements

Q1.   Are partners (sub-awardees) required to register with Grants.gov?
A1.   No. Only the primary applicant must register with Grants.gov.

Q2.   Are partners (sub-awardees) required to have a DUNS number?
A2.   Yes. If a partner will receive a portion of the grant funds, then the partner is considered a sub-awardee and must have its own DUNS number.

Q3.   Is a national organization allowed to use one DUNS number to submit applications for local offices?
A3.   Yes. A national organization may submit multiple applications under one DUNS number, but it must be clear on each application which location or affiliate office is applying.

Q4.   How do I migrate to the System for Award Management (SAM) from the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) system?
A4.   To migrate from CCR to SAM, please follow the steps outlined in SAM Quick Guide for Migrating Roles. You can find more information on SAM at www.sam.gov.

Q5.   We are in the process of getting a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN). Will we have access in SAM while we are waiting?
A5.   No. You will need your TIN to register in SAM, so you will not be able to access SAM while you are waiting.

Q6.   Can we see the application before we are registered in SAM?
A6.   Yes. You do not need to access SAM in order to view the funding announcement for the program. You may access the notice of funding opportunity at any time. For more information about the program, visit www.uscis.gov/grants.

Q7. **How do I find out if we need to update our status in SAM?**

A7. To see if your SAM registration is current, check your status on the SAM website. It is important to check this immediately, if your registration is not current, it may take up to two weeks to update.

Back to the top