

LA County Planning Language Access Plan

Effective: June 30, 2025

Contact: LanguageAccess@planning.lacounty.gov

SECTION 1: OVERVIEW + CONTEXT

LA County Planning (Department) provides equitable planning, development, and engagement for all unincorporated LA County residents and businesses to help create vibrant, sustainable, and resilient communities.

LA County Planning aims to make our services accessible to speakers of languages other than English (LOTE) to ensure that everyone can understand and take part in the planning process. By addressing language needs, LA County Planning allows for the experiences and views of all LA County residents to be recognized and valued.

It is vital for the Department to offer better language support to LOTE speakers. This helps LA County Planning gather new community ideas and input. It also strengthens ties with underrepresented groups and improves our public services, supporting the County's equity goals.

This Language Access Plan reflects LA County Planning's commitment to creating inclusive, resilient communities and is a living document to be updated as new needs emerge.

A. Department Priority Languages

Approximately one-quarter of Los Angeles County's population is comprised of persons with limited English proficiency (LEP) (American Community Survey, 2019). Per LEP.gov, limited English proficiency (LEP) persons are individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

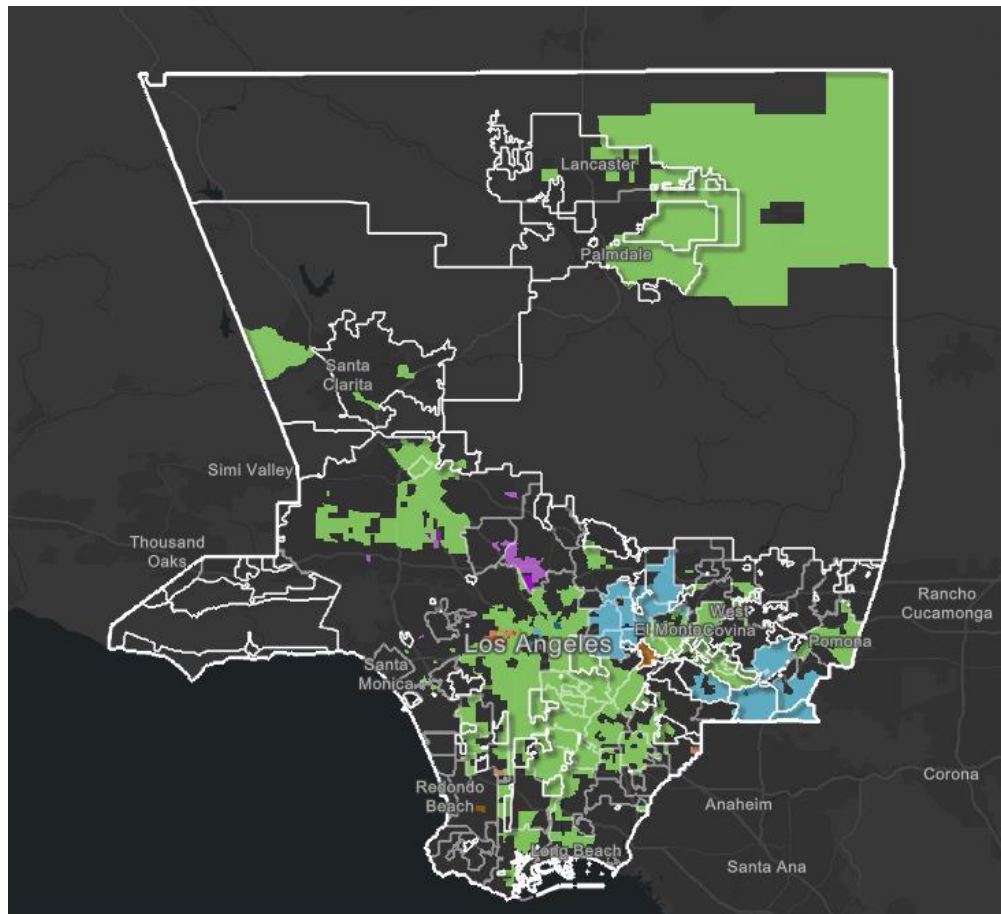
LEP Communities are places where at least 15% of the population over the age of five speak a language other than English at home, per the American Community Survey (ACS) 2019¹. Using this definition, Spanish and Chinese² are the threshold LEP languages for the unincorporated LA County communities.

LA County Planning has created a [LEP Communities Map](#) using the ACS data identifying census tracts where 15% or more of the population speak a primary language other than English. Given the number and broad distribution of these census tracts, translation of planning products and live interpretation services are being made available in these threshold

¹ "Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over."

² Written translations shall use Simplified Chinese and spoken Chinese shall be offered in both Mandarin and Cantonese where appropriate.

languages. **However, services are not limited to these two threshold languages.** LA County Planning is making every effort to identify the preferred languages in unincorporated communities and provide translation and interpretation services at no cost.



SECTION 2: DEPARTMENT'S LANGUAGE ACCESS POLICY

LA County Planning provides free and timely language assistance to the public. LA County Planning policy requires that information, including project information and the Department's public website, be made available in other languages, including American Sign Language (ASL). These services include but are not limited to, translation of vital documents and interpretation at public hearings, meetings, and customer service interactions.

The policy applies to all staff, contractors, interns, and volunteers who interact with the public.

Staff responsibilities include:

- Staff are to follow regularly updated protocols and procedures to provide language access services to members of the public.

- Staff are to use professional telephonic interpretation contractors or, when appropriate, bilingual certified staff for immediate customer service interpretations whether in-person, virtually, or over the telephone.
- Staff are to obtain professional interpretation services for public hearings and community meetings in Spanish and Chinese (Mandarin/Cantonese). If a project is within an LEP community where a language(s) other than Spanish and Chinese is widely used, then professional interpretation services shall be provided in that community's LEP language as needed. Interpretation services shall also be provided in ASL if a need for ASL services is anticipated or requested.
- Staff are to translate important written materials into Spanish and Simplified Chinese. If the project is located within an LEP community where a language(s) other than Spanish and Chinese is widely used, then written materials shall be translated into additional language(s) as needed.
- Staff are to submit outsourced translation work to bilingual certified staff for review, if available.

SECTION 3: KEY TERMS + DEFINITIONS

1. **Interpretation:** Rendering spoken or signed language into another language while maintaining the meaning and tone of the language.
2. **Language Access:** Providing free language assistance to LEP speakers in their preferred language, including through interpretation and translation services, to help enable reasonable access to and an opportunity to fully participate in the services, resources, and programs administered by the County.
3. **Language Other Than English ("LOTE") Speaker:** an individual who speaks a language that is not English.
4. **Limited English Proficiency ("LEP"):** limited skills in reading, writing, speaking, or understanding English.
5. **Preferred Language:** The language in which an individual prefers to read, write, and speak.
6. **Translation:** Producing written documents into another language while preserving meaning.
7. **Video Remote Interpretation ("VRI"):** a service that provides real-time language interpretation through a video call, allowing for both audio and visual communication.

8. **Vital Documents:** Documents that affect enrollment, continued participation, or termination from a County program, benefit, or service.
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SECTION 4: PROCEDURES

A. Identifying Preferred Languages

Staff shall receive ongoing language access training to ensure awareness of language access policies, procedures, and resources to assist customers. This may include the following strategies to identify the customer's preferred language:

- Staff in the field offices should use the Language Identification Guide Card to assist a customer in identifying their preferred spoken and written language.
- Assist LOTE speakers in identifying preferred spoken and written language at all touchpoints, during in-person and/or telephone interactions without undue delay. The determination of a person's preferred language should be made by the individual, not by LA County Planning staff. For example, a person may be able to engage in a brief simple communication in English, Spanish, or another language identified as their preferred language, but for more complex interactions, it may be necessary to request an interpreter or use a language access service.
- Communicate in ASL with customers who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, and whose preferred language is ASL.
- Identify regional language variation if appropriate when assisting a LOTE speaker to ensure that appropriate language access services are provided (e.g., client discloses that they are from Mexico and not fluent in Spanish, reporting that their preferred language is Zapotec).
- Inform customers of potential miscommunication when using their own interpreter and that the County cannot guarantee that the interpreter may fully understand and translate planning terms.
- Provide services using vital documents in the customers' preferred written language.
- Display language access signs in field offices to inform the public about language access services.
- Document individuals' language preferences so that language access services can be readily available in future interactions.

B. Vital Documents

Vital documents are written documents, either on paper or electronically, that contain information that is critical and necessary for a person to access aid, benefits, services, training, activities, or are required by law. Vital documents for LA County Planning include but are not limited to:

- Applications for permits and subdivisions
- Referrals and letters

- Notices informing LOTE customers of the availability of free language assistance
- Notices requiring a response from LA County Planning customers
- Forms that need a signature
- Notices related to changes to the General Plan, land use regulations, or development projects that may impact LOTE speaker communities.

The translation of vital documents is available and accessible in electronic format, hard copy, upon request, and on the LA County Planning website: <https://planning.lacounty.gov/applications-and-forms/>.

SECTION 5: NOTIFICATION OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE

LA County Planning is committed to ensuring that LOTE customers are aware that language access services are available to them at no cost. LA County Planning provides the following four types of language access services:

- 1. Immediate Customer Service Interpretations:** Immediate interpretation service for interactions, including ASL, at the public counter, in the field, or on the telephone.
- 2. Public Hearings and Community Meeting Interpretations:** Pre-planned interpretation services for public hearings and community meetings.
- 3. Written Translations:** Translation of written materials for public distribution such as social media posts, flyers, surveys, and project documents.
- 4. Review of Translated Materials for Quality Control:** Review of translated written materials to ensure content is conveyed in a clear, accurate, and consistent manner.

LA County Planning disseminates and promotes the availability of language access services across divisions (Advance Planning, Current Planning, and Land Use Regulation), through the following methods:

Advance Planning

The Advance Planning Division shall provide language access services for functions related to policy development, hearings/noticing, and community engagement. At a minimum the following project components shall be translated into the threshold languages:

- Surveys that are requesting community feedback.
- One or two sentences in community meeting announcements, newspaper ads, public hearing notices, and/or mailings.
- A one-page project summary made available on the project website.
- Fully translated public hearing notices made available on the project website.

When a project is located within a Spanish and/or Chinese LEP Community, additional materials and services will be provided in the threshold languages:

- Public announcements, community meeting announcements, blog or social media posts, fact sheets.
- Presentation slides and script for outreach meetings, workshops, and webinars.
- Language interpretation during community meetings and public hearings.

Advance Planning staff will provide project materials in other preferred languages upon request or as needed.

Current Planning

The Current Planning Division shall provide translation and interpretation services for all public counseling options, which include public counter, phone, email, and virtual counseling, in three areas of responsibility: (1) public counseling, (2) hearings/noticing, and (3) forms/informational material.

- Projects requiring a public hearing have their notices and project summaries translated into Spanish and Chinese and posted on the public website.
- Mailed notices also include text in the threshold languages guiding the constituent to a website to review the translated documents. Translation into additional languages will be done as needed. On a case-by-case basis, staff can consider translating additional case material, including, but not limited to, staff reports, findings, and conditions of approval.
- Language interpretation during community meetings and public hearings will be provided upon request or as needed.
- Application forms and informational material available on LA County Planning's website and offices will be translated into Spanish, Chinese, and additional languages as needed.

Land Use Regulation

Land Use Regulation's (LUR) main interaction with LOTE speakers occurs in the field, at the front counter, and over the phone. These interactions typically require immediate interpretation services. LUR staff shall offer interpretation services by utilizing LA County Planning's on-call oral and ASL professional interpretation contractors, or by seeking assistance from LA County Planning bilingual certified staff if a contractor is not available.

For professional services, LUR planners shall save the phone numbers, download the apps, and/or bookmark the websites for the services on their County-issued mobile devices to ensure services are offered as efficiently and expeditiously as possible. To help them identify in which language a LOTE speaker may need translation or interpretation services, LUR planners shall familiarize themselves with the threshold languages found in their service area(s) by utilizing the LEP Communities Map.

LUR planners shall also provide a digital or paper copy of the Notice of Availability of Free Language Assistance. This notice will help a LOTE speaker identify the language in which they require interpretation services. For any special assignments requiring public noticing, public hearings, and/or community outreach, LUR staff shall also follow the language access protocols established by the Advance Planning and Current Planning Divisions above. LUR enforcement notices shall include contact information in the threshold languages to ensure constituents know where to obtain more information regarding zoning violations.

SECTION 6: MONITORING LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE EFFECTIVENESS

A. Interpretation Services

Staff and contracted interpreters shall:

- Demonstrate proficiency and ability to communicate information accurately in both English and the other language. They should choose the appropriate interpreting method (e.g. consecutive, simultaneous, summarization, or sight translation).
- Understand and stick to their role as interpreters. They should not act as a counselor, advisor, or other roles.
- Demonstrate language proficiency and have knowledge of any specialized terms or concepts related to the planning process and of any vocabulary and phraseology used by the LOTE speakers.

LA County Planning will regularly check the quality of translations by having a bilingual certified staff or a second translator review the work of the primary translator. LA County Planning will also gather community input and use surveys to improve language assistance.

B. Over-the-phone and Video Remote Interpreter Services

Over-the-phone interpretation services and Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) provided to LA County Planning customers by County-contracted providers are monitored for quality assurance by reviewing the On-Demand Interpretation and Translation Services (ODITS) incident reports submitted by LA County Planning staff. Each incident report is evaluated and investigated by the contractor and a resolution is provided to LA County Planning. The Internal Services Department has set protocols to review the certifications and credentials of contracted providers under ODITS.

C. Translation Services

LA County Planning bilingual certified staff are available to review outsourced translation work for quality control and consistency. Lead project staff shall submit requests for review to the certified bilingual staff at least two (2) weeks before the review is needed. Requests must include:

- Translated material.
- English version of the translated material.
- Due date.

When there are no bilingual certified staff available for quality assurance, lead project staff shall seek out qualified vendors from the ODITS program.

D. Annual Metrics

On an annual basis, LA County Planning shall systematically collect and evaluate data on language assistance services.

Key metrics:

- **Number of requests** for interpretation and translation services, by language and service type (e.g., in-person, telephonic, Video Remote Interpretation).
- **Timeliness and accuracy** of language services provided.
- **Public-facing materials** translated and distributed by language.
- **Staff training completion rates** related to language access policies and procedures.
- **Community feedback and complaints** related to language barriers or unmet needs.

The metrics will inform the following:

- Evaluate whether language assistance is being provided consistently, promptly, and appropriately.
- Identify trends in language demand and usage to inform resource planning.
- Assess compliance with internal language access policies and state and federal legal requirements.
- Guide targeted staff training and policy updates to address service gaps or emerging needs.

E. Complaint Process

LA County Planning wants everyone to access our services and receive accurate information in their preferred language. If our department does not provide the language assistance that is needed, such as assistance with interpreting and/or translating services, or if there is an issue with the language assistance that is provided, a complaint can be submitted. LA County Planning will work to resolve any issues.

Complaints can be submitted by completing the Language Access Complaint Form (Appendix A) and submitting the form through email or by mail. Additionally, complaints can be submitted by speaking to staff at an event or meeting, over the phone, or using the online submission form (<https://bit.ly/LAComplaint>).

When LA County Planning receives a language access complaint, it will be reviewed promptly. A confirmation receipt will be provided within 10 business days and a resolution to the complaint will be provided within 45 business days. If a complaint is submitted anonymously, no response will be provided.

SECTION 7: TRAINING

A. Language Access Committee

The purpose of the Language Access Committee is to develop and maintain LA County Planning's language access policies and procedures so that access to LA County Planning's information, efforts, and services is available for LOTE speakers. The Language Access Committee is responsible for:

- Establishing and managing LA County Planning's Language Access Policy and procedures.
- Establishing and updating threshold language requirements and identifying LEP Communities.
- Increasing access to LA County Planning's information, efforts, and services in threshold languages and obtaining input from LOTE speakers.
- Prioritizing tasks and implementing suggestions to improve language access.

B. Training

To support LA County Planning's language access efforts, a training program has been developed with the following key components:

- **Expert-Led Sessions:** Trainings will be led by designated Language Access Coordinators who bring subject matter expertise and practical insights.
- **Onboarding Training:** All new staff will receive language access training within six months of employment to build a strong foundation in relevant policies, procedures, and available resources.
- **Annual Refreshers:** Regular training sessions will be offered. These sessions will reinforce knowledge, provide updates, and ensure consistent understanding across teams.
- **On-Demand Access:** Recorded training sessions will be available to staff at any time, allowing for flexible, self-paced learning.
- **Policy Updates:** Staff will receive updates on language access policies through periodic communications and supplemental training as needed.

- **Service Access Training:** Specific instruction will be provided on how to access language services through the ISD ODITS Master Agreement, ensuring staff know how to request and use interpretation and translation services effectively.
- **Supportive Resources:** A policy and procedures guide is available to all staff, serving as a go-to reference to reinforce training and support daily work.

Section 8: Community Outreach & Engagement

LA County Planning is committed to improving the ways in which we serve our LEP communities. Opportunities for future consideration by the Department include, but are not limited to:

- Developing and maintaining a list of language specific newspapers to publish notices by geography for staff.
- Continuing to improve on providing interpretation services during community meetings that take place in LEP communities.
- Advertising bilingual/multilingual skills for commonly spoken languages in Los Angeles County as a desired skill in job listings.
- Translating LA County Planning field office signage and hearing room signage into threshold languages.
- Ensuring that the public is notified in as many forums as possible that language access services are available free of charge.
- Conducting outreach to LEP communities on the topic of language access to receive input on LA County Planning's language access efforts.
- Creating a planning glossary in Chinese and other languages modeled after the existing Spanish-language glossary.
- Initiating an annual public survey to identify specific language access needs and to garner feedback on the provision of language access services. Translate the survey into threshold languages.
- Partnering with community-based organizations and partners that represent or serve LA County Planning's identified LEP communities to help us improve language access policies.
- Establish a Speaker's Bureau comprised of a multilingual and culturally fluent team that is specially trained in media and presentations. Develop working relationships with local non-English language media, groups, and organizations. Issue press releases in threshold languages. Provide presentations; participate in interviews for local non-English newspapers, radio, and television; and contribute to PSAs and social media posts in threshold languages.

Your feedback helps us provide better Language Access services. Please use this form to tell us about your experience.

Why Use This Form?

Please complete and submit this form if LA County Planning did not provide you the **language assistance** you needed, such as assistance with interpreting and/or translating services, or if there was an issue with the language assistance you were provided.

What Happens Next?

1. Once we receive your complaint, we will review and respond to your complaint in within the timeframes noted below. **If you choose to remain anonymous, no response will be provided.**
2. **Follow-up:** If you do not receive a response within **10 business days**, contact us at LanguageAccess@planning.lacounty.gov or (213) 974-4442.
3. **Resolution:** We will let you know how we addressed your complaint as soon as possible, but no later than **45 business days** from the date we receive your complaint.

How to Fill Out This Form?

1. **Verify the issue:** Is your complaint about language assistance, such as an issue with interpreting and/or translating services?
2. **Complete the form:** Provide as much detail as possible so that we can understand the problem.
3. **Submit the form:** You can submit the form using the following methods –
 - **Online:** Submit the form here (<https://bit.ly/LAComplaint>)
 - **Email:** Send the form to LanguageAccess@planning.lacounty.gov
 - **Phone:** Give us a call at (213) 974-4442 to submit your complaint
 - **Mail:** Print and send the form to:

LA County Planning
Attn: Language Access
320 W Temple Street, 13th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90012

If you have questions or need assistance, contact us at LanguageAccess@planning.lacounty.gov or (213) 974-4442.

Please note: Complaint forms may be made public under California Law.

CONTACT INFORMATION (OPTIONAL)

Date: _____

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Street Address:

City: _____

Zip Code: _____

Email Address:

Phone Number: _____

How would you like to us to contact you?

☐ Email☐ Phone☐ MailWhat language do you prefer for **reading** and **writing**?
_____What language do you prefer for **speaking** and **signing**?
_____**Did someone help you fill out this form?** *If yes, please provide their details.*

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Organization/Department:
_____Email Address:

Phone Number: _____

ABOUT YOUR COMPLAINT:

What language did you need help with? _____

When did the issue happen (Date/Time)? _____

Where did the issue happen?

☐ **In Person**

Address (Street, City, Zip Code):

☐ **Over the phone**

☐ **Online**

Website or social media account:

☐ **Other** (please describe):

What went wrong? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ I didn't know I could ask for an interpreter or translation assistance.
- ☐ Information about LA County Planning programs or services was not available in my preferred language.
- ☐ The written translation was incorrect or hard to understand.
- ☐ The interpreter did not translate correctly.
- ☐ Other (please describe below)

Tell us more about your complaint and how you would like it resolved.
