

Language Access Policy

City of Chicago Office of Inspector General

1. Background

In July 2014, Mayor Emanuel appointed the Language Access Advisory Committee (LAAC), a group of community, legal, and civic leaders tasked with developing a policy to ensure meaningful access to City of Chicago programs for persons who do not speak English or have limited-English proficiency (collectively, “LEP persons”). In April 2015, the City adopted LAAC’s recommendations, enacting the Citywide Language Access to Ensure the Effective Delivery of City Services Ordinance, MCC Chapter 2-40 (“Ordinance”). The Ordinance requires City Departments “that provide direct public services [to] ensure meaningful access to such services by taking reasonable steps to develop and implement department-specific language access plans regarding LEP persons.” MCC § 2-40-020(a). In particular, the ordinance contemplates City Departments adopting policies making available written translation and oral interpretation services (“language services”) in a manner consistent with guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Justice in June 2002, [67 Fed. Reg. 41455](#). The City of Chicago Office of Inspector General (“OIG”), in compliance with the Ordinance, hereby adopts this Language Access Policy (“LAP”).

2. OIG’s Mission and Direct Public Services

OIG’s mission is to promote economy, effectiveness, efficiency, and integrity by identifying corruption, waste, and mismanagement in City government. OIG is authorized and has jurisdiction to conduct investigations and audits into most aspects of City government.

Given OIG’s mission, much of the Office’s work involves interacting with City officials, employees, and vendors. However, OIG provides forms and reports on its website and maintains a hotline, allowing the public to:

- report corruption, fraud, misconduct, and unfair hiring by City officials, employees, and contractors;
- submit possible topics for OIG audits and other reviews;
- share general ideas for improving City government; and
- gain an understanding of OIG’s activities, as well as its findings and recommendations regarding City programs and operations.

3. Goal of OIG’s Language Access Policy

- Create a protocol for translation and interpretation services
- Compile a list, subject to periodic updates, of essential public documents for translation (see subsection 6A below)
- Provide outreach and maximize awareness of OIG’s language-access efforts
- Develop a monitoring and measurement system for language access service usage

4. Definitions

- A. The Ordinance defines **direct public services** as those administered by a City department directly to public beneficiaries and participants.

- B. The Ordinance defines **essential public documents** as documents regularly distributed to the public that contain or elicit important information needed for the provision of basic City services.
- C. The LAAC's recommendations define a Department's **Language Access Coordinator (LAC)** as the employee assigned the role of overseeing implementation and administration of an LAP, including collecting department data and monitoring compliance.
- D. The Ordinance defines **Limited-English Proficiency (LEP)** as an individual who does not speak English as their primary language and who has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.
- E. OIG considers **meaningful access** for LEP persons to have been achieved when language assistance results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the LEP person.

5. LEP Population Assessment

OIG will assess the LEP population it serves using the four-factor analysis issued by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2002. The four factors, as expressed in the Ordinance, are:

- A. The number or proportion of LEP persons served or encountered in the eligible service population;
- B. the frequency with which LEP persons come into contact with the department;
- C. the nature and importance of the program, activity, or service to the LEP person (including consequences of lack of language services or inadequate interpretation/translation); and
- D. the resources available to the department and the costs of providing various types of language services.

The threshold for the provision of language access services is an LEP population speaking a particular language that constitutes 5% of the City's population or 10,000 individuals, whichever is less. Federal guidelines provide for determining whether a particular language meets this threshold by using U.S. Census data, intake data collected by City Departments, data on telephonic language translation service requests or usage, research provided by the City's LAAC, and community feedback, as well as any other pertinent sources.

Under these standards, as determined by the Mayor's Office of New Americans, certain City Departments are required to provide services in **Spanish, Mandarin, Polish, Hindi, and Arabic** (the five required languages).¹ OIG adopts this list for purposes of the first year of this LAP, and will adjust the list as warranted by its ongoing consideration of the aforementioned four factors. For LEP persons whose primary language is not Spanish, Mandarin, Polish, Hindi, or Arabic, OIG will consider offering translation/interpretation services on a case-by-case basis, taking into account budgetary constraints.

In the past, OIG's interactions with LEP persons have predominantly been through the complaint intake hotline and in-house translated marketing collateral (Spanish and Polish only). Because

¹ These languages were determined by the LAAC's assessment of 2010 Census data which highlighted the top five languages spoken in Chicago other than English.

public complaints initiated through the hotline or website may be elevated to an audit report or an investigation, OIG will strive to meet the interpretation needs of LEP populations through interpretation and translation services such as LanguageLine.

6. LEP Services

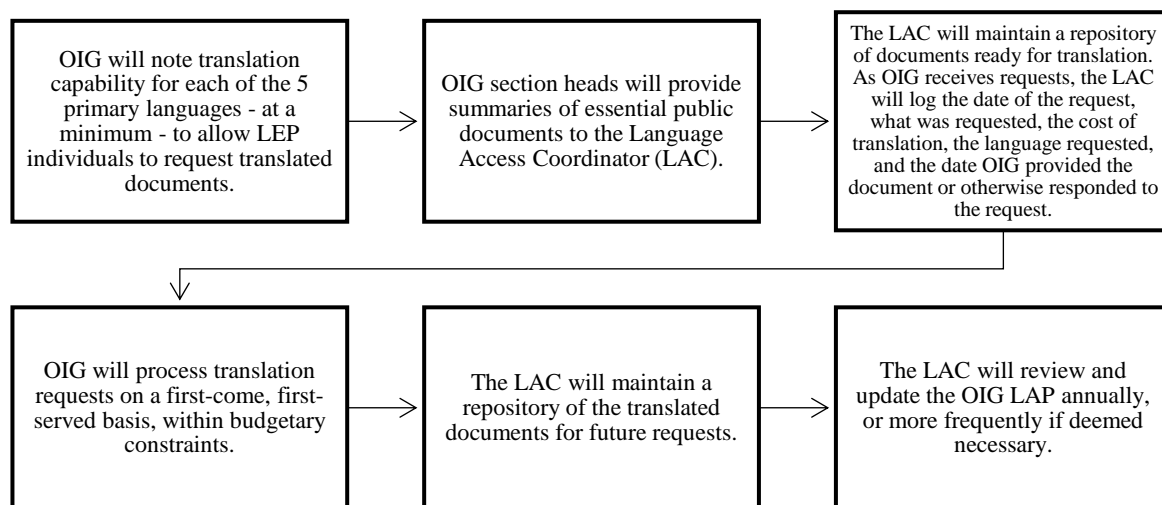
A. Translation of Essential Public Documents

To fulfill its role as the City’s watchdog, OIG largely depends on citizen complaints and referrals. As such, it is imperative that the public understands OIG’s purpose, objective, and process. For this reason, taking into account the four-factors cited above, OIG has identified the following public documents as either essential or non-essential²:

Essential public documents	Non-essential public documents
Mission and diversity statements Complaint submission form Public outreach materials (e.g., one pagers, brochures, and/or business cards) Language access policy	Executive summaries from audits and evaluations Press releases Quarterly reports Task force reports Speeches All other documents not designated as essential

Given the considerable length of OIG’s public documents, line-by-line translations would be cost-prohibitive. Rather than translating the entirety of a document, OIG may decide to take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access by translating only essential information contained within (such as, executive summaries) and/or by making personnel available to discuss, upon request, a document’s contents in the requestor’s primary language.

To translate and maintain records of essential public documents, OIG will use the following processes:



² Non-essential documents may, in some instances, relate to or arise from complaints and referrals. However, while OIG makes these documents public, they are not critical to its direct public service function.

B. Interpretation at Community Events

When community events (external or internal) meet a certain threshold of attendees and/or a formal request has been issued, OIG will enlist the services of an interpreter. Please note that for public events, American Sign Language (ASL) will be considered a required language. Requests for interpretation must be made within three (3) business days of an event

C. Interpretation for Incoming Telephone Calls

When an LEP person contacts OIG, intake personnel will determine the caller's primary language. Intake personnel will utilize the LanguageLine interpretation service to bring an interpreter into the conversation, determine the purpose for the call and interact with the caller appropriately.

7. Training on the Language Access Policy & Implementation Plan

OIG complaint intake specialists—the primary point of contact for LEP persons—and the LAC will receive annual LanguageLine training via the company's onsite program, or more frequently if deemed necessary. All staff will have access to the LAP and information regarding LanguageLine services, including how to refer LEP persons to OIG intake specialists.

Training needs will be reassessed if OIG implements new programs or activities that involve direct contact with LEP populations.

8. Recordkeeping and Monitoring

To evaluate the effectiveness of OIG's language access services and make any necessary improvements, the Office will develop a recordkeeping and monitoring system that collects data and evaluates the OIG's performance in making those services available. This system will utilize the following protocol:

A. Tracking and Measurement

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- The LAC will maintain a log tracking requests for translated documents that includes:
 - the date of the request;
 - the title of the document;
 - the OIG section that produced the requested the document;
 - the cost of translation;
 - the language requested;
 - the date OIG provided the translated document, and
 - the number of times this document has been requested

Requests for Translated Copies of Essential Public Documents

- When a translation for an essential public document is requested, staff will coordinate with the LAC to retrieve that document.
 - If a translated version in the relevant language already exists, the LAC

will provide the translated document for the LEP client and update the LAC log tracking translation requests.

- If the document is not available in that language, the LAC will note this in the log and have the document translated as described above.

B. Monitoring and Review

Annual Review

- On an annual basis, the LAC will collect and review language access service records (including language services offered/utilized, delivery of language access services, qualitative feedback from staff and clients, and click-through rates on the website) to assess the effectiveness of the LAP.

Annual Reports

- On an annual basis, as required under the Ordinance, the LAC will issue a report that:
 - assesses compliance with the Language Access Ordinance;
 - reviews progress of the implementation plan;
 - identifies gaps, if any, in language access services;
 - describes areas for improvement; and
 - provides recommendations for improvement.

9. Outreach and Public Awareness

It is important that the general public and LEP persons are made aware of OIG's language access services. OIG will therefore integrate the goals of its LAP into its outreach by promoting and advertising language access services, once budgets are established and efforts can be funded.

10. Determining the Availability of Resources

On an annual basis, OIG will review its administrative budget and determine what percentage of its funds to dedicate to translation of essential documents and provision of direct public services to LEP persons.