Illinois Department of Agriculture Language Access Plan 2026



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SECTION 1: LEGAL BASIS AND PURPOSE

1.1 BACKGROUND ON LANGUAGE ACCESS LAWS AND ORDERS

Introduction

The State of Illinois is home to one of the largest immigrant populations in the United States, with nearly 1.9 million immigrants contributing to the state's vibrant cultural and economic landscape. Among them, nearly 1 million residents speak languages other than English at home and report speaking English less than "very well." As this linguistically diverse population continues to grow, Illinois recognizes that all residents—regardless of English proficiency—have a right to equitable access to government services.

This document shall serve as the Language Access Plan ("LAP") for the Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) to provide services to limited English proficient ("LEP") individuals, as required under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 45 C.F.R. §80 et seq., and 28 C.F.R. §42 et seq. A LEP individual is someone who is not able to speak, read, write or understand the English language at a level that allows him or her to effectively access or take advantage of OSFM services, documents, programs, or activities. The purpose of this LAP is to provide a framework for the provision of timely and reasonable language assistance to LEP persons who come in contact with IDOA, and to ensure that those LEP individuals are provided with meaningful and equal access to IDOA and matters within IDOA's regulatory scope.

In 2000, President Clinton's Executive Order 13166 affirmed the obligations of all federal agencies, *as well as any state or local agency that receives federal financial assistance*, to ensure that LEP individuals can meaningfully interact with government agencies. Federal financial assistance includes, but is not limited to, grants and loans of federal funds; grants or donations of federal property; training; details of federal personnel; or any agreement, arrangement, or other contract which has as one of its purposes the provision of assistance. An agency's failure to ensure that LEP individuals can effectively participate in, or benefit from, federally assisted entities, programs, and activities may run afoul of the protections under Title VI. As such, all State of Illinois agencies, boards, commissions, programs, and activities that receive federal funding must take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to LEP individuals. Similarly, the Illinois Civil Rights Act of 2003, which is modeled after Title VI, prohibits units of State, county, and local government from utilizing criteria or methods of administration that have a disparate impact on the basis of race or national origin, regardless of intent. *See* 740 ILCS 23/5.

Section 2: Employment Plans, Bilingual Needs and Disability Surveys

Every year, State agencies are required to report data and information to the Department of Central Management Services (CMS) to enable CMS to track State agencies' hiring practices of African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, respectively, and to assess State agencies' success in implementing strategies and programs in accordance with the previous year's Employment Plans. State agencies are also required to annually report Bilingual Needs and Bilingual Pay data. A Disability Survey is also offered to IDOA employees annually so those employees have the ability to voluntarily self-identify a disability so the Agency can collect affirmative action statistics but also to identify employees who may need assistance in emergency situations. The responses to these surveys contribute to a collective effort to ensure that everyone across the State of Illinois can access the rights, privileges and benefits to which they are entitled, including individuals with limited English proficiency.

Section 3: Demographic information & Data

Based on information supplied by the Office of the Governor, the top five non-English languages spoken in Illinois are: Spanish, Polish, Chinese (including Mandarin and Cantonese dialects), Tagalog, and Arabic. IDOA has taken steps to provide interpreter and/or translator services to all LEP individuals.

IDOA has not historically tracked LEP requests. The department typically has 10 or less LEP requests per year. However, the department will develop tracking method to ensure we are capturing all LEP requests.

Section 4: Language Assistance Services

IDOA has two designated Spanish-speaking translators on staff. Both are fluent in Spanish and available to assist Spanish-speaking LEP individuals. These translators will be deployed as needed and when requested.

When IDOA staff receive a request from Spanish-speaking LEP individuals for an interpreter or translator, arrangements will be made to connect those LEP individuals with the designated IDOA staff member in the Springfield office. Alternatively, if any IDOA staff having a direct communication with a Spanish-speaking LEP person believes that the LEP individual is having difficulty understanding all or a portion of the conversation, that IDOA staff member can either inquire if the LEP individual would like an in-house Spanish

speaking interpreter/translator to join the conversation or unilaterally determine to engage an in-house Spanish-speaking interpreter translator or translation services.

SECTION 5: 3RD PARTY LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE TRANSLATOR/INTERPRETER SERVICES

If at any time an in-house translator is unavailable, or a need arises for non-Spanish translation services, IDOA utilizes the state master contract, which provides telephonic Interpretation by a professional network of over 4,000 interpreters who collectively speak more than 200 languages. The department also has a TTD/TTY line for the deaf and hard of hearing at the Administrative Headquarters in Springfield, the Environmental Programs Regional Office in DeKalb, and the DuQuoin State Fair Office.

IDOA has also made great strides in translating test materials into Spanish and have translated testing materials into other languages on an as needed basis. Document translation is a service available to IDOA and its customers through the Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT) using the DoIT Document Translation Portal. Once approved to access the service, agencies can have documents translated using DoIT's Document Translation Portal to convert Agency documents on request. Agencies will be billed based on their usage of the document translation service on a per-page basis.

SECTION 6: NOTIFICATION OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES

IDOA's Divisions and Bureaus have many forms, applications, and other documents available at the IDOA website: Illinois Department of Agriculture. The IDOA webpage includes a language visual tool on top that lets users select their preferred language, and the first six listed are the most common in our state. In case language assistance is required with reading and/or completing a document, please contact the IDOA Language Access Coordinator at: AGR.languageaccess@illinois.gov.

If someone encounters difficulties, either specifically with Language Access or generally with any kind of treatment felt to be questionable or problematic, there is a Contact Us page on the IDOA website. These complaints will be routed to the IDOA Language Access Coordinator.

When staff requests language assistance from LAC, they play a crucial role in informing LAC, and training is provided. The Language Access Coordinator will then ask the LEP how our process was, and the LEP will be informed of the complaint form at that time. If the agency received a complaint, the Languages Access Coordinator would be the first person to receive notification. LAC will note facts, enter them into systems, and ensure a secure and efficient

escalation to the Assistant Director. LAC will note recommendations, and the Assistant Director will decide on the next steps, consulting with the Director or General Counsel. If the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily, LAC will reach out to the Governor's Office of New Americans at GOV.NewAmericans@illinois.gov.

SECTION 7: LANGUAGE ACCESS TRAINING

Illinois Department of Agriculture is committed to training staff and increasing awareness of LEP issues and responsibilities among that staff. This training may include how to identify LEP individuals who need language assistance, awareness of IDOA's in-house Spanish speaking translators and providing information on current state contracts available to LEP individuals to assist them.

IDOA will utilize multilingual I-Speak resource cards to assist with the identification of the languages requested by individuals with LEP. These tools support meaningful access by enabling individuals with LEP to indicate their language need. I-Speak cards and posters provide information on the availability of interpretation services for the six languages spoken in Illinois.

SECTION 8: MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND REPORTING

The LAP will be submitted to the Office of the Governor and posted on the IDOA website. Language Access Resource signage will be prominently posted in all IDOA offices across the state. This will ensure staff are informed about available resources and equipped to provide them to the public. Members of the public visiting our offices will also have access to this signage and related materials.

The LAP will be reviewed at certain intervals to ensure the LAP meets the ongoing and evolving needs of LEP individuals, accurately reflects IDOA's operations at the time, and is in line with expectations from the Office of the Governor.

SECTION 9: CONTACT INFORMATION

IDOA's Language Access Coordinator:
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