



Proposed Language Access Plan

Village Manager's Office of Diversity,
Equity, and Inclusion

October 22, 2024

Agenda



- Overview of Language Access Plan
- Language Access Terminology
- Purpose of Language Access Plan
- Overview of Policies
- Budget
- Implementation Plan

Board Goal Alignment



Board Goal: Racial Equity

- Priority One: Ensure equitable access to government services and contracts.

Overview



- Language Access Plans (LAP) ensures individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and/or English Language Learners (ELL) have meaningful access to Village services. The plan includes policies, procedures, and resources to improve equitable service access.
- The LAP complies with the following legal mandates:
 - Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
 - Executive Order 13166 (2000)
 - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
 - Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973

Purpose



- The Language Access Plan (LAP) is a guide on needed policies, procedures and practices to remove language barriers that can inhibit or even prohibit limited English proficient (LEP) or English Language learners (ELL) persons from accessing assistance and/or understanding important rights, obligations, and services, or from communicating accurately and efficiently in a variety of interactions with the Village.
- This Language Access Policy and Plan is intended to assist the Village of Oak Park's personnel in ensuring language accessibility in communications/interactions with the public.

Language Access Terminology



Cultural Competency	A critical skill in fields such as healthcare, education, social services, and public administration, where professionals encounter diverse populations regularly. It requires a commitment to ongoing learning, self-reflection, and adaptation to reduce cultural biases and improve the effectiveness and inclusivity of services. By fostering cultural competency, organizations and individuals can better serve diverse communities, promote equity, and create environments where all individuals feel respected and understood.
English Language Learner	An individual whose primary language is not English and who has limited or no ability to speak, understand, read, or write English.
Limited English Proficient (LEP) Individual	A person who does not speak English as their primary language and who has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. LEP individuals may require language assistance to access services or navigate systems effectively.
Primary language	The language that an individual communicates most effectively in.
Qualified interpreter or translator	A trained professional who is a neutral third party with the requisite language skills, experienced in interpretation or translation techniques, and knowledgeable in specialized content areas and technical terminology to effectively
Vital Documents	Any materials that are essential to an individual's ability to access services provided by the organization, or are required by law.

Defining Language Access



Language access refers to the ability of individuals who have limited proficiency in the English language (Limited English Proficient, or LEP individuals) to obtain and understand information, services, and resources in a language they can comprehend. This concept ensures that non-English speakers or those with limited English skills can effectively communicate with public agencies, healthcare providers, educational institutions, and other organizations to fully participate in social, economic, and civic life.

Language access involves providing services such as translation of written materials, interpretation services (both in-person and via phone or video), bilingual staff, and the development of language access plans. These services are essential for promoting equity and inclusion, ensuring that all community members, regardless of their language skills, have meaningful access to public services, programs, and rights.

Defining Language Access “The Why”



- **Inclusivity and Equity:** Providing language access ensures that all residents, regardless of their language proficiency, can access essential services and participate fully in community life. This promotes equity and inclusivity, allowing everyone to benefit from public services¹.
- **Legal Compliance:** Many local governments are legally required to offer language access services under laws such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. This law mandates that programs receiving federal funds must provide meaningful access to people with limited English proficiency (LEP)³.
- **Effective Communication:** Language access improves communication between residents and local government officials. This is vital for community-building and ensures that important information, such as emergency alerts and public health updates, reaches all community members².
- **Resource Efficiency:** Having a well-planned language access strategy can lead to more efficient use of resources. Instead of reacting to language needs as they arise, a proactive approach helps in better planning and resource allocation¹.
- **Community Trust:** When residents see that their local government is making efforts to communicate in their preferred languages, it builds trust and encourages greater civic participation

Four-Factor Analysis



- The Village conducted a Four-Factor Analysis to determine language needs:
 - **Population:** 13% of Oak Park residents speak another language other than English.
 - Speaking languages such as Spanish, Polish, Mandarin, and Tagalog.
 - **Service Encounters:** LEP individuals frequently engage with Village services.
 - **Program Importance:** Language access is critical for civic participation.
 - **Resources:** The Village Board has allocated resources for translation and interpretation services.

Key LEP/ELL Languages



- 13% of the Oak Park community has a different first language than English
- U.S. Census data shows that Oak Park's largest growing primary language is Spanish with 6.2% or 3,144 individuals.
- Overall the Oak Park population has 2.3% or 1,178 individuals that speaks English less than "very well." Which means that consideration must also include overall English proficiency as well.
- The LAP identifies other key languages spoken by LEP residents, including:
 - Spanish
 - Polish
 - Chinese
 - Tagalog

DEI Impact of Language Access Plan



The Village of Oak Park is committed to ensuring that all residents, regardless of language proficiency, can fully access public services. By implementing this Language Access Plan, Oak Park upholds its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, striving to eliminate barriers and promote a welcoming, inclusive community for all.

Language access is crucial because it ensures that everyone, regardless of their language proficiency, can fully participate in society. It is a good example of what it means to be equitable, as for those who speak English may not recognize the privilege in to understand important information about government services, policies, and programs in the language you understand. Language access promotes inclusivity, allowing diverse communities to communicate effectively and feel valued. Access to language is access to opportunity, equity, and dignity.

Language Access Policy



- It is the policy of this Village to ensure all persons in need of language access assistance services are provided in a timely and equitable manner. Village Staff will provide reasonable accommodations to English Language Learners (ELL)/ Deaf individuals to ensure equitable access to participate in services, activities, programs, and other benefits.
- Language assistance will be provided through use of certified multilingual staff, contracts with interpretation and translation services, or technology, and telephonic interpretations services. All staff will be provided notice of this policy and procedures, and staff will be trained annually.

Language Access Policy: Notice



- The Village of Oak Park will ensure reasonable notice and communication of language access services. The public will be informed that the services are free, and instructions on accessing.
- Signage will be placed in visible locations throughout Village Hall notifying individuals of the right to request an interpreter at no cost to the individual. Signage will be translated into the languages most frequently encountered by the organization. For example, “Se Habla Espanol” decals at the front entrance of Village Hall.

Staff shall not make any assumptions about an individual’s primary language based on their race, nationality, and ethnicity. Additionally, an accent is not an indicator of language access needs.

Language Access Policy: Interpreters



- The Village will ensure that all contracted and multilingual staff is adequately trained or certified from a culturally responsive lens. As interpretation is not only communicating what a person has said, it requires commitment to being culturally aware, responsive, and attune to the needs of the population that is being served.
- Any person or party has the right to abstain from any language access services provided by the Village in lieu of their own provided service support.
- Department staff should avoid using the following individuals to provide language assistance services absent emergency circumstances.
 - Family members
 - Neighbors
 - Friends
 - Acquaintances
 - Bystanders
 - Opposing parties

Language Access Policy: Ethics



Interpreters are required to accurately convey the original speech into the target language, maintaining all elements of the source message without alteration. This includes preserving the syntax and semantics to ensure the translation flows naturally in the target language. Interpreters must avoid any distortion of the message, which means no additions, omissions, explanations, or paraphrasing are allowed.

They should authentically reproduce all hesitations, repeated phrases, and any mixed-language words present in the source speech. Additionally, culturally specific terms or expressions that lack a direct translation in English or hold multiple meanings should be carefully preserved to maintain their original intent.

The interpreter should strive to keep the original tone, style, and register of the speaker intact. If there is any doubt or misunderstanding about what the speaker has said, the interpreter should promptly seek clarification. Any errors made during the interpretation/translation process must be identified and corrected as quickly as possible to ensure accurate communication.

Language Access Policy: Translations



- A vital document is paper or electronic written information and material that contains content critical for accessing a program or activity. Documents not deemed vital will be translated upon request. Whether or not a document (or the information it solicits) is 'vital' may depend upon the importance of the program or activity, information, encounter, service, or benefit involved, and the consequence to the individual with LEP/ELL if the information in question is not provided accurately or in a timely manner.
- Vital documents intended for the general public, or a broad audience may include, but are not limited to:
 - Public outreach or educational materials.
 - Claim or application forms including their instructions.
 - Forms of written material related to individual rights.
 - Notices of outreach or community meetings or training.
 - Press releases announcing activities or matters that affect communities with LEP.
 - Notices regarding the availability of language assistance services provided by the component at no cost to individuals with LEP, where applicable in light of the component's mission and operations.
- Similar to the policy for interpreters, the Village will not use translators that are friends, family, children, or volunteers or Google translate. Except in exigent circumstances may those listed may be used.

Language Services Provided



- Key services offered to ensure language access:
 - In-house multilingual staff
 - Contracted interpreters and translators
 - Real-time interpretation devices and telephonic interpretation
 - Web-based video remote interpretation (VRI) services
 - ASL interpretation for Deaf or Hard of Hearing individuals (D/HOH)

Staff Training and Cultural Competency



- Village staff will undergo training to ensure cultural competency and effective use of language services. This includes:
 - Recognizing LEP individuals
 - Accessing language services
 - Ensuring respect and inclusivity for all community members
 - Best Practices for Working with Interpreters and Translators
 - Interpreter Ethics and Professionalism
 - Tracking and Evaluation of Language Assistance Services

Continuous Improvement and Feedback



- The Language Access Plan (LAP) should be periodically assessed and, where appropriate, updated to ensure that the scope and nature of language assistance services provided under the plan reflect updated information on relevant LEP populations, component language assistance needs, changes in technology, and component experience under the plan. The review should gather data to assess the effectiveness of component language assistance services.
- This may include:
 - Conducting an inventory of languages most frequently encountered.
 - Identifying the primary channels of contact with LEP community members (whether telephonic, in person, correspondence, web-based, etc.).
 - Identifying the extent to which language assistance services were requested, needed and/or accessed by individuals with LEP.
 - Reviewing plans and protocols.
 - Reviewing the annual cost of translation and interpreter services
 - Consulting with outside stakeholders

Role of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office



- **Responsibilities:**

- Serve as the central point of contact for all language access–related inquiries and issues within the Village.
- Develop and maintain the Language Access Plan, ensuring compliance with federal, state, and local mandates.
- Coordinate with all Village departments to identify language access needs and provide resources, including training and language service providers.
- Monitor the implementation of the Language Access Plan, conduct regular assessments, and report findings to Village leadership.
- Facilitate community engagement to understand the language needs of the community better and ensure that services are accessible to all residents, particularly those with limited English proficiency (LEP).

- **Procedures:**

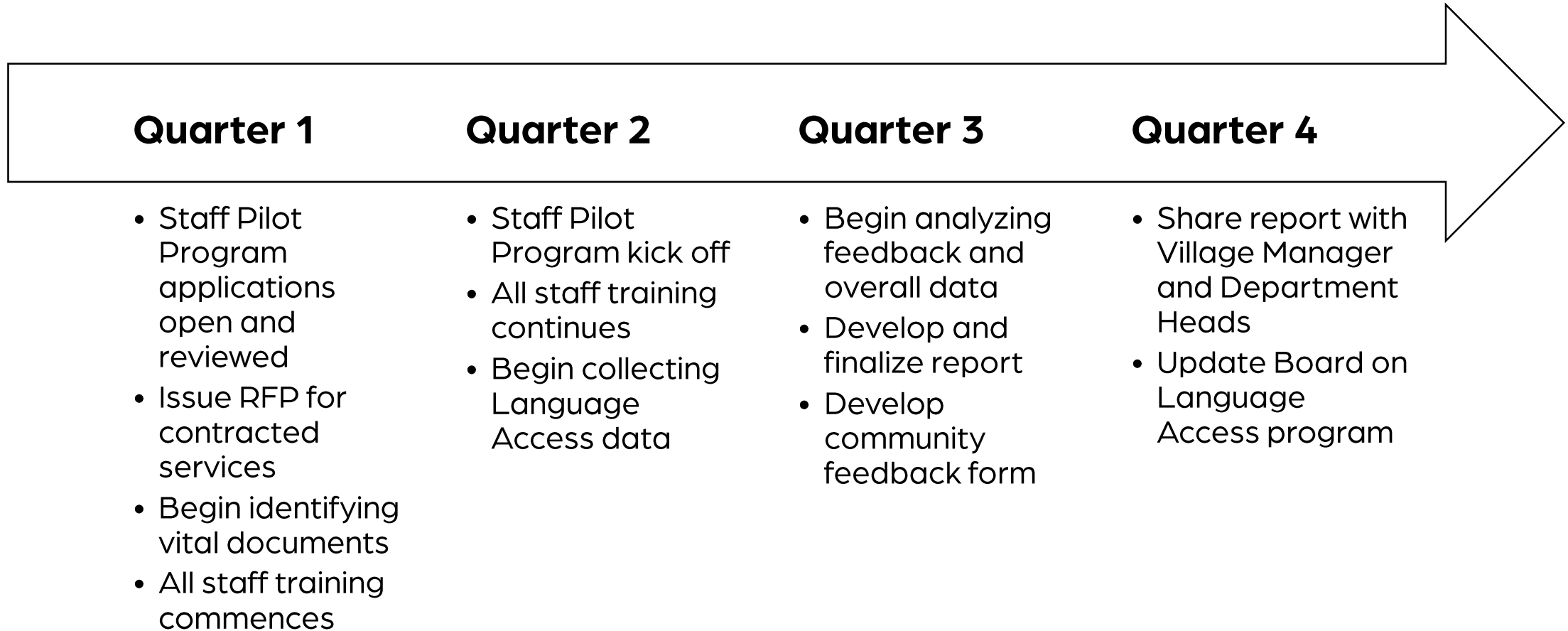
- Regular Meetings: Organize monthly meetings with departmental language access liaisons to review service requests, identify emerging language needs, and address any issues.
- Training Programs: Develop and implement training programs for Village staff on cultural competency, effective use of interpretation and translation services, and compliance with language access policies.
- Feedback Collection: Establish a process for collecting and reviewing feedback from both staff and the community regarding language access services to identify areas for improvement.
- Resource Management: Maintain an up-to-date list of qualified interpreters and translators, including contact information, languages covered, and rates. Ensure all departments have access to this list.

Staff Recommendations Budget



- Approve the Language Access Plan with proposed budget. Then direct staff to prepare the necessary materials for adopting a policy.
- **Proposed Budget: \$100,000**
 - Translation of Vital Documents
 - \$40,000
 - In-Person Interpretation
 - \$10,000
 - Contracted Phone and Web
 - \$40,000
 - Software Applications
 - \$8,000
 - Devices and Supplies
 - \$2,000

Implementation Plan FY 2025



Conclusion



- The Village is committed to ensuring all residents, regardless of language proficiency, can access public services. By implementing the Language Access Plan, Oak Park continues to uphold its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, eliminating language barriers and promoting an inclusive community.

"Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going".

-Rita Mae Brown



Questions?

