



City of Santa Maria

Language Access Plan



August 2021

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SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION

This Language Access Plan (LAP) describes the City of Santa Maria’s efforts to ensure meaningful access to City programs and activities by Santa Maria residents who are Limited English Proficiency (LEP). LEP persons are those who, as a result of national origin, do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to speak, read, write, or understand English. The creation of this LAP responds to a Voluntary Compliance Agreement (VCA) entered between the City of Santa Maria and the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on July 14, 2021, to ensure that LEP individuals have meaningful access to City services, benefits, and assertion of rights relating to City programs.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides that “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance”.

Executive Order 13166- “Improving Access to Services for Persons with LEP”, requires that recipients of federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to LEP applicants and beneficiaries. The Executive Order establishes that differing treatment based upon a person’s inability to speak, read, write, or understand English is a type of national origination discrimination. It directs each federal agency to publish guidance for its respective recipients clarifying their obligation to ensure that such discrimination does not take place. This order applies to all State and local agencies that receive federal funds.

This LAP follows the guidance provided by HUD in the VCA. HUD recommends utilizing the “four-factor” analysis for determining the LEP populations that should be served and the level of language services to be provided. This pertains to the City of Santa Maria and all subrecipients of HUD funding. This LAP is intended for use by the City of Santa Maria’s staff to provide meaningful access to programs and services for LEP persons.

SECTION 2 – “FOUR-FACTOR” ANALYSIS

This section uses HUD’s four-factor analysis to determine the eligible LEP population(s) and the level of language services to be provided to LEP individuals by the City. The four-factor analysis is intended to impart flexibility for implementing a program that meets the intent of federal guidelines for a LAP without imposing undue burdens on recipients’ or subrecipients’ financial resources or organizational capacity.

To meet LEP obligations, the city must take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to LEP individuals. To balance the need for access to critical services while not imposing undue financial burdens, the City will implement the following “four-factor” analysis:

Factor 1: The number or proportion of LEP individuals in Santa Maria

Persons who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English can be LEP, and may be entitled to language assistance with respect to a particular type of service, benefit, or encounter. The City seeks to communicate with LEP persons who may be seeking meaningful access to City services, benefits, and assertion of rights relating to City programs.

To evaluate Factor 1 of the analysis, estimates from the 2014-2018 American Community Survey (ACS) were examined. This information was used to analyze the languages where written translations of vital¹ documents are required. Guidance provided by HUD states that written translations of vital documents should be provided for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes either at least 1,000 persons or five (5) percent of the population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected or encountered. According to data for the City of Santa Maria, 40 percent of the population (60,900 people) speak a language other than English at home. Of this percentage, 28,469 Spanish speakers, and 1,030 Tagalog speakers speak English less than “very well”. Though there is not much data on the Mixteco population, many of these indigenous Mexican migrants speak only their native languages, which have no written record, or very limited Spanish.

Spanish and Tagalog speakers who speak English less than “very well” are LEP and are eligible to be served or likely to be served. The City’s Spanish and Tagalog LEP populations meet HUD’s thresholds for recommended provisions of written language assistance and the City will translate vital documents and written notices for these groups. Because the City recognizes the ethnic diversity in the community, the City already translates certain vital documents into Spanish, such as Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) press releases, legal ads, notices, public participation surveys and workshops, and all appropriate forms pertaining to CDBG funded programs and services that residents may benefit from. Spanish translation is also available to the public upon request during all City public hearings, meetings, and workshops.

Factor 2: The frequency with which LEP individuals come in to contact with the City of Santa Maria

The City does not collect specific data on the annual number of LEP individuals seeking services. Services are made available when requested, and Spanish language translation and interpretation is the predominant language provided to residents. The City of Santa Maria employs 140 staff members citywide throughout all Departments who have translation skills to provide language assistance to LEP individuals. The City will offer translation and interpretation services upon request in Spanish, including Mixteco, and Tagalog.

The City of Santa Maria Community Development Department Special Project’s Division manages a range of HUD-funded activities and programs that have varying degrees of interaction with LEP individuals. For example, programs that serve homeowners and

renters are more likely to have contact with LEP individuals and require more robust language access services than infrastructure programs. The [Community Development Department's Special Projects Division's website](#) lists HUD-funded projects and programs managed by the Special Projects Division. The Special Projects Division will annually monitor the subrecipients of the requirement and ensure that subrecipients are provided:

- Program information in English and Spanish
- Website information in English and Spanish
- A written procedure to assist people who speak little or no English
- Access to English and Spanish materials in lobby and at community events

Factor 3: The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided

Services provided by the city may include acquisition, relocation, housing rehabilitation, services, and/or infrastructure projects. In some of these programs, residents are likely to have considerable direct contact with subrecipients and their staff. Further, all citizen participation activities are open to the public and, therefore, LEP persons may be in contact with city staff and subrecipients to provide feedback. Subrecipients must assess their chosen activities to determine the frequency with which LEP persons may encounter their programs. Because of the essential nature of the services and the importance of these programs in the lives of many of Santa Maria's residents, there is a need to ensure that language is not a barrier to access to programs, services, and information.

Factor 4: Resources available to LEP and costs associated with assistance

The City of Santa Maria has committed resources to improving access to its services and programs for LEP persons. Bilingual information (English/Spanish) is distributed in an extensive number of mediums including:

- A bilingual English/Spanish City website
- Bilingual English/Spanish outreach materials (on-going and in process)
- Bilingual English/Spanish representation at public meetings
- Bilingual English/Spanish individual service representatives
- Bilingual English/Spanish telephone communications
- Bilingual English/Spanish written signage (in process)

To date, the costs associated with these efforts fit within the City's marketing and outreach budget. Costs are predominantly associated with translation services and material production. Spanish and Tagalog LEP populations in Santa Maria meet HUD's thresholds for recommended provisions of written language assistance. Additional work will be required to translate the city's vital documents into Tagalog as well as Spanish.

SECTION 3 – LANGUAGE ACCESS MEASURES

The City of Santa Maria will utilize the following procedures to meet the oral language needs of telephone LEP callers:

1. All City staff will receive training on how to field LEP phone calls. Every staff member will use the interpreter directory on the City's phone system that lists individuals who can speak a non-English language.
2. A staff member who receives a call from a LEP client will assess the primary language needed by the client. If that staff member has been identified as a city approved interpreter and speaks a language relevant to the LEP caller, then the staff member will assist the client himself/herself. If communication becomes difficult for any reason, the staff member will transfer the call to another City employee identified as an interpreter. If City staff receives a call from a LEP client and does not speak the language of the caller, the staff member will transfer the call to another City interpreter with the relevant language skills. The city's interpreter directory will be updated to include individuals who are approved to translate and interpret Tagalog.

The City of Santa Maria will utilize the following procedures to meet the oral language needs of walk-in LEP visitors:

1. A staff member who assists a walk-in LEP visitor will assess the visitor's primary language by showing this person an "I Speak" language identification list developed by the Census. If this staff member is an identified city interpreter and speaks the LEP visitor's language, then the staff member will assist the visitor himself/herself.
2. If the staff member does not speak the language of the walk-in LEP client, the staff member will call another city interpreter with the relevant language skills.

The city will utilize the following procedures to meet the written language needs of LEP beneficiaries:

For written translations, staff will determine which programs, notices, and documents are "vital" to LEP beneficiaries. HUD's Final Guidance defines vital documents as those that are critical for ensuring meaningful access by beneficiaries or potential beneficiaries generally and LEP persons specifically. If a program or document is determined vital, City services that contain program specific information will be translated into Spanish and Tagalog. Documents that are not considered "vital" will likely not receive written translations, but this determination will be made on a case-by-case basis. Currently, there are translated documents for the City's critical programs. These documents are displayed at City Hall, on the City's website. There is room for improvement on the website by trying to guide LEP clients more easily to these translated program descriptions.

Outreach Tools (Bilingual)

- **Television, Radio, and Print Media.** Local television and radio station appearances, as well as newspaper articles and other periodicals. This includes press releases and legal ads.
- **Outdoor.** Advertising in City Hall lobby, outside of City Hall on bulletin board, at City Recreation Centers, Library and with local community partners.
- **Website.** The city will continue to include translated documents for the City's critical programs on the city website.
- **Direct Mail and Email.** The Community Development Department's Special Projects Division sends mail and emails to local community partners and persons of the community who requested to be on the email information list.
- **Written Notices to Area Residents.** The Community Development Department's Planning Division will often send out letters to select residents to notify them of projects occurring in their area.
- **Public Information Sessions.**
- **Public Hearings.**
- **Legal Notices.**

Identification of Stakeholders

Stakeholders are those who are directly and indirectly affected by a plan, or the recommendations of that plan. Those who may be adversely affected, or who may be denied benefit of a plan's recommendation(s), are of particular interest in the identification of specific stakeholders. Stakeholders can come from a number of groups including general citizens/residents, minority and low-income persons, public agencies, and private organizations and businesses. Any community organization or person can be added to the City's stakeholder list and receive regular communications regarding the city's programs.

SECTION 4 – STAFF TRAINING

It is important to have well-trained city staff capable of effectively providing LAP services to LEP persons. City of Santa Maria Staff will be trained on the following:

- Review the City's Language Access Plan
- Sign an acknowledgement stating their understanding of the following: *“The City of Santa Maria is an equal opportunity service provider and adheres to the Federal Fair Housing Act and Equal Credit Opportunity Act. In accordance with applicable law, the City prohibits discrimination in its practices based on race, color, ancestry or national origin, religion, disability, medical condition, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, marital status, age, military or veteran status, age, pregnancy or familial status or any other consideration protected by federal, state, or local laws. All such discrimination is unlawful. The City's commitment to equal opportunity applies to all persons involved in our operations and prohibits unlawful discrimination by any City*

employees. There is no tolerance by the city of any discrimination and acts of discrimination are bases for immediate termination of employment. If you see or hear of discrimination in the workplace, you are instructed to tell your supervisor immediately. By reading the August 2021 City of Santa Maria's Language Access Plan, I acknowledge I have read, understood the information presented in the Language Access Plan, and agree to the policy document."

- Review and obtain the list of employees certified to translate and interpret in the workplace and for work related events.
- Review and know where translated documents, forms, brochures, and informational documents are for printing and distribution.
- Review a list of common customer service-friendly phrases to use in Spanish and Tagalog such as "I do not speak Spanish," "one moment please" and "I will get a translator."

SECTION 5 – MONITORING, EVALUATION, AND UPDATE OF THE LAP

The City of Santa Maria's Community Development Department is tasked with improving community engagement to ensure compliance with the City's LAP. The monitoring of the LAP will include:

- Annual reviews of Santa Maria's census data for changing patterns of LEP populations; and
- Ongoing collaboration with local partners; and
- Ongoing review of translation requests of the City's website and other City materials; and
- Monitoring of subrecipients for availability and provision of language services to LEP persons.