

Increasing Asian American and Pacific Islander DACA Participation:

Overview and Grantmaking Recommendations

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

On June 15, 2012, President Obama announced the creation of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) initiative, which provides temporary legal status to undocumented youth who meet the program's criteria. As we approach the two-year anniversary of the DACA program, the participation rates of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) have been markedly low. In response, Unbound Philanthropy contracted with EunSook Lee to assess ongoing DACA-related services to AAPI youth and to develop grantmaking recommendations to increase their participation.

Information for this brief was gathered through phone and in-person interviews as well as e-mail correspondence with over 60 individuals, including community organizers, legal service providers, reporters, funders, researchers, and Dreamers. These interviews were supplemented with a review of current research and studies on the DACA program and the undocumented population.

This brief (1) provides a demographic overview of the DACA-eligible AAPI population, including where they reside and their application rates; (2) identifies regions that have a significant concentration of AAPI youth who are expected to renew their DACA status in 2014; (3) describes barriers that have prevented AAPI youth from applying for DACA; and (4) offers grantmaking recommendations for increasing AAPI participation.

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

There are an estimated 108,024 potential beneficiaries from Asia as of October 2012. Table A. lists the top ten states of residence.

Table A. AAPI DACA Population: Where They Live¹

State	Number
California	37,033
New York	11,275
New Jersey	6,245
Texas	6,184
Illinois	3,958
Virginia	3,846
Georgia	3,054
Washington	2,895
Florida	2,834
Maryland	2,712

AAPI DACA Population: Country of Origin

The Migration Policy Institute provided estimates of individuals who are immediately and potentially eligible beneficiaries from select Asian countries.

Table B. AAPI DACA Population: Country of Origin²

	Potentially Eligible*	Immediately Eligible**
Country of Birth		
Philippines	27,000	22,000
Korea	26,000	22,000
China	19,000	15,000
India	17,000	12,000

Potentially Eligible arrived before 16 years, before June 2007, and was under 31 years as of June 2012. **Immediately Eligible** is between the ages of 15 and 31 years and meets the education criteria.

¹ Immigration Policy Center, *Who and Where the DREAMers Are, Revised Estimates; A Demographic Profile of Immigrants Who Might Benefit from the Obama Administration's Deferred Action Initiative* (Washington, DC: American Immigration Council, October, 2012).

² This profile was produced by Migration Policy Institute on January 29, 2014 for this project and is not for publication purposes.

Table C. AAPI Application Rates by Country of Origin³

	Potentially Eligible	Immediately Eligible	Number of Applications	Application Rate	Number of Approvals	Approval Rate
Total	1,900,000	1,089,000				
Country of Birth						
Philippines	27,000	22,000	3,874	17%	3,489	90%
Korea	26,000	22,000	7,741	35%	7,144	92%
China	19,000	15,000	837	5%		
India	17,000	12,000	3,005	25%	2,282	83%
Pakistan			1,539		1,289	83%

Table D. AAPI Application Rates by State⁴

State	Number of Potential DACA Beneficiaries from Asia	Percentage of Applications Submitted from Asia	Number of Applications Submitted from Asia	Application Rate for Individuals from Asia
California	37,033	4.80%	6,345	20%
New York	11,275	15.50%	4,048	40%
New Jersey	6,245	9.90%	1,413	25%
Texas	6,184	1.60%	1,205	20%
Illinois	3,958	2.90%	708	30%
Washington	2,895	4.60%	440	5%

³ Application rates were calculated by dividing the number of “Immediately Eligible” by the number of applications submitted as of December 2013 according to USCIS’s latest figures for individuals from the Philippines, Korea, and India. China’s figures were derived from the Brookings Institution analysis of applications submitted as of March 2013 and the data is not for publication purposes. Pakistan’s sample size was too small to be included in the “Immediately Eligible” column and therefore estimated application rates are unavailable. The application rates were calculated by dividing the number of applications submitted by the number of approvals according to USCIS’s latest figures for individuals from Philippines, Korea, India, and Pakistan. Figures for China were too low to be included by USCIS.

⁴ Application rates were calculated by dividing the number of potential beneficiaries (Table A.) by the number of applications submitted as of March 2013 based on the Brookings Institution’s online page: “DACA Applications by State.” More current data was not available. These figures were rounded off and provide rough estimates on application rates by state.

Readying for Renewals

Professor Tom Wong at the University of California at San Diego has identified renewal “hotspots” for AAPI DACA beneficiaries based on an analysis of the first 146,313 applications submitted to USCIS (August 15 - September 30, 2012). Table E. identifies the top 5 states of residence of AAPI DACA beneficiaries who are likely to renew their status in 2014, and Table F. describes this information at the county level.⁵

While California had a lower application rate compared to New York and other states, it has the largest number of potential renewals. The majority of applications from California were from Southern California. In fact, San Francisco was not even among the top 20 counties with the most AAPI DACA applications.

Table E. Likely AAPI Renewals in 2014 by State

STATE	NUMBER
CALIFORNIA	3,876
NEW YORK	2,256
NEW JERSEY	888
TEXAS	696
ILLINOIS	519

Table F. Likely AAPI Renewals in 2014 by County

COUNTY	NUMBER	COUNTY	NUMBER
LOS ANGELES (CA)	2,226	NEW YORK (NY)	140
QUEENS (NY)	1,399	HUDSON (NY)	129
ORANGE (CA)	566	GWINNETT (GA)	128
BERGEN (NJ)	397	SANTA CLARA (CA)	125
COOK (IL)	372	KING (WA)	120
KINGS (NY)	264	NASSAU (NY)	100
HARRIS (TX)	200	SAN DIEGO (CA)	99
ALAMEDA (CA)	160	SUFFOLK (NY)	98
FAIRFAX (VA)	148	RIVERSIDE (CA)	92
SAN BERNARDINO (CA)	148	MONTGOMERY (PA)	87

⁵ Tom Wong, *Mapping Outreach for DACA Renewals: Addendum, Asian Applicants* (San Diego, CA: UC San Diego Department of Political Science, March 6, 2014).

Why Are AAPI Application Rates Low?

Almost 30 local and national organizations have created programs to offer DACA application assistance to AAPIs.⁶ Few are adequately resourced and most work in isolation, often not part of broader networks to support DACA applications. An analysis of program practices by key AAPI organizations revealed that many experienced challenges in executing effective outreach activities to inform eligible youth of the DACA program and its benefits. As a result, few were successful in helping large numbers of AAPI to apply for DACA.

The most common barriers preventing AAPI Dreamers from applying to DACA are no different than those expressed by other eligible youth. They include the inability to pay the application fees, difficulties in obtaining documents to support their applications, lack of educational attainment, lack of knowledge about how to apply, and fear of deportation or negative consequences to other family members.

However, the prevailing stigma against undocumented immigrants in AAPI communities had been a particularly difficult to overcome. Community leaders, ethnic media reporters, and Dreamers point out that undocumented AAPI immigrants face a greater level of shame in their communities because undocumented immigration issues are not widely discussed, nor are they covered by ethnic media. Many adults are reluctant to have their children come forward to seek deferred status, fearing that it could bring shame to the family and heighten the risk of deportation to other family members.

6. This project identified a total of 25 local or regional organizations and 3 national networks that offered DACA outreach and/or application services. Eleven were based in New York, followed by nine California based groups, four in Illinois, and one in Texas.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO GRANTMAKERS

Prioritize Select States

Grantmakers should consider two primary factors in selecting states for AAPI focused DACA programs: (1) states with the largest eligible population, focusing on those with low application rates, and (2) states and counties with a high number of renewal opportunities. Six states – California, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Texas, and Washington State – have 70% (67,590) of all potential AAPI beneficiaries and 73% (8,355) of the first wave of applicants eligible for renewal. Providing resources to California is especially compelling, as more than a third of all potential applicants reside in the state.

Support Targeted Outreach to Specific Ethnic Communities

Grantmakers should dedicate resources to support outreach and services targeted for individuals from five priority countries: Philippines, Korea, China, India, and Pakistan. The first four are the top countries of origin for potential beneficiaries. The fifth country, Pakistan, has a significant number of applicants who will need to renew their DACA status over the next year. Individuals from these countries make up 89,000 of the potentially eligible population, of which 71,000 are immediately eligible and 17,000 who will be eligible for renewal in 2014.

Prioritize Community Education and Outreach

Donors should invest in organizations with strong connections to the target populations, ready to coordinate on-the-ground education and outreach activities, and capable of shaping and influencing community views on immigrants. Successful outreach depends on an organization's commitment to take up the challenge of changing the hearts and minds of AAPI communities on undocumented immigration, a controversial, emotionally charged, and complex issue. Organizational intent coupled with skilled organizing on the ground will produce better outcomes.

Effective outreach strategies should include:

- Developing work plans with measurable goals
- Mapping the target population
- Developing informed and compelling spokespersons, as well as persuasive messages

Some best practices include working with educators, parent associations, and school boards at high schools and community colleges; developing faith leaders as validators of the program; and partnerships with consulate offices of select Asian countries. Reaching a broader AAPI population will require thoughtful planning by organizations that have experience working with individuals living in the informal economy and within ethnic enclaves.

Given that many AAPI groups have limited outreach capacity or experience, particularly with the undocumented community, support for organizations to provide technical assistance and sharing best practices should be a priority. In late 2012, several funders supported the development of a national AAPI DACA Collaborative to address these challenges. The Collaborative has been co-led by Advancing Justice—Los Angeles and NAKASEC, and includes their various affiliates, the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund (AALDEF) and South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT). The Collaborative helped 3,842 AAPI youth submit DACA applications, provided 9,616 consultations, and held 305 clinics and processing events from June 2012 to December 2013. However, limited funding restricted the Collaborative's ability to offer technical assistance to the field. Any concerted effort to increase AAPI DACA application nationally should expand the capacity of the Collaborative to support other groups that are interested in helping more AAPI youth apply for DACA.

Support Creative Multi-Media Strategies

Multi-pronged communications strategies that combine ethnic media with new media can reach a much larger audience of potential beneficiaries, their family members, and broader AAPI communities. Ethnic media is often the primary source of information and news for immigrant communities, but young AAPIs are very digitally connected and often are bicultural and bilingual. Organizations need to craft compelling messages and execute consistent activities to promote awareness of and foster dialogue about the DACA programs. Funders should support organizations that have demonstrated ability to reach the intended audience, and when necessary, bring in additional partners. For example, entities such as 18MR, Kollaboration and other popular AAPI bloggers can develop social media strategies to complement traditional outreach campaigns by local community-based groups.

Link Organizing to DACA Outreach and Services

DACA offers a tangible benefit to many undocumented youth, and it can be an important organizing opportunity for AAPI groups to integrate undocumented immigrants into their programs. As Dreamers and their parents come forward to apply for DACA, community groups should develop strategies for engaging these immigrants and helping them to become leaders, activists, and supporters.

Dreamers and their families are forceful messengers for immigration reform, immigrant integration, and immigrant rights, and they would benefit from projects design to build their organizing skills. Trainings, coaching, and mentorships could expose young people to strategy and tactics from organizations that run the gamut --- from electoral campaigns to neighborhood based organizing. The development of more AAPI organizers will augment the progressive youth movement of today and increase immigrant and AAPI community capacity for movement building and enhanced immigrant civic participation in the future.

Increase Research on the Undocumented Population

There is scant research on the undocumented population, and even less about AAPIs because of their relatively small size. Donors should support efforts by organizations to partner with researchers to better understand the individuals they come into contact through information provided in intake forms, surveys, or focus groups. This type of information could help create a richer population profile, identify needs, and improve outreach tactics and services.

Measure Impact, Analyze Tactics, and Promote Success


Many of the groups that are providing DACA services to AAPIs do not have systems for collecting data, tracking outcomes and assessing impact. Funders can help support the development of a common set of metrics for DACA outreach and assistance activities so that these groups will be better positioned to assess their strategies and identify gaps. This effort should be done collaboratively with leading AAPI groups to ensure that the process and content of any new evaluation framework is responsive and not overly burdensome. A shared evaluation framework, with specific metrics, will enable organizations to quantify outcomes, measure success, and allow for course corrections. Metrics related to legal services, outreach, and media outreach should align as much as possible with existing activities and program.

Build the Capacity of the AAPI DACA Collaborative

The Collaborative (described above) should receive resources to hire a dedicated coordinator to strengthen overall communications, convene groups, and implement coordinated activities. The Collaborative can be the anchor for a national network of AAPI groups that shares best practices for legal services and outreach, facilitates the development of common materials (including translated documents), and offer an advocacy voice for AAPI communities

In addition, the Collaborative should establish strategic partnerships with campaigns and organizations such as United We Dream Network (UWDN) and USCIS Office of Public Engagement. A meaningful partnership with UWDN's Own the Dream campaign, in particular, could prove especially beneficial to both parties, allowing them to expand their reach and enhance their programs. By working with other networks, the Collaborative can help develop new guidelines and policy changes, advocate on particular cases and serve a useful information conduit to local AAPI groups.

DACA offers the promise of real change to the lives of many young immigrants. DACA implementation also can serve as a dress rehearsal for any broader legalization program that Congress may enact in the future. AAPI groups, in particular, can use this opportunity to expand their capacity to conduct outreach and expand their services and programs to undocumented immigrants.



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