

Networks for Integrating New Americans

Presents

Civic Engagement through Three Lenses



Presenters



Andy Nash
TA Coordinator
Networks for New Americans
World Education



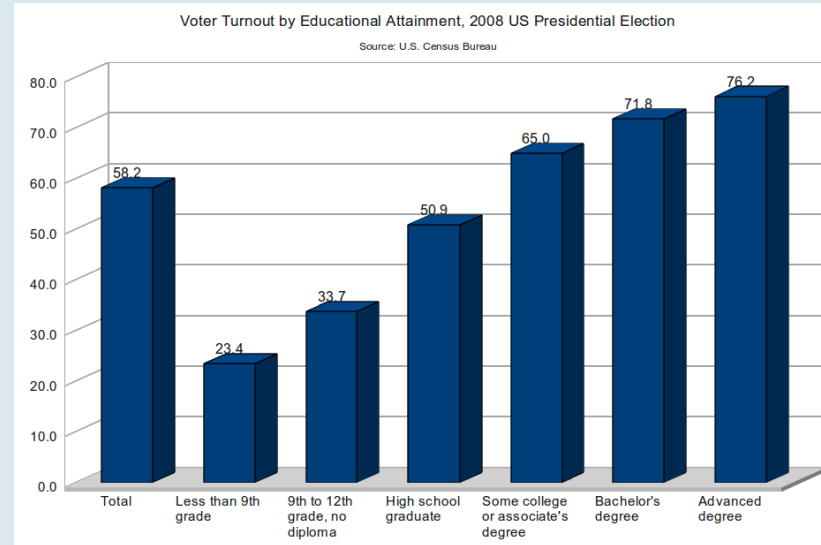
Kien Lee
Principal Associate & Vice President
Community Science



Homa Naficy
Chief Adult Learning Officer
Hartford Public Library

Why did we build a civic framework?

- ▶ Only 57.5% of eligible voters voted in the 2012 election.
- ▶ Immigrants are under-represented in the electorate. In 2011, only 56% of those eligible for naturalization had legalized.
- ▶ In the U.S., more than in most other countries, those with lower skills are more likely to feel that they have no influence on public decisions and the political process. (PIACC)
- ▶ Bring civics into EL/civics



Civic engagement and participation

- ▶ “Civic engagement describes how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for fellow citizens or to help shape the community’s future.”

Blueprint for the Next Chapter, Civic Ventures, 2005

- ▶ “Civic participation is the process that draws newcomers into collective problem solving to improve conditions in matters affecting their lives.”

Craig McGarvey, “Pursuing Democracy’s Promise: Newcomer Civic Participation in America, 2004

What is this civic framework and how did we develop it?

This civic framework is a description of the skills and knowledge that community members draw upon to effectively engage in the civic life and decisions of their communities and participate actively in a democratic society.

Building the Framework

1. How do people civically participate in U.S. daily life?
2. How can we organize/categorize these activities?
3. What skills and knowledge are needed to carry them out?



Step 1: How do people participate civically?

- ▶ Advocating for adult education funding
- ▶ Helping fire victims
- ▶ Volunteering at a soup kitchen
- ▶ Sharing information about community resources (DV, AIDS)
- ▶ Writing to/visiting/hosting decision-makers
- ▶ Organizing for public transportation
- ▶ Protesting discrimination
- ▶ Educating the local community about immigrants
- ▶ Registering voters
- ▶ Celebrating new citizens
- ▶ Doing community surveys
- ▶ Petitioning for a promised soccer field
- ▶ Writing to the newspaper about a community issue

Step 2: How can we categorize these activities?

Civic Engagement Activities	Forms of Civic Engagement
Helping fire victims Volunteering at a soup kitchen Celebrating new citizens	Building community
Sharing information about community resources (DV, AIDS) Educating the receiving community about immigrants Writing to the newspaper about a community issue	Expressing informed opinions and educating others
Writing to/visiting/hosting decision-makers Registering voters Petitioning for a promised soccer field	Holding decision-makers accountable
Advocating for adult education funding Organizing for public transportation Protesting discrimination	Organizing for change
Doing community surveys	



Step 3: What skills and knowledge are needed?

Forms of Civic Engagement	Knowledge needed	Skills needed
Building community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community needs and concerns • Community strengths and assets • History of the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening • Working across difference • Problem-solving
Expressing informed opinions and educating others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What you think and why (evidence and reasoning) • Who needs to hear you/your audience • Belief in the value of speaking up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and writing • Reading charts and graphs • Digital literacy • How to consider audience • Persuasion & argumentation
Holding decision-makers accountable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What decisions are being made and how they affect the community • Who makes which decisions • How democracy works • How elections work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research: how to access and interpret information • Asking effective questions • Media literacy • Critical thinking
Organizing for change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community concerns • History of change/Belief that things can change • Legal, civil, human rights • Effective communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • Planning • Strategizing • Decision-making



Examples from the classroom

Project-based learning

1. Identify question or concern
2. Investigate
3. Consider civic engagement options
4. Discuss transfer of learning



Tales of Resilience

We Are Change

Lisa Gimbel and Students at the Welcome Project



Students talked about what would make it easier to be healthy in our community.



This is the way we walk to the super-market, where we can get fresh food. It is dangerous to walk here. We don't have enough public transportation.



We went to talk to the mayor about the changes we need. He agreed with what we wanted and he would help us improve our community.



We also went together to meet with other elected officials. We told them what we wanted.



Examples from the classroom

- ▶ Citizenship prep
- ▶ Integration with basic skills
- ▶ Program democracy



Promising Practices for Building Civic Participation

- ▶ Build on the civic understanding and experience that people bring from their home cultures.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for students to take leadership, practice democracy, and participate in their communities.
- ▶ Build the skills to communicate respectfully and resolve conflict.
- ▶ Collaborate with community groups to participate in community efforts, campaigns, and other organized efforts.



Promising Practices for Building Civic Participation

- ▶ Critically examine the media and how it represents people and events.
- ▶ Use current events to stay informed and to analyze issues in social and historical context.
- ▶ Use the arts as a means to explore place, culture, and history.
- ▶ Provide opportunities for students to reflect on their identities and roles in a new culture and to consider how they want to participate.





Community Science

A Framework for Planning and Measuring Civic Engagement

April 10, 2015

Kien S. Lee

Principal Associate/Vice President

301-519-0722, ext. 108

kien@communityscience.com



MAINSTREAM AVENUES FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY *Social organization of community*

IMMIGRANT

- Knowledge and skills to:
- Hold decision-makers accountable
 - Develop and express informed opinions
 - Mobilize and organize for change
 - Build relations

Schools

Labor unions

Neighborhood
civic
associations

Faith
institutions

Cultural &
language
programs

Local
government

Benevolent
associations

Hometown
associations

Professional/
trade
associations

Media

Service
providers

Professional
& merchant
associations

Chamber of
commerce

Ethnic credit
associations

Recreation/
sports groups

Advocacy/interest
groups

Public libraries

Goal

Example of Activities

Immigrant Community

Mainstream Avenues

Hold decision-makers accountable



Run for the president of the Asian American Merchant Association

Attend candidate forums during elections to ensure that candidate address concerns of immigrant businesses

Build relations



Develop and implement a cultural program for youth at the Buddhist Temple

Invite leaders from other communities to be presenters or mentors

Develop and express informed opinions



Wrote articles for *India News*

Contribute to neighborhood website
Be a guest speaker on local TV or radio station

Organize for change



Convene "tea chats" to discuss what to do about why the Latino youth soccer team can't use the park for its weekly games

Request meeting with local council member to discuss the community's concerns about the use of the park



Example of Activities

Immigrant Community

Run for the president of the Asian American Merchant Association

Develop and implement a cultural program for youth at the Buddhist Temple

Wrote articles for *India News*

Convene “tea chats” to discuss what to do about the sports club’s lack of access to the park for soccer games

Mainstream Avenues

Attend candidate forums during elections to ensure that candidate address concerns of immigrant businesses

Invite leaders from other communities to be presenters or mentors

Contribute to neighborhood website
Be a guest speaker on local TV or radio station

Request meeting with local council member to discuss the community’s concerns about their inability to use the park

Example of Measures

Setting of activity (within immigrant community, across communities, through mainstream avenues)

First-time involvement

Frequency of participation (# of times per time period)

Quality of participation or involvement (positive, negative)

Outcome of participation or involvement (Individual, organizational, relationship, systemic)



MAINSTREAM AVENUES FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY Social organization of community

IMMIGRANT

Knowledge and skills to:

- Hold decision-makers accountable
- Develop and express informed opinions
- Mobilize and organize for change
- Build relations

Schools

Labor unions

*Provide equitable opportunities
and different ways for immigrants
to participate*

*Build bridges with
immigrant
organizations*

Neighborhood
civic
associations

Faith
institutions

Cultural &
language
programs

Local
government

Benevolent
associations

Hometown
associations

Professional
associations

Media

Service
providers

Professional
& merchant
associations

*Provide access to
information and
resources*

*Respect and value civic
traditions of different
cultures*

Ethnic credit
associations

Recreation/
sports groups

Chamber of
commerce

Advocacy/interest
groups

Public libraries

Immigrant

Hold decision-makers accountable

Build relations

Develop and express informed opinions

Organize for change

Mainstream Avenues for Civic Engagement

Provide equitable opportunities and different ways for immigrants to participate

Build bridges with immigrant organizations

Respect and value civic traditions of different cultures

Provide access to information and resources



Mainstream Avenues

Example of Activity

Example of Measures

Provide equitable opportunities and different ways for immigrants to participate

Allow and encourage immigrants to bring friends
Establish advisory committees or boards composed of immigrant leaders

Build bridges with immigrant organizations

Engage ethnic media
Understand and respect the unique functions of different immigrant organizations

Respect and value civic traditions of different cultures

Attend and volunteer at immigrant community events
Educate immigrants about US civic traditions

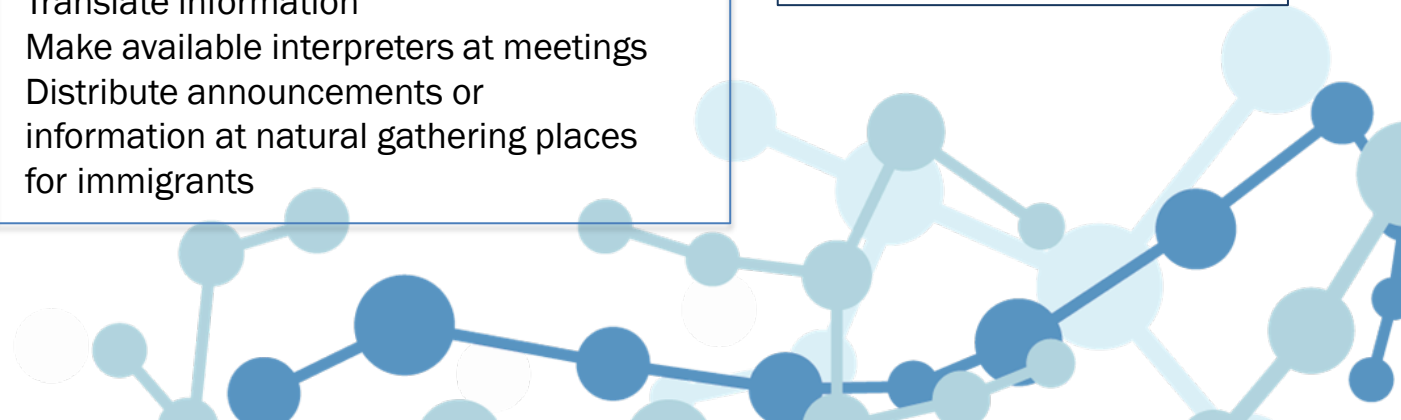
Provide access to information and resources

Translate information
Make available interpreters at meetings
Distribute announcements or information at natural gathering places for immigrants

Institutional policies that support immigrant engagement

Institutional practices that support immigrant engagement

and quality of relationships with immigrant organizations



**MAINSTREAM
AVENUES FOR CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT**

**STRONG, INCLUSIVE, EQUITABLE, &
JUST COMMUNITIES**

IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY
Social organization of community

IMMIGRANT

- Knowledge and skills to:
- Hold decision-makers accountable
 - Develop and express informed opinions
 - Mobilize and organize for change
 - Build relations

**SENSE OF
COMMUNITY**

TRUST

REPRESENTATION

Schools

Labor unions

*Provide equitable opportunities
and different ways for immigrants
to participate*

*Build bridges with
immigrant
organizations*

Neighborhood
civic
associations

Faith
institutions

Cultural &
language
programs

Local
government

Immigrant
associations

Hometown
associations

Professional
associations

Media

Service
providers

Professional
& merchant
associations

*Provide access to
information and
resources*

*Respect and value civic
traditions of different
cultures*

Ethnic credit
associations

Recreation/
sports groups

Chamber of
commerce

Advocacy/interest
groups

Public libraries



Libraries: A Gateway to Immigrant Civic Engagement

Homa Naficy
Chief Adult Learning Officer
naficy@hplct.org

Hartford Demographics: A Snapshot



About The American Place (TAP)

The American Place



TAP Core Services

- **ESOL Classes**
- **Citizenship Classes**
- **Guided Self-Study Program**
- **Online support**
- **Passport Services**
- **Legal Services**
- **Over the phone interpreter svc.**

Need for Increased Community Involvement

- 1. Move by USCIS to digitize the delivery of its services**
- 2. Increase in the proportional share of immigrants in the general population**

Contextualized Learning

The Capitol

City Hall

City Council

Court System

Virtual Civic Tours

Public Libraries

Why Libraries?

Offer tax services

Serve as polling sites

Commemorate American civic holidays

Setting for Naturalization Ceremonies

Connect with community development

Serve as a catalyst for social capital

Host public forums on municipal issues

**A | landmark democratic institution –neutral,
free and open to all**

Building Relationships of Trust

- Networks of trusting relationships - **both with people from like and unlike backgrounds** - create one of civic participation's most powerful contributions to immigrant integration.
- People who know each other **through shared work** are far less capable of stereotyping and characterizing people as 'other'.

We Belong Here Initiative

Cultural Navigators

Citizenship Guides

Community Dialogues

Communications Campaign

Outcomes

**Establishment of a neighborhood
Welcoming Committee**

**Establishment of a City Commission of
Refugee and immigrant Affairs**

**Increased “traffic flow” of immigrants at
the library (beyond the classroom)**

Increased sense of belonging

Promoting Immigrant Civic Engagement



WE BELONG HERE *HARTFORD*



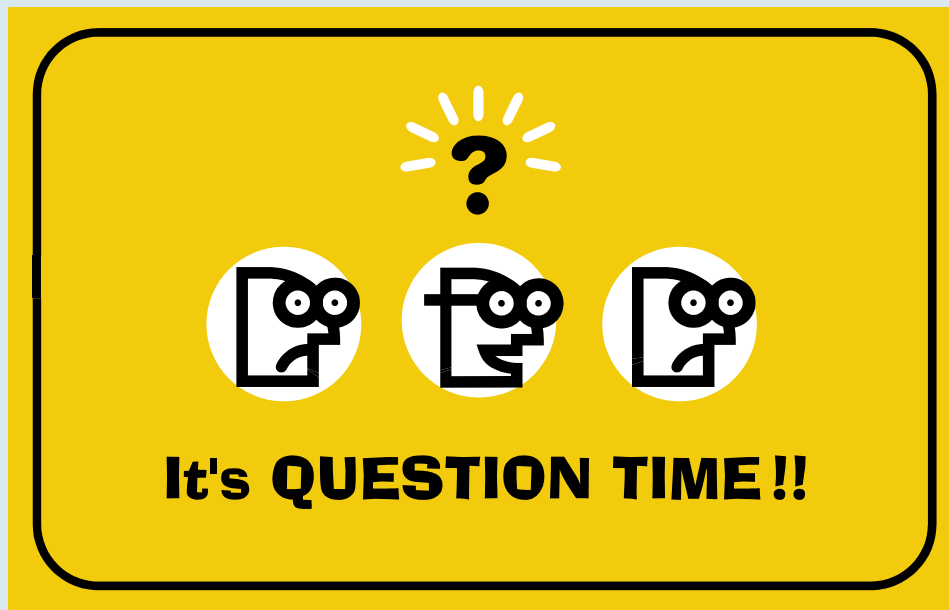
<http://hpl.discovervideo.com/show/watch?id=e478f962&t=1>



These initiatives have been made possible through funding from IMLS and USCIS.



U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services



Resources

Hartford Public Library citizenship and civic engagement activities:

<http://www.hplct.org/library-services/immigration-citizenship/community-civic-participation>

Voter Education, Registration, and Action: www.nelrc.org/VERA

Civic Participation and Community Action Sourcebook:

<http://tech.worlded.org/docs/vera/index1.htm>

The Change Agent: <http://changeagent.nelrc.org>



Networks for Integrating New Americans

Thank you!

A recording of this webinar and the follow-up discussion will be available on the VCoP.

To join the VCoP, please contact Araceli Mendez at amendez@worlded.org

