



North Central Texas Council
of Governments
Language Assistance
Plan

It is the policy of this agency to provide timely, meaningful access for limited English proficiency (LEP) persons to all agency programs and activities. All personnel shall provide free language assistance services to LEP individuals whom they encounter or whenever an LEP person requests language assistance services. All personnel will inform members of the public that language assistance services are available to LEP persons, and that the agency will provide these services to them if needed.

NCTCOG's Agency Language Assistance Plan (LAP) documents how the agency complies with nondiscrimination requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and federal Executive Order 13166 of 2000. These authorities prohibit discrimination based on national origin and call for improving access to services for persons with limited English proficiency, respectively.

The Agency Language Assistance Plan (LAP) broadly describes how NCTCOG:

- Assesses the level of language services the agency should provide
- Provides language assistance
- Trains staff to provide language assistance
- Notifies the public and LEP communities that language assistance services are available free of charge
- Monitors, evaluates, and updates language assistance services.

Appendices to this plan provide more specific strategies for individual NCTCOG departments. These departments' varied functions necessitate self-assessments and strategies tailored to those functions.

Definitions

- A. **Effective Communication** - Communication sufficient to provide the LEP individual with substantially the same level of access to services received by individuals who are not LEP. For example, staff must take reasonable steps to ensure communication with an LEP individual is as effective as communications with others when providing similar programs and services.
- B. **Interpretation** - The act of listening to a communication in one language (source language) and orally converting it to another language (target language) while retaining the same meaning.
- C. **Language Access** - National origin discrimination includes discrimination because of limited English proficiency (LEP).
- D. **Language Assistance Services** - Oral and written language services needed to assist LEP individuals to communicate effectively with staff, and to provide LEP individuals with meaningful access to, and an equal opportunity to participate fully in, the services, activities, or other programs administered by the Department.
- E. **Limited English proficiency** - Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. LEP individuals may be competent in English for certain types of communication (e.g., speaking or understanding), but still be LEP for other purposes
- F. **Translation** - The replacement of written text from one language (source language) into an equivalent written text in another language (target language).

- G. **Vital Document** - Paper or electronic written material that contains information that is critical for accessing a component's program or activities or is required by law. Classification of a document as "vital" depends upon the importance of the program, information, encounter, or service involved.

Elements of a Language Access Plan

NCTCOG developed a workgroup with coordinators from each department to create the Plan. This workgroup was created to better understand the multiple manners in which NCTCOG interacts with LEP individuals as well as to better ensure the development of an operational and effective Plan. The workgroup agreed that an effective Plan will identify individuals, provide language access, train staff, and communicate with LEP individuals. A brief description of each of these elements follows.

A. Identifying LEP individuals. NCTCOG interacts with the public in a variety of ways. NCTCOG uses multiple methods to identify LEP individuals including use of demographic information and stakeholder outreach.

B. Providing effective language assistance. NCTCOG takes reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to its programs and activities by LEP persons.

C. Training staff. Staff will be trained on NCTCOG's nondiscrimination policies and procedures, which will include this Plan, and on the agency's federal obligations.

D. Communicating with LEP individuals. Once LEP populations are identified, NCTCOG will develop strategies, which involve the impacted community, to inform LEP individuals of applicable programs, services, or activities.

Self-Assessment/Four-Factor Analysis

NCTCOG will conduct a four-factor analysis to assess the level of language services it should provide. Individual departments within the agency may use additional methods to identify specific needs for language services.

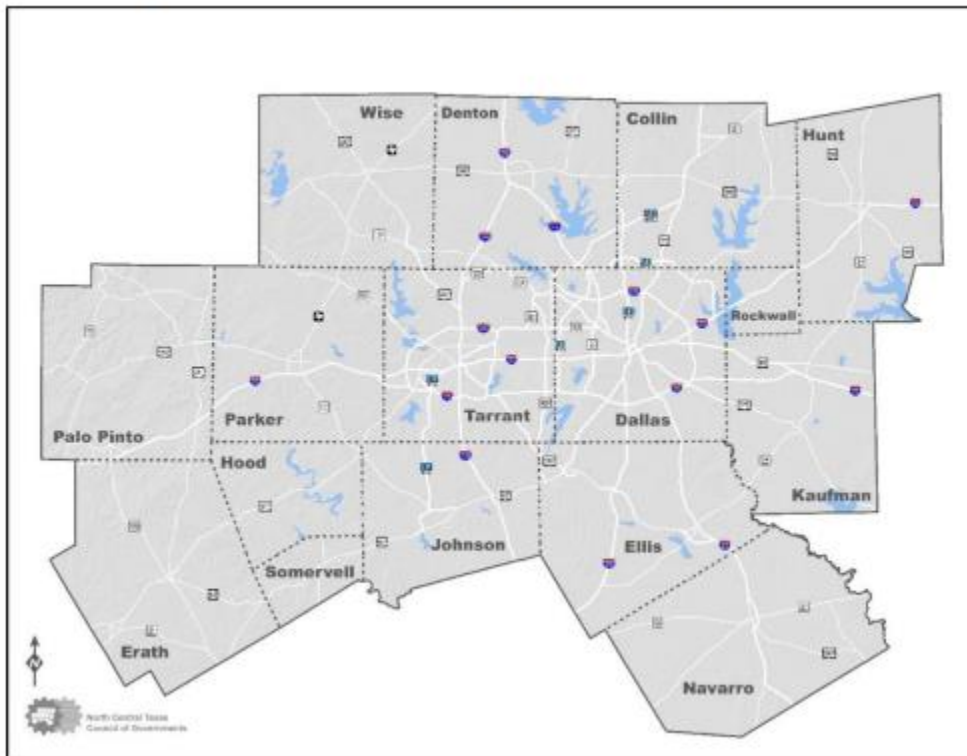
Factor 1: The number or proportion of persons with limited English proficiency who are eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the program.

The American Community Survey provides data on limited English proficiency. This Census Bureau dataset updates its estimates annually.

The NCTCOG 16-county region encompasses the following counties: Collin, Dallas, Denton, Ellis, Erath, Hood, Hunt, Johnson, Kaufman, Navarro, Parker, Palo Pinto, Rockwall, Somervell, Tarrant, and Wise. (See *Exhibit 1.*)

Exhibit 1

NCTCOG 16-County Limited English Proficiency Service Area



More than 12 percent of NCTCOG’s 16-county region identify themselves as speaking a language other than English and speaking English less than “very well” (Exhibit 2). This is almost 900,000 individuals.

Every language or language group meets the Safe Harbor threshold of 1,000 individuals or 5 percent. The “Safe Harbor” analysis was put forward by the U.S Department of Justice (DOJ) to establish an objective standard to guide recipients. Safe Harbor standards help agencies comply with Title VI. If NCTCOG translated vital documents into each Safe Harbor language, it is likely that the agency would comply with translation requirements. However, the size of the region results in 12 languages or language groups meeting the Safe Harbor threshold. It would be unfeasible for vital documents to be translated into all these languages, especially considering some of the language groups include multiple languages. It will be important for individual departments or programs to gather additional information on translation needs. This information may be sought from local governments or communities.

Exhibit 2

Limited English Proficiency and Safe Harbor	Number of Individuals (Safe Harbor Threshold: 1,000)	Percent of Service Area Population (Safe Harbor Threshold: 5%)
Total Population Over 5 Years Old	7,118,104	
Speaks Only English	4,902,879	68.88%
Speaks Another Language and Speaks English Less than "Very Well"		
Spanish	678,446	9.53%
Vietnamese	43,256	0.61%
Other Indo-European languages	42,568	0.60%
Other Asian and Pacific Island languages	33,796	0.47%
Chinese (incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)	26,334	0.37%
Other and unspecified languages	20,527	0.29%
Korean	14,171	0.20%
Arabic	12,880	0.18%
French, Haitian, or Cajun	8,502	0.12%
Russian, Polish, or other Slavic languages	5,607	0.08%
Tagalog (incl. Filipino)	5,119	0.07%
German or other West Germanic languages	1,123	0.02%
Total Limited English Proficiency	892,329	12.54%

Source: American Community Survey 2020 5-Year Estimates, Table C16001

Factor 2: The frequency with which individuals with limited English proficiency come into contact with the program.

Some opportunities for interaction with individuals with limited English proficiency include:

- 911 calls
- Workforce Solutions centers
- Client visits
- Information line calls
- Outreach programs
- Public meetings and hearings
- Websites
- Written materials or complaint forms
- Brochures intended for public distribution

NCTCOG will endeavor to conduct a survey of its staff about their contact with individuals with limited English proficiency. Survey reports will show the number of interactions with limited English proficient individuals during the past few years and activities where the most interactions are most likely to occur.

Factor 3: The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the organization to its beneficiaries.

NCTCOG departments maintain responsibilities that vary in nature and importance. Many of these responsibilities qualify as high importance. For example, NCT9-1-1 provides life-saving services to individuals calling in with an emergency. The North Central Texas Area Agency on Aging coordinates health and social services for older adults and family caregivers. On the other end of the spectrum, Agency Administration provides intra-agency fiscal services. This department also trains city managers and government finance officers, who are unlikely to experience limited English proficiency.

More specific information about the nature and importance of the programs, activities, and services provided by individual departments will be maintained in the department's individual Language Assistance Plan.

Factor 4: The resources available to the organization and the costs of language services.

The resources available to the organization vary widely by department. The Transportation Department, which, along with its policy board functions as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for Dallas-Fort Worth, receives dedicated federal funding via transportation legislation. Other departments operate using smaller grant funding and member fees. More specific information about resources available to individual departments are provided in their Language Assistance Plans.

To translate documents, NCTCOG can use both a translation service and department staff. At no cost, the Google Translate tool was added to the NCTCOG website, making information more readily accessible in more than 120 languages.

The four-factor analysis discussed above addresses applicable needs for a language assistance program to effectively serve the North Texas metropolitan areas' LEP populations. Agencies that receive federal funds are however not required to provide language assistance services to every language group that may exist within their jurisdiction as this could be prohibitively expensive and constitute an undue burden to the organization.

Providing Language Assistance Services

NCTCOG's Title VI Coordinators will implement the language access plans for their departments. The services provided will vary from department to department and are included in the department's individual language plan where applicable. Generally, these responsibilities may include:

Administration of:

- The department's language access plan
- A budget to provide language assistance services
- Language assistance program improvements

Development of policies and procedures regarding:

- Objectives and benchmarks for measuring success of language assistance efforts
- Tracking and recording language needs
- Responses to telephone calls from individuals with limited English proficiency
- Responses to letters and email from individuals with limited English proficiency

- Procurement of in-person, telephone, and video interpreter services
- Use of qualified bilingual staff for interpretation and translation, recognizing that simply being bilingual does not qualify a person to interpret or translate
- Translation of vital documents that contain information critical for obtaining services and/or benefits
- How staff will process language access complaints

Language assistance implementation:

- Training for staff on how to use language assistance services when serving customers
- Database of qualified interpreters and translators
- Management of requests for interpretation and translation
- Translated vital documents, including application forms, consent forms, complaint forms and procedures, and eligibility forms
- Notices to the public about free language services

Monitoring:

- Utilization of language services
- Title VI complaints related to limited English proficiency
- Changes in the region's demographics
- Accomplishment of objectives and benchmarks

Training Staff on Policies and Procedures

Applicable training for staff will be determined and conducted as needed. Training will identify strategies to identify individuals with limited English proficiency and improve outreach to the community.

Providing Notice of Language Assistance Services

NCTCOG will provide notice of language assistance services to promote meaningful access for communities with limited English proficiency. This notice will effectively inform the public and LEP communities that language assistance services are available free of charge. This notice will be provided in English and other appropriate languages on signage, websites, and community focused outreach.

Notices will include the telephone number and email address to request special accommodations for language translation or disability.

Any documents or websites promoting public meetings or outreach events will be fully translated into appropriate languages or, at a minimum, will include a tagline in English and appropriate languages. The tagline will include the following verbiage: "If you speak Spanish [or other appropriate language], language assistance services are available free of charge. Call xxx-xxx-xxxx for assistance."

Plan Access

NCTCOG will post the Plan on its website. Additional interpretation and/or written translation will be provided upon request. Individuals without internet access may receive a copy of the Plan at no charge by contacting Title-VI-Coordinator@nctcog.org. NCTCOG makes every effort to accommodate language translation needs, if provided sufficient notice. Advance notice is required for these arrangements to be provided for a public input opportunity. NCTCOG Title VI

Coordinators will consistently seek input and involvement from organizations and agencies which serve LEP populations to complement other language assistance and outreach efforts.

Monitoring, Evaluating, and Updating the Plan

The Agency Language Assistance Plan should be a living document. Title VI Coordinators will monitor the need for and use of language assistance services. Each department, as needed, will develop objectives, benchmarks or performance measures, and timeframes for implementing Language Assistance Plans.