



How Centering Communities
Created a New Playbook for
Nonprofit Collaboration





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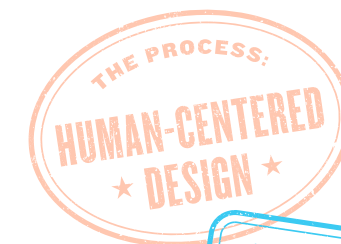
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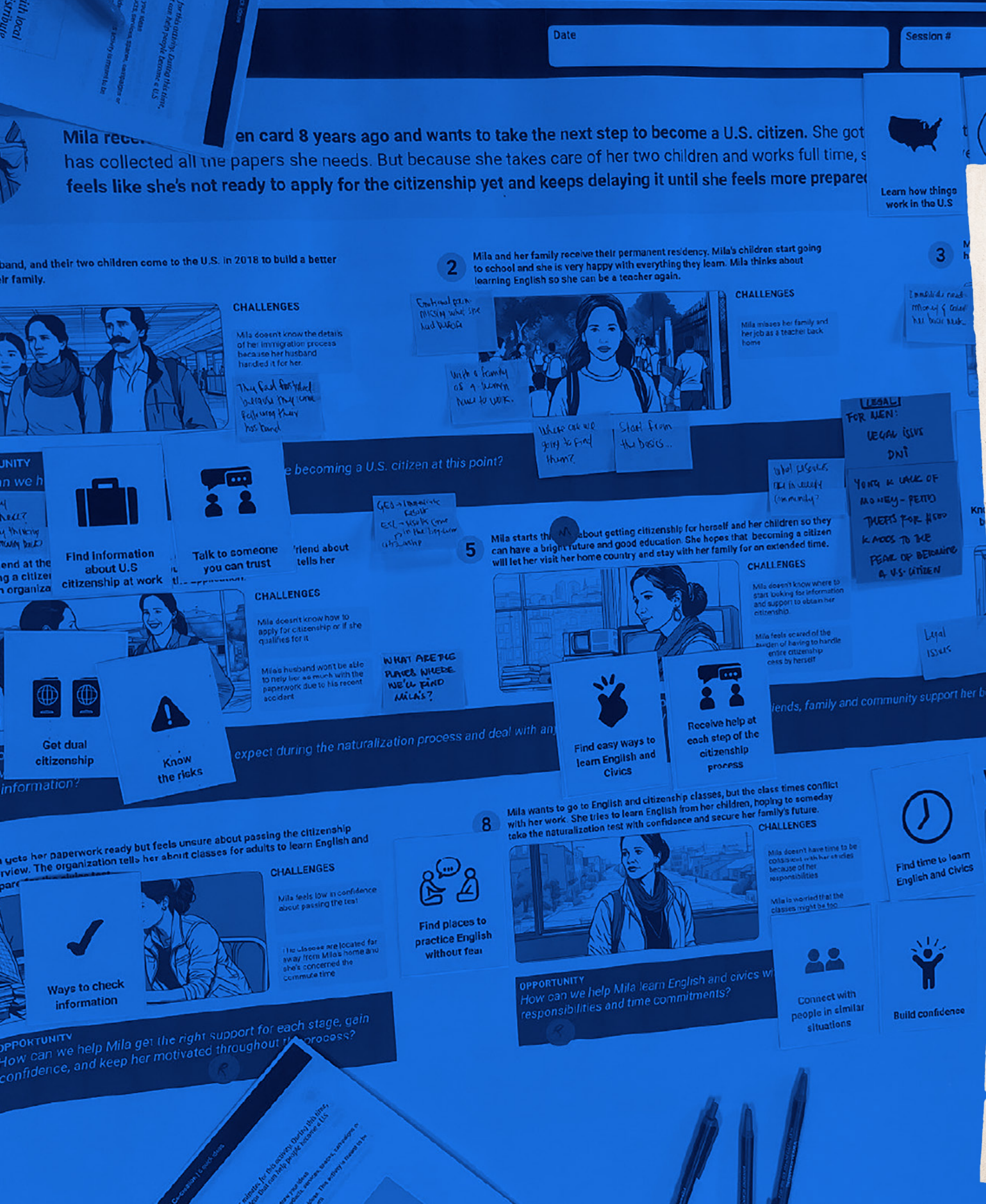
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ABOUT THIS PROJECT

Applying Human-Centered Design to Address Citizenship Barriers

Greater Houston is one of the most diverse regions in the country. One in four residents are foreign born, more than 145 languages are spoken here, and over 360,000 lawful permanent residents are eligible to become U.S. citizens.

To help address barriers that keep many residents from pursuing citizenship, Houston Endowment partnered with Dalberg Design and Wellspring Consulting to work directly with community members to develop solutions.

From September 2023 through December 2025, the teams collaborated with residents, nonprofit leaders, and other local partners through research, workshops, interviews, and co-design sessions. A Citizenship Advisory Committee helped guide the work throughout the process.

Together, these efforts led to three connected pilot efforts: **community support programs, facilitator and navigator training, and a multilingual outreach campaign.**

The project illustrates how human-centered design, organizational partnerships, and commitment to community-led decision-making can strengthen and extend the reach of regional naturalization ecosystems.

BY THE NUMBERS

★ **More than 500** directly engaged community members, including 113 from Mexico, 52 from Vietnam, 17 from El Salvador, 12 from South Korea and 12 from the Democratic Republic of Congo.

★ **165** community members included in research and co-design, who engaged across 59 sessions, alongside comparative research with 73 experts and organizations in other metro areas.

★ **351** participants served in the community support programs, which were implemented over a 6-month period, including 239 in Support Circles and 112 attending Navigator meetings.

A set of practical tools, including playbooks for the Support Circles, Navigator Program, and multilingual outreach campaign, are available to organizations interested in pursuing this work.



INVOLVED
'FROM THE VERY
BEGINNING':

Multi-Year Initiative Spanning Five Neighborhoods Builds a Set of Solutions Rooted in Community Expertise

By Claudia Kolker

VISITING WRITER, HOUSTON ENDOWMENT



W. KaNeesha Allen knows Houston's immigrant services landscape. After a 13-year career in adult education and literacy as an ESL and citizenship instructor and nonprofit leader, she has seen it from multiple angles.



W. KaNeesha Allen
 DALBERG DESIGN

That's why, two years ago, the designers of the Greater Houston Citizenship Project selected Allen to help lead the community engagement aspects of a uniquely ambitious mission. They wanted to learn why only about 10 percent of the Houston region's 360,000 lawful permanent residents choose to become citizens every year.

Seeking citizenship requires applicants to demonstrate English proficiency, knowledge of U.S. history, and familiarity with American laws. Gaining insights into what motivates residents to complete this process—and what stands in their way—would enable the project to co-create and test programs to address those barriers alongside community members.

Allen understood from her own work that the barriers to naturalizing are complex and would need equally complex responses. But when the design team first invited community members to share their knowledge, they were surprised.

"One of the common themes we heard from community members was: 'Wow. You guys are asking for input from us?'"

For individuals, gaining citizenship raises salaries, increases homeownership, enables the freedom to travel, and empowers people to vote.

“From my experience,” Allen explained, “oftentimes service agencies operate on qualitative data gathered three and four years ago. And consultants maybe have a not-so-good reputation for helicoptering in. What has been very distinctive this time is that community members have been involved in this project from the very beginning.”

Scholars and advocates have long known that naturalizing measurably benefits the whole community: naturalizations help boost GDP, strengthen public safety, and can build social cohesion. For individuals, gaining citizenship raises salaries, increases homeownership, enables the freedom to travel, and empowers people to vote. Yet the majority of those eligible have not taken the step toward citizenship.

So two years ago, after a decade of investing in naturalization support, Houston Endowment partnered with two national firms, Dalberg Design and Wellspring Consulting, to probe the deeper issues shaping Houston’s naturalization landscape. Their methodology, called human-centered design, involves working side-by-side with community members to design and test pilot projects that could clear the way for more citizenship applications.



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This work resulted in three pilot concepts:

★ Community Support Programs

This concept centered on Support Circles, which provided five sessions of a structured curriculum to prepare a cohort of eligible-to-naturalize Houstonians for the citizenship process, and a Navigator Program, which provided one-on-one support.

★ Facilitator and Navigator Training

Trainings and collaborative, peer-learning structures prepared community members to run the Support Circles and Navigator Program.

★ Multilingual Outreach Campaign

Driven by community-identified archetypes, this campaign encouraged eligible Houston residents to pursue citizenship and to help recruit participants for the community support programs.

Alongside the development of sustainable programs, the foundation also envisioned a broader goal for this work: strengthening Houston's nonprofit ecosystem.

"This project allowed us to work directly with community members to uncover the unique barriers faced by eligible-to-naturalize residents in Houston, help organizations tailor their work to fit the needs of our community, and strengthen our collective impact," explained Meghna Goswami, civic engagement program director for Houston Endowment.

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In April and May of 2024, Dalberg Design and Wellspring Consulting facilitated 28 community research sessions with 83 Houston residents from Latin, South Asian, East and Southeast Asian, West/Central/Eastern and South African, and Middle East and North African communities. These gatherings explored the participants' experiences of citizenship and daily life, immigration journeys, trusted networks, and aspirations around gaining citizenship.

These sessions paved the way for 17 co-design sessions with 21 nonprofit members and 46 community members in July and August of 2024. After these co-design meetings, Dalberg Design and Wellspring Consulting processed the ideas and concepts they had gleaned, methodically narrowing the ideas to be prototyped and tested. Participants then prioritized three pilot concepts, which Dalberg and Wellspring onboarded and implemented at local organizations in partnership with the employees there.

April-May 2024

28 COMMUNITY RESEARCH SESSIONS

83 HOUSTON RESIDENTS FROM LATIN, SOUTH ASIAN, EAST AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN, WEST/CENTRAL/EASTERN AND SOUTH AFRICAN, AND MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICAN COMMUNITIES

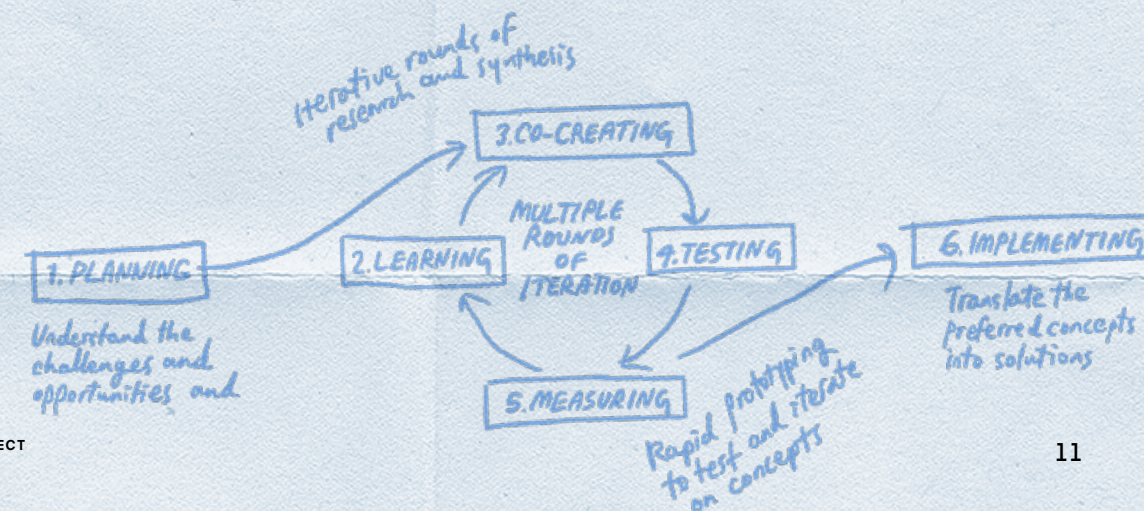
July-August 2024

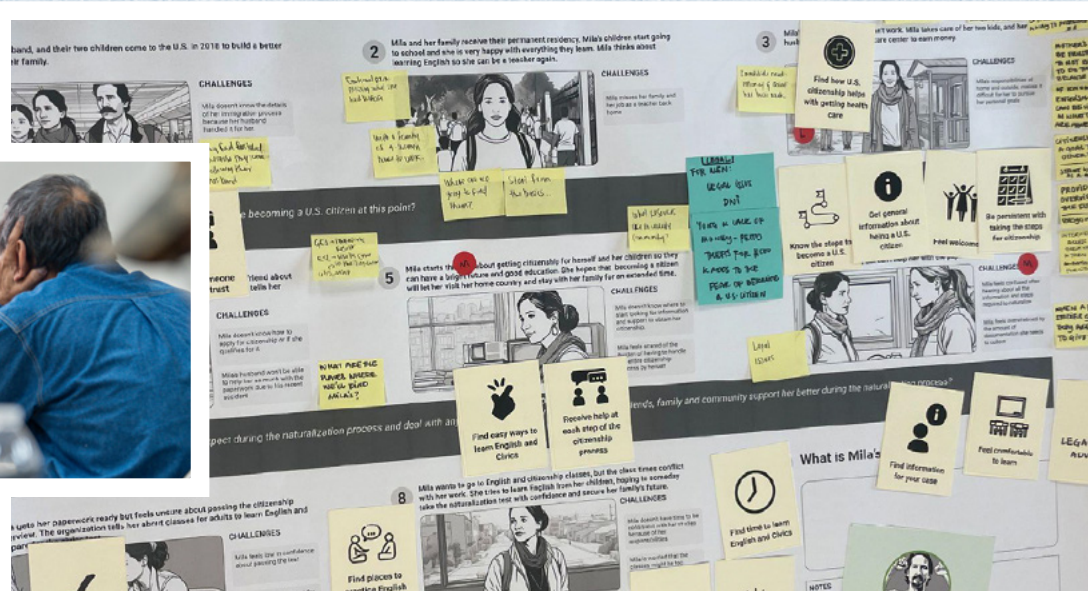
17 CO-DESIGN SESSIONS

21 NONPROFIT MEMBERS

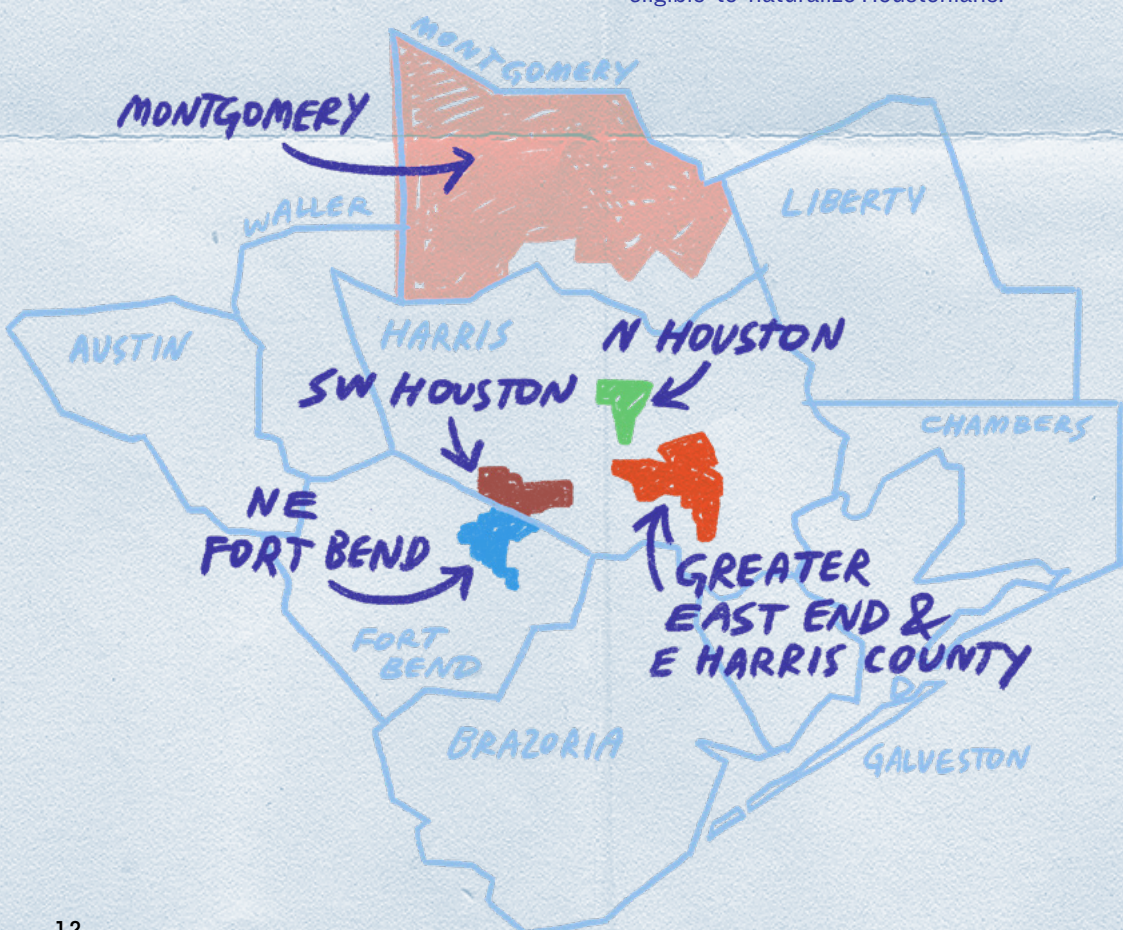
46 COMMUNITY MEMBERS

HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN PROCESS





The setting:
Five Neighborhoods



The research and programs focused on five neighborhoods identified by the Citizenship Advisory Committee, a group of experienced local advocates. The neighborhoods they chose represented both variety and concentration of eligible-to-naturalize Houstonians.

- NORTH HOUSTON**
ALDINE, EASTEX-JENSEN, GREENSPOINT
- GREATER EAST END AND EAST HARRIS COUNTY**
MAGNOLIA PARK, GALENA PARK, PASADENA
- SOUTHWEST HOUSTON**
ALIEF, SHARPSTOWN, GULFTON
- NORTHEAST FORT BEND**
SUGAR LAND, FORT BEND HOUSTON
- MONTGOMERY COUNTY**
CONROE, WILLIS

Leaving a Legacy of *CONNECTION*

The Houston Endowment team believed a human-centered design process could help connect Houston's overworked, under-resourced immigrant-serving nonprofits—groups that work in dozens of languages and assist tens of thousands of residents from Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Americas—into a more collaborative network.

Given the diversity of cultures represented in Houston, many organizations have long tailored their approach to meet the needs of a single community, with few opportunities to actively collaborate and learn from each other. Yet there are many commonalities in people's perceptions and experiences with citizenship.



Click the Film strip to hear directly from Houstonians who've taken the step to become U.S. citizens!



Maria is a U.S. citizen from Vietnam who came to Houston with her two children. With help from the community, she was able to overcome the language barrier and become a proud U.S. citizen.



“This campaign is magnificent,” said longtime community advocate Claudia Ortega-Hogue, former president of the Houston League of Women Voters and a CAC member. “I don’t want it to end.”

Two years later, the relationships built between agencies are among the project’s most consequential outcomes.

Working together to understand and encourage citizenship journeys, several leaders said, pushed organizations to examine their own internal processes. As they did so, they learned from—and leaned on—fellow nonprofits with complementary skills, especially legal capacity.

Maybe more surprisingly, the nonprofit leaders said, the project’s main local guidance structure, the Citizenship Advisory Committee (CAC), became a reliable source of joy.

“This campaign is magnificent,” said longtime community advocate Claudia Ortega-Hogue, former president of the Houston League of Women Voters and a CAC member. “I don’t want it to end.”

Claudia Ortega-Hogue
FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE HOUSTON
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS AND A
CAC MEMBER



Alice Min
CAC MEMBER



“The Citizenship Advisory Committee meetings were my happy place,” said Korean American advocate Alice Min, a CAC member and former advocate with the Spring Branch Asian-Latine service organization Woori Juntos who is now working with NAKASEC TX. “The CAC created the safest place for us. This work makes you really tired. It’s very important work, but it gets you down a lot. Whenever we gathered, we were so happy, so supportive. We felt such similarity, even though we represented different communities and different backgrounds. There were about 25 to 30 people meeting every two or three months. We’d cry and we’d laugh.”

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“We felt such similarity, even though we represented different communities and different backgrounds.”



As program director at FAM Houston, Ndjabuka implemented Support Circles while also serving on the Citizenship Advisory Committee.

Working her way through a conference room on Bellaire Boulevard, Congolese American advocate Ndjabuka is gently sowing trust, one interaction at a time. To an older woman seated in a wheelchair, she bows. To a mother struggling in English, she says in Swahili, “Don’t think about it in your head, just talk.” And when her weekly empowerment group settles in to introduce themselves, she turns to Kakonga—a French-speaking professional tailor, impeccably dressed—and speaks to him in French.

“Give us your full name,” she says, “so we know where to go for clothes.”

Seeking citizenship can be arduous. It requires being quizzed in English, memorizing U.S.

history and studying American laws—even when most waking hours already go to simple survival. For Houston’s Congolese immigrants, many of whom have spent years in refugee camps, citizenship can also require an extraordinary leap of trust.

Like other community leaders involved in the Greater Houston Citizenship Project, Ndjabuka earned that trust long ago. “She speaks our language,” says Iziziki, a 47-year-old mother of five who takes the bus to the weekly community group. “She is one of us.”

Previously a system navigator for a Houston hospital, Ndjabuka is now a program director at the nonprofit FAM Houston, which supports refugees, immigrants, and local Houstonians.

Her projects include leading the Women’s Empowerment Group, where community members from Congo and other countries meet to learn about resources and hear from guest speakers. Ndjabuka drew on the group’s experiences to advise the Citizenship Advisory Committee and later used the meetings as a foundation for a citizenship Support Circle.

Today, leading conversation in a sleek pantsuit and a hand-tied head wrap, Ndjabuka radiates assurance. A mother of three who has been in the United States for 20 years, she is intent on helping other East and Central African refugees find their footing here.

The emotional nourishment the groups provide is visible, says a volunteer who works with the group. “When the empowerment group started in 2019, I would see Congolese women sitting alone for hours, in darkened rooms with the TV on, in silence.”

Trust in Ndjabuka encouraged Tabu, a recently widowed mother of five, to try for citizenship after struggling to pass the test because of her limited English. “I can’t stay in America without citizenship,” she says. “There were 10 interview questions, I passed three.”

Ndjabuka pressed Tabu to join FAM’s citizenship Support Circle. There, she was encouraged to take an ESL class offered by the Harris County Public Library—a class that Ndjabuka successfully proposed after building bonds with county library workers through the Greater Houston Citizenship Project.

“I also am going to classes in sewing ... and English and computers,” Tabu says. She took Ndjabuka’s advice in all these endeavors, she says, because of trust. “She calls, texts, emails, and visits consistently.”

Ndjabuka also reminds the group to sing at meetings. And sometimes, she says nothing.

“Back home, where we come from, you don’t look at elder people, for example,” she explains. “You give respect by looking down and bending your knee. They might shake hands or touch your head, like giving a blessing. You don’t speak back if your elder is saying something. We say, ‘Listen more. You will get more.’”



The bonds forged through the project have especially important policy implications in a social context marked by high levels of immigrant fear, Dalberg Principal Robert Fabricant said.

“In a nutshell, this design process was layered on to a very rich trust-building process,” Fabricant said. “We are in a moment when bringing communities to the table is more difficult. Houston Endowment understood that. They needed partners trusted by their communities.”



“In a nutshell, this design process was layered on to a very rich trust-building process.”

According to recent data from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), the Houston field office received the highest number of applications for the past six fiscal quarters. From fiscal year 2023 to fiscal year 2024, the number of applications received in the Houston field office increased by 16.9%, and in fiscal year 2024, the office had the highest number of approved applications. While these outcomes can't be directly linked to the citizenship pilots, the sheer number of navigators, influencers, CAC members, journalists and other leaders involved in the effort helped place citizenship into many conversations for the first time.



Robert Fabricant
DALBERG PRINCIPAL



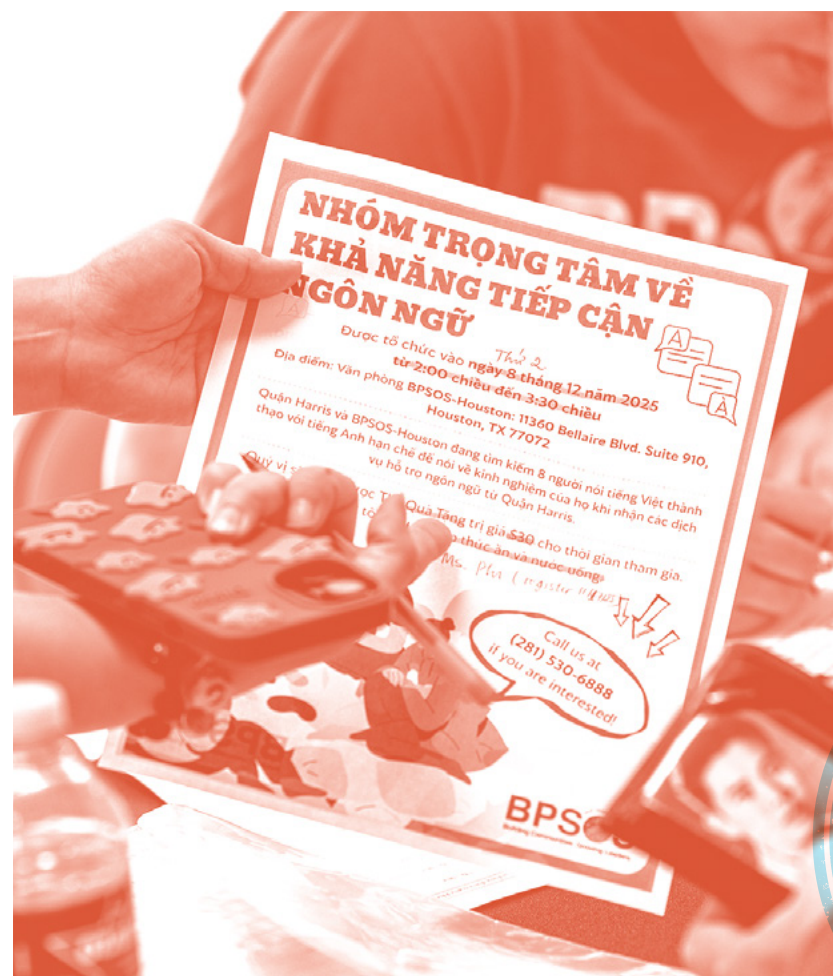
Reflective and RESPONSIVE

Throughout the initiative, Endowment leaders knew they were entrusted with strengthening an ecosystem of nonprofits that had dedicated decades to helping residents navigate the naturalization journey. The \$4.6 million investment included equitable compensation for community participants and CAC members, as well as grants to nonprofit partners. Just as robust was the investment of time, attention to Houston-specific detail, and sustained engagement.



For each pilot project, consultants Dalberg and Wellspring dug deep to ensure culturally precise language and programming. This approach was most visible during the multilingual outreach campaign, which co-created an array of materials—messaging toolkits, videos and articles—designed to educate and encourage eligible-to-naturalize residents to begin the citizenship process.

“In our community, people speak in many different dialects, and sometimes certain ways of speaking can be hard for others to understand, bringing up discomfort or uneasy feelings,” said Jannette Diep, executive director of the nonprofit BPSOS-Houston. “If there is dislike of a radio or TV show, I promise we will hear about it.”



“In our community, people speak in many different dialects, and sometimes certain ways of speaking can be hard for others to understand, bringing up discomfort or uneasy feelings.”



Jannette Diep
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF
THE NON-PROFIT BPSOS-HOUSTON

To ensure the final public service announcements in the campaign matched local Vietnamese sensibilities, Dalberg sent Diep recordings with varied pronunciations for her team to review and approve before they aired.

The multilingual outreach campaign also created an adaptable toolkit of images and messaging materials, and commissioned local marketers Big Oak Tree Media to film video profiles of Houstonians who matched each archetype from diverse cultural backgrounds. Versions of these materials appeared as paid social media, on advocates' websites and social channels, and on influencer sites.

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For Gustavo, a Mexican father of two elementary school girls, citizenship represented a future of possibilities for his daughters. “For me, citizenship means opportunity,” he said.



Click the film strip to hear directly from Houstonians who've taken the step to become U.S. citizens!

HOUSTON ENDOWMENT



Guided by a detailed co-design process with its local Citizenship Advisory Committee (CAC), Dalberg Design launched a multilingual outreach campaign to support individual naturalization journeys across the region.

March-September 2025

4 LOCAL ETHNIC INFLUENCERS

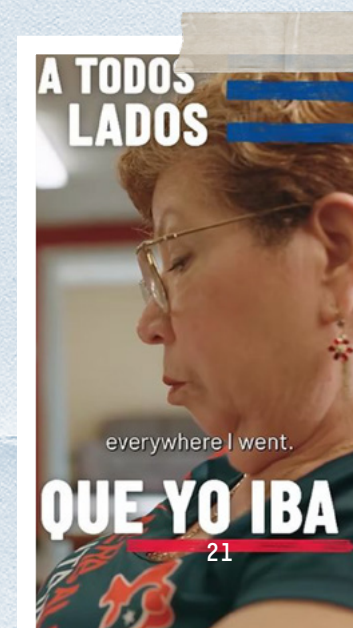
25 ETHNIC MEDIA FELLOWS

>2 dozen
ETHNIC PUBLICATIONS
AND RADIO STATIONS

From March through September 2025, participants worked together to create and launch educational materials in multiple languages that would be shared by a network of community messengers, including four local ethnic influencers, 25 ethnic media fellows, and more than two dozen ethnic publications and radio stations.

Many of the questions these communicators set out to answer were straightforward: Who is eligible to apply for citizenship? Who can help? How can individuals get training or financial help for the process? And, most importantly, what are the concrete benefits of citizenship that you gain by navigating this process?

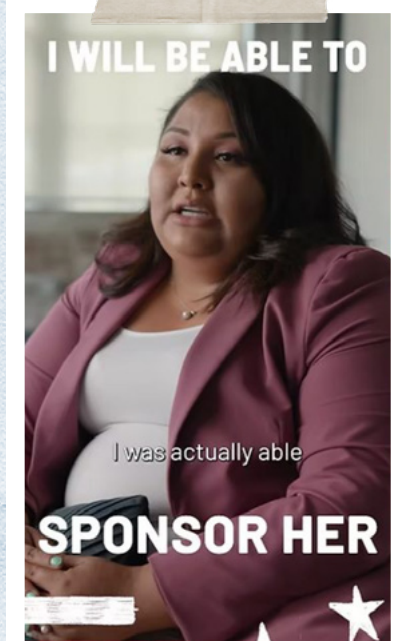
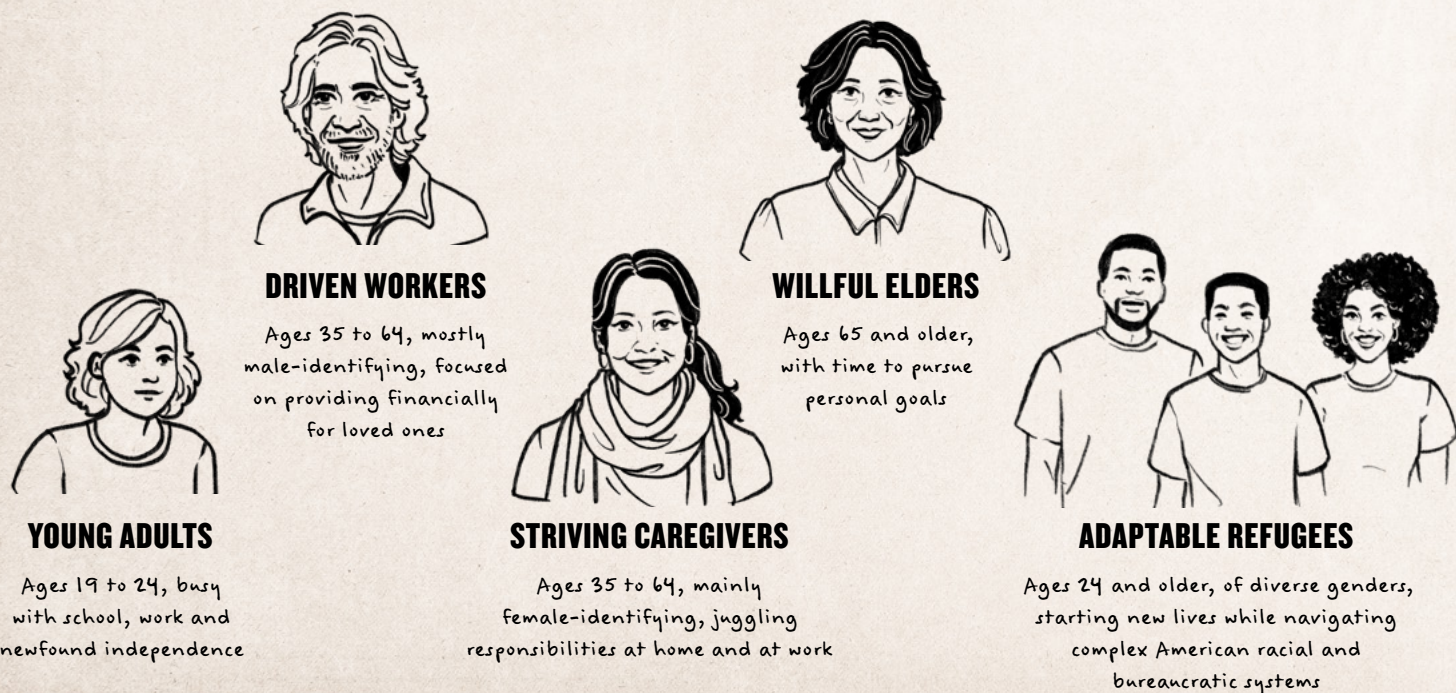
For guidance, audiences were directed to BecomeACitizenToday.com, a one-stop informational website in multiple languages featuring facts and nonprofit resources, developed by Houston-based Lopez Negrete Communications and supported by Houston Endowment.



GREATER HOUSTON CITIZENSHIP PROJECT

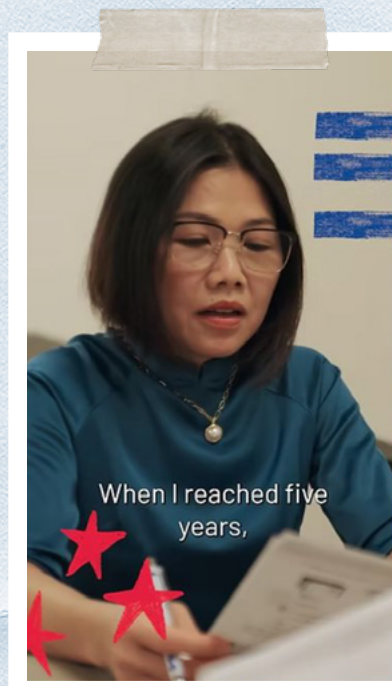
The 5 Archetypes

To tailor messaging for Houston's diverse audiences, the design team developed a key innovation: five "archetypes," or profiles meant to reflect common experiences among potential applicants. "The team began to notice patterns of beliefs, capacities, and access to networks of support," said W. KaNeesha Allen, community collaboration lead for Dalberg Design.



Altogether, Dalberg said, the multilingual outreach campaign reached more than 5 million viewers. A total of 14,764 people liked, commented on or shared what they saw. And among immigrants and refugees who participated in related programs, 24% said they learned about the Greater Houston Citizenship Project through traditional or social media—including content from the influencers, media fellows, and paid postings from the outreach campaign.

The campaign created a durable set of tools: informed and committed influencers, journalists, and advocates; trainings and toolkits for future campaigns; and a powerful library of video testimonies from Houstonians who successfully became U.S. citizens.



The 4 influencers reached

32,556
VIEWERS ON INSTAGRAM

6,288
ON FACEBOOK

2,653
ON TIKTOK

Altogether

>5 million
PEOPLE WERE REACHED BY THE COMMUNICATIONS PILOT

14,764
PEOPLE LIKED, COMMENTED ON OR SHARED WHAT THEY SAW

24%
OF IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES SAID THEY LEARNED ABOUT THE CITIZENSHIP PROJECT THROUGH TRADITIONAL OR SOCIAL MEDIA



Perhaps the most-used tool throughout the initiative was convening people—preliminary advisory groups, ongoing Citizenship Advisory Committee meetings, citizenship Support Circles, Navigator services, agency capacity-building trainings, and a post-project discussion after the initiative ended.



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From the beginning, these were no ordinary focus groups, Fabricant said. They were building sessions.

Working alongside community members, facilitators created “journey maps” in real time as participants described their lives,

goals, routines, and the barriers and incentives they faced in the naturalization process. If the maps didn’t accurately capture a participant’s lived experience, they could make changes immediately—rather than waiting to see whether notes and resulting plans reflected their experiences.

Seeing their input accurately externalized allowed participants to more confidently construct a story about themselves—one that could then inform a prototype and, ultimately, a clearly defined concept to help lawful permanent residents begin the citizenship process.



Leaders and pilot participants said the sum of this intense interaction exceeded the parts. Intended to clear a path for Houstonians to naturalize, the human-centered design process also strengthened an already dedicated network of immigrant and human service organizations over two years.

Two years after the project began, agency leaders said their capacity to take on new priorities—such as food distribution, English classes and advocacy—has grown significantly.

Two years after the project began, agency leaders said their capacity to take on new priorities—such as food distribution, English classes and advocacy—has grown significantly.

By the numbers, participant satisfaction was overwhelming: 98 percent said they would recommend the community support programs (Support Circles and Navigator Program) to others, and the average participant's confidence grew by 26%, with numerous participants moving directly to filing their N-400 paperwork after the program.

“The biggest impact we saw was really within the organizations,” said Diep, of BPSOS-Houston. “We were doing the work, but before this, many of us didn’t have the capacity to help our clients take the next step. And every year in this work is so different. This year is so different from last year!”

The Dalberg-led process achieved major strides both in citizenship education and in the nonprofit ecosystem, she said.

“They brought to the forefront the fact that more than 360,000 people in Houston are eligible for citizenship—and they’re not applying,” Diep said. “It gave us a chance to step back and look more closely: what do we really understand about the community? That’s something we rarely do because we’re so deep in the trenches. I think every organization should do this every year.”

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“They brought to the forefront the fact that more than 360,000 people in Houston are eligible for citizenship—and they’re not applying.”



GUIDED BY ★★★ COMMUNITY VOICES

What keeps eligible Houstonians from applying for U.S. citizenship?

Throughout the research process, community members consistently told their design team partners that the following variables most affected their choices to apply for naturalization.

Beliefs and Perceptions

- ★ A SENSE OF BELONGING IN U.S. SOCIETY.
- ★ PERCEIVED VALUE OF CITIZENSHIP.
- ★ OUTLOOK ON THE FUTURE.
- ★ SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN THE NATURALIZATION PROCESS.
- ★ LOYALTY TO HOME CULTURE.



"Now I want citizenship. When my brother died, I learned that he was applying for citizenship so his children could meet their grandmother in Puebla."

43-year-old man, eligible to naturalize, from Mexico

Capacity and Capabilities

- ★ ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND/OR CONFIDENCE.
- ★ ABILITY TO NAVIGATE THE CITIZENSHIP PROCESS.
- ★ TIME AVAILABILITY TO TAKE PART IN THE PROCESS.
- ★ COMFORT WITH LEARNING IN A CLASSROOM CONTEXT (LANGUAGE, INTERVIEW SKILLS, MEMORIZATION).
- ★ AGE AND SENSE OF ABILITY TO ENGAGE IN AN UNFAMILIAR BUREAUCRATIC PROCESS.
- ★ SAFETY IN ENGAGING WITH GOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES.



"When they denied my citizenship, I thought to myself, I speak English, I'm not leaving this place without my citizenship approval."

38-year-old woman, citizen, from Mexico

Relationship to Support

- ★ TRUST IN INFORMATION ABOUT NATURALIZATION.
- ★ ACCESS TO FINANCIAL RESOURCES FOR CITIZENSHIP STEPS INCLUDING APPLICATIONS, LAWYER'S FEES, AND ESL CLASSES.
- ★ WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE AND ACCEPT COMMUNITY SUPPORT.
- ★ SUITABILITY OF GUIDANCE AND HELP TO THE CLIENT'S NEEDS.



"I started working with [this Houston nonprofit] because I want to give back to the community—they helped me too."

24-year-old man, legal resident, from South Sudan

Building a Shared Sense of PURPOSE

Like many program partners, the nonprofit System for Education Empowerment and Success (SEDES) had been deeply engaged in community work for years.

“Our work has always centered on serving the immigrant communities in Houston, where we’ve built strong relationships and trust over time,” said president and CEO Luis García-Alvarez.

“Our work has always centered on serving the immigrant communities in Houston, where we’ve built strong relationships and trust over time.”

García-Alvarez said he most valued the new relationships he built with other nonprofits, especially Memorial Area Ministries and Houston Volunteer Lawyers. As a result, SEDES is planning on applying for Department of Justice Recognition and Accreditation.

“I never would have had this idea before,” he said. “Through this collaboration, we have significantly expanded our capacity. We are now implementing a citizenship Navigator Program, in which trained navigators provide one-on-one support, information, and referrals to community members throughout their naturalization journey.”



Luis García-Alvarez
PRESIDENT AND CEO OF SYSTEM
FOR EDUCATION EMPOWERMENT
AND SUCCESS (SEDES)



Click the film strip to hear directly from Houstonians who've taken the step to become U.S. citizens!



The citizenship project, meanwhile, benefited from SEDES’ credibility with Houston’s 10,000 Garifunas—a vibrant group of Afro-Indigenous Central Americans from Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala. While many are eligible for citizenship, García-Alvarez said the community traditionally trusts elders for guidance. García-Alvarez tutored one of the elders 15 years ago for a GED diploma, and that relationship helped him extend citizenship support to the Garifuna community.

The project’s process also helped avert mistakes that could have tripped up less engaged researchers. Ortega-Hogue noted that Dalberg followed her advice to hire familiar Houston marketers Big Oak Tree Media and influencers for the multilingual outreach campaign—an assignment traditional consultants might have handed off to a national agency.



For Rwandan refugee Vestine, naturalization meant gaining agency. “U.S. citizenship gives you strength to tackle any challenge,” she said.

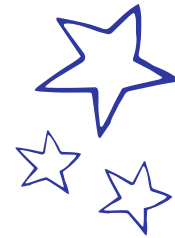




“Through this collaboration, we have significantly expanded our capacity.”



Alonso Perez-Putnam
WELLSPRING CONSULTANT



Wellspring consultant Alonso Perez-Putnam, who wrote curricula for two of the pilot concepts, also benefited from local guidance.

“Our citizenship Support Circles were based on a mental health model,” he said. “We gained an appreciation for how traumatic the conversations around the topic of immigration could be. A younger man from Cuba almost burst into tears about the pain of migration, about not even being able to give his child candy in Cuba. It wasn’t even directly in regard to citizenship. So we made sure there was training and space for talking about this kind of experience.”

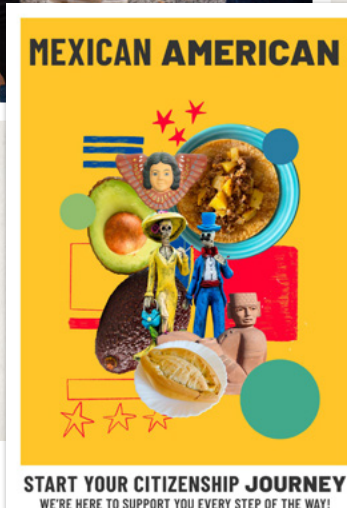
“We gained an appreciation for how traumatic the conversations around the topic of immigration could be.”

In response, the research team worked closely with community partners to put in place a set of support tools and mechanisms to safeguard the emotional safety of participants.

Community members also offered cultural insights that sometimes surprised even agencies working closely with them: the preferred news source for many elderly Latine and Asian residents (TikTok); the most trust-inspiring persona for online citizenship

education (someone in office attire); the added credibility of official logos on social media posts; the role of confidence in English skills; and generational preferences in reading materials (digital for millennials, paper for seniors). Congolese and other refugees, they found, needed far less orientation about naturalization than immigrants who had never dealt with U.S. bureaucratic processes.



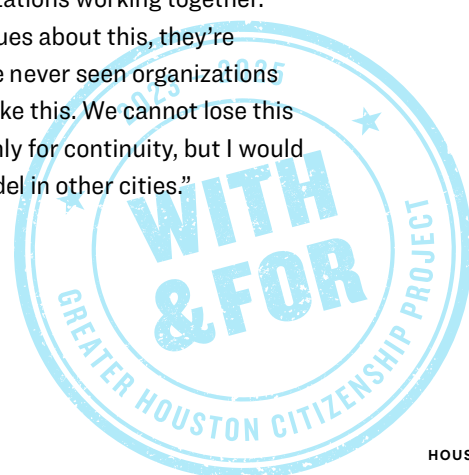


While the design process shaped programming and outreach, many nonprofit partners said it mattered most in building a shared sense of purpose during a period of profound uncertainty.

“This program came at the right time,” said SEDES leader García-Alvarez.

The human-centered approach of the Greater Houston Citizenship project enabled SEDES to benefit from newly forged institutional partnerships.

“This is a truly innovative initiative,” he reflected. “There are programs out there, but they are isolated. Now we have a strong, informal coalition of organizations working together. When I tell colleagues about this, they’re amazed. They have never seen organizations working together like this. We cannot lose this momentum: not only for continuity, but I would like to see this model in other cities.”



Acknowledgments

Houston Endowment would like to thank the following community members, whose participation on the Citizenship Advisory Committee was essential to the success of this initiative.



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Community Organizer,
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Dr. Andrea Caracostis
MD, CEO, HOPE Clinic

Luis A. García-Alvarez
President & CEO, SEDES

Modesto “Moy” Hinojosa
Communications & Funding
Development Assistant,
Living Hope Wheelchair
Association

Zenobia Lai
Executive Director,
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Services Collaborative
- Stan Marek**
Chairman & CEO,
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Alice Min
Former Service &
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Woori Juntos

Ndjabuka
Director, Pamoja Project

Claudia Ortega-Hogue
Former President, League of
Women Voters of Houston

Sandra Rodriguez
Executive Director,
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J. Michael Treviño
Executive Advisor,
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Gislaine Williams
Program Officer,
Houston Endowment

About Houston Endowment

Houston Endowment is a private foundation established in 1937 by Jesse H. Jones and his wife, Mary Gibbs Jones, to improve the quality of life for everyone in Greater Houston. Today, it has more than \$2 billion in assets and invests about \$100 million a year in strengthening public education, increasing civic engagement, enhancing the arts and cultural sector, and growing Houston’s greenspaces—as well as addressing emerging opportunities in our region. Working with fellow Houstonians, Houston Endowment pursues bold goals, builds partnerships, and invests in innovative solutions to create a vibrant region where all have the opportunity to thrive.

Houston Endowment supported the Greater Houston Citizenship Project as a learning and capacity-building effort for the region’s naturalization ecosystem. The foundation provided funding, convening support, and space for partners to test community-designed approaches in real time. The project compensated community members for their expertise, supported nonprofit partners’ participation, and invested in practical tools that organizations can adapt for their own work.



