

NEVADA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE FOR NEW AMERICANS

# LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN



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# PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY



Nevada's Senate Bill 318 (SB318) and the federal guidance on Title VI both agree that language should not be a barrier to accessing governmental programs and services. As SB318 puts it, **"Persons with limited English proficiency require and deserve meaningful, timely access to government services in their preferred language."**

Moreover, it makes it clear that it is the responsibility of government to provide that access:

**"State and local agencies and entities that receive public money have an obligation to provide meaningful, timely access for persons with limited English proficiency to the programs and services of those agencies and entities."**

The Governor's Office for New Americans (ONA) is committed to compliance with Nevada Senate Bill 318 and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 2 C.S. § 561 et seq. (Act 172 of 2006) in ensuring meaningful access to State services and programs for individuals with limited English proficiency.

The purpose of this document is to establish an effective plan and protocol for ONA personnel to follow when providing services to, or interacting with, individuals who have limited English proficiency.

Following this plan and protocol is essential to the success of our mission to the Governor's Office for New Americans.

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# GENERAL POLICY

The Governor's Office for New Americans (ONA) recognizes that the population eligible to receive its services includes Limited English Proficient (LEP) Nevadans. It is the policy of ONA to ensure meaningful access to LEP individuals.

ONA adopts the following policies and procedures to ensure that LEP individuals can gain equal access to our services and communicate effectively.

This Plan applies to all ONA's programs and services including, but not limited to ONA's constituent service, Skilled Immigrant Integration Program, and resources, online, in-person, on the phone.

It is Nevada's policy to grant access to services or programs to every person regardless of their ability to speak, understand, read, or write English. ONA intends to take all reasonable steps to provide LEP individuals with meaningful access to its services and programs.

The Governor's Office for New Americans seeks to reduce barriers by increasing its capacity to deliver services and benefits to people in their preferred languages.

## LANGUAGE ACCESS COORDINATOR

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ONA's language access coordinator is responsible for developing and biennially revising the office's Language Access Plan (LAP). The LAP is reviewed and approved by the Executive Director of ONA.



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Toward this end, the Office for New Americans endorses the following policies:

- ONA is committed to equity and will take all reasonable steps to provide limited English proficient (LEP) individuals with meaningful access to all its services, programs, and activities.
- The agency, rather than the LEP individual, bears the responsibility for providing appropriate language services, regardless of the LEP individual's preferred language, at no cost to the LEP individual.
- Staff at the initial points of contact have the specific duty to identify and record language needs.
- Use of informal interpreters such as family, friends of the person seeking service, or other customers is not allowed. Minor children are prohibited from acting as interpreters.
- No staff may suggest or require that an LEP individual provide an interpreter in order to receive agency services.



## PROFILE OF ONA'S LEP CLIENTS

The Office for New Americans is committed to tracking the languages preferred for communication among our limited English proficient (LEP) clients so that we can better provide meaningful, timely access to our services and programs without regard to any language impediments. Below is a data table summarizing relevant client data for ONA from January 2022 to September 2022.

LANGUAGE GROUP SERVED	TOTAL #	SAFE HARBOR?
SPANISH	54	YES
TAGALOG	1	YES
HINDI	1	NO
FRENCH	1	NO
TOTAL	57	



<b>% OF CLIENTS SERVED THAT ARE...</b>	<b>NUMBER</b>
<b>REFUGEES</b>	4
<b>INDIGENOUS</b>	0
<b>LEP CLIENTS</b>	57
<b>TOTAL</b>	61

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# LANGUAGE SERVICES AND PROCEDURES



The Governor's Office for New Americans has secured the language access services described below to enable our LEP clients to access our services and programs more fully. In every case, ONA ensures that all language service providers are fully competent to provide these services.

For language access services that have not been secured, this plan will outline how ONA plans to secure those services in the future.

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# ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE SERVICES

The Governor's Office for New Americans (ONA) provides the following oral and sign language services:

Oral services is provided through qualified bilingual or multilingual staff whose language skills are assessed during the hiring process through a series a written, oral, and listening tests.

<b>ONA STAFF</b>	<b>LANGUAGE(S) SPOKEN BESIDES ENGLISH</b>
#1	Spanish
#2	Spanish
#3	Spanish
#4	Filipino

ONA uses the following procedures to identify vital information used in the provisions of its services and programs, including both paper and electronic communications. The procedures for identifying vital written communication between ONA and individuals, as well as the procedure for identifying vital communication targeting the broader public are both presented.

Materials categorized as vital documents must be translated. These are the materials that are deemed as vital document: public-facing forms, informative paper documents (i.e. brochure), and online content, including social media posts, relating to resources for immigrants and refugees in Nevada.

The Governor's Office for New Americans will determine and reassess materials to determine whether they should be categorized as vital documents that must be translated biennially.

Translations are done in-house by multilingual staff both in Spanish and Filipino where deemed appropriate and within the "safe harbor" provision.



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# COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The Governor's Office for New Americans (ONA) is committed to ensuring that the larger Limited English Proficient Nevada community is aware of and able to access all available language services.

In doing so, ONA has taken steps to publicize the availability of its language services in the community. Additionally, ONA has provided notification of its services at all relevant points of contact and also provided resources for its staff to improve their cultural competency and ability to work with diverse groups.

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## PROCEDURES & RESOURCES FOR LEP COMMUNITY OUTREACH

ONA has engaged, and will continue to engage, in the following outreach activities:

- distributing information in "safe harbor" languages to a stakeholder list
- attending and tabling at events
- utilizing ethnic media to disseminate information
- partnering with our immigrant-serving community based organizations

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## CULTURAL COMPETENCY RESOURCES

ONA will develop and provide training to its personnel regarding cultural competency. The focus on the trainings will include:

- the value of diversity
- how to understand and respond to cultural differences
- implicit bias
- immigration 101



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# IMPLEMENTING LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES



The Governor's Office for New Americans (ONA) is committed to providing our Limited English Proficient clients full access to our services and programs. Towards this end, ONA requires its staff to follow the procedures described below to ensure meaningful access to available language services.

Moreover, ONA is committed to 100% compliance with these procedures and provides staff with training described below to help ensure that all staff are familiar with these procedures and recognize their important to ONA's mission.

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## IDENTIFYING CLIENT LANGUAGE NEEDS AND PREFERRED LANGUAGE

The following procedures should be followed to (1) interact appropriately with LEP clients, (2) inform clients of the availability of language services, (3) determine clients' preferred languages, and (4) record and track LEP client language preferences so that the data will follow them through their interactions with the Office for New Americans staff.

The following procedures are as follows:

- Upon interacting with a constituent, determine what their preferred language.
- Inform constituent of available language services.
- Track constituent data in customer relationship management (CRM) program.

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## ACCESSING APPROPRIATE ORAL AND SIGN LANGUAGE SERVICES

Staff should seek appropriate oral/sign language services in this order:

- The preferred method of serving LEP constituents by using competent bilingual staff to be able to provide services directly in the constituent's preferred language without the need for an interpreter
- Available, trained, competent bilingual staff may be used for in-person or telephone interpreting to support other staff
- Staff should seek assistance from professional in-person or telephone interpreters when staff cannot meet language needs.
- Staff should recognize that certain circumstances may require specialized interpretation and translation services even when staff with bilingual activities are available.
- Staff must be authorized to provide language services to communicate effectively even when such assistance is not requested by customer.
- If there are no competent bilingual staff or assistance from professional services, staff must make a sincere effort to ensure that constituent is still being provided the service that they are trying to access.

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## **ACCESSING APPROPRIATE WRITTEN LANGUAGE SERVICES**

According to the Office for New Americans stated policy on the determination of "vital documents", the following procedures should be followed to access qualified written language services. This applies both to written information intended for broad distribution as well as written communications between ONA and its constituents.

- Vital documents determined by the agency must be translated to Spanish.
- Resources on the ONA website must be translated into Spanish.
- Emails written in a different language will be addressed by competent bilingual staff.
- If there are no competent bilingual staff, staff must make a sincere effort to ensure that constituent is still being provided the service that they are trying to access.

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## **LANGUAGE SERVICE QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The Office for New Americans is committed to ensuring that all language service providers it utilizes are qualified and competent to provide those services. The following procedures are in place to (1) establish provider qualifications and (2) track provider performance.

- For bilingual staff, staff's language skills (written, oral, and listening) are tested extensively during the interview process.
- For professional services, ONA uses state-approved vendors for translation and interpreting services.

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## **STAFF TRAINING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The Office for New Americans believes that the appropriate provision of language services is vital to the fulfillment of its mission. Towards that end, ONA ensure that its staff are familiar with its language access policies and the above procedures for providing said services.

ONA staff will be trained in: Title VI of the Civil Right Acts and SB 318. ONA staff will also be trained in the ONA language access plan and its procedures.

For all new personnel, the training will be part of their orientation; current personal will have the training biennially.



## EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Office for New Americans is committed to monitoring the performance of the above policies, procedures, and resources to ensure that its language access plan (LAP) is responsive to the needs of both ONA and the people it serves. At a minimum, ONA will review, evaluate, and updates its LAP biennially, if necessary.

The Language Access Coordinator and the Executive Director will be the ones responsible for LAP implementation and maintenance. ONA will also track its LAP's performance using the criteria indicated below:

- identifying primary points of contact for LEP constituents and assessing if staff implements procedures in the LAP
- complaint forms
- feedback from staff to supervisors
- feedback from community-based organizations

Currently, ONA does not have the budget to implement their language access plan fully but will be requesting additional budget in the 2026 - 2028 biennium.

ONA recommends for the Nevada State Legislature to fully fund a Language Access Coordinator to be able to develop and implement a language access plan more effectively and efficiently.