



NPNA Language Access Working Group Victories & Models

In honor of Language Access Month, NPNA has created this toolkit to highlight victories across the country with Language Access Working Group partners and resources on providing meaningful language access.

What is Meaningful Language Access?

Individuals who are limited English proficient (LEP) are those for whom English is not their primary language and they have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. Immigrants and refugees in the United States come from many language backgrounds and while some speak English very well, approximately half of the total immigrant and refugee population of [43.3 million in 2015 were LEP](#). Beyond the LEP population in the United States, there are [nearly 68 million](#) (almost 1 in 5) people in the US who spoke a language other than English at home, making the US one of the most linguistically diverse countries in the world (Census.gov, 2015).

Many resources to linguistically diverse individuals can provide language access, but meaningful language access is vital to ensure safety and justice for people with limited English proficiency and empower them to fully participate in their communities. Meaningful language access is defined as “language assistance that results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the Limited English Proficient individual” ([U.S. Department of Justice](#), 2012). Language access services are critical to ensure that survivors have a fair chance to access safety and justice. [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act](#) requires that recipients of federal funding take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to services for individuals with limited English proficiency.

Federal Laws and Guidelines on Language Access

The federal government places a high priority on language access to federally funded services, whether in a state or local government agency. Several federal laws and guidelines mandate language assistance to LEP individuals.

[Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#)

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits recipients of federal financial assistance from discriminating based on race, color, or national origin. It states, “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” The application of Title VI extends to providing meaningful access to individuals who have limited English proficiency (LEP) as languages are related to national origins.

[The Voting Rights Act of 1975](#)

- Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) mandates language assistance if more than 10,000 or over 5 percent of the citizens of voting age in a jurisdiction are members of a single-language minority group who do not speak or understand English adequately enough to participate in the electoral process.

[Executive Order 13166 of 2000](#)

- President Bill Clinton signed Executive Order 13166 in 2000, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency to Federal Agencies. The Executive Order requires all federal agencies to establish guidelines on providing meaningful access to LEP individuals in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights

Act of 1964, and to issue guidelines to recipients of their funding to clarify what they must do to provide meaningful access to LEP persons.

Department of Justice Guidelines of 2001

- The Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice (DOJ) developed guidelines in 2001 that provided a four-factor test that federal agencies and other entities can use in the determination of “reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access.” These factors include:
 - The number or proportion of LEP individuals eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the program
 - The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program
 - The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the program to individual’s lives
 - The resources available to the grantee/recipient and costs
- According to DOJ guidelines, quality interpretation and translation services may be provided in numerous ways, including:
 - multilingual staff,
 - telephone interpreter lines,
 - written language services, and
 - community volunteers

Language Access Victories & Resources

East Coast Region

District of Columbia

- District of Columbia, [Language Access Act of 2004](#), codified in District of Columbia Municipal Regulations and District of Columbia Register, Chapter 4-12 (2014).
- <https://ohr.dc.gov/service/know-your-rights-language-access>

Maryland

- [Chapter 141 of the Acts of 2002](#): Chapter 141 of the Acts of 2002 is a State reaffirmation of Executive Order 13166. The law declares that State departments, agencies, and programs shall provide equal access to public services for individuals with Limited English Proficiency; requiring vital documents to be translated into any language spoken by any Limited English Proficient population that constitutes 3 percent of the overall population within a specified geographic area.

Massachusetts

- [Boston, MA](#): Ten million dollars will support public health responses, including vaccine initiatives and treatment for behavioral and substance use issues. The same amount is headed to communities that were hit especially hard by the pandemic to be used for affordable housing investment and other housing services, health programs, support for childcare and early education, and **support for language access**. Another \$14.5 million will address the impacts of the pandemic on food access, housing, arts, culture, and tourism, and the remaining \$15.5 million will assist small businesses in pandemic recovery.
- [Boston, MA: City of Boston: An Ordinance Establishing Language and Communications Access for City Services](#)

New York

- [Statewide Language Access Policy, 2011](#)
- [Suffolk County Executive Order - 10 \(2012\)](#)
- Executive Orders 34 & 41: Executive Orders 34 and 41 act as a confidentiality policy that allows all New Yorkers, regardless of immigration status, to access important City services.
 - [Read Executive Order 34](#)
 - [Read Executive Order 41](#)

- Executive Order 120: Executive Order 120 requires that all City agencies that provide services to the public create a language access plan to ensure that those that do not speak English can still access city services.
 - [Read Executive Order 120](#)
- Executive Order 128: Executive Order 128 officially creates Immigrant Heritage Week, an annual Citywide program of outreach and education celebrating the histories and traditions of the City's diverse immigrant communities. Immigrant Heritage Week is held every April.
 - [Read Executive Order 128](#)
- Local Law 30: Local Law 30 (LL 30) is the City's language access law which improves access to City services for all individuals. LL 30 requires covered agencies to appoint language access coordinators, translate commonly distributed documents into 10 designated languages, provide telephonic interpretation in at least 100 languages, and develop and implement language access implementation plans, among other requirements.
 - [Read Local Law 30](#)
- Local Law 31: Local Law 31 is the City's "Immigration Service Provider Law." The law introduced new protections for immigrants against fraud by non-lawyer, for-profit providers.
 - [Find out more on the Department of Consumer Affairs site](#)
- Local Law 73: Local Law 73 is also known as the "Equal Access to Human Services Law." This City law strengthens language access services for people with limited English skills seeking important health and human services. The law places requirements on the Human Resources Administration (HRA), the Administration for Children's Services (ACS), the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), and the Department of Homeless Services (DHS).
 - [Read Local Law 73](#)

Pennsylvania

- [Philadelphia](#): In 2015, Philadelphians voted to amend the Home Rule Charter to require all City agencies to provide language access services. The Office of Immigrant Affairs manages Language Access Philly, the City's language access program that oversees [language access policies](#) and language services. Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English can be considered limited English proficient, or "LEP." Language Access Philly ensures that City departments can communicate with people with limited English proficiency (LEP). In addition to bilingual staff, language access services offered by the City may include:
 - Interpretation over the phone.
 - Interpretation in person.
 - Translation of documents.

Southern Region

Georgia

- Atlanta: [The Language Access Plan](#), known as iSpeakATL, offers free, timely, and efficient language services to the City's Limited English Proficient (LEP) population. Constituents will be able to receive excellent service in all City buildings and offices, no matter what language they speak.

North Carolina

- [Office of Language Access Services](#)
- [Durham Language Access Department](#)
- [Durham Language Access Plan](#)

Texas

- [Language Access Policy | AustinTexas.gov](#) (2022)
 - [Language Access Policy](#)
- Council approves \$450K for accessibility and outreach programs. City Council approved three resolutions that will direct \$450,000 in grant money from the

American Rescue Plan Act to the Austin Public Library system's new public outreach and accessibility programs. \$150,072 of the grant funding is allotted for bridging language barriers

- More than half of the grant will go to the Texas Digital Navigators program, adding seven temporary employees that will teach digital literacy to populations that have difficulty accessing or using the internet at home.

Midwest Region

Michigan

- [CITY OF BRIGHTON: Limited English Proficiency \(LEP\) Plan Guidelines and Procedures](#)

Minnesota

- [LEP Resources](#)
- [Minneapolis Language Access Plan](#) (2015)

Illinois

- Chicago: In 2015, the City Council passed Mayor Emanuel's [Language Access Ordinance](#). Most recently, the city published [Bridging the Language Gap: Recommendations from Chicago's Language Access Advisory Committee](#).

Wisconsin

- [Madison, WI](#): \$150,000 in ARPA funds will be used to support connection to basic needs for the most vulnerable populations

West Coast Region & Alaska & Hawai'i

Alaska

- [Anchorage, Language Access Plan](#) (2018)

California

- [Long Beach](#): The Proposed FY 22 Language Access Program (LAP) budget is approximately \$3.2 million (see below table for detailed information). Of this amount, \$2.2 million is structural and includes funding for the following: a LAP coordinator to manage requests for interpretation/translation, conduct training, and evaluate LAP policy Citywide; contract services for document translation; interpretation at community and City Council meetings; community outreach stipends to fund multilingual education about LAP; bilingual skill pay for 591 FTEs across 19 City departments to compensate for certified oral and/or written bilingual capacity for positions that have frequent or significant interactions with the public. In addition, the budget includes \$950,000 in one-time Long Beach Recovery Act funding to support LAP coordination services, interpretation services at City meetings, translation of health material for COVID-19 response efforts, and business and outreach program materials to aid in economic recovery.
 - As of October 2020, all City Council meetings provide Spanish interpretation. A contracted vendor currently provides this service. Due to challenges with interpretation quality in the past, the vendor now typically assigns the same two interpreters for every City Council meeting so interpreters become familiar with the flow and jargon used in the meetings. The City Council has directed staff to explore bringing interpretation inhouse to be provided by City staff. The Office of Equity is currently working with Human Resources to identify the classifications and funding needed to hire staff interpreters
- [Sonoma County](#): A Language Access proposal (\$310,000) will engage a consultant to evaluate existing language access provisions, assess language needs, and recommend and implement a county-wide Language Access Policy.
- [San Francisco](#): In 2001 the City enacted the [Equal Access to Services Ordinance \(EAS\)](#) to ensure meaningful access and the same level of service to Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons that was available to all city residents. Since the Ordinance was amended in 2009 as the Language Access Ordinance (LAO), OCEIA has been charged with overseeing compliance, implementing one of the most comprehensive

local language access laws in the nation, and engaging community organizations and City departments in an ongoing effort to better serve LEP residents in San Francisco. In March 2015, the LAO was further amended by the Board of Supervisors and signed into law by the Mayor. These actions clearly make the San Francisco LAO the strongest, self-imposed local language law in the nation.

- Key changes include amending the administrative code to
 - expand the scope of the Language Access Ordinance to apply to all City Departments that provide information or services directly to the public;
 - revising and strengthening complaint procedures; and
 - enhancing and streamlining annual departmental compliance plan reporting requirements.
- In addition to overseeing compliance, OCEIA provides direct services to assist City Departments, the Mayor's Office and the Board of Supervisors better meet the needs of residents and workers for whom English is not a first language. Services include technical assistance, and on demand translation and interpretation assistance.

Colorado

- [State Language Access Policy and Plan](#)
- [City and County of Denver Language Access Program](#)

Hawai'i

- [Hawai'i Office of Language Access](#)
- [Hawai'i Language Access Plan for Persons with Limited English Proficiency \(2022-2024\)](#)

New Mexico

- City of Albuquerque Executive Order:
 - This Executive Order affirms the aspiration of the City of Albuquerque to provide equal access to City services for all people living in Albuquerque, including those with limited proficiency in English and those who use American Sign Language, closed captioning, and Braille. This Executive Order directs all city departments to create and implement a Language Access Plan.
 - [Language Access Plan and Toolkit](#)

Oregon

- [Language Access Plan](#)
 - Mission Statement: Court Language Access Services provides mandated linguistic access to the Oregon State Courts through trained ethical interpreters, education of the court and responsible resource management.

Washington

- Language Access for Early Learning
 - DCYF to hire two temp. language access coordinators with specialties in Spanish and Somali to address immediate language access needs at DCYF related to COVID-19 child care relief and recovery in agency programs, including:
 - Translation
 - Outreach to community organizations serving multilingual children and families
 - Webinars and other technical assistance
 - Other means of increasing language access and equity for early learning providers and caregivers
- [King County](#): King County declared racism a public health crisis and used that effort to develop programs with their cooperating departments to provide targeted help and information to the BIPOC community, as well as creating a COVID-19 Language Access Team (LAT) that hired community members as translation contractors to help guide residents who do not speak English. Translation management tool - Smart Cat

used throughout the cities in King County. City is working off LA executive order v. ordinance. Plan to test city workers who are multilingual and can be paid a premium on top of salary to assist translation and interpretation requests throughout the city

- [Washington State Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Response Language Access Plan](#)
- [Washington State Coalition for Language Access](#)
 - [iSpeak Cards](#)

Language Access Program Development (LEP.gov)

- [DHS Indigenous Languages Plan](#) “DHS recognizes the importance of effective communication with persons who are limited English proficient (LEP) across its many missions and functions and is committed to meeting the requirements of Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (August 11, 2000). The DHS Indigenous Languages Plan is a vehicle for strengthening language services for Indigenous migrants who are encountered and served in DHS programs, activities, and operations, as migration levels in the U.S. from Guatemala and other countries with large Indigenous populations have increased significantly.
- Related resources are available on the [interpretation](#) and [translation](#) pages, including I Speak cards, translated taglines, and notices for language assistance services.
- [Language Access Assessment and Planning Tool for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs](#) - May 9, 2011
- [Common Language Access Questions, Technical Assistance, and Guidance for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs \(PDF\)](#) - August 15, 2011
- [Considerations for Providing Language Access in a Prosecutorial Agency](#) - September 21, 2011
- [Top Tips from Responses to the Survey of Language Access Strategies Used by Federal Government Agencies](#), Federally Conducted Committee, Federal Interagency Working Group on Limited English Proficiency
- [Guide to Developing a Language Access Plan](#), U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - 2018
- [Language Access Services Webinar](#) for Wyoming Department of Health (3 Sessions), Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services - 2019
- Session II: Civil Rights and Language Access Planning ([Recording](#), [Slides](#)) - April 17, 2019
- Sample LEP policy and procedure – [OCR’s Sample LEP Policy and Procedure](#)