



Advancing Language Access Toolkit

Updated September 2021



MIMA
BALTIMORE CITY
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF
IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS



This toolkit has been created by the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs in collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Performance and Innovation, existing Language Access Liaisons, external service providers, and resident voices.

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Serving all
Baltimore City
residents starts with...

hello

hola

bonjour

你好

안녕하세요

ابحرم

About this toolkit

The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MIMA) is committed to providing culturally and linguistically connected customer service support to all Baltimore residents. This toolkit serves to assist Baltimore City Language Access Liaisons and employees with the tools and resources necessary to provide high quality, successful, and empathetic customer service for diverse populations of Baltimore City residents and comply with federal and local language access mandates.

The toolkit is organized into two sections which consist of helpful information and tools that can be shared electronically, printed, and used as needed. Below, you will find a list of section topics and a summary of their content.

1. Introduction

Provides an overview of the fundamental purpose of language access, the significant laws that mandate these services, and definitions of key terminology.

2. Language Access Resources

Focuses on how to design, organize, and implement a language access plan within your agency. This portion includes tips for city employees, and instructions for requesting support from MIMA.



At a time when the pandemic disproportionately impacts communities of color, we cannot safeguard public health without ensuring all residents—regardless of language ability—have access to essential services and resources.

As part of my commitment to equity, my Administration works tirelessly to foster a Baltimore that welcomes and serves all residents, including immigrants and refugees. **Ensuring language accessibility not only fulfills our legal obligation to provide access to Limited English Proficient residents, but it also improves the City's response to the needs of our growing immigrant communities.**

Baltimore values and embraces New Americans, and I will continue to govern in that manner.

- Mayor Brandon Scott



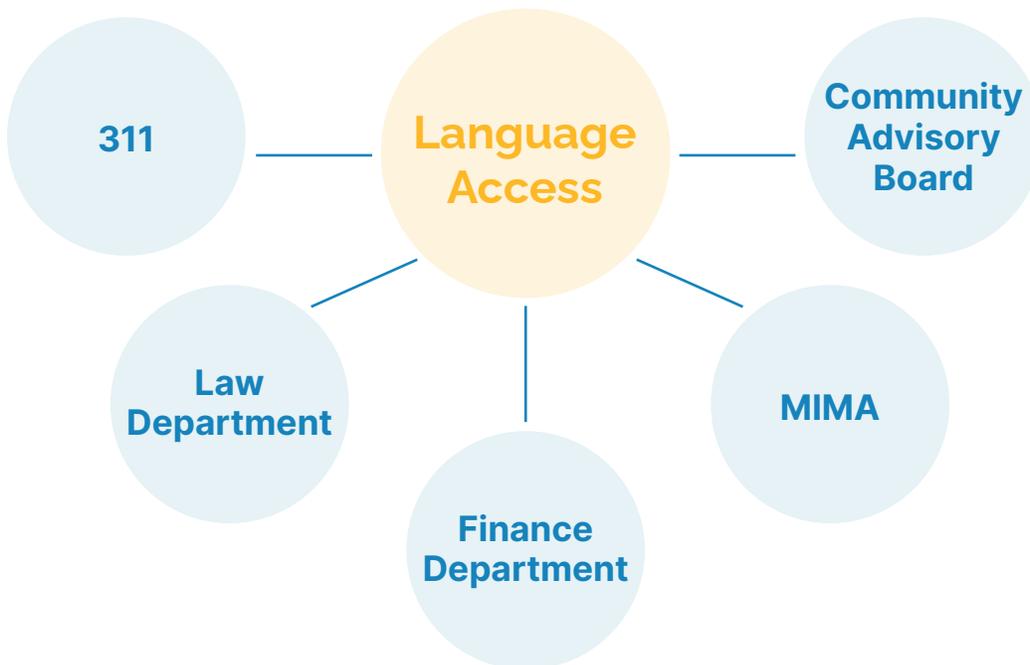
1.

Introduction

The language access landscape in Baltimore City

The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs aims to promote community well-being, economic development, and the integration of immigrant communities by identifying the needs and opportunities that immigrants bring to our city and to develop public-private partnerships to strengthen the development of these communities. Language access is key to ensuring that immigrants who speak languages other than English have full access to Baltimore City services.

The Key Players for Language Access in Baltimore City



Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

MIMA is responsible for overseeing the implementation of language access in Baltimore City. The language access initiative aims to provide equitable access to individuals in the City who are limited English proficient (LEP) and individuals who speak a language other than English at home. MIMA provides guidance and technical assistance to City agencies to ensure that agencies have the necessary resources such as access to telephonic interpretation, ability to request translations of documents, training to serve LEP constituents.

Language Access Liaisons in agencies

Language Access Liaisons are essential to the planning and implementation of language access within the agency. Language Access Liaisons are appointed by each agency director to work in close collaboration with MIMA to identify and plan for the agency's language access needs. The Language Access Liaisons are the first point of contact for agency employees for any language access related issues.

City employees in agencies

City employees interact with LEP individuals on a daily basis, whether through call centers, community outreach, or other in-person service locations. These employees need language access training and tools like telephonic interpretation to have successful interactions with speakers of other languages.

Why language access matters

In the United States where the predominant language is English, speakers of other languages face significant barriers as they navigate daily life. Language assistance enables speakers of other languages to equitably access City services and programs. Language access isn't special treatment - it affords speakers of other languages the same level of access granted to English speakers in Baltimore City.

Baltimore City staff & agencies have a responsibility because language access is:



Federal Law

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Executive Order 13166, titled, "Improving Access to Services by Persons with Limited English Proficiency,"



Our responsibility as a Welcoming City

As City of Baltimore employees, we have a responsibility to serve all residents of Baltimore, including those who speak languages other than English.



Our new reality in Baltimore

Immigrants and speakers of other languages are a growing population in Baltimore City. These populations help to mitigate the City's overall population loss, and as these populations grow, City employees will need to be increasingly prepared to provide services in languages other than English.



More about Federal Laws

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin in programs that receive federal financial assistance, and national origin has been interpreted to include language. Failure to ensure that persons who do not speak English very well, or are “limited English proficient,” can effectively participate in, or benefit from, federally assisted programs may violate Title VI’s prohibition against discrimination based on national origin.

In 2000, then President Bill Clinton issued **Executive Order 13166, titled, “Improving Access to Services by Persons with Limited English Proficiency,”** Executive Order 13166 requires federal agencies to assess and address the needs of otherwise eligible persons seeking access to federally conducted programs and activities who, due to their limited English proficiency, cannot fully and equally participate in or benefit from those programs and activities.

Section 2 of the Executive Order 13166 directs each federal department or agency “to prepare a plan to improve access to...federally conducted programs and activities by eligible LEP persons....”

For more information on federal guidelines, visit bit.ly/DOJLEP-law and bit.ly/EO13166. Check out lep.gov, which offers broader guidance on serving LEP individuals.



Our responsibility as a Welcoming City

In 2020, Baltimore City became one of the first 10 communities across the United States to become Certified Welcoming, a standard for communities that have created policies and programs reflecting their values and commitment to immigrant inclusion. The Welcoming Certification process is overseen by Welcoming America, and Baltimore's continued certification is contingent upon the availability of language access services across City agencies.

Designation as Certified Welcoming requires that communities demonstrate that they have components in place, including language access services, that are at the core of what it means to be welcoming. The core components together form the Welcoming Standard are divided among seven categories:

- Government Leadership
- Civic Engagement
- Equitable Access
- Education
- Connected Communities
- Economic Development
- Safe Communities

For more information on Welcoming America visit, certifiedwelcoming.org



Baltimore, MD
*A Certified Welcoming place
for all of us to call home.*



Our new reality in Baltimore

From 2010 to 2019, the number of speakers of other languages grew from 52,594 (9% of the population 5 years of age and older) to 56,188 (almost 10% of the total population 5 years of age and older). While that growth may seem modest, the City's overall population declined by approximately 20,000 during that same period. This parallels national trends: Immigrants reinvigorate urban areas and mitigate population loss in post-industrial cities. To enhance the positive impact of immigrants in our cities and further mitigate population loss, City agencies can make Baltimore an even more Welcoming City by providing language access services.

For a more comprehensive look at our demographic data, visit our dashboard at ispeak.baltimorecity.gov/datadashboard

Spanish
French
Mandarin

Korean
Arabic

37,400

Population size of residents that speak the top five languages

23,000

Population size of our Spanish-speaking residents

Key terms for language access

There are terms that are commonly used in relation to language access. We have included some of these terms in the section below.

Interpretation: Spoken and/or oral rendition from one language to another, either simultaneously, where the conversation continues with no pauses; consecutively where the speaker stops and allows for the interpretation to take place; or by sight translation, where the interpreter reads a written document and orally translates its contents.

Language Access: Ensuring that persons who have limited or no English language proficiency are able to access information, programs, and services at a level equal to English proficient individuals.

Language Access Plan: A road map for language access implementation that describes in detail the various means and methods in which the agency will provide LEP individuals with meaningful access to its programs, services, and activities.

Language Assistance Services: Oral and written translation services. Oral language assistance service may come in the form of “in-language” communication (a demonstrably qualified bilingual staff member or telephonic interpretation communicating directly in an LEP person’s language) or interpreting.

Limited English Proficient Individuals (LEPs): people who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English

Meaningful Access: The federally mandated standard for communication with LEP individuals, is defined as language assistance that results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the LEP individual. For LEP individuals, meaningful access denotes access that is not significantly restricted, delayed, or inferior as compared to programs or activities provided to English proficient individuals.

Sight Translation: The rendering of material written in one language, completely and accurately, into spoken speech in another language.

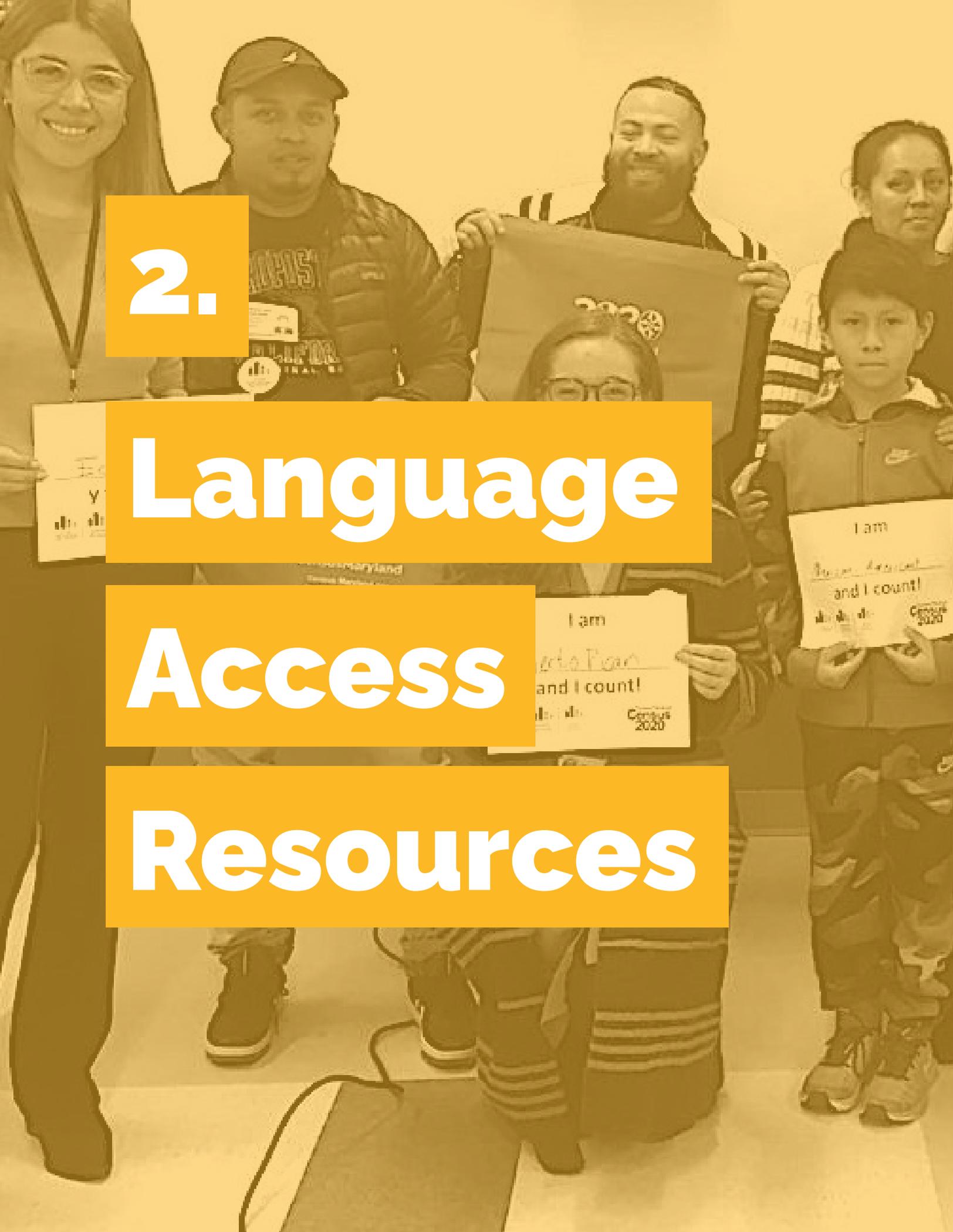
Vital Documents: Paper or electronic written material that contains information that is critical for accessing a component's program or activities, or is required by law.

Written Translation: The process of translating words or text from one language into another; written documents.



On behalf of MIMA, it is an honor to be a part of Baltimore's first Language Access Toolkit. As immigrant and refugee communities continue to grow, **it is imperative that we remove barriers preventing our communities from accessing services and resources.** MIMA remains committed to ensuring Language Access is an integral part of Baltimore's commitment to equity.

- **Catalina Rodriguez Lima**
MIMA Director



2.

Language

Access

Resources

How to approach language access holistically

The purpose of this section is to dive into all the components that ensures successful language access implementation and compliance.



Step 1:

Preparing for language access protocols within the agency

- Setting up compliant language access procedures



Step 2:

Setting up language access tools when interacting with LEP individuals

- Translating vital documents
- Ensuring readability before translating documents
- Using telephonic interpretation
- Understanding when to use in-person or virtual interpretation





Step 3:

Informing residents about Language Assistance Services in the City

- Promoting language access services availability with visuals and other forms of communication
- Engaging trusted partners in communities to spread the word



Step 4:

Building and maintaining internal capacity for language access

- Understanding the role of agency Language Access Liaisons
- Regularly training staff to serve LEP individuals
- Knowing the parameters of working with bilingual staff
- Establishing quality customer service
- Monitoring and evaluating language access services



Preparing for language access

Before offering language access tools, it is important to take a step back and set up the structure that can ensure sustainable offerings for language support to LEP residents in Baltimore. This information is beneficial for agency leadership looking to implement language access and other key staff who will maintain the following protocols.

Setting up a compliant language access process

The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, in collaboration with all City agencies, aims to bring Baltimore City to full compliance with language access law. But what does that mean?

To be in full compliance with language access law, the City of Baltimore must have the following components in place:

- A citywide language access plan:** MIMA, in coordination with the Law Department, completed this step in 2018.
- Four Factor Analysis:** completed by all public-facing agencies, these analyses assess where an agency is at in terms of language access services. They should be updated every 10 years in accordance with federal standards.
- Agency Language Access Guidance Document:** The guidance document is completed by the language access liaison & serves as a roadmap for language access implementation within the agency.

- **Agency staff training:** 100% of City employees who interact with the public should have language access training, facilitated by MIMA. Language Access Liaisons are responsible for identifying groups for these trainings and scheduling them. Training should be ongoing to account for staff turnover.
 - Training with MIMA is essential to ensure the agency or office has the necessary codes and established processes that are required when using interpretation and/or translation services.
- **Translation of vital documents:** All documents that are critical to access programs within an agency, affect continued participation in a program, or communicate termination of a service or those documents that are otherwise required by law must be translated and available in the City's core languages. MIMA has a budget to facilitate translation of these documents over the next three years.
- **Interpretation services:** Limited English proficient individuals seeking services over the phone or in person must be offered interpretation services. MIMA oversees a citywide telephonic interpretation account, and trained employees gain no-cost access to this account. Interpretation services may also be needed for in-person events where a large number of speakers of another language are expected to attend.
- **Outreach to LEP residents:** Agencies must notify LEP residents of language access services. Outreach can take many forms and includes but is not limited to signage offering interpretation in public facing locations, social media posts about services in multiple languages, working with cultural media sources (like TV and radio) and more targeted, community specific outreach like canvassing with flyers in multiple languages for a place-based project.

Once an agency has all of the above in place, the agency is considered a language access complaint! However, as programs are always changing, compliant agencies still maintain an ongoing relationship with MIMA to make updates and facilitate additional training as needed.

The following page expands on two key items of this checklist: the **Four Factor Analysis** and **Language Access Guidance Document**.

What is the Four Factor Analysis?

This analysis serves as a baseline for planning and implementation of language access. While designed to be a flexible and fact-dependent standard, the starting point is an individualized assessment based on four key factors as established at the federal level.

These are the four factors and suggested information that supports the assessment:

- 1 The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the program or grantee.**

Review data from sources such as Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), etc.

Identify a listing of the counts and percentages of LEP individuals present in your service area by language
- 2 The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program.**

Identify ways to quantify the frequency of how the agency/office is interacting with LEP residents and the languages spoken.
- 3 The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the program to people's lives.**

Create a brief summary of the services, benefits, and activities offered and how they serve LEP residents.
- 4 The resources available to the grantee/recipient or agency, and costs.**

Include a brief summary of the resources available and overall costs of providing language assistance.

Analyze budget to identify available funding for providing language assistance.

Language Access Guidance Document:

While the City as a whole has a Language Access Plan, each agency is expected to have a Language Access Guidance Document. The purpose of this document is to create a roadmap for implementation, and since each agency is distinct, the specific steps towards implementation will vary by agency. Language Access Liaisons are responsible for completing this document with the support of MIMA's Language Access Coordinator, and completion of the Guidance Document is the gateway to additional services like use of the citywide telephonic interpretation account and translation of vital documents, available at no cost to agencies through partnership with MIMA.

A Language Access Guidance Document has the following components:

- An explanation of **existing language access services** (if any) to serve as a baseline. This section is a brief summary of the Four Factor Analysis.
- A **plan for implementation**, which includes:
 - Identification of public-facing services that could be points of contact for LEP residents (e.g. call centers, service desks, outreach programs, etc.).
 - A plan for provision of oral interpretation services, often through telephonic interpretation but sometimes through in-person interpreters, for example, at community events.
 - Training of staff who have contact with the public or are involved in program development so that language access becomes seamlessly integrated into agency's day-to-day functions.
 - Budgetary considerations that lie outside the services covered by MIMA.
- An **outreach plan** to notify the public of available services through signage in public-facing City office or other communication methods, like social media.
- A **data management strategy**, which details how an agency will track data on the number of LEP residents served

Language Access Liaisons receive training and have access to ongoing support as they complete the Guidance Document. A Guidance Document is crucial, as it will exist beyond any one staff member and helps MIMA understand the type of ongoing support that each agency needs.



Setting up language access tools when interacting with LEP individuals

Translation and interpretation are at the heart of ensuring successful language access implementation. Once agencies and offices have established language access plans, it's time to use the tools that ensure adequate communication with LEP constituents.

This section further explains the following:

- **The process of identifying and translating vital documents:** This step is key to ensuring public-facing agencies and/or offices are compliant and requires careful assessment to know what documents fall under this. This section is beneficial for agency leadership and the staff person assigned as the Language Access Liaison.
- **The importance for readability in documents:** Even before translating documents, it's important to look at how documents are written so that many audiences can understand them, even before applying language access tools. This section can help city employees who work on public-facing documents.
- **How to access telephonic interpretation:** The City has access to telephonic interpretation through a third-party company. MIMA has a process for providing the necessary information for Baltimore City employees to easily connect with the company's telephonic interpreters.
- **Know when and how to provide virtual or in-person interpretation:** Agency Language Access Liaisons and employees can work with another third party language access service to determine your in-person interpretation needs.

Translating vital documents

Translating vital documents is one way to ensure that LEPs are able to access services or programs. In Baltimore City, it is recommended that agencies translate documents into the city's core languages. MIMA works with agency Language Access Liaisons to help identify and collect vital documents. When documents have been collected, MIMA then coordinates translation.

Guidelines for Identifying Vital Documents:

A document will be considered vital if it contains information that is critical for accessing the agency's program or activities or is required by law. These should be documents that have been developed by the agency and not by a third party (i.e. state or federal government or a nonprofit/community group).

Vital documents may include, but not limited to:

- Documents that provide information on accessing your agency's services
- Notice of ineligibility, denial, or cancellation of services
- Documents that are required by law such as: complaint, consent, release, or waiver forms
- Application forms*
- Notices of upcoming appointments or requests to appear before a board
- Notice of rights, requirements, or responsibilities
- Information on emergency situations or disaster-preparedness

* *Applications should be translated with fields in English and the translated languages so that a completed application can be understood by an English-speaking employee, or an external case manager. Agencies should consider how they plan to process applications completed in another language. **A best practice work-around is to complete applications over the phone with the assistance of telephonic interpretation.***

Collecting Vital Documents for Translation:

The agency Language Access Liaison will be responsible for collecting the agency's vital documents. The Language Access Liaison will submit documents to MIMA's Language Access Coordinator for review (e.g. a lengthy manual may not be appropriate for translation). This process will be finalized by September of each year to aid MIMA in the allocation of funds for translation based on agency needs.

As of FY22, MIMA controls the citywide budget for translation to centralize the process and streamline procurement. This centralization also allows for better tracking and storage of all translated documents.

Not all identified vital documents will be translated at once. Agencies can expect all of their requested vital documents to be translated over the course of a three-year period, and MIMA will help Language Access Liaisons prioritize documents for translation.

Evaluating Vital Documents:

MIMA wants to ensure that documents submitted for translation are in a format that can be easily translated. The following criteria should be considered when submitting documents to MIMA:

- Verify that the document is the most updated version and that it will not be subject to updates within six months of submission.
- Ensure documents are in an editable format. This can be in Microsoft word format, packaged Adobe design file, Canva document, etc. Documents saved as a PDF and graphics in .png or .jpeg format are not acceptable, as the translation company cannot directly edit these files.

- Documents should be concise. The purpose of translation is to make a document accessible to the public; a 20-page document is not likely to be approved for translation because a member of the public should not be expected to read a lengthy document for critical information.

For more information on readability, go to [page 28](#). Assessing readability is a great standard practice, as it benefits everyone, not just speakers of other languages.

- For documents such as applications, the agency should ensure that they have the language skills to receive applications in all languages, including those that use other character systems, like Arabic, Korean, or Mandarin. If this is not possible, agencies should consider alternatives like accepting applications completed over the phone with the assistance of an interpreter so that the application can be more easily processed.

Translation of Vital Documents

MIMA will work with the agency Language Access Liaison to assess vital documents for translation. Once approved, the Language Access Coordinator is responsible for submitting documents to the translation company.

Agencies should allow at least 5 business days for translation/s to be completed. Subsequently, the Language Access Coordinator will share final document/s with the requesting Language Access Liaison and store them to a centralized location (SharePoint).

Please know that this process applies only to pre-identified vital documents.

Translation of non-vital documents

If you are looking to translate non-vital documents, please consult with MIMA's Language Access Coordinator and they are able to support your request on a case-by-case basis.

Ensuring readability before considering translation

Readability refers to how easy or difficult it is to understand written text. Text complexity, familiarity, legibility, and typography are key factors that contribute to how a reader experiences a piece of text. This is critical for residents with low-literacy. Readability is measured using a score that indicates the grade level of your writing content known as the Flesch-Kincaid score. The score provides guidance for the suggested level of your target audience. The Flesch-Kincaid score is a widely recognized and recommended readability scoring system. The system evaluates reading ease and grade level.

Why does it matter?

Readability affects how an individual engages with written text. Language and words either ease or strain readers while they navigate to comprehend concepts. For instance, if the content is too challenging or complex to read, the audience may lose interest or misunderstand the information. However, if the material is too simple readers could lose interest and dismiss the information. As a result, readability significantly impacts how an individual interprets and processes messages of the language. Most importantly, readability is an important equity issue because it builds on access and trust with residents.

Ways to improve content for readability access

The most effective way to improve readability scores is to use a holistic writing approach.

- Avoid jargon
- Use simple, familiar, and short words
- Use simple sentences, active voice, and present tense
- Use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Use culture and gender neutral language
- Use simple graphic elements to make information easily digestible and visually accessible

Quick tip:

Microsoft Word can provide readability scores when doing grammar check. Make sure to have the readability statistics in the Proofing options in your Microsoft Word Settings. These are the two scores they offer:

- **Flesch Reading Ease:** a score using a 100-point scale. The higher the score, the more people can understand the document, with the standard* average being 60 to 70.
- **Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level:** a score that indicates grade level, with the standard* writing is between 7th-8th grade reading level.

* Please note that the standard level is based on a national level and can differ for Baltimore City.

Telephonic Interpretation

MIMA oversees a telephonic interpretation account available to all City agencies. Each agency is assigned a unique access code. MIMA provides training to frontline/customer service agency employees on how to access and use the account. The telephonic interpretation account is available 24/7, 365 days a year, and covers 200 plus languages.

For agencies to get access to the telephonic interpretation account the following criteria is required:

- Agencies should participate in language access planning with MIMA so that access to telephonic interpretation is part of a larger agency-wide strategy to increase access for speakers of other languages.
- The agency staff will need to receive language access training on how to access and utilize telephonic interpretation. This account is only accessible to be used by City employees.

Tips for Telephone Interpretation Sessions:

Start of the session

- When you call telephonic interpretation company, be sure to know the agency and access codes, as the interpreter is prompted to ask you at the start of the session.
These codes are provided to you once your agency or office has completed training with MIMA, as stated above.
- If it's your first time using a telephonic interpreter, you can let the interpreter know. They are trained to explain how the process works while conducting the interpretation.
- Introduce yourself to the interpreter as well as to the LEP individual and let everyone on the line know the reason for the call. If there are multiple people in the room, introduce everyone; it is important to establish trust among everyone involved and for everyone to be aware of who is participating in the telephone interpretation session.
- Let the LEP individual know if the conversation is confidential or if information will be shared with others so they can feel secure in divulging private or confidential information.
- Ask specific questions and know what your goals are prior to the session so you can better accomplish them.

During the session

- Relax and allow yourself to use a comfortable volume and pace.
- Always speak in the first person and direct the questions and/or conversation to the LEP individual. Example: Say, “How are you today?” instead of telling the interpreter, “Please ask her how she’s doing today.”
- You’re in control of the conversation, the telephone interpreter is only there to facilitate communication, not to direct or manage.
- Feel free to ask the interpreter or LEP individual questions to ensure that all information was understood and that everyone is on the same page.
- Speak with clarity and be concise in your sentence structure. Use “plain English,” and make sure you pause after a few sentences to let the interpreter pass the information to the LEP individual.
- Understand there are many linguistic as well as cultural differences across languages, allow time for the interpreter to interpret the information in a way in which the LEP individual can clearly understand the information being presented to them.
- Encourage the interpreter to ask you questions if they need more clarification regarding a term or concept you spoke about.
- Smile and be kind. Everyone will feel more comfortable, resulting in a better outcome for the LEP individual, the interpreter and you.

End of the call

- Once the purpose of the conversation is completed, make sure to be clear about closing out the interpretation process with both your LEP individual and telephonic interpreter.

What to avoid:

- ✗ Limit the use of overly difficult terminology, slang, idioms and industry jargon.
- ✗ Eliminate background noise as best as possible. If other people are present, ask them to be quiet during the session, unless asked to speak. Noise is distracting, and you want to ensure focus during a telephonic interpretation session due to the fact that the people involved are not speaking face to face. *Note that if people are around and speaking loud enough for the interpreter to hear, an interpreter can communicate the side conversations to the LEP individual.*
- ✗ Do not ask the interpreter their opinion, as their only role is to bridge language gaps.

Guidance for Requesting Other Forms of Interpretation

The State of Maryland provides government agencies (including Baltimore City) options to subcontract with an on-site/in-person interpretation (oral translation) company to minimize language barriers. Please note that this service is not covered by MIMA. Instead, agencies must contact the on-site interpretation company to set up a User ID account and find out further information about user training. For more information on how to access on-site interpretation services, please visit:

If you encounter any issues during your event or are unsatisfied with the services provided, please contact MIMA at the end of the event to provide feedback. MIMA will follow up with the vendor to address these issues.

bit.ly/MD-languageservice

In the Case of Virtual Interpretation

The on-site interpretation company also offers interpretation for virtual gatherings, like video conference calls. When requesting interpretation, you will be asked to provide the following information:

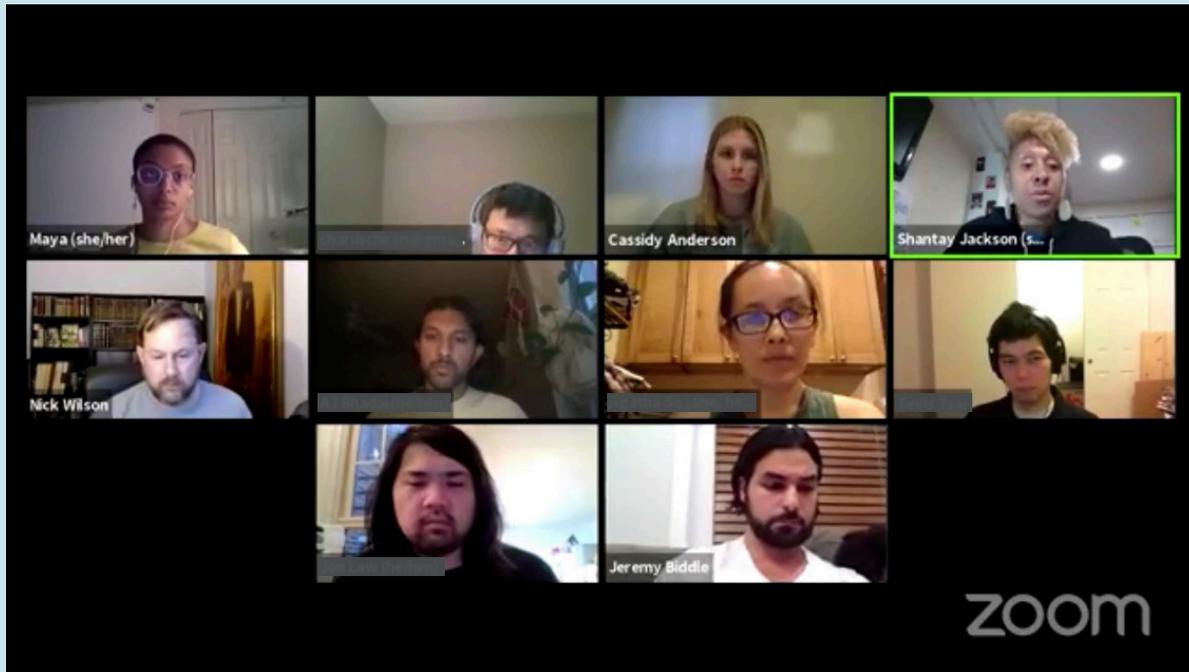
- **What's the topic of the event?**
- **What's the date of the event?**
- **What's the time of the event?**
- **How long will it last?** It is important to know the length of the events to determine how many interpreters should be scheduled.
- **In what language(s) is interpretation requested?**
- **What is the platform?** Zoom is preferable, as it has some built in features for channels in multiple languages. Details about alternatives platforms should be discussed with the vendor.
- **Who is in charge of tech setup?** The agency should have a contact person who will work with interpretation company to set up the technology needed for the event.

- **When is the technical run-through?** The technical run is typically scheduled to happen the day before the event to ensure that everything is working properly. The agency contact person meets with the vendor to test the technology and confirm that everything is functioning properly.
- **When do you need a quote?** The quote will be sent to the agency for approval at least a week before the day of the event.
- **Who is paying for the virtual interpretation?** Agencies are responsible for their own virtual interpretation costs. Please refer to [page 32](#) for guidance on how to access virtual interpretation. MIMA's Language Access Coordinator will provide guidance about this process when necessary.

In the Case of On-Site/In-Person Interpretation

Be sure to provide the following information:

- **What's the topic of the event?**
- **What is the date of the event? What is the start time of the event?**
- **How long will it last?** It is important to know the length of the events to determine how many interpreters should be made available.
- **In what language(s) is interpretation requested?**
- **Where is the location of the event?** Please provide an address.
- **Who is paying for interpretation?** Agencies are responsible for their own on-site/in-person interpretation costs. Please refer to [page 32](#) for guidance on how to access on-site/in-person interpretation. The MIMA's Language Access Coordinator will provide guidance about this process when necessary.



Case Study:

Reaching LEP Audiences in Virtual Feedback Sessions

The purpose of holding the AAPI Community Feedback Session, and all of the other feedback sessions, was to ensure that all of Baltimore contributed to the production of what would become the City's Violence Prevention Plan, **including those with language barriers.**

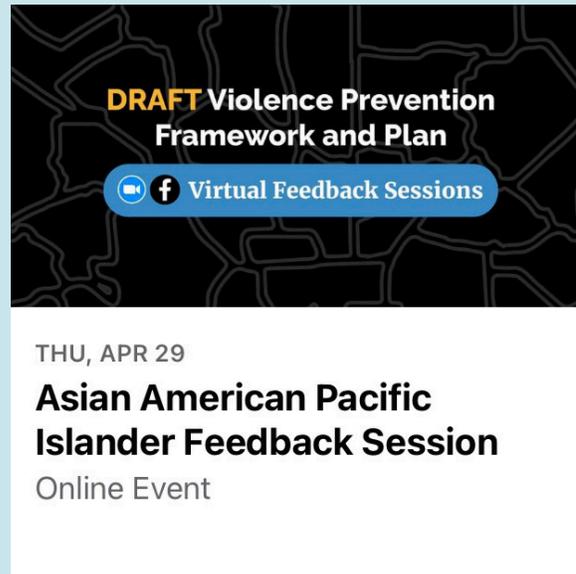
The Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE) solicited feedback from the community on the draft Violence Prevention Plan (VPP) in two ways: through an online survey and a series of virtual listening sessions.

During the listening sessions, the team presented on the three pillars of the VPP and then used additional time for feedback from community members on the call.

Each call was directed towards a certain micro community, such as returning citizens and the Latinx community. As MONSE began brainstorming groups that needed to be specifically heard from, they recognized the need to engage the AAPI community, especially since a drastic increase in hate crimes against this micro community was part of a national conversation.

Process in structuring the event with language assistance services

MONSE first locked down a date and scheduled the session with their team. They then met with Councilwoman Odette Ramos and her team to discuss community engagement and language access for both the Latinx and AAPI communities in Baltimore. Following that meeting, MONSE connected and coordinated with MIMA to gain access to translators and discuss best practice for event promotion. They utilized their social media channels and reached out to various AAPI groups to ask for partnership in promoting the event.



Takeaways from the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood and Safety Engagement:

MONSE's participation in this session was high, though all who joined spoke English (with most if not all of them being local AAPI activists). If MONSE were to hold a session like this again, they would consider the following:

- Coordinate with MIMA further in advance to elongate our reach to the micro community and have more time to promote the event.
- Connect with more Community Based Organizations that directly service AAPI groups.
- Have presentation materials translated. Even though the event did have both Mandarin and Korean interpreters present, MONSE used Eventbrite for session registration (not language accessible) and the PowerPoint presentation was not translated.
- When reaching the AAPI audiences in the City, MONS suggestion is to utilize the Baltimore chapter of Stop Asian Hate and to work with the council members as they have large social media reaches.



Informing residents about Language Assistance Services

A major component of language access compliance is providing notice of Language Assistance Services to LEPs. This means informing LEP individuals of their eligibility for benefits, programs, and services in a language they understand. In addition, agencies must provide notice and information about available language assistance services such as translating outreach materials, websites, signage, and/or, public service announcements.

It is recommended that agencies assess all points of contact with the public and LEP individuals to determine the best method to provide notice of language assistance services. MIMA has developed supporting materials that can support engagement with LEPs.

iSpeak logo use

Cities across the country use the term ‘iSpeak’ to let their constituents know about language access. This logo includes the translation of the phrase “I Speak” into the top five languages. This logo can be included in public facing materials in order for constituents to recognize this visual and be reminded that the city offers Language Assistance Services.

The logo files can be found on ispeak.baltimorecity.gov



Baltimore speaks your language!

Please let a City employee know if you need interpretation assistance and identify your language by pointing to the text you are reading. The employee will call an interpreter via phone at no cost to you.



Español/Spanish

iBaltimore habla su idioma!

Por favor diga al empleado del municipio si usted necesita ayuda de interpretación e identifique su idioma (by pointing to the text you are reading). El empleado llamará a un intérprete por teléfono sin costo a usted.

Français/French

Baltimore parle votre langue!

Veillez informer un employé de la ville si vous avez besoin d'assistance à l'interprétation et identifiez votre langue (by pointing to the text you are reading). L'employé appellera un interprète pour vous sans frais.

普通話/Mandarin

巴尔的摩帮助解决您的外语沟通障碍!

请告知市政府员工您是否需要口语翻译支持, 并确认您所使用的语言。该员工将免费为您致电联系一名口译人员。(by pointing to the text you are reading)

한국인 /Korean

볼티모어는 귀하의 언어로 말하세요!

통역보조가 필요하시면 시 직원에게 알리고 귀하의 언어를 말씀해 주세요. 직원이 전화로 통역사에게 전화할 것입니다. 비용은 무료입니다. (by pointing to the text you are reading)

Arabic / عربي

بالتيمور نتحدث لغتك

يرجى إبلاغ موظف بالمدينة إذا كنت بحاجة إلى الاستعانة بخدمة الترجمة الفورية وحدد لغتك من خلال الإشارة إلى النص الذي تقرأه. وسوف يستدعي الموظف مترجماً من خلال الهاتف من دون أي تكلفة عليك.

FOR CITY EMPLOYEES: Show a Limited English Proficiency resident this sign and see where they point to know what language they need assistance in. To learn more about providing language access in Baltimore City, visit ispeak.baltimorecity.gov.



iSpeak posters in resident-facing city buildings and offices

This graphic was designed to be used in public-facing offices where a constituent can see it and use it to bridge any language gaps with the city employee while they connect with the necessary language assistance tools. As a city employee, you can have the constituent point at the language they recognize to know what to request when using language access services.

Files available for print at ispeak.baltimorecity.gov

- Available in 8.5" x 11" and also in a larger, tabloid size, 11" x 17"
- Please ensure to print with color as it can help with the identifying the constituent's language needs



iBaltimore habla su idioma!

Por favor diga al empleado del municipio si usted necesita ayuda de interpretación e identifique su idioma. El empleado o la empleada llamará a un intérprete por teléfono sin costo a usted.

Yo hablo Español / I speak Spanish

FOR CITY EMPLOYEES: When a Limited English Proficiency resident shows you this, they are asking for language assistance. To learn more about providing language access in Baltimore City, visit ispeak.baltimorecity.gov



MIMA
BALTIMORE CITY
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF
IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS



볼티모어는 귀하의 언어로 말하세요!

통역 보조가 필요하시다면 시 직원에게 알리시고 귀하의 언어를 말씀해 주세요. 직원이 전화로 통역사에게 전화할 것입니다. 비용은 무료입니다.

나는 한국말을 한다 / I speak Korean

FOR CITY EMPLOYEES: When a Limited English Proficiency resident shows you this, they are asking for language assistance. To learn more about providing language access in Baltimore City, visit ispeak.baltimorecity.gov



MIMA
BALTIMORE CITY
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF
IMMIGRANT AFFAIRS

iSpeak cards for residents

This graphic can be given to residents and is also sized as a phone graphic. Residents can keep this graphic that pertains to their preferred language and when they interact with a city employee, they can hold it up to determine the language need for interpretation.

Graphics available in the City's core languages.

Files available for print at ispeak.baltimorecity.gov



Baltimore speaks your language!

If you encounter someone in the field who speaks another language, show this image to the individual for them to identify the language they recognize. Afterwards, call Language Line for telephonic interpretation to help you communicate in the individual's preferred language.

Yo hablo Español / I speak Spanish

Je parle français / I speak French

我說普通話 / I speak Mandarin

나는 한국말을 한다 / I speak Korean

I speak Arabic / أنا أتحدث العربية



iSpeak cards for city employees doing fieldwork

This graphic is for city employees who do fieldwork and can be printed out or saved as a photo on a mobile device. If you encounter an LEP individual and need telephonic interpretation on site, show this and ask them point to the language they recognize to request interpretation.

Files available for print at ispeak.baltimorecity.gov

Other ways to communicate to the public

In addition to these graphics, there are other ways to let residents know about language access. Here are some suggested options:

- Include language assistance availability in your email signature
- Add a translated phrase with the top five languages to footers of public-facing documents, like application forms
- Include a language access note in your voice options for phone calls

Working with community partners and service providers in the area

Community service providers play an important role in creating more access for LEP individuals to reach city services and resources.

Employees and staff at these organizations serve as advocates for Baltimore residents by reducing barriers and guiding individuals and families through complex procedures.

It is important to create and cultivate partnerships with immigrant service providers to build allies and champions that can help Baltimore City's language access goals. Aim to engage with community service providers to help foster relationships and create connections with Baltimore residents which can offer mutual benefits for all parties involved.

Consider these suggestions and tips for working with service providers and providing stakeholder engagement:

A full list of service providers working with LEP residents can be found in MIMA's Welcome Guide mima.baltimorecity.gov/wg

Three reasons why working with community partners is effective to letting residents know about our services:

1

Service providers and organizations have a deep understanding about immigrant communities to better understand cultural norms within our City.

2

These partnerships build trust in communities that are wary about government presence. They can help promote your agency's offerings.

3

Collaborating with community-based organizations and other stakeholders offers opportunities for feedback on how to improve your agency's language assistance services.

Case Study:

Collaborating with Service Providers to Create a LEP-friendly Service

“The partnership with MOFCS has been a great opportunity for us to ensure that the Eviction Prevention Program is available to all residents of Baltimore. All too often we see our immigrant clients encounter barriers to accessing services and government supports, and **this collaboration allowed us to break down many of those barriers.**”

Kate Jakuta, SECDC Family Stability Program Manager

Southeast Community Development Corporation (SECDC) is a nonprofit that serves residents in Southeast Baltimore. As an established organization, they offer housing counseling, eviction prevention, youth employment development and community revitalization services, and often serve as conveyors of state and local government opportunities for the community.

In 2021, SECDC partnered with the Mayor’s Office and Children and Family Success (MOFCS) to provide case management to Limited-English Proficient (LEP) residents applying to the City’s Eviction Prevention Program. SECDC helps Spanish speakers with the program’s application and required documentation.

The partnership with SECDC has shaped the Eviction Prevention Program to meet the linguistic and cultural needs of immigrant applicants. For example, the application required proof of income, often requested as a pay stub. With feedback from partners like SECDC, the program developed alternative options to prove income for residents paid in cash. This minor change removed a significant barrier of entry, especially for immigrant residents who may lack traditional documentation.

When building programs or services, consider partnering with non-profit organizations serving immigrants like SECDC at the onset. They have a deep understanding of resident needs that can shape service and program development to be as resident-friendly as possible. Additionally, non-profit immigrant-serving organizations are trusted sources of information for LEP residents when promoting programs or services.

Please contact MIMA if you need assistance engaging immigrant non-profit organizations. *For more information on how the City’s CAP centers were a part of ensuring language access for the Eviction Prevention Program, go to **page 46**.*



Building internal capacity in all parts of the city

All agency staff have the obligation to provide language assistance services. Language Access Liaisons are responsible for planning and ensuring that the agency adheres to its language access guidance document and procedures to provide meaningful access to LEP individuals. As such, public-facing staff must provide language access services. Another recommended practice is the use of bilingual staff to minimize language barriers. This section includes recommendations as to how to appropriately utilize and support bilingual staff in the provision of services. Finally, this section concludes with suggestions as to how to track language access data to accurately reflect the efforts of everyone in your agency to reach LEP constituents.

The role of Language Access Liaisons in city agencies

Language Access Liaisons are the intermediaries between MIMA and their agency. Language Access Liaisons should have broad administrative knowledge of the agency so that they are positioned to move language access implementation forward. The following provides an overview of the liaison's responsibilities:

Essential Functions of the Liaison

- Act as initial point of contact between the agency and the MIMA.
- Advise agency leadership on language access policy, protocol, implementation, and related language access issues.
- Serve as point person for implementation and monitoring & evaluation of the agency's language access plan.
- Work with their agency to develop a comprehensive language access plan.
- Attend meetings with other agency Language Access Liaisons.

Training:

- Establish a training schedule and organize regular, on-going training of agency staff to ensure they are aware of the contents of the agency's language access plan and protocol.
- Ensure that newly hired staff are provided with language access training.

Outreach:

- Work with the agency to develop means of notifying the public of the availability of language services and how they can be accessed.
- Establish outreach methods, such as public advertising, community outreach, posted notices in public service areas, tag lines on agency documents, or information on the agency's website.

Provision of Services:

- Troubleshoot issues as agency staff use language services.
- Work with MIMA to resolve issues that are identified through the feedback process or through other sources.

Monitoring:

- Use the reporting template designed by MIMA to submit annual reports documenting language access implementation.
- Collect, track and report language specific data on persons served and the use of language services.
- Work with contractors or grantees of the agency to ensure that they are aware of and comply with the City's language access policy.

Working with bilingual staff within your agency

Bilingual employees are a tremendous asset to agencies that provide resident-facing services. However, please consider how bilingual employees are used. The tips below will help you leverage employees' skills while also respecting an employee's time and job description:

- 1 Determine your employee's language skill level.** For example, you may have another Spanish-speaking employee who can verify a candidate's language skills in an interview. If such verification isn't possible, use professional services whenever possible, as the services' interpreters and translators are trained and vetted.

Ask yourself what the consequence would be if, for example, an employee with unverified language skills translated a flyer incorrectly and you published that information.

- 2 Respect the language skills and expertise of bilingual employees, and consider language skills and the time required when crafting new positions.** For example, if two employees have identical job descriptions and one employee who speaks Spanish is expected to perform the same responsibilities as their English only colleague AND provide translation and interpretation services, you could be overburdening the employee with language skills.

- 3 Interpretation and translation take time.** Give employees sufficient time and notice to perform these responsibilities well. You should not pull an employee from their regular tasks with moment's notice to provide interpretation for a town hall meeting. Likewise, an employee cannot be expected to translate a lengthy document (greater than 1 page) overnight.

If you require a quick turnaround, many third-party translation and interpretation companies can accommodate these rush requests.

Approaching language access through quality customer service

Quality customer service is critical for addressing resident needs and ensuring individuals have a positive experience. Below you will find tips for providing high quality customer service to LEP residents.

Customer service tips and tricks

- 1 Be patient:** Using services like interpretation sometimes takes extra time, but the successful communication will undoubtedly be a rewarding experience.
- 2 Slow down and speak at a normal volume:** Residents will have different levels of fluency. Slow down your speaking when introducing new concepts.

Our instinct is often to speak louder when we are misunderstood, but a louder volume can seem aggressive and create mutual frustration.
- 3 Show some emotion, but follow the resident's lead:** Many emotions are universal and can help with communications. However, there are differences in a variety of cultures, so stay within a resident's comfort zone.
- 4 Draw a picture to communicate (if applicable):** Some people are visual, so even the most basic drawing can be more helpful than repeating the same thing over and over again.
- 5 Ask for help:** Use tools and resources within this toolkit, like telephonic interpretation services.



Case Study:

Making Community Action Partnership Centers More Accessible

The Baltimore City Community Action Partnership (BCCAP) is committed to supporting all Baltimore households in the move toward financial stability, and the CAP centers are guided by six goals to build accessibility, exclusivity and trust with the Hispanic and Latinx community:

1. Grow BCCAP staff capacity to support LEP families.
2. Diversify BCCAP workforce to be more representative of the communities the City serves.
3. Translate BCCAP documents for the public into Spanish.
4. Strengthen BCCAP partnerships with organizations that serve our Hispanic and Latinx community.
5. Make sure CAP centers are welcoming to our Hispanic and Latinx community.
6. Through community outreach, increase the number of Hispanic and Latinx families that BCCAP supports.



We know that these goals are going to take time to implement, but we also have a sense of urgency because our families need support now.

We want them to know that they can count on us.

- **Daniela McDonald, Southeast CAP Center Manager**, herself an immigrant from Colombia

Baltimore City's rental assistance program is one area in which the CAP centers are committed to improving accessibility and community outreach. The Mayor's Office of Children & Family Success, BCCAP's managing agency, created a brief video in Spanish that walks residents through the application process for the program, from start to finish.

Designed for easy viewing on any device, the video is just six minutes long, and tells residents everything they need to know to get the housing stability support they need—and Daniela's native Spanish and big smile make the video especially welcoming.

bit.ly/BaltCityEvictionPrevention-Spanish

Monitoring and Evaluating Language Access Services

The final piece of language access implementation is monitoring and evaluating language access services. Services need to be tested, and assessment of services can provide valuable feedback for improvement. Services also need to be documented in order to demonstrate that agencies are, indeed, providing these services. As language access is federally mandated, the City could be audited for language access at any time. In the event of such an audit, language access data would provide demonstrable evidence that language access is happening in Baltimore City.

Service Request Process for Feedback

The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs created a 311 service request to provide feedback about language access issues or successes. An LEP constituent or a representative can call 311 to let the City know how we're doing in terms of providing language assistance.

The feedback process follows the path detailed as follows:

1. An impacted resident or representative calls 311 to provide feedback about the quality of language assistance provided by an agency.
2. 311 creates a service request that MIMA can access. After reviewing the feedback, MIMA contacts the constituent to acknowledge that feedback was received and to inform them that any necessary resolution will occur within 30 business days.
3. MIMA follows up with the agency to investigate the incident and makes recommendations for corrective action.
4. The agency is given 15 business days to rectify the issues and report back to MIMA.
5. MIMA informs the constituent about the outcome of the investigation & closes the service request.

Secret Shopping

“Secret shopping,” or unscheduled attempts by bilingual MIMA staff or volunteer community members to access services in another language, is one method to ensure high-quality language access services. A bilingual secret shopper attempts to access a service in another language and then provides feedback about the experience.

For instance, a French speaker could call a call center where MIMA has previously trained staff. The French speaker would provide feedback to MIMA about the interaction.

Annual Implementation Reports

Agencies are required to compile and submit language access implementation reports to MIMA. These reports help MIMA track the progress of language access for each agency and make recommendations if necessary. MIMA provides a reporting template to Language Access Liaisons as part of their training.

Data Collection

Quality data collection is a great way to demonstrate that your agency is making a concerted effort to serve speakers of other languages. Below you will find some examples of easy ways to integrate data collection to support your language access efforts:

- Most call centers keep records of calls. Add an option for call center operators to check that they used telephonic interpretation and an option (drop down menu or text box) to include the language.
- Sometimes speakers of other languages get assistance to complete applications. Include an option on applications that allows applicants to indicate if they would prefer to receive future communications in another language. If someone needs to call the applicant, they can call a telephonic interpreter before calling the applicant, and your agency will have a record that you served a speaker of another language.



...Language Access is part of our continued and integral commitment to equity, inclusion, **and creating the conditions that allow New Americans to thrive.**

Closing remarks

Every year, Baltimore City welcomes hundreds of immigrants and refugees. Our new residents are diversifying our neighborhoods and business corridors. Removing language barriers to essential services and resources through Language Access is part of our continued and integral commitment to equity, inclusion, and creating the conditions that allow New Americans to thrive.

We consider this toolkit as a starting point with continuous space for growth and progress. We hope you find the toolkit helpful in identifying resources, tools, and best practices when assisting LEPs. Lastly, we welcome your feedback, suggestions, and questions.

Please e-mail us at Language.Access@baltimorecity.gov

A list of all the links included in the Toolkit

City Graphics to Promote Language Assistance Services

- ispeak.baltimorecity.gov/templates

MIMA Resources

- Welcome Guide with a list of immigrant service providers
mima.baltimorecity.gov/wg
- MIMA main website
mima.baltimorecity.gov
- MIMA's contact information for Language Access
Language.Access@baltimorecity.gov

Baltimore City Data Dashboard

- ispeak.baltimorecity.gov/datadashboard

State of Maryland Language Contract Information

- bit.ly/MD-languageservice

Federal Guidelines for Language Access Compliance

- Department of Justice Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons
bit.ly/DOJLEP-law
- Executive Order 13166
bit.ly/EO13166
- Additional resources for serving LEP individuals
lep.gov

Welcoming America

- certifiedwelcoming.org



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