

FY 2025 | Community Grant Application
Deadline April 30, 2026
3:30 P.M.



Organization Name: Central American Resource Center-CARECEN

Executive Director/Officer Abel Nuñez

Fiscal Sponsor Name: _____

Mailing Address 4930-A Annapolis Rd. Bladensburg, MD 20710

Phone Number 202-328-9799 Email abel.nunez@carecendc.org

Federal ID# 52-1271888

Incorporation Date 1982 501 (c) (3) Registration Date _____

Project Title Immigration Legal Services

Project Location 4930-A Annapolis Rd. Bladensburg, MD 20710

CERTIFICATION

"I certify that I have reviewed this application and that, to the best of my knowledge, all statements and figures contained herein are true, accurate, and complete. If your organization does not have a Board of Directors, please indicate "NA" on the signature line and have the Organization's Director sign.

Abel Nuñez
Signature of Chief Executive Officer

4/10/2026
Date

Print Name Abel Nuñez Title Executive Director

Address 4930-A Annapolis Rd. Bladensburg, MD 20710

Phone 202-328-9799 Email abel.nunez@carecendc.org

Provide the following information about your clients based on your most recent data. Information current as of (date) 4/10/2026

RESIDENCE OF CLIENTS SERVED (*Preference will be given to agencies serving Bladensburg residents*)

Town of Bladensburg	<u>82</u>
Prince Georges County	<u> </u>
Port Towns (Edmonston, Cottage City, Colmar Manor)	<u> </u>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - Provide a brief summary of your project and organization. Please include the following: the project purpose, the number of people in **the Town of Bladensburg** to be served, and how the Town grant funds will be used.

The Central American Resource Center (CARECEN) fosters the comprehensive development of the Latino and immigrant populations in the Washington metropolitan region. Founded in 1981, CARECEN provides direct services, including low-to-no-cost legal assistance, housing counseling, citizenship assistance and educational workshops, while promoting grassroots empowerment, civic engagement and human rights advocacy.

Grant funds will be used to provide full and brief legal consultations to at least 20 Bladensburg residents. Consultations are especially important in the current moment as they help individuals assess eligibility for immigration relief, understand their current status, potential risks, and identify vulnerabilities that could affect their families.

As part of the timely legal counsel offered, families will benefit from our offering of family emergency planning, deportation preparation, education and accompaniment. This way, the community will have knowledge to best prepare for any eventuality, including protection of their families and assets in case of detention or deportation and a renewed sense of strength and agency. Deportees and their families will also benefit from access to practical guidance and resources for reintegration.

PROGRAM INFORMATION - Describe the overall or general purpose of your agency and how it serves the residents of Bladensburg.

CARECEN has two core programs:

a) The Legal Immigration Department provides low-to-no-cost legal services, including assistance with FOIAs, advanced parole services, work permits, DACA renewals, work authorization, permanent residence, and family reunification.

The Legal program holds regular Know Your Rights (KYR) presentations that include individualized legal consultations after the general presentation. Our presentations provide free legal advice to underserved Haitian, Senegalese, and West African communities. These workshops help immigrants and their families understand any benefits for which they may qualify, resulting in increased access to justice.

These KYR trainings have become increasingly important for educating immigrant communities about their constitutional rights, especially given rapidly shifting policies, such as the expansion of expedited removal and intensified immigration enforcement. Alongside KYR sessions, brief consultations are crucial to ensure that individuals are fully informed and understand their immigration status and history. This helps determine whether they are eligible for any immigration relief, or not - which is important for planning and preparedness in case of detention. Family preparedness plans have also become increasingly essential, particularly for mixed-status families. These plans enable families to proactively prepare for potential detention scenarios, ensuring they are well-informed and equipped to navigate such situations.

b. The Citizenship and Civic Participation program, a subset of the Legal program, provides a comprehensive naturalization process. This includes quarterly citizenship classes to prepare applicants for the US naturalization exam, individualized tutoring, and interview preparation. The program also promotes informed community participation in local civic and democratic processes through education and training.

By taking an integrated approach to the naturalization process, CARECEN helps immigrants successfully transition from Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) status to US citizenship, facilitating access to job opportunities, educational advancement, higher earnings, derivative citizenship for minor children, family reunification, and enhanced civic participation and leadership opportunities. In the upcoming 2026 local and national elections, the importance of increasing civic engagement within this historically marginalized population could not be overstated.

c. The Housing Department helps to maintain safe and affordable housing by informing tenants of their rights, providing financial literacy training, and individualized counseling to prevent displacement. Additionally, we provide technical assistance to cooperatives and tenant association boards subjected to threats of displacement or who need support with sale negotiations.

For decades, CARECEN has been operating out of our DC office, serving residents across DC, Maryland, and Virginia. In the past decade, we've witnessed a significant displacement of our clients due to the high cost of living in the District, prompting many to seek more affordable housing in Prince George's County and surrounding areas. This led us to open our Bladensburg, MD office in 2025. Having a physical presence in Bladensburg has made it easier for residents to access our services without needing to travel all the way to DC. We are continuing to conduct outreach to raise awareness about our presence and services in Bladensburg, MD.

PERFORMANCE HISTORY (Prior Grant Award Applicants Only) - If you received Town Grants last year, please evaluate the progress you have made in implementing the project. Please discuss factors that may have hindered your progress

To date, we have provided brief legal services to 82 residents and hosted two KYR workshops attended by 68 individuals, with positive feedback from participants. Clients reported feeling more confident about their rights and several successfully renewed their work permits with our assistance, maintaining their legal status in the US and protected from deportation.

COMMUNITY NEED/POPULATION BEING SERVED- Describe the issue or community that needs to be addressed. Provide the demographic data and geographic information used to determine the extent of the problem or the need not being addressed.

The Washington Post recently reported that ICE agents made nearly 20,000 arrests in DC, Maryland, and Virginia from the start of President Trump's second term. Prince George's County, Maryland, is home to a large and diverse immigrant population. U.S. Census Bureau data shows that 39.5% of Bladensburg's residents are foreign-born, with 46.4% speaking a language other than English at home. Many of these individuals face significant barriers, including an inability to afford legal services and a lack of understanding of available resources. The area is also home to many low- and moderate-income families, with a large portion employed in low-wage or informal sectors. These economic challenges are compounded by limited English proficiency, financial instability, and housing insecurity, making accessing essential services, including legal resources, particularly difficult.

While we cannot prevent people from being detained or deported, legal service providers can help immigrant families, especially those with mixed immigration statuses by equipping them with resources and preparing them for worst-case scenarios so they are not left even more vulnerable. Family emergency preparedness has become so critical to maintaining stable family units and overall integrity. We've encountered numerous stories where individuals were detained or deported, leaving children stranded and facing challenges in reuniting them with their families due to missing guardianship forms or temporary parental consent documents. Additionally, when primary breadwinners, often men are detained, households face a secondary crisis if their names are not on leases or bank accounts, leading to housing insecurity and an inability to access immediate funds.

While there are some local organizations providing legal assistance to immigrants, many lack the multilingual capacity and cultural competency needed to serve the diverse populations, particularly those who speak languages such as Spanish, Haitian Creole, French, Wolof, and Djola. CARECEN's diverse and multilingual team is uniquely equipped to offer culturally appropriate services, addressing both legal and social service needs in a way that meets the distinct needs of these immigrant communities.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION- Please provide a detailed description of the program you are proposing. Please include the group of people you plan to serve, the expected number of participants, the activities or services you will provide, and the location of the program/project.

The grant funds will be used to provide brief legal consultations to at least 20 residents of Bladensburg, with a focus on underserved communities, including Latino, Haitian, Senegalese and other migrant populations. These legal services include brief legal consultations, which are so critical for immigrants, mixed-status families understand their legal status, vulnerabilities and risks for themselves and loved ones.

In addition to timely legal counsel, families will benefit from family emergency planning, deportation preparation, education and accompaniment. This way, the community will have knowledge to best prepare for any eventuality, including protection of their families and assets in case of detention or deportation and a renewed sense of strength and agency. Deportees and their families will also benefit from access to practical guidance and resources for reintegration.

CARECEN's multilingual team will ensure that services are accessible and culturally relevant to Bladensburg's diverse population. Through this grant, CARECEN aims to promote the integration of immigrant residents, educating and preparing families in case of detention and deportation so that they are better equipped to make informed decisions for their families.

Services are provided at CARECEN's Maryland office located at 4930-A Annapolis, Rd. Bladensburg, MD 20710.

METHODOLOGY- Describe the methodology (or approach) for the proposed program/project, e.g., the procedures, tasks, techniques, or tools you will use to develop the program.

CARECEN's trauma informed services are informed by the principles of safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness and empowerment. We ensure that clients feel safe, both within and outside of our presence, by providing a safe and secure environment, building trustful relationships, and addressing client fears and concerns. CARECEN assures clients that the services will be confidential and conducts conflict checks as needed. CARECEN respects the choices of its clients and provides referrals and support without judgment. CARECEN's support, guidance, education and referrals are also geared towards empowering our clients.

CARECEN implements the following strategies and tools to measure progress and tracks outcomes:

A. Training: Staff is provided continuing legal education for all Legal Services Program staff, supervised legal interns, and pro bono attorneys to ensure they will be able to provide trauma-informed representation to clients.

B. Case Management: Staff maintain both online (Salesforce and Cerenade) and physical tracking systems to efficiently manage client requests, anticipate document submissions, and oversee long-term cases, especially those affected by administrative backlogs lasting five years or more.

C. Technology: We leverage technology to streamline consultations and application processes. Our staff completes immigration applications online whenever possible, and scans necessary documents such as police and hospital reports, as well as photos of the victims' injuries. To address safety concerns from the use of technology, clients are informed about the methods used to file their applications, and the electronic records that will be maintained. Clients are reassured about the safety of the databases maintained by CARECEN and all actions taken by CARECEN are done only with client consent.

D. Evaluation Method: To ensure grant compliance and evaluate service efficiency, we track data on the number of new clients served and those returning for additional legal services.

E. Community Outreach and Engagement: Most of our clients learn about CARECEN through word of mouth. We also collaborate with local organizations, community groups, and places of worship to further promote our programs to potential clients. Our outreach efforts include distributing informational materials, hosting community events, and utilizing social media platforms to raise awareness.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND IMPACT - Please provide activities and events that your organization has held within the Town of Bladensburg and the Port Towns. Tell us about the impact of your community activities.

- Held 3 twelve-week citizenship preparation classes, enrolling 35 eligible Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs)
- Hosted a virtual KYR session for PG residents in partnership with Council Member Jolene Ivey and Congressman Ivey, attended by 46 residents and conducted in English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, and French
- Partnered with Council Member Alison Pages to host a bilingual KYRs for Colmar Manor residents, attended by 60 residents
- Participated in a citizenship event in Brentwood in July 2025 which had about 8 participants, and a KYR at Kenmoor Middle School in August 2025 with 60 participants

ORGANIZATION CAPABILITIES - Describe the organization's ability to implement the program/project

Having served the community in various capacities for over 45 years, CARECEN is recognized throughout the greater Maryland and Washington, DC metropolitan region as a trusted advocate and legal service provider for the immigrant community. CARECEN's experienced legal services team is highly qualified to undertake this project and provide high-quality, affordable culturally competent and trauma-informed services, and extensive community outreach.

The Director of Legal Services, who has over 29 years of legal experience including 14 years in immigration law, supervises the Legal Services Program team. The legal services team is not only experienced in immigration practice, but is also well-versed in culturally competent, community-based representation for low-literacy, and multilingual clients who may be hesitant or stigmatized in divulging information about their victimization.

The team is also managed by a Deputy Legal Director with over 20 years of experience as a licensed attorney in Spain and El Salvador and includes a staff attorney and two Immigrant Justice Corps (IJC) fellows who focus on serving crime victims and unaccompanied minors, and reviewing paralegal work, ensuring quality control (QC), as well as providing additional oversight. The team also has two fully accredited U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) representatives who can represent clients before Immigration Judges and the Board of Immigration Appeals, and five partially accredited DOJ paralegals who can represent clients before the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Finally, we have one legal assistant who will support the paralegals.

A key strength of CARECEN's Legal Services Program is its diverse team, which is fluent in Spanish, Portuguese, French, Haitian Creole, Wolof, and Djola. This multilingual capacity is essential for creating an inclusive and supportive environment where clients feel understood and empowered. It enables us to effectively address the legal needs of a diverse clientele, ensuring that language is never a barrier to justice.

Furthermore, through strategic partnerships with law schools and law firms, such as Georgetown University, American University, Steptoe, and Wilmer Hale we expand our capacity to meet the growing demand for legal services. These partnerships allow us to extend legal representation to more clients than we could have on our own. Moreover, Pro bono attorneys, volunteers, and interns trained and mentored by CARECEN gain invaluable experience in immigration law, expanding their capacity to serve immigrants. This not only supports our mission to provide legal services but also contributes to the broader goal of ensuring more immigrants have access to justice and legal representation.

In response to the community's needs, our legal team has worked tirelessly in close collaboration with various partners. With extensive experience in conducting Know Your Rights (KYR) trainings, managing materials, and adapting content to evolving immigration policies, our team has been dedicated to providing crucial support. In 2025, CARECEN provided 170 KYRs trainings reaching a total of 7,781 individuals. We utilized a hybrid model consisting of 121 virtual sessions and 49 in-person. The impact was felt across the region, with 92 trainings reaching 4,468 Maryland constituents and 78 sessions reaching 3,313 in DC.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS: Please attach any materials that will provide more context for your activities and events in the Town of Bladensburg and the Port Towns. *Examples include event flyers, social media posts, links to media articles, and other information on your organization.*

PROJECT BUDGET

Please see the project budget template, which includes all budget items and the total for each.

Note the funding cap of this grant is **\$2000.00**.

Budget Category	Description	Requested Amount (\$)
Personnel	(Stipends for project staff, if applicable)	
Supplies & Materials	(List project-related items such as tools, equipment, or materials)	
Contractual Services	(Payments for external services such as consultants or instructors)	
Event Expenses	(Venue rental, permits, marketing, refreshments, etc.)	
Printing & Outreach	(Flyers, posters, online ads, or other marketing materials)	
Transportation	(Mileage reimbursement or rental costs, if applicable)	
Other Costs	(Miscellaneous expenses essential to the project)	
Total Requested	(Must not exceed \$2,000)	²⁰⁰⁰ \$ _____