



2024 CITY OF CONCORD LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN



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Introduction

Why does the City of Concord Need a Language Access Plan?

The City of Concord recognizes that many of its residents and visitors speak different languages and need different levels of support to communicate with city team members to engage and participate in city business. With this in mind, the City has developed a comprehensive Language Access Plan (LAP) that aims to promote inclusivity to ensure equitable access to essential city services. It outlines the policies and procedures that the City aims to carry out to maintain accountability and transparency for all community members who require language access services or assistance.

The City of Concord will continue to keep our commitment to treating all residents with respect and dignity, regardless of their level of English proficiency. Reasonable steps will be taken to meet this commitment and ensure that the City's services, programs, information, and activities are accessible in a meaningful way to all members of the public.

Additionally, the City's Language Access Plan ensures that the City of Concord complies with the federal requirements and regulations covered by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the 1987 Civil Rights Restoration Act, Executive Order 13166, ¹ Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, and 65 Fed. Reg. 50, 121 (Aug. 16, 2000). These regulations prohibit recipients of federal assistance, including a local government and its departments, from discriminating based on race, color, or national origin.

In 2023, the City of Concord was accepted into the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Institute for the Study of the Americas' Local Government Language Access Collaborative, in partnership with El Puente Hispano, an active non-profit organization dedicated to addressing the unique challenges and hardships faced by the Latino community in Cabarrus County. Through this program, our City-Community team of seven learned promising practices, conducted an assessment to identify current offerings and opportunities, and drafted this Language Access Plan.^{1a}



What is language access?

Language access ensures that all people have reasonable and equitable access to city services and resources regardless of their ability to speak English.

Purpose

The City of Concord is aware of communication barriers for people with limited English proficiency and understands the importance of providing equal access to city services, regardless of language proficiency. By creating and implementing a comprehensive language access plan, the City can improve services offered to members of the public with limited English proficiency, increase their civic engagement, and encourage a sense of belonging in our community.



1. "Executive Order 13166." Justice.Gov. U.S. Department of Justice, November 21, 2022. <https://www.justice.gov/crt/executive-order-13166>.

1a. "Language Access Collaborative Home page – Latino Migration Project." Latino Migration Project, <https://migration.unc.edu/language-access-collaborative/>. Accessed 8 January 2024.

Key Terms & Concepts

Language Access

Providing individuals whose dominant, only, and/or primary language is something other than English with reasonable and meaningful access to the same services as individuals who are proficient in English; also refers to the laws and policies that provide all members of the public access to written, verbal, or visual materials or services in their preferred languages.²

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act

Prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin by entities that receive federal financial assistance. A person may not be discriminated against because they are not proficient in the English language due to their national origin.

Translation

The process of adapting written text from one language to another language(s), with consistent and accurate meanings. A finished document should read as if it has originally been written in the target language for the target audience.⁴

Language Justice

A framework that respects every individual's fundamental language rights - to be able to communicate, understand, and be understood in the language in which they prefer and feel most articulate. It is believed that culture and language are critical components that shape how others receive our message. By recognizing and embracing these elements, we can become more effective communicators and build stronger connections with those around us.³

1987 Civil Rights Restoration Act

Also known as the Grove City Bill, it is a U.S. law that requires entities that receive federal funds to comply with federal civil rights legislation in all of their operations, not just in the program or activity that receives the funding.

Interpretation

The process of adapting oral speech from one language to another, either simultaneously or delayed (consecutive), without loss or change in meaning. An interpreter must be competent and have knowledge in both languages of the relevant terms or concepts particular to the program or activity and the dialect and terminology used by an individual who has limited English proficiency. Interpreter competency requires more than self-identification as being bilingual.⁵

2. Julia Haskins, "Moving From Language Access to Justice," de Beaumont Foundation, June 1, 2022, <https://debeaumont.org/news/2022/moving-from-language-access-to-justice/>.

3. "Language Justice Curriculum," Center for Participatory Change, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://www.cpcwnc.org/lj-curriculum/>.

4. U.S. Department of Justice, "Language Access Assessment and Planning Tool for Federally Conducted and Federally Assisted Programs," May 2011, https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/resources/2011_Language_Access_Assessment_and_Planning_Tool.pdf

5. Department of Justice, 2011

Key Terms & Concepts



Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Any prospective, potential, or actual recipient of benefits or services from the city who cannot speak, read, write, or understand the English language at a level that permits them to interact effectively with the provider of services. According to the U.S. Census Bureau classification, an individual with LEP is anyone above the age of 5 who reported speaking English less than “very well.” The Bureau’s classifications are “very well,” “well,” “not well,” and “not at all.”⁶

Vital Documents

Forms and informational materials published and maintained by local governments that are critical for communication, access to resources and services, and civic participation.⁷

Strategic Languages

The non-English language groups most commonly used in the City of Concord.

For this current plan, the languages are Spanish, Hindi, and American Sign Language (ASL).

Meaningful Access

The ability to use services and benefits comparable to those enjoyed by community members who are proficient in English. It is achieved by eliminating communication barriers and ensuring that the client or prospective client can communicate effectively.⁶

6. “Language Access Plan.”

www.Townofchapelhill.Org/. Town of Chapel Hill, November 13, 2019. <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showpublisheddocument/44433/637093323620030000>.

7. Language Access Plan, Durham Public Affairs Department, 14 June 2019.

<https://www.durhamnc.gov/DocumentCenter/View/41347/PA-7-1---Language-Access-Plan-Policy>. Accessed 8 Nov. 2023.



Demographics

The City of Concord is growing. According to data released in 2022 by the U.S. Census Bureau, the City of Concord is the 10th largest city in North Carolina and is one of the fastest-growing cities in the state and region. Additionally, from 2012 to 2021, the percentage of City of Concord residents born outside of the U.S. steadily increased from 8.9% to 12.2%.

As Concord grows, the immigrant and refugee populations from Latin America and Asia also continue to grow. According to the 2021 American Census Survey (ACS), 50.3% of all people born outside of the United States and living in Concord were from Latin America, and 31.1% were from Asia. As the city works to meet the changing service demands of the growing population, it's important to continue to prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

The City of Concord's residents speak languages other than English. Using data from the ACS and an internal survey completed by city staff members, the following languages were identified as the strategic languages within the City of Concord.



1. Spanish



2. Hindi



3. American Sign Language (ASL)

Assessment

In writing the Language Access Plan, the City of Concord utilized a comprehensive process that involved conducting a needs assessment, collecting input from stakeholder groups, and evaluating language assistance services. The following factors were considered while creating the design and commitment to language access services:

1. The amount of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals within the City of Concord.
2. The frequency of interactions between LEP individuals and city services.
3. The nature of the services provided.
4. The availability of resources and associated costs.

These four factors offer insight into the language access needs of individuals with Limited English Proficiency. The higher number of LEP individuals, the increased interaction with city services, and the significance of these services all contribute to a greater likelihood of needing language services. It is important to note that these findings may evolve as community demographics change and will be evaluated on an annual basis.

FACTOR 1

Amount of LEP individuals in the community

The U.S. Census Bureau's 2022 American Community Survey reported a total of 4.6% of Concord residents speak English less than "very well."

Table 1. Total LEP City of Concord residents (ACS 2022)⁸

LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME	ESTIMATE	PERCENT
Total Population	102,788	82.8%
Speak Language other than English	19,879	19.3
Speak English less than "very well"	4,778	4.6

8. U.S. Census Bureau. "Selected Social Characteristics in the United States." American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP02, 2022, . Accessed on November 10, 2023.

The most recent data that specifies which languages City of Concord residents speak at home are from the 2020 American Census Survey (ACS).

Table 2. Languages Spoken at home by City of Concord residents (ACS 2021) ⁹

LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME	ESTIMATE	PERCENT
English only	72,471	82.8%
Language other than English Speak English less than "very well"	15,054 4,464	17.2% 5.1%
Spanish Speak English less than "very well"	9,365 3,326	10.7% 3.8%
Asian and Pacific Islander languages Speak English less than "very well"	2,323 525	2.7% 0.6%

Source ACS 2020

FACTOR 2

Frequency of Contact

Additional data that helped identify strategic languages for the City of Concord came from input from city employees. The city surveyed supervisors across all 20 departments and also encouraged them to share it with their respective team members. The purpose of this survey was to collect data on the diverse languages with which city staff routinely engage and to gain insights into the existing practices and resources within each department. Responses were received from all 20 departments, with a total of 61 participants completing the survey.

Here are some key findings from the survey:

Results from the survey identified the following languages as the most frequently encountered:

1. Spanish
2. Hindi
3. American Sign Language (ASL)

9. U.S. Census Bureau. "SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE UNITED STATES." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP02, 2021, . Accessed on November 10, 2023.

An impressive **82%** of the survey participants reported regular encounters with Spanish-speaking customers, describing these interactions as "Very Frequent," "Frequent," or "Occasional."

Interestingly, over **55%** of the respondents indicated that they primarily determine the need for additional language assistance by "assuming limited English proficiency if communication appears impaired." In contrast, only **9%** of survey participants mentioned using language identification cards or posters to make this determination.

When asked "How does your department engage with the public and individuals who prefer languages other than English," the top three responses were:

- Utilizing bilingual staff members who are not formally trained as interpreters.
- Using electronic communications in languages other than English, such as emails, websites, and social media.
- Leveraging telephone-based interpreter services.

FACTOR 3

Nature and importance of the services (Accessibility and Inclusion)

The survey results revealed that public safety departments, including Police, Fire, and Communications, have the highest level of interaction with American Sign Language (ASL) speakers when compared to other departments.

The City of Concord provides critical and essential services to our residents and members of the public, including lifesaving aid provided by the Police, Fire, and 911 Telecommunications departments. Ensuring that there are established procedures for staff to use when a language barrier is present could help save lives. Currently, the Communications Department uses phone interpretation services when they receive phone calls in languages they cannot speak fluently. Several city departments also employ bilingual employees to assist customers and residents as needed. Additionally, when bilingual employees are not present, police officers have used virtual video interpretation services to communicate with community members who use ASL.

FACTOR 4

Resources Available and Costs

The City will regularly assess the resources available for interpretation and translation. This evaluation will include identifying suitable documents for translation and providing support in the implementation of the LAP.

Stakeholder Engagement

El Puente Hispano directly assists the City and has actively contributed to various initiatives, including securing grants for fitness programs specifically for the Spanish-speaking community, co-hosting the Concord International Festival, and previously organizing Zumba Fest events. Additionally, El Puente occasionally assists in translating the City's media and marketing materials, offering valuable input, and maintaining representation on several community-focused committees and coalitions to promote collaborative leadership involvement.

Proposed Policies & Procedures

This section outlines key policies and steps that the City of Concord will take to communicate effectively with members of the public with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

The City of Concord will notify individuals of their right to language assistance services.

Flyers or posters will be displayed in various reception areas and other entrance points at city facilities in strategic languages to inform community members of their right to receive free language services when seeking city services. The City will include the following information in all notices about language access services:

- Announcements to individuals that they have a right to language assistance services.
- Confirmation that language access services for city business are free to the person needing assistance.
- The type of language services that are available.

In compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1987, the following city departments receive federal funding: Planning, Aviation, Transit, Housing, and Police. These departments are responsible for implementing the following language assistance methods:

- Identify qualified language professionals and companies with the expertise to provide translation and interpretation services.
- Provide free language assistance services to persons with LEP when an individual requests or requires language assistance services.
- Provide timely, meaningful access for persons with LEP to city programs, services, and activities.
- Provide contracted written translation services to produce non-English language materials to LEP persons.
- Provide contracted oral telephonic interpretation services to LEP persons at no charge.
- Train employees in public-facing positions on language access policies and procedures, including how to access language assistance services to communicate and interact with persons with LEP, interpreters, and translators.
- Determine the additional resources that are available to assist persons with LEP, e.g., city or community organizations that assist LEP persons.
- Hire and train bilingual staff to assist LEP persons directly when possible.
- Departments that provide emergency services and/or provide external customer services are responsible for implementing and maintaining at least one of the language assistance notice methods listed below:
 - Using a telephone voicemail menu in the most common languages encountered.
 - Notice of free language services on the city's website.
 - Working with community organizations and leaders once per fiscal year to inform them about the language access services available to residents and members of the public by the city.

All notices will be translated into the City's identified strategic languages.

The City of Concord's strategic non-English languages in the City are:

- Spanish
- Hindi
- ASL (American Sign Language)

Every year, this designation will be reevaluated by the City Manager's Office and shared with Department Directors to change their notice materials as needed.

Accommodation request forms will be available in advance of public events or meetings.

- The City will provide a city-wide accommodation request form that can be submitted online or in person at city facilities to request language access services for official city business (City Council meeting, assistance starting utility services, etc.) in the strategic languages.
- Planned accommodation requests must be submitted 10 business days before the event or meeting when assistance is needed. The City of Concord will make its best effort to address accommodation requests made after the requested 10-day deadline of notice.

Language interpretation and translation services will be offered free of charge.

- The City will provide language interpretation services at no charge for city services or programs when requested.
- The City will provide translation of vital documents and emergency communications at no charge when requested.
- The City will make its best effort to ensure timely access to interpretation and translation services.
- The City commits to prioritizing the use of trained interpreters and translators wherever feasible to provide assistance with language services.

The City will translate documents and emergency communications into the City's identified strategic language, Spanish, by June 30, 2025.

- Departments that offer external services or programs should identify and create a list of vital documents to be translated. Every three years, a review of the translated documents list should be completed by the Department Director.
- The City will distribute critical messages in the identified strategic languages during emergency situations, such as natural disasters and emergency evacuations. The City will utilize various channels of communication, including community organizations that assist LEP persons.
- Translated materials may be randomly evaluated for accuracy.

The City will continue to offer a bilingual pay incentive to those who meet the requirement for serving as an interpreter or translator for the City.

- Employees in positions requiring proficiency in a second language are eligible for a 5% increase in base pay not to exceed the maximum rate of pay identified for the position.
- To be eligible, the employee will be required to pass a language proficiency test with an acceptable level of proficiency set by the Human Resources Department. All employees, including native speakers, are required to be tested. Testing is paid for by the City, per Article 3.4(E) of the City's Personnel Policies and Procedures.

The City will provide staff with training on the Language Access Policy to employees, which will include, but not be limited to:

- The importance of language access to civic engagement, compliance ordinances, and how to use the available language access resources.
- Language assistance policy and procedures familiarization with the discrimination complaint process.
- Protocols for requesting translation and interpretation services, including American Sign Language, over the phone and for in-person interpretation at meetings and events.
- The training will be offered to employees. Departments are strongly encouraged to send at least one team member. All employees who receive the bilingual pay increase will be strongly encouraged to attend.

The City will make meaningful efforts to communicate with the public using "plain language," language that is easy to read, clear, and concise.

- The city will offer training to staff dedicated to ensuring they are familiar with plain language techniques and understand the importance of communicating in plain language.
- When documents are assessed for translation priority, the City Manager's Office should note which documents need to be drafted into plain language, regardless of whether they will be translated. The plain language review ensures that public-facing documents are clear, organized, and concise, using common words and short sentences.
- New written content created by the City should be reviewed for plain language. Having the department representative who attended the training or the City's Manager's Office review the content will suffice. This helps improve the effectiveness of machine translation tools produced by web browsers or web page add-ins, such as Google Translate.

The City will develop an inclusive emergency response plan.

- The City will take reasonable steps to ensure members of the public can meaningfully access emergency life-saving notifications and disaster recovery programs in the City's determined strategic languages.

English closed-captioning will be used on all City-created video content.

- The City will continue to make it's best effort to include closed-captioning on video content.
- Prior to being posted, all auto-generated captions must be reviewed for accuracy by the Public Affairs Office.
- If a person with a disability requests captioning or a transcript, the city department hosting that video or audio file must fulfill that request.

Any person who feels they have been wronged by unlawful discriminatory practice under Title VI may file a complaint with the City of Concord by contacting the City of Concord's DEI Strategist.

- To resolve a complaint, the Title VI officer may be notified at 704-920-5100. All complaints will be reviewed by the City Attorney's Office.
- Official guidance on how to submit a complaint to the U.S. Department of Justice can be found at <https://www.justice.gov/crt/filing-complaint> ¹⁰

10. United States, Congress, U.S. Department of Justice . *Filing A Complaint*, 19 Mar. 2020. <https://www.justice.gov/crt/filing-complaint> . Accessed 10 Nov. 2023.

Plan

Members of the Language Access team recommend the following items to be completed by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Strategist and a representative of El Puente, as outlined by the approved grant from the Language Access Collaborative to fulfill the needs of the City of Concord's Language Access goals.



Identify a list of verified language service providers that offer a variety of language services. The list will include local and virtual providers as on-site interpreters and translators.

Provide each department with tools to track which language access services are utilized each month.



Develop an internal training session dedicated to sharing language access resources, requirements, and services.

Work with community partners, including but not limited to: El Puente, Cabarrus Health Alliance, and Cabarrus County to inform them of the City's efforts to provide language access services.



Annually monitor and update the language access plan to add the most frequently encountered languages in future years.

Identify large-scale annual city events to promote in the identified strategic languages through the City's platforms to reach the LEP populations. Share language access updates at all senior leadership team meetings.



References

1. "Executive Order 13166." Justice.Gov. U.S. Department of Justice, November 21, 2022.
<https://www.justice.gov/crt/executive-order-13166>.
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<https://migration.unc.edu/language-access-collaborative/>. Accessed 8 January 2024.
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3. "Language Justice Curriculum," Center for Participatory Change, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://www.cpcwnc.org/lj-curriculum/>.
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https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/resources/2011_Language_Access_Assessment_and_Planning_Tool.pdf
5. Department of Justice, 2011
6. "Language Access Plan." *Www.Townofchapelhill.Org/*. Town of Chapel Hill, November 13, 2019.
<https://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showpublisheddocument/44433/637093323620030000>.
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8. U.S. Census Bureau. "Selected Social Characteristics in the United States." American Community Survey, ACS 1-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP02, 2022, . Accessed on November 10, 2023.
9. U.S. Census Bureau. "SELECTED SOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS IN THE UNITED STATES." American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP02, 2021, . Accessed on November 10, 2023
10. United States, Congress, U.S. Department of Justice . Filing A Complaint, 19 Mar. 2020.
<https://www.justice.gov/crt/filing-complaint> . Accessed 10 Nov. 2023.

Appendix: Accessing Language Service Providers

For translating one-page flyers and social media graphics, departments can use:

1. An internal team member that works in their department who has passes the city's language proficiency test in the language for which the translation is needed. Public Affairs, being a support department that aids all departments in external communication efforts, can utilize internal team members from across departments
2. Propio
3. Language Line

For translating legal notices and mass printing, departments may use the options below. Mass printing includes, but is not limited to, any flyers, poster, brochure, magazine, document, bill insert, or promotional item printed or electronically distributed to 100 or more residents or visitors:

1. Propio
2. Language Line
3. Certified translation companies included in a service contract.

For interpretation (oral) and via telephone.

Interpretation needs for emergency calls will continue to come from department's budgets.

If a department's pre-planned language services request exceeds \$1,000 and the Department Director would like to use Language Access Grant funding, the Department Director should contact their Assistant City Manager for approval.

The City's language access team is reviewing additional companies that provide in-person interpretation options. This resource document will be updated by July 1, 2024