

Providing Citizenship Education in the Workplace

Citizenship education programs in the workplace offer a unique opportunity to help lawful permanent residents prepare for the naturalization process and test. There are many advantages of having a workplace citizenship program. At the same time, there

could also be some challenges in starting such a program. This tip sheet for employers and adult education program administrators offers practical ideas for ensuring that a workplace program begins with the basic tools needed for long-term success.

Program Models

Independent Workplace-Based Citizenship Education Model:

The employer creates the program, provides the space and equipment, hires the teacher or tutors, manages, and financially supports the program. This model may be best suited for larger businesses with robust training components and sufficient numbers of employees who have the goal of becoming a U.S. citizen.



Collaborative Workplace-Based Citizenship Education Model:

The employer provides the space and usually some equipment, but contracts with a local adult education program with citizenship expertise to provide the teachers and/or tutors. This model is ideal for the employer who lacks the infrastructure to provide the expertise and coordination needed to run an independent program. As with the Independent Workplace-Based Citizenship Education Model,

employers need to have an ongoing cohort of employees who have the goal of becoming a U.S. citizen.

Externally Based Workplace Citizenship Education Model:

The employer contracts with a local adult education program or programs to hold citizenship classes at their schools with instruction also provided by their teachers. This model is ideal for the employer who lacks adequate space as well as the infrastructure to provide such a program.

Referral-Driven Workplace Citizenship Education Model:

The employer refers interested employees to existing citizenship programs within the community. The employer may support the employee with funds for textbooks, transportation, daycare, release time, etc.

These four program models are some of the most common; however, there are other models along with combinations of the program model elements listed above.

Operational Considerations

In addition to selecting the most appropriate program model, employers need to decide how they will offer citizenship education to their employees. Here are some of the most common structures:

Release-Time Considerations

1. Time off with full pay to attend classes during worktime.
2. Time off with partial pay to attend classes during worktime.

3. Time off without pay to attend classes during worktime.
4. No time off. Classes must be taken before or after work or on the weekends.
5. Lunchtime classes. No time off.

Voluntary vs. Mandatory

Unlike other workplace education programs where an employer may require employees to improve their skills by attending a formal training course, the citizenship class must always be voluntary.

Policy Implications

Before implementing any workplace education program, it is strongly encouraged to have a written policy that is shared with all employees. If there is a union or employee association, make sure it is involved from the beginning of the planning process. If there is a contractual agreement between the business and educational provider, make sure the provider clearly understands the policy so there are no misunderstandings or unintended consequences later in the process.

Support Programs and Resources

Employers may wish to consider offering, contracting with, or collaborating with an English as a second language (ESL) program to provide employees who are lower-level English language learners with the basic language skills they need before moving into a citizenship class. Offering a paid or volunteer-based on-site tutoring program, or collaborating with state or community programs that offer volunteer services, can greatly enhance the learning potential of employees.

The Citizenship Resource Center from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) offers information on how to start and manage an adult citizenship education program. The site can be found at www.uscis.gov/citizenship. Three foundational documents are the [Start-Up Guide](#), [Elements of Program Quality](#), and [Citizenship Content Standards](#).

In addition, the Citizenship Resource Center offers numerous educational products including [lesson plans](#) at both the beginning and intermediate levels. USCIS also supports an [online class locator](#) to identify adult English language and citizenship programs within a specified area.

Basic Steps to Establishing a Workplace Citizenship Education Program

1. Be clear about why the employer would like to establish a citizenship education program.
2. Confirm that the business is committed to the program from the beginning.
3. Survey employees to determine if there is enough interest to justify the time and resources needed to establish a program.
4. Appoint a coordinator and organize an advisory committee to plan and help manage the program. The committee should include management, non-management, union representatives (if applicable), representatives from the contracting organization (if applicable), the program coordinator, and the hired or contracted teachers/tutors. The committee also may include outside adult education, citizenship education, and ESL professionals who are willing to provide their expert advice, but who do not have a direct stake in the program.
5. With the advisory committee, plan the program and develop the draft policy. The plan should include all the details about the program structure, class structure, class levels, schedules and length of class cycles, textbooks used, curriculum, assessments, space needed, equipment and furniture required, budgets, etc. The policy should include details concerning release time, pay, attendance, expectations, and other important factors.
6. Share the draft policy with all employees and encourage questions and comments.
7. Revise the policy where needed. One challenge to a successful workplace citizenship education program is ensuring that management fully supports the program. A common concern of program coordinators is that some managers may not be eager to let employees fully participate in the program.
8. Share the final policy with all employees and build awareness of the program.
9. Implement the program.

10. Monitor the program on an ongoing basis and provide support and troubleshooting where needed.
11. Evaluate the program's strengths and weaknesses.

12. Revise the plan and policy where needed and prepare for the next cycle of classes.

For more information on starting up and managing a general workplace education program, visit ProLiteracy's Workplace Literacy Guide at <https://www.proliteracy.org/Resources/White-Papers>.



**U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services**

www.uscis.gov/citizenship