



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN 2025

Overview of Standards & Current Systems and
Practices

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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 AGENCY OVERVIEW

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 Language Access Plan outlines the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity's (DCEO) five-year plan for language access implementation, a timeline selected to achieve greater alignment with the Illinois Language Equity and Access Act. Section 1 of the Language Access Plan sets the stage for the plan by providing an overview of DCEO and establishing the purpose, goals, and guiding principles that anchor the Language Access Plan. The sections that follow, Sections 2 to 7, address specific areas of language access implementation. Each area of implementation is addressed in two distinct parts, which include:

1. **Overview of Standard** (or Implementation Area): A brief description of the standard based on federal guidance and the Language Equity and Access Act.
2. **Current DCEO Systems and Practices**: A description of DCEO's current practices, existing infrastructure, and/or progress to date in relation to the standard

Implementation Goals and a 5-Year Action Plan is provided to support agency implementation:

Implementation Goals: provides an overview of the overarching goals DCEO will pursue to meet compliance objectives

5-Year Action Plan: a list of detailed time-bound action items to be completed by DCEO in three phases over an implementation period of five years:

- a. Phase 0 (Year 0)
- b. Phase I (Year 1)
- c. Phase II (Years 2 and 3)
- d. Phase III (Years 4 and 5)
 - i. The timeframe for a phase is subject to modification by DCEO.

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY'S ROLE

The Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity mission is to create equitable economic opportunities throughout the State of Illinois. By attracting and supporting major job creators, investing in communities, strengthening Illinois' workforce, fostering innovation, and ushering in the new clean energy economy, DCEO works to fortify Illinois' reputation as a global economic powerhouse while ensuring Illinois is the best state to live, work and do business. Additionally, as a designated Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) administrative entity, DCEO is required to monitor and ensure nondiscriminatory and universal access to programs, services, and benefits administered through the Illinois WorkNet Center system.

DCEO delivers impactful programs and services through the Offices of Accountability, Broadband Development, Business Development, Community Development, Community Assistance, Employment and Training, Economic Equity and Empowerment, Energy and Business, Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Technology, Equal Opportunity Monitoring and Compliance, External Relations, Grants Management, Human Resources, Illinois Works, Policy Development, Planning and Research, Regional Economic Development, Tourism, Film, and Trade and Investment.

DCEO complies with all federal and state nondiscrimination laws and recognizes the value and importance of providing meaningful access to the programs and services offered by the agency. DCEO ensures that all recipients of WIOA Title 1 funding comply with the Illinois Nondiscrimination Plan, which includes provisions that outline rights for limited English proficient individuals by providing compliance reviews of the American Job Centers that receive federal funding.

1.2 LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN LEGAL BASIS AND PURPOSE

PURPOSE AND GOALS

DCEO's Language Access Plan aims to provide guidance to staff and establish a roadmap to support DCEO's commitment to building trust, fostering relationships, and removing language barriers to support meaningful access to the department's programs, services, and opportunities for individuals with LEP. The Language Access Plan also seeks to align the department's efforts and bring DCEO into compliance with Illinois's Language Equity and

Access Act (Public Act 103-0723), the Illinois Civil Rights Act of 2003, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other applicable federal and state standards and guidelines.

AUTHORITY

As a recipient of federal financial assistance, Illinois is bound by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d-2000d-7, and its implementing regulations, 45 C.F.R. Part 80, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin (which includes Limited English Proficiency). Illinois is committed to advancing the goals of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 in alignment with the State of Illinois' Language Equity and Access Act (Public Act 103-0723)

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

[Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) (42 U.S.C. § 2000d) (Title VI) prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. As a recipient of federal financial assistance, the [Department/Agency] is bound by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d-2000d-7, and its implementing regulation, 45 C.F.R. Part 80, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin (which includes Limited English Proficiency).

Illinois Civil Rights Act of 2003

The [Illinois Civil Rights Act](#) prohibits State, county, or local government in Illinois from excluding a person from participation in, denying a person the benefits of, or subjecting a person to discrimination under any program or activity on the grounds of that person's race, color, national origin, or gender. Additionally, the Illinois Civil Rights Act prohibits using criteria or methods that have a discriminatory effect.

Illinois Human Rights Act (IHRA)

The [Illinois Human Rights Act](#) consolidates existing laws and administrative processes addressing civil rights in Illinois. IHRA prohibits discrimination in employment, housing, financial credit, and public accommodations because of race, color, sex, religion, ancestry, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, unfavorable military discharge, and marital status, as well as retaliation for opposing discrimination. IHRA established the Illinois Department of Human Rights (IDHR) and the Illinois Human Rights Commission (IHRC) as enforcing agencies.¹

¹ <https://dhr.illinois.gov/about-us/directors-office/agency-overview-and-history.html>

Language Equity and Access Act

Signed into law by Governor Pritzker in 2024, the Language Equity and Access Act 2024 aims to ensure that all residents can access state information, programs, and services equitably, and that limited English proficiency does not prevent anyone from fully participating in civic life.² The Act aims to ensure all Illinois residents, including individuals with LEP, have meaningful and equitable access to state services, programs, information, and activities by removing language barriers. The act incorporates federal guidance for ensuring meaningful access for individuals with LEP and other federal and state legislation that prohibit discrimination based on national origin and promote language access, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Illinois Human Rights Act of 1979, and the Illinois Civil Rights Act of 2003.³

The Act designates the Governor’s Office of New Americans (ONA) as the lead agency responsible for coordinating the implementation of statewide language access policy, with the support of the Department of Human Services. ONA is tasked with providing oversight, offering technical assistance, and ensuring agency compliance with the Act’s requirements.

Under the Act, the ONA will lead the development of a Language Needs Assessment Report using U.S. Census data to identify the languages spoken across Illinois and inform agency planning. All state agencies will develop Language Access Plans that will inform how the agency will ensure meaningful access to individuals with LEP, appoint a Language Access Coordinator (LAC) to oversee implementation within each agency, and translate vital documents and provide qualified interpretation services for LEP populations.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

In accordance with federal and state requirements, including the Illinois Language Equity and Access Act (Public Act 103-0723), this Language Access Plan provides a framework for ensuring DCEO can deliver timely and meaningful language assistance services to DCEO constituents with LEP. DCEO is committed to providing equitable language access to its services, programs, and activities for all individuals, regardless of the language they use. DCEO will operationalize this commitment to language access by:

- Designating a Language Access Coordinator who is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the Language Access Plan.

² See *Language Equity and Access Act*, Public Act 103-0723, 103rd Gen. Assem. (Ill. 2024), <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=103-0723>.

³ See *Language Equity and Access Act*, Pub. Act 103-0723.

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- Serving all individuals with LEP and providing accurate, timely, and effective communication, including oral and written language services needed to assist people with LEP to communicate effectively, and providing them with equal opportunity to participate fully in the services, activities, or other programs administered by the state. This includes displaying public notices in commonly spoken languages that communicate the availability of free language assistance services and how to access them.
- Conducting a regular assessment that describes the population of people with LEP the agency serves, the policy and programmatic actions implemented to ensure meaningful access, and the metrics used to measure compliance with the Language Equity and Access Act. This assessment will be conducted by the federally recognized four-factor analysis, which considers the number or proportion of people with LEP served, the frequency and context, the nature and importance of services provided, and the agency's available resources and costs.
- Strengthening DCEO's capacity to develop and distribute multilingual content and expanding access to translated vital documents and other resources. Translation of vital records will be prioritized with guidance provided by ONA. The agency will also work to expand multilingual website content, including program information, complaint procedures, and eligibility criteria.
- Establishing mechanisms to track progress across divisions, programs, and funded partners, and supporting efforts to meet language access compliance standards. This includes collecting and reporting data on how to use interpretation and translation vendor services, including volume, language type, and service type. DCEO will maintain a complaint and review process and ensure timely resolution.
- Provide ongoing employee development and training to maintain well-trained bilingual employees and general staff. DCEO will also collect and report data on bilingual staff roles, language certifications, and language capacity across its workforce.
- Ensuring the Language Access Plan and related materials are publicly available through DCEO's website and other accessible formats.

DEFINITIONS

- **State Agency:** any State of Illinois agency, board, or commission, directly responsible to the Governor, that provides direct or indirect services, resources, programs, information, data, policies, instructions, or activities to the public, Funded Entities, and staff.

- **Tier I State Agency:** State Agencies that have primary responsibilities that involve providing direct or indirect services and information to the public and have relatively large staff, budget, and operational scope.
- **Tier II State Agency:** State Agencies that have responsibilities that involve providing direct or indirect services and information to the public and/or having a relatively medium-to-small staff, budget, and/or operational scope.
- **Tier III State Agency:** State Agencies that do not have primary responsibilities that involve providing direct or indirect services and information to the public, though they may provide information to the public.
- **Coordinating Entity:** The Language Access Program, housed in the Office of New Americans within the Office of the Governor as the entity assigned to coordinate the efforts of the State of Illinois's State Agencies to provide meaningful language access to individuals with LEP in accordance with the Language Equity and Access Act
- **Funded Entity:** any contractors, grantees, and recipients that receive financial assistance from the State Agency for the purpose of delivering programs, activities, research, information, or services to the public.
- **Limited English Proficiency (LEP):** the inability or difficulty to understand or to effectively express oneself in spoken or written English as a result of one's national origin, and the individual has not developed fluency in the English language.
- **Individuals with LEP:** individuals who self-identify as speaking English less than "very well" according to the U.S. Census American Community Survey.
- **Language of Lesser Diffusion:** any language used within a distinct geographic area, such as a city, county, or state, where the population of speakers is relatively small.
- **Language Access:** the process of ensuring that individuals with LEP have access to vital documents and services in a language they can understand, either through interpretation or translation services. Please see Meaningful Language Access below.
- **Meaningful Language Access:** the ability to receive accurate, timely, and effective information in one's spoken or preferred language, and to participate in and benefit from public services offered by a State Agency, at no cost to the individual with LEP. Meaningful access must not be unreasonably restricted, delayed, or inferior compared to access provided to individuals with English proficiency.
- **Digital Language Access:** the utilization of technology to guarantee that individuals with LEP can understand and engage with digital content in their preferred language. This includes the use of tools such as translation applications, multilingual websites, and various digital resources, all of which aim to enhance information accessibility for people, regardless of language disparities.
- **Language Access Plan (LAP):** a management document and roadmap that outlines the tasks and priorities to be implemented to ensure the State Agency will meet compliance standards set forth in the Language Equity and Access Act.
- **Statewide Manager for Language Access Program:** staff of the Coordinating Entity tasked with coordinating and overseeing all language access implementation statewide and

across all Covered and Funded Entities and overseeing the Language Access Coordinators.

- **Language Access Coordinator (LAC):** staff of a State Agency tasked with coordinating and overseeing the entity's language access implementation activities and coordinates and oversees the Language Access Liaisons to ensure that language access information is shared across all state agency programs and divisions.
- **Language Access Liaison (LAL):** staff of a division, program, or Funded Entity tasked with coordinating and overseeing the entity's language access implementation activities, working under an LAC
- **Language Assistance Services:** oral and written language services needed to assist individuals with LEP to communicate effectively with staff, and to provide individuals with LEP meaningful access to, and equal opportunity to participate fully in, the services, activities, or other programs administered by the State.
- **Compliance Evaluation Framework:** an evaluation methodology involving the Language Assessment Rubric and Reporting Tool which the Statewide Manager for Language Access will use to monitor the compliance of State Agencies.
- **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. See also Oral Language Services.
- **Oral Language Services:** includes various methods to provide verbal information and interpretation, such as staff interpreters, Multilingual Staff, telephone interpreter programs, tele-video interpretation services, and private interpreter programs. See also Interpretation.
- **Multilingual Staff:** staff member who has demonstrated proficiency in one or more language other than English and is formally assigned and fairly compensated to either provide language assistance services such as interpretation and/or translation to individuals with LEP, or serve in a policy, resource, or advisory role to provide their cultural and linguistic expertise.
- **Language Service Provider (LSP):** a vetted contractor/vendor contracted to perform language assistance services, such as interpretation and/or translation, for individuals with LEP.
- **Four-Factor Analysis:** a framework intended to aid recipients of federal financial assistance with conducting an individualized assessment of their programs and activities to help them prioritize language access services.
- **Translation:** the conversion of written text from one language (source language) into an equivalent written text in another language (target language) to convey the intent and essential meaning of the source text.
- **Plain Language:** a style of communication that aims to make written or spoken information easy to understand for a broad audience. The Plain Language Act (2010) defines Plain Language as “clear, concise, well organized, and follows other best

practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience.”⁴ Language intended for public consumption avoids non-essential information and complex phrasing; highlights essential information; avoids the use of technical terms and industry jargon; and simplifies complex information.

- **Vital Documents:** public-facing written materials, whether in paper or electronic format and made available on any platform (including websites), that are created, issued, or distributed by a State Agency to communicate with the public. These documents contain information that affects an individual’s access to, retention of, termination of, or exclusion from program services or benefits; are required by law; or serve to: Inform the public about rights, responsibilities, rules, services, resources, or events; allow individuals to apply for or participate in programs or benefits; notify individuals about their eligibility, participation, or benefits; and provide instruction, guidance, or complaint submission processes.

SECTION 2: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Illinois is home to a diverse population with cultural and linguistic backgrounds from around the world. To support DCEO in determining and prioritizing language assistance services, the Language Access Plan includes a Needs Assessment that identifies the languages spoken by individuals with languages other than English served or likely to be served by DCEO.

A four-factor analysis is used in this section as a framework to determine the language services DCEO needs to prioritize to meet the needs of individuals with limited English proficiency. The four-factor analysis is a tool designed to help recipients of federal financial assistance conduct an individualized assessment that considers the following four factors:⁵

1. Factor 1: Data collection and analysis of the population with limited English proficiency
2. Factor 2: Data collection and analysis of languages encountered
3. Factor 3: Services Provided to General Public and/or Prospective Limited English Proficient Users
4. Factor 4: Budget and Available Resources

⁴ See *Public Law 111-274*, 124 Stat. 2861 <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ274/pdf/PLAW-111publ274.pdf>.

⁵ See *Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons* (67 FR 41455) (2002). <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2002/06/18/02-15207/guidance-to-federal-financial-assistance-recipients-regarding-title-vi-prohibition-against-national>

Data provided in this section illustrates the number of individuals with limited English proficiency and with LEP who may need language services, as well as the types of services DCEO provides that the general public and potential individuals with LEP would access.

2.1 FOUR-FACTOR ANALYSIS

FACTOR 1

Overview of Standards

Limited English Proficient Population Data Collection and Analysis assess the number or proportion of individuals with limited English proficiency that could be served by or could encounter DCEO's services.

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act require each State agency to conduct an individualized assessment to determine the adequacy of its Language Access Plan. This assessment must consider the frequency with which people with LEP come in contact with services, programs, or activities provided by the agency. In addition, the Act directs ONA, with the support of the Department of Human Services, and any other relevant agencies, to prepare a Language Needs Assessment Report based on available U.S. Census data. This report must identify languages spoken throughout the State and examine the geographic patterns and trend data to inform people about the development of agency Language Access Plans.

The Language Access Plan must include a description of the LEP populations served, the policy and programmatic actions taken to ensure meaningful access, and the metrics used to measure compliance with the Act. Agencies must regularly monitor demographic population changes to ensure language services adequately reflect actual needs, particularly for services frequently utilized by the public.

This analysis helps ensure that DCEO is positioned to adequately identify underserved communities with LEP and emerging language needs and address any barriers that may prevent access to critical public services.

Current DCEO Systems and Practices

In 2025, DCEO is using the following findings from a demographic analysis⁶ conducted by the University of Illinois Chicago in partnership with the Office of New Americans on the State's individuals with limited English proficiency and individuals with LEP:

⁶ See Rob Paral, "Language Needs Assessment Report, _ Office of New Americans, Office of the Governor of Illinois, Great Cities Institute at the University of Illinois Chicago (2025), <https://arcq.is/1Py4n0>.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Language Access Plan

- In Illinois, 1.0 million residents speak English less than "very well," and speak a language other than English at home. Both federal and state policies recognize that these individuals have a right to equitable access to government services, which includes information and communication in a language they understand.
- Eleven languages have more than 10,000 limited-English speakers in Illinois, including:

Largest Language Groups and Largest Limited-English Language Groups in Illinois: 2018-2022			
Largest Language Groups		Largest Limited-English Language Groups	
	# of Speakers		# of Speakers
Spanish	1,638,222	Spanish	616,760
Polish	169,308	Polish	73,843
Chinese*	106,399	Chinese*	51,494
Filipino, Tagalog	86,051	Filipino, Tagalog	23,198
Arabic	67,017	Arabic	20,342
Urdu	56,122	Korean	20,165
Gujarati	50,196	Gujarati	18,762
Hindi	47,274	Russian	17,649
Russian	44,211	Vietnamese	13,966
Korean	39,624	Urdu	13,893
French	36,728	Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Little Russian	11,817

- The predominant language other than English in many Illinois counties may be Spanish, but closer examination of the most common non-English languages shows that immigrants and migrants come to Illinois from many places. For example, in Champaign County, the top language spoken in limited English households is Mandarin, and in Macon County, it is Tagalog. Additionally, in Cass and Knox counties, the second language is French/Haitian/Cajun. In Madison County, it's Tagalog. In Cook, DuPage, and Kane counties, the second language category is Slavic. In Boone County, "other Asian Pacific Islander" is second to Spanish.
- A statewide map of persons who don't speak English very well shows that the largest numbers of such persons are in the metro Chicago area. Nevertheless, significant numbers of up to 9 thousand are located in townships across the

state and are often located near metro areas such as St. Louis, Springfield, Champaign, and Rock Island. There are also notable populations in relatively rural townships in counties such as Cass, Douglas, or Union.

- After years of decline, the number of Illinois residents who don't speak English very well is on the rise. In examining ten years, from 2014 to 2023, this population fell by 79,000 people between 2014 and 2019. But since a low of 1.0 million in 2019, the most recent data, for the year 2023, shows about 1,082,000 people, for a gain of some 82,000.

FACTOR 2

Overview of Standard

Language Encounters Data Collection and Analysis assess the frequency with which limited English proficient (LEP) individuals encounter DCEO's services, programs, or activities.

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act require State agencies to conduct an individualized assessment as part of its Language Access Plan that considers the frequency with which persons with LEP come into contact with the services, programs, and activities provided by the agency. This analysis supports the DCEO's ability to identify language access needs and ensure meaningful access.

Current DCEO Systems and Practices

DCEO's contact with LEP individuals can be described as regular occurrences for externally facing DCEO Offices, where other Offices fund local grantees that work directly with LEP individuals/clients. DCEO may collect data on the use of third-party vendor translation services, including requested language, however, a formalized data collection and analysis assessment will need implementation.

In compliance with the Illinois Language Equity and Access Act, and to ensure that all DCEO encounters with individuals with LEP across programs and services are collected in a comprehensive and ongoing manner, DCEO will implement a 5-Year Action Plan, beginning with the following proposed goals:

Phase 0:

- The Language Access Coordinator will collaborate with ONA to understand the requirements for compliance with this standard.

Phase I and II:

- Collect data on encounters with individuals with LEP that take place in person, by telephone, via email, and through online platforms.
- Track the languages encounters and types of language assistance services requested and/or provided during those encounters; and

- Conduct regular assessments and identify high-volume languages and the most frequently requested or needed language assistance services to ensure meaningful access that is accurate, timely, and effective at no cost to people with LEP.

FACTOR 3

Overview of Standard

Services Provided to General Public and/or Prospective Limited English Proficient Users, assesses the nature and importance of the programs, activities, or services provided by DCEO.

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act require State Agencies to implement an individualized assessment as part of their Language Access Plan that includes the nature and importance of the services, programs, or activities provided by the State agency.

Current DCEO Systems and Practices

DCEO may interact with the public, including in person, virtually via telephone, email and or through online mediums. DCEO's employs bilingual staff to assist LEP callers, when applicable, and the DCEO website provides information on DCEO's programs, services, including the Five-Year Economic Growth Plan, which is translated into multiple languages. DCEO utilizes Google Translate to further assist LEP individuals.

In compliance with the Illinois Language Equity and Access Act, DCEO will conduct an assessment of the nature and importance of the programs and services it provides to ensure meaningful access to the general public, including LEP individuals, by implementing the following proposed goals in the 5-Year Action Plan:

Phase 0:

- The Language Access Coordinator will collaborate with ONA to understand the requirements for compliance with this standard.

Phase I and II:

- Identify all programs, service, benefits, and/ or activities where LEP individuals may be encountered.
- Identify specific programs, services, benefits, and/or activities that should be prioritized, based on the nature and importance of those services to the public.
- Consult with the Department of Innovation & Technology (DoIT) to ensure compliance with website accessibility requirements, including the feasibility to convert information on the website presented in PDF form to an HTML format so that Google Translate can be utilized more fully.

FACTOR 4

Overview of Standard

Budget and Available Resources assess the resources available to DCEO currently, as well as the cost associated with providing language assistance.

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act require State Agencies to review the resources available to the State Agency and the costs. It is best practice for the budget for language access services to be based on programmatic needs and the top five languages prioritized for services. Additionally, a strategic practice is to outline the costs associated with current language assistance services, as well as assess the level of resources, costs, and capacity to implement and support additional language services over time. Based on the assessment of resources, DCEO will identify efforts to support cost-savings and cost-sharing when/if needed. Such efforts may include sharing resources with other departments and agencies and/or using technology to support the delivery of language assistance services.

Current DCEO Systems and Practices

The Office of Equal Opportunity Monitoring and Compliance submits an annual budget for language translation services. DCEO will continue to assess and prioritize its programmatic needs, including identifying cost saving resources to support meaningful access.

SECTION 3: STAFFING AND COORDINATION

Overview of Standards

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act outline the requirements for each State agency to designate a Language Access Coordinator who is responsible for overseeing the development and implementation of the agency's language access plan. The Language Access Coordinator Will support ongoing compliance by partnering with ONA to ensure coordinated implementation and compliance with language access requirements.

To ensure adequate staffing to support the development, management, and oversight of the language access activities, and consistent with the Language Equity and Access Act's directive to ensure adequate staff of bilingual employees, DCEO will establish internal roles to implement its Language Access Plan. These roles include a Language Access Coordinator and may also include a Language Access Liaison within divisions or programs to support

localized implementation and coordination of language assistance services, in alignment with national language access best practices.

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act direct State agencies to incorporate language equity compliance provisions into their contracts with vendors, grantees, and purchase of care entities, ensuring that these funded entities provide language assistance services to individuals with LEP.

DCEO conducts programs and services in partnership with a wide network of grantees and funded entities. Therefore, DCEO will take affirmative steps to ensure those entities fulfill language access obligations to support monitoring and accountability.

SECTION 4: LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES

DCEO is committed to taking reasonable steps to ensure meaningful communication and access to information for DCEO's users with LEP. The Language Assistance Services section outlines the types of language assistance DCEO currently provides, as well as the services DCEO plans to provide to support meaningful communication and participation for individuals who are limited English proficient. The language assistance services outlined in the Language Access Plan include oral interpretation services, virtual interpretation services, in-language assistance with multilingual staff, print and online translation services, and the development of other multilingual media content.

This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of DCEO's language access staff, including Language Access Coordinators and Language Access Liaisons, who are responsible for monitoring and ensuring the implementation of language assistance services according to the Language Access Plan across the agency.

DCEO's Language Access Coordinator (LAC) shall be responsible for monitoring and ensuring the implementation of language assistance services according to the Language Access Plan (LAP) across the agency. The Office of Equal Opportunity Monitoring & Compliance (EOMC) is responsible for ADA and EEO compliance and currently assigned the responsibility to oversight compliance of DCEO's LAP. The Deputy Director of EOMC currently serves as DCEO's LAC. DCEO's Director has authority over the delegation and/or transition of the LAC role, and responsibilities. The LAC contact information should be made available to all DCEO staff members through workforce training and posted on the agency's internal and external websites. Any change and/or transition in the LAC position, including contact information, will be shared with DCEO staff members, updated on the agency websites, and made available to the Governor's Office of New Americans.

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4.1 LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES PLAN

LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES

1. LANGUAGE NEED IDENTIFICATION

- **Overview of Standard**

The Language Access Plan requires State Agencies to develop clear policy and programmatic actions to ensure meaningful access. It is national language access best practice for State Agencies to utilize language-need identification materials, such as printed 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 needs, consistent with State Agencies' obligations to ensure accurate, timely, and effective communication.

- **Current DCEO Systems and Practices**

DCEO has access to Babel Charts and "I Speak" Flashcards to assist LEP individuals. Babel Charts and "I Speak" Flashcards are available at each American Job Center, that receive federal financial assistance in compliance with WIOA.

To further comply with this standard, DCEO will implement a 5-Year Plan, beginning with the following proposed goals:

Phase 0:

- The Language Access Coordinator will collaborate with ONA to understand the requirements for compliance with this standard.

Phase I:

- Conduct an assessment of DCEO programs and services where language-need identification materials are made available, where applicable.

2. HIRING/CONTRACTING QUALIFIED INTERPRETERS FOR IN-PERSON COMMUNICATION

- **Overview of Standard**

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act require State Agencies to ensure individuals with LEP have access to competent, timely, and effective interpretation services when interacting with agency staff, programs, and services. Agencies are required to provide meaningful access. Using trained and qualified interpreters, in alignment with standards developed by ONA, supports State agency compliance and ensures meaningful access.

- **Current DCEO Systems and Practices**

DCEO ensures effective communication and meaningful access to the agency's programs and services, by providing professional translation, interpretation, including American Sign Language services via state-wide contract with Multilingual Connections Translation services.

3. HIRING/CONTRACTING QUALIFIED INTERPRETERS FOR VIRTUAL COMMUNICATION (OVER-THE-PHONE OR VIDEO)

- **Overview of Standard**

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act require State Agencies to ensure individuals with LEP have access to competent, timely, and effective interpretation services when interacting with agency staff, programs, and services.

- **Current DCEO Systems and Practices**

DCEO utilizes Propio Telephonic Language Assistance Services, a third-party vendor, to provide professional telephonic language interpreters in over 300 languages. Propio Telephonic Language Assistance is available at each American Job Center, that receive federal financial assistance in compliance with WIOA. To further comply with this standard, DCEO is in process of developing Propio Telephonic Assistance education and training for all employees, as a proposed goal for Phase I in the 5 Year Action Plan.

4. EMPLOYING/ UTILIZING BILINGUAL OR MULTILINGUAL STAFF

- **Overview of Standard**

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act require the Governor's Office of New Americans, with the support of the Department of Human Services, and any other relevant agencies to set standards for adequate staffing of bilingual employees at

State Agencies, including a methodology for monitoring implementation and updating the State Services Assurance Act and the Bilingual Employment Plan, based on the Language needs Assessment. While the Language Equity and Access Act specifically use the term "bilingual staff", national language access best practices recognize and value the role of multilingual staff, highlighting the broad linguistic competencies of individuals who possess proficiency in more than two languages or multiple linguistic repertoires.

- **Current DCEO Systems and Practices**

DCEO currently employs (8) staff with bilingual designation in their position. The following is a list of Office's with number of bilingual staff and language:

- Office of Trade and Investment (2) bilingual staff members
 - Chinese, French, German, Portuguese, Spanish
- Office of Economic Equity & Empowerment (2) bilingual staff members
 - Spanish
- Office of Regional Development (1) bilingual staff member
 - Spanish
- Office of Community Assistance (1) bilingual staff member
 - Spanish
- Office of Human Resources (1) bilingual staff member
 - Spanish
- Office of Employment & Training (1) bilingual staff member
 - Spanish

5. TRANSLATION OF VITAL DOCUMENTS AND ONLINE CONTENT

- **Overview of Standard**

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act require agencies to ensure that vital documents are translated accurately, completely, and in a timely manner by qualified translators. In instances where LEP populations fall below these thresholds but still require meaningful access, agencies must provide written notice in the primary language of the right to oral interpretation of the written material at no cost.

Translation priorities should be guided by the most recent Language Needs Assessment Report and the demographic data of the agency's service population.

- **Current DCEO Systems and Practices**

Vital program information, whether written, oral, or electronic, is necessary for an individual to know how to obtain any aid, benefit, service, training, or information required by law. DCEO is committed to providing meaningful access and will continue to monitor its programs and services to ensure that vital information is available to the general public and / or LEP individuals. DCEO considers a document to be vital, if it contains information related to the access, enrollment, and or termination of a program or service and or is required by law.

Current vital documents identified for DCEO include:

- Advantage Illinois Small Business Loans Information
- Community Service Block Grant Program Services
- Connect Illinois Broadband Resources and Programs
- Consent and general program complaint forms
- DCEO Press Releases
- First Stop Business Development Resource Information
- Help Illinois Family Assistance Information
- Illinois Cannabis License Resources and Loan Information
- Illinois Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program Information
- Illinois Works Apprenticeship Program for Contractors and Subcontractors
- International Business Development Programs
- Low Income Housing Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Low Income Water Housing Assistance Program (LIWHAP)
- Minority, Veteran and Woman Owned Business Resources
- Office of Illinois Tourism Program and Offerings
- Rebuild Illinois Program Information
- Weatherization Program for Homes and Multi-structure Buildings
- WorkNet Resources and information for job seekers

In compliance with the Illinois Language Equity and Access Act, DCEO will implement a 5-Year Action Plan, beginning with the following goals:

Phase 0:

- The Language Access Coordinator will collaborate with ONA to understand the requirements for compliance with this standard.

Phase I:

- Conduct a comprehensive review of DCEO programs and services, to further identify, prioritize, and translate vital documents to provide meaningful access to LEP individuals.

6. DEVELOPMENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF MULTILINGUAL CONTENT IN OTHER FORMATS (PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS, RADIO MESSAGING, SOCIAL MEDIA INFORMATION)

- **Overview of Standard**

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act require State Agencies to take steps to ensure that digital content is accessible to individuals with LEP. All translations of public-facing digital content will be completed in a manner that ensures accuracy, completeness, and timeliness, consistent with the Act's requirement for competent translation services. The selection of languages for translation will be guided by current demographic data, the State's Language Needs Assessment, and thresholds outlined in the Language Equity and Access Act.

- **Current DCEO Systems and Practices**

DCEO is committed to providing meaningful access to the general public and/ or LEP by the development and distribution of multilingual digital content. To comply with this standard, DCEO will implement a 5-Year Action Plan, beginning with the following proposed goals:

Phase 0:

- The Language Access Coordinator will collaborate with ONA to understand the requirements for compliance with the Illinois Language Equity Act as it relates to this standard.

Phase I-II

- Identify and prioritize existing and new developed materials for translation using criteria such as vital content, frequency of use, and relevance to LEP populations. Coordinate translation of public facing content.

SECTION 5: NOTIFICATION OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES

In addition to providing language assistance services, the Notification of Language Assistance Services section will outline how DCEO can notify the public of language assistance services and provide information on how language assistance services can be requested. Such communication will assist individuals with LEP in understanding the services provided by DCEO, which can increase public trust and confidence.

5.1 NOTIFICATION OF LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE SERVICES PLAN

Overview of Standards

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act require State Agencies State Agencies ensure that the general public and individuals with LEP are informed of the availability of free interpretation and translation services and how to request them. To meet this requirement, DCEO will provide multilingual public notices in various formats—both digital and physical—to promote broad public awareness. All notices will clearly explain how individuals can request interpretation or translation services and will be made available in the most frequently spoken languages identified through demographic analysis and the State’s Language Needs Assessment Report.

Current DCEO Systems and Practices

DCEO is committed to informing the general public and LEP individuals of the availability of free interpretation and translation services, including how these services may be requested. To comply with this standard, DCEO will collaborate with ONA to understand the requirements for compliance as it relates to this standard, including recommendations for implementing goals in the 5-Year Action Plan.

SECTION 6: LANGUAGE ACCESS TRAINING

DCEO is committed to providing ongoing employment development and training on language access to well-trained bilingual employees, general staff, and all staff who interact with or may interact with individuals with LEP receive ongoing professional development and training on language access policies, procedures, and responsibilities. This section outlines the type of language access training to provide all DCEO personnel, as well as specific training responsibilities for bilingual or multilingual employees, frontline staff, and other personnel who may interact with individuals with LEP. This section also identifies the timing, frequency, and delivery methods for how training should be implemented across the agency and its divisions.

6.1 LANGUAGE ACCESS TRAINING PLAN

Overview of Standards

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act requires that State Agencies develop and implement an ongoing employee development and training strategy to maintain well-trained bilingual employees and general staff. This ensures the DCEO is equipped to deliver effective language assistance services.

Current DCEO Systems and Practices

DCEO is currently in process of developing an employee Language Access Training program. Training shall consist of an overview of applicable federal and state language access laws, DCEO's language access plan, services, roles and responsibilities of the Language Access Coordinator, bilingual staff, and understanding of the language access resources available. To comply with the Illinois Language Equity and Access Act, DCEO will implement a 5-Year Action Plan, beginning with the following proposed goals:

Phase 0:

- The Language Access Coordinator will collaborate with ONA to understand requirements for compliance with this standard.

Phase I:

- Implement ongoing employee development and training for all workforce that includes:
 - Applicable federal and state laws
 - Overview of the Language Access Plan
 - Overview of language needs identification procedures
 - Overview of language access resources
 - Overview of the role of the Language Access Coordinator and bilingual staff
 - Overview of complaint process, addressing complaints, and elevating to ONA.

SECTION 7: CONCERN RESOLUTION PROCESS

The Concern Resolution Process Section of the Language Access Plan highlights the need for allowing public feedback on the quality, accessibility and effectiveness of language assistance services to address any concerns that arise. This section outlines how DCEO will develop and make publicly available a multilingual concern resolution form, collect and log complaints submitted by individuals with LEP and others and promptly investigate and address each concern in a timely manner. Additionally, this section describes how the DCEO will track the resolution status of complaints to ensure transparency and accountability and coordinate with the ONA when appropriate to support compliance and continuous improvement.

Overview of Standards

The Illinois Language Equity and Access Act require State Agencies to establish and make publicly available a process for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) and members of the public to submit concerns related to access to language assistance services. Section 15(b)(5) of the Act requires each State agency to develop an internal complaint and review process specific to the provision of language assistance services. Complaints that are not resolved in a timely or satisfactory manner may be referred to the Governor's Office of New Americans for further review, per Section 30(c) of the Act.

Current DCEO Systems and Practices

An individual may file a complaint with the Deputy Director of Equal Opportunity Monitoring & Compliance regarding the alleged violation of the agency's Language Access Plan at:

Teri Morris, Deputy Director EOMC and Language Access Coordinator
1011 S. 2nd Street
Springfield, Illinois 62704
(217) 558-2418
Teri.morris@ilinois.gov

TTY: (800) 785-6055 Fax: (217) 558-6971

Complaints should be reported within (30) days of the alleged violation. If an individual feels that DCEO has not appropriately addressed the complaint, the individual can contact the Governor's Office of New Americans at GOV.NewAmericans@illinois.gov and or submit complaint via [ONA Language Access Complaint Notification Form](#)

To further comply with this standard, DCEO will implement a 5-Year Action Plan, beginning with the following proposed goals:

Phase 0:

- The Language Access Coordinator will collaborate with ONA to understand the requirements for compliance with this standard

Phase 1:

- Upon review and approval from DCEO's Director, and internal legal counsel, formalize language access complaint form, review and reporting process.
- Coordinate with DoIT, to create an online complaint reporting link on the DCEO website <https://dceo.illinois.gov/>

SECTION 8: MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND REPORTING

The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting section of the Language Access Plan outlines the implementation and procedures DCEO will implement to assess compliance with the Illinois Equity

and Access Act and evaluate the effectiveness of this Language Access Plan and its action items. This section will outline current practices and procedures for monitoring and collecting language access data, analyzing language use and language assistance needs, procedures for collecting and participating in community engagement/community feedback sessions to gather input on improvements to the Language Access Plan and language assistance service, and evaluating the quality of language assistance services offered by DCEO.

8.1 MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND REPORTING PLAN

Overview of Standard

In accordance with the Illinois Language Equity and Access Act, DCEO will coordinate with the Governor's Office of New Americans to review and monitor the implementation of its Language Access Plan and ensure ongoing compliance with the Act.

DCEO will conduct an individualized assessment of language assistance needs and patterns of language use on an ongoing basis and incorporate updated data and performance metrics into each new iteration of the Language Access Plan, as required under Section 25(d)(3). The agency will use this information to evaluate the effectiveness of current policies and practices and to inform people about continuous improvement of language access services.

The plan will include the ongoing review of statewide and agency-specific data on limited English proficient (LEP) populations, including demographic shifts and the identification of new or emerging language needs, as outlined in the State's Language Needs Assessment Report. The monitoring and evaluation plan will also track progress on the implementation of Language Access Plan goals; review expenditures related to language assistance services and assess whether projected changes in costs require budget adjustments or modifications to service delivery methods. Data will be collected and reviewed using the following methods:

Current DCEO Systems and Practices

The Language Access Coordinator will collaborate with ONA to understand the various requirements for compliance as it relates to this standard, including recommendations for implementing goals in the 5-Year Action Plan. The LAC will then develop a monitoring, evaluation, and reporting plan to present to DCEO's Director, Chief of Staff, Chief of Operations, and General Council, for review and approval.

SECTION 9: RESOURCES

- Illinois Statewide Coordination Plan
- Illinois Language Access Toolkit

SECTION 10: APPENDIX

9.1 APPENDIX 1: FACTOR 1 AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DEMOGRAPHIC DATA