



**Homeland  
Security**

## Engagement Readout

### **Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman’s Webinar Series: Naturalization Test Redesign Updates**

On July 19, 2023, the Office of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman (CIS Ombudsman) hosted an informational session regarding U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services’ (USCIS) naturalization test redesign initiative. Acting CIS Ombudsman Nathan Stiefel and Deputy Chief of USCIS’ Office of Citizenship, Partnership and Engagement (OCPE) Bertha Anderson provided opening remarks.

During this engagement, Ciro Parascandola, assistant chief of policy at the CIS Ombudsman, engaged Shawn Chakrabarti, education program specialist in USCIS’ Citizenship Education and Training Branch, in a dialogue about the naturalization test redesign process, including background on the initiative and how the test may be administered.

On December 15, 2022, USCIS announced it would conduct a nationwide trial and engagement process to inform possible changes to the naturalization test. The trial will test potential changes to the English-speaking portion and updates to the content and format of the civics test. This initiative is intended to support the goals outlined in Executive Order 14012, *Restoring Faith in Our Legal Immigration Systems and Strengthening Integration and Inclusion Efforts for New Americans*, which directs a comprehensive review of the naturalization process to eliminate barriers and make the process more accessible to all eligible individuals. USCIS plans to use the results of the trial to assess any possible changes to the naturalization test.

Representatives from USCIS and the CIS Ombudsman’s Office discussed topics including:

- The current tests and proposed changes, both for the English language and the civics test
- Information, including sample questions, about and timing of the trial tests
- Examples and background on the structure and administration of a multiple-choice civics test
- Details about the technical advisory group that will review and provide recommendations on the redesign process

A total of 346 people joined this national webinar. Participants submitted 68 written questions and comments. Below is a sample of the questions received:

- How will the general expectations of ESL Level 3 be made more specific to reduce variability between USCIS immigration services officers?

- Will applicants be permitted to use interpreters during the N-400 interview after passing the new speaking and civics test?
- As the trial is going on, should applicants still prepare according to the current test?
- How will the trial ensure that low literacy level learners are included if National Reporting System (NRS) assessments are not required?
- If a community-based organization (CBO) is interested in participating in the trial, what is the registration process?
- Given that a computer-based test would create an additional barrier for those with low or no technological literacy, will the trial test be administered via paper?
- Besides the tester sample size of 1,500 test takers from the 230 CBOs, do you have any other criteria for test takers to ensure you have good representation in your data samples (e.g., testers over age 55 and people with limited English proficiency as opposed to those with very advanced English skills)?

The CIS Ombudsman will share a full list of inquiries received with USCIS to give the agency an opportunity to address the public's questions and concerns.

Speakers:

- Nathan Stiefel, acting CIS ombudsman
- Bertha Anderson, deputy chief, OCPE, USCIS
- Ciro Parascandola, assistant chief of policy, CIS Ombudsman
- Shawn Chakrabarti, education program specialist, Citizenship Education and Training Branch, OCPE, USCIS