



# In-Person, Hybrid and Virtual Workshops: Advantages vs. Challenges & Limitations

Traditionally, in-person workshop models for benefits such as naturalization, DACA and TPS are events in a physical location that bring together staff and trained volunteers to assist immigrants in completing an application to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, or USCIS. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, many legal immigration service providers began experimenting with virtual workshops models in which all participants attended the workshop remotely via video conferencing platform or the phone.

As pandemic restrictions began to ease and community health conditions improved, community organizations began offering hybrid workshops, allowing attendees to choose if they would come to a physical location or participate virtually. In-person, virtual and hybrid models each have their own benefits and challenges that should be considered before holding a workshop. The chart and descriptions below lay out some of the benefits, challenges and limitations of each model to help you consider what is best for your organization and community.

	<b>In-Person</b>	<b>Virtual</b>	<b>Hybrid</b>
<b>Advantages</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants tend to be more comfortable with in-person workshop</li> <li>• Draws attention to your organization and to naturalization</li> <li>• High impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows a broader range of attendees to participate</li> <li>• Communication advantages</li> <li>• Eliminates potential public health risks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allows for the largest number of participants and larger potential impact</li> <li>• Bad weather or technological issues will not stop the workshop</li> </ul>
<b>Challenges &amp; Limitations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considerable time and effort to secure location and do outreach work</li> <li>• Vulnerable to inclement weather and poor turnout</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly dependent on technology</li> <li>• More time and effort needed to prep and register applicants</li> <li>• Follow-up appointments often needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Added complexity to simultaneously manage in-person and online event spaces</li> </ul>

# In-Person Workshops

## Advantages

- Applicants tend to be more comfortable with in-person workshops: For many applicants the in-person model reassures them that they are dealing with a reputable organization and not a notario or other individual seeking to take advantage of them. Additionally, communication is often better amongst participants when they are together in one physical location than when they are communicating over the phone or video conferencing platform.
- Draws attention to your organization and to naturalization: In-person workshops elevate the visibility of naturalization as an issue in the community and create greater awareness around naturalization benefits and eligibility. It also creates positive press for your organization and expands your reputation among community members.
- High-impact: In-person workshops generally result in the largest number of fileable applications completed in a single day.

## Challenges & Limitations

- Considerable time and effort to secure location and do outreach work: In-person workshops often require more time and resources to coordinate larger logistical challenges of workshop location, materials, and outreach in addition to managing the flow of applicants and volunteers on the day of the event.
- Vulnerable to inclement weather and poor turnout: Although in-person workshops are often highly productive events that result in the completion of many applications, they are also vulnerable to factors outside your control. Poor turnout to a workshop or bad weather makes for ineffective workshops or workshops that may need to be cancelled.

# Virtual Workshops

## Advantages

- Allows a broader potential range of attendees to participate: Virtual workshops allow applicants, volunteers, and staff to participate in the workshop from a location of their choosing. This means that applicants that might not otherwise be able to come to an in-person event can now receive application assistance. Similarly, volunteers who may not want to come in-person or who cannot commit to work for the entire workshop can now offer application assistance. Additionally, the ability to participate from anywhere means that your organization can recruit volunteers with more specific and unique skill sets. Virtual workshops also reduce the inconvenience of downtime, or time spent waiting, for all participants because they are generally participating from home.
- Communication advantages: Although in-person communication is typically more effective, virtual workshops do allow for communication advantages. Communicating remotely can provide a quieter environment for participants to work together and allows for more privacy when discussing sensitive information.
- Eliminates potential public health risks: Virtual workshops eliminate the risks associated with the spread of communicable diseases. Additionally, virtual events can continue regardless of poor weather conditions assuming utilities are not affected.

## Challenges & Limitations

- Highly dependent on technology: Virtual workshops are highly dependent on technology and the ability of volunteers and applicants to participate may depend on access to a reliable internet connection and technology and their ability to use technology effectively. Workshop coordinators also need to ensure that sensitive information and documents can be shared and uploaded in a secure manner.
- More time and effort needed to prep and register applicants; follow-up appointments often needed: Virtual workshops typically take more staff and volunteer time to prepare applicants in the lead up to the workshop to ensure the workshop is as effective and efficient on the day of. Additionally, many virtual models rely on an in-person appointment to finalize the application packet and in some cases to complete legal review. Therefore, although much of the work to complete the application is done on the day of the workshop, few applications are ready to be filed.

# Hybrid Workshops

## Advantages

- Allows for the largest number of participants and larger potential impact: The hybrid model's main advantage is that it allows applicants, staff and volunteers to decide if they want to attend the workshop in-person or virtually. This opens the workshop up to anyone who wants to participate and expands the workshop's overall impact.
- Bad weather or technological issues will not stop the workshop: Another significant advantage to hybrid workshops is that they can continue despite inclement weather or technology failure. Where an in-person or virtual event might need to be cancelled due to these impediments, a hybrid workshop can shift and continue to serve applicants at the workshop's physical location or remotely.

## Challenges & Limitations

- Added complexity to simultaneously manage in-person and online event spaces: Although a hybrid workshop offers the combined benefits of both the in-person and virtual models, it also means you are taking on many of the associated tasks with each model type. Hybrid models take more time to plan and organize and will require more staff or volunteers with a broader range of skills and training to effectively implement the workshop.