



# Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

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Language Access Implementation Plan

Commissioner Bitta Mostofi



## Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs Language Access Implementation Plan

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### I. Agency mission and background

The mission of the New York City Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs (MOIA) is to facilitate the full inclusion of immigrant New Yorkers into the City's civic, economic, and cultural life. New York City is home to 3.1 million immigrants or 38% of its residents, the largest number in the City's history. Roughly another 20% are children of immigrants. Realizing this mission in a city as diverse as New York City requires multiple approaches to advance immigrant inclusion. MOIA's efforts align with and support the de Blasio Administration's goal of a more equitable city. Towards this end, MOIA seeks to increase access to services for immigrant New Yorkers, as well as inform and engage and advocate on behalf of immigrant New Yorkers. MOIA does this by developing and implementing strategic programs (e.g. IDNYC, ActionNYC, We Speak NYC, Know Your Rights program); conducting targeted outreach to NYC's immigrant communities – especially hard-to-reach communities; conducting local, state and federal legislative advocacy and developing and implementing policy initiatives; and leading capacity-building initiatives to help City agencies effectively serve immigrant residents.

Much of MOIA's work is conducted through collaboration with sister agencies, other cities, and community-based groups. However, MOIA also engages directly with immigrants across New York City in the three ways described below. It is these three areas for which language access must be considered:

- **Outreach:** MOIA conducts outreach to immigrants in a variety of ways – through holding town halls with immigrant communities, conducting Know Your Rights presentations or other presentations about City services, and distributing information about City services or other critical policy updates that impact them.
- **Constituent services:** All New Yorkers can call MOIA's hotline number to ask about city services, immigration-related questions, or request MOIA's support on an individual case or event.
- **Immigrant Information Desk:** MOIA's Immigrant Information Desk, located in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens, serves as an in-person 311 where staff connect immigrants to City services and provide referrals to community-based services is run by City staff.

Please note that MOIA's other programs, such as IDNYC, ActionNYC, We Speak NYC, and its Know Your Rights Program are administered by other agencies or community partners and not directly by MOIA.

## **II. Agency language access policy and goals**

Through this Language Access Implementation Plan, MOIA seeks to outline its commitment to language access and its approach to ensuring that the Office is effectively engaging with the City's limited English speakers.

MOIA supports language access throughout City government through capacity-building support, technical assistance, and guidance to City agencies and other on language access and the provision of legal services. This work is driven by our oversight role for the City's language access laws and our recognition of how communication plays a central role in the effective delivery of government services and community engagement. Linguistic and cultural diversity is a defining feature of New York City: across all New Yorkers, 200+ languages are spoken, 49% speak a language other than English at home, and 23% have limited English proficiency (LEP). Specifically among immigrant New Yorkers, approximately 50% have LEP. Nearly 63% of undocumented immigrants have LEP. This diversity requires that the City communicate effectively with New Yorkers with limited English proficiency and that language access be at the forefront of how the City engages with its residents.

In addition to language access support to other agencies, MOIA facilitates immigrant inclusion across the spectrum of English language ability through our program for English language learners We Speak, as well as interagency work to support adult literacy.

MOIA's approach to language access is that all New Yorkers, regardless of English language proficiency, should be able to access MOIA's information, services, and communicate with MOIA staff. It is the responsibility of MOIA to proactively inform and provide language assistance services to ensure access. Language access is a priority consideration in MOIA's decisions on areas including operations, staffing, communications, and program planning. MOIA continues to identify and address language barriers for communities with limited English proficiency, while at the same time advising on and supporting language access across the City as a whole.

For our areas of direct engagement with immigrant New Yorkers in outreach, constituent services, and the City-staffed Immigrant Information Desk, MOIA ensures accessibility to services and information to New Yorkers with LEP by:

- Hiring bilingual staff for roles that involve directly engaging with immigrant New Yorkers or communities in their language.

- Contracting with professional translation and interpretation vendors to translate materials and interpret at events.
- Translating materials distributed to immigrant communities in at least the ten designated languages under Local Law 30 (LL30).
- Developing and refining processes and protocols for requesting translation and interpretation services.
- Training for staff to ensure their commitment to providing language access, the legal obligations, the resources available to them to communicate with limited English speakers, and how staff can access those resources.
- Providing a means for filing complaints about language access at MOIA and responding to those complaints.
- Conducting outreach in multiple languages and raising awareness about language access to City services and information.

### **III. LEP population assessment**

As guided by Local Law 30, MOIA applies the “four factor analysis” promulgated by the US Department of Justice to assess obligations for language access as the basis for its Language Access Implementation Plan.

#### **Factor 1 – the number or proportion of LEP persons in the eligible service population:**

MOIA looked at citywide data to assess the number or proportion of LEP persons and their languages in the eligible service population for our outreach, constituent services, and Immigrant Information Desks. According to analysis of Census data provided by the Department of City Planning, 49% of New Yorkers above the age of five, or approximately 3.88 million New Yorkers, speak a language other than English at home. Twenty three percent of New Yorkers, or 2 million individuals, are considered limited English proficient (LEP), meaning that they self-identify as speaking English “less than very well.” LEP correlates with an increased need for language assistance. Local Law 30 requires that the Office of the Language Services Coordinator determine the top ten citywide languages based on data from the Census and the Department of Education. Based on this analysis, the ten citywide languages are: Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Bengali, Haitian Creole, Korean, Arabic, Urdu, French, and Polish.

Further analysis by MOIA indicates that among the 3.1 million immigrants in New York City, 76% (approximately 2.37 million individuals) speak a language other than English at home, and 49% (1.52 million individuals) have limited English proficiency. Among undocumented immigrants, we estimate that nearly two in three have LEP. Mixed-status households are more likely to be linguistically-isolated.

**Factor 2 – the frequency with which LEP individuals come into contact with the agency:** MOIA regularly engages with immigrant communities through its outreach activities, constituent services, and Immigrant Information Desks.

**Factor 3 – the importance of benefit, service, information or encounter to the LEP person:** MOIA's outreach, constituent services, and Immigrant Information Desks are directed at immigrant communities, especially those from newer or more vulnerable communities. The information MOIA provides addresses critical concerns, such as updates on changing federal immigration policies, health, immigrant rights and access to services, consumer protections, etc. For the proportion of immigrant New Yorkers who have limited English proficiency, as noted above, it is vital that this communication is available in the languages appropriate for the target audiences. Furthermore, addressing language barriers facilitates ongoing engagement and outreach across the communities.

**Factor 4 – resources available:**

Led by its Language Service Team, MOIA contracts with translation, in-person and telephonic interpretation vendors through the DCAS language service contracts and contracts with a third party translation vendor that provides a quality assurance review on translated documents. MOIA has procured interpretation equipment as well as computer-assisted translation tools, to streamline translation requests, improve consistency, quality, and turnaround times of translated materials. MOIA also employs bilingual staff, who can engage directly with LEP individuals.

**Evaluation of language access needs of agency's service population:**

Based on our assessment of the above factors, a significant number of MOIA's target service population has LEP. Our outreach, constituent services, and Immigrant Information Desks are in regular communication with LEP New Yorkers and the services and information provided address critical concerns. Thus, language access is a core priority for our service population. While speakers of the ten Designated Citywide Languages under Local Law 30 account for more than 85% of LEP foreign-born New York City residents, MOIA makes additional efforts to support hard-to-count immigrant communities.

The primary driver of providing in-person interpreters and translating materials into languages beyond the 10 local law languages is the Outreach Team's work. One of the goals of the Outreach Team is to conduct outreach to hard-to-reach communities, some of which do not speak one of the designated 10 Local Law languages. In order to ensure that the Team can effectively engage with these communities, MOIA provides interpretation in and translates materials into languages beyond the local law languages. For example, in 2018:

- MOIA provided over 330 interpreters that spoke 18 languages at 110 events.
- MOIA translated materials into 38 languages in response to directed outreach to specific communities. These languages include Nepali, Tibetan, Greek, Burmese, Tajik, Uzbek,

Punjabi, Wolof, Quechua, Kiche, Greek, and Japanese, based on the language needs the Outreach Team identified while engaging immigrant New Yorkers.

#### **IV. Provision of language assistance services**

The four-factor analysis and evaluation of language access needs above informs MOIA's provision of language services through bilingual staff and professional language services.

##### **Bilingual Staff**

MOIA is committed to hiring staff that reflect the multilingual and multicultural diversity of our city. Understanding the cultural nuances of immigrant communities and being able to communicate with New Yorkers who are limited English proficient without the use of an interpreter are critical. MOIA employs many bilingual staff and, due to the extent to which MOIA engages with LEP individuals and communities, seeks to hire bilingual staff for positions that will directly engage with LEP individuals. Its Outreach Team, for example, collectively speaks roughly six to eight languages and MOIA's Constituent Services Team has bilingual staff and fellows.

##### **Professional Language Services**

While multilingual staff are an asset to reaching New Yorkers with LEP, MOIA does not rely on them to translate materials or interpret. MOIA recognizes that solely being bilingual does not mean that staff will have the requisite skill or experience to translate or interpret. To ensure effective communication and appropriate staff responsibilities, MOIA uses the services of contracted translation and interpretation vendors.

To facilitate work with our contracted vendors, MOIA established the Language Services Team (LST) in December 2016 to centralize the coordination of language services within MOIA. MOIA's Language Access Coordinator (LAC) oversees the LST, which is comprised of staff who facilitate the provision of language services and:

- Oversee the delivery of translation and interpretation services for MOIA
- Provide a point of contact for MOIA staff, external vendors and other partners
- Manage procurement and accounting of contracted language services
- Distribute and maintains an inventory of interpretation equipment
- Provide training to MOIA staff
- Identify new needs and language services solutions

This centralization helps to streamline the processing of requests and turnaround times, and leverages the language access technical expertise of staff, which improves the quality of the multilingual content that MOIA delivers. The LST stays up to date with developments and



trends in the language services industry. In Spring 2018, the LST launched an online portal for translation and interpretation requests from MOIA and Mayoral Offices to structure communications and project management.

Below, we describe our approach to providing translated documents and interpretation services.

### *Translation*

MOIA aims to ensure that critical material is available and disseminated in the languages needed by its target audiences. The LST works with a translation vendor through the DCAS Citywide Language Services contracts to translate these materials.

### Most commonly distributed documents

As described in factor three of the four-factor analysis, MOIA assesses the importance of documents it creates and the breadth of distribution to determine whether they should be translated into the LL30 designated 10 languages. MOIA's most commonly distributed documents include community-facing materials that describe MOIA's programs, services available to immigrant communities, and/or policy updates that impact immigrant communities. These materials are translated into at least the designated 10 languages. As noted in Section III, LEP Population Assessment, MOIA's materials are translated into additional languages based on the language needs identified by the Outreach Team and their engagement with immigrant community members.

### Plain language

The LST language access training addresses how to develop content and design materials for a multilingual audience. As materials are being developed and before they are translated, they go through an internal review process to ensure that materials are accurate and written in plain language.

### Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement

MOIA incorporates standard practices and tools from the language service industry to expand delivery of translated materials that are high quality and produced in a timely fashion.

To ensure quality, the LST's practices incorporate:

- Standardized project and file management for translation projects, including version control.
- Consistent and proactive communications with vendors and clients (colleagues at MOIA and other Mayoral Offices).
- Advising clients, including sister agencies, on content issues that may affect the translation process.
- Conducting training for MOIA staff.

- Liaising with vendors and DCAS to ensure we receive high quality services.
- Standardizing the tools used to produce materials (e.g., Adobe Creative Cloud).
- Expanding the use of a glossary (or termbase) and style sheets.

In 2018, the LST introduced computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools from the language services industry to manage an increasing body of multilingual content. These tools help improve the quality and consistency of translated materials as well as turnaround times.

While MOIA's vendor has a quality assurance process, MOIA provides supplemental quality assurance through a contract with a secondary translation vendor that reviews certain translated materials. The secondary vendor occasionally assists the LST on non-standard projects that require extra attention. MOIA's bilingual staff or the Citywide Volunteer Language Bank may also provide quality assurance reviews of materials.

The LST reviews its provision of language services to identify opportunities for improvement through refined practice (coordination and collaboration) and more appropriate inputs (vendors, tools/technology).

#### Communications beyond "commonly distributed documents"

MOIA seeks to make accessible other forms of communication, even if these items are not considered "most commonly distributed documents," and thus not subject to translation under the requirements of local law. This work includes expanding the distribution of multilingual information through digital channels, including press releases, social media posts, and web content. Decisions about multilingual communications are based on an assessment of language needs of the target audience.

Many of our media contacts are from community and ethnic media and we work with them to ensure that information is consistently disseminated to diverse audiences in their preferred language. MOIA tracks the information in these media outlets to ensure accuracy and follow up for correction as needed.

In 2018, MOIA launched a pilot project to translate its website into the ten Local Law 30 languages to ensure that online content is accessible to LEP New Yorkers. The multilingual website will launch in 2019. The website project will coincide with the initial phase of developing a multilingual glossary for MOIA, a key part of ensuring consistency across all MOIA translations.

#### *Interpretation*

Unless bilingual staff are available to communicate in the language the LEP individual prefers, MOIA uses professional interpretation services (either in-person or over the phone) in its outreach, to respond to constituent inquiries, and at the Immigrant Information Desks, as



needed. (MOIA does not rely on bilingual staff to provide interpretation). MOIA procured these interpretation vendors through the DCAS Citywide Language Service contracts. The LST assesses feedback about the quality of services and relays any concerns back to the vendors, and/or engages with DCAS, as necessary.

#### In-Person Interpretation

MOIA provides interpretation at events and gatherings, including Mayoral Town Halls and other public-facing events held by Mayoral Offices. For these events, MOIA uses its contracted vendors to provide consecutive or simultaneous interpretation in languages of the target audience. In 2018, interpreters who spoke 18 different languages were provided at 110 events. MOIA has purchased and maintains interpretation equipment, including both stationary and portable transmitters, receivers, headphones, and booths, to allow for simultaneous interpretation. The LST provides this equipment and coordinates interpreters for events organized by MOIA staff, as well as by other Mayoral Offices.

#### Telephonic interpretation

Telephonic interpretation provides a valuable service to support exchanges in languages not spoken by bilingual staff. Telephonic interpretation provides ready access in more than 200 languages. MOIA contracts with a vendor for telephonic interpretation through the DCAS Citywide contacts.

All staff can access MOIA's telephonic interpretation service. The staff primarily use it when communicating with LEP New Yorkers through the Constituent Services hotline and when serving LEP individuals at the Immigrant Information Desk. Outreach staff may use telephonic interpretation in the field.

#### **Notification of Free Interpretation Services**

Local Law 30 requires that agencies provide notification of free interpretation services. MOIA informs members of the public about the availability of free interpretation services in multiple ways, including through multilingual signage and outreach presentations. MOIA's Immigrant Information Desk staff, located at the Coney Island SNAP center, the Queens Public Library in Flushing, and Metropolitan Hospital have signs about the availability of free interpretation services. MOIA also provides signage at events in which there is interpretation to ensure individuals with LEP are aware of the service. MOIA has also distributed to City agencies signage they can use to inform immigrant communities about the availability of free interpretation. MOIA also provides information through Know Your Rights and other presentations to communities about Local Law 30 and New Yorkers' rights to language services across City government (see Section VII).

#### **Emergency Planning**

MOIA works in close partnership with the NYC Emergency Management during emergencies that impact LEP communities. After Hurricane Sandy, MOIA worked with NYCEM and the

Department of Social Services (DSS) to update the NYCEM Language Access Protocol, which outlines how language access should be provided and coordinated during emergencies. MOIA convenes the “Lead Team” (agencies that come together when OEM triggers the Language Access Protocol) to discuss language access needs, available resources, and provision of language services. During emergencies, MOIA works with OEM and DSS to ensure that language needs are being met, and advises on the provision of language services. MOIA participates in exercises with OEM to ensure language access is integrated into emergency operations.

#### **IV. Training**

To ensure that staff are aware about language access obligations and services available to support their efforts, the LST provides annual training for MOIA staff. The training addresses the following:

- The importance of language access in ensuring equity and its importance to MOIA’s mission;
- The City’s legal obligations around language access, including Local Law 30;
- The language services resources available to MOIA staff to ensure they can communicate with LEP New Yorkers and how to access those services; and
- Steps staff can take to ensure the quality of multilingual communications.

The LST also provides additional refresher trainings on language services and the use of interpretation equipment for staff developing materials or conducting outreach.

The LST has also developed a language access protocol and a one-page guide for staff on how to request translation and interpretation services and how to use telephonic interpretation. All new staff receive this content. Training materials are reviewed and updated at least annually.

#### **V. Record keeping and evaluation**

The LST processes and tracks the translation of materials, as well as requests and fulfillment of interpretation services at MOIA. The LST regularly assesses the volume of service requests and how they were provided.

In alignment with the procurement and fiscal cycles, the LST reviews its delivery of language services with members of MOIA’s Senior Team to identify new needs and opportunities for improvement. This review includes an assessment of demand for language services, the LST’s ability to meet demand and manage projects effectively, and any issues encountered with respect to contracted services.

As part of MOIA’s strategic planning process, MOIA monitors its compliance with Local Law 30 and the efficacy of its implementation plan. The Executive Director of Interagency Initiatives and Language Access and the Language Access Manager meet weekly to assess progress on



language access goals, including LL30 compliance (in consultation with MOIA's legal team, as necessary). Those staff will review the Language Access Implementation Plan and provide an update at least every three years (next update by 2022).

## **VI. Resource analysis and planning**

In addition to periodic review by the LST to improve its delivery of language services and identify gaps in provision (see Section V), MOIA seeks to better understand shifts in language needs across immigrant communities. MOIA relies on outreach by MOIA staff to immigrant communities (see Section VII below), conducts demographic research, and monitors data releases from the Population Division of the Department of City Planning and other sources of demographic information.

MOIA maintains relationships with immigrant-serving community organizations that share the priority needs and challenges faced by their respective communities, including language barriers to accessing services. This information guides MOIA's practices around staffing, developing multilingual information and resources for these communities, and working with contracted vendors. MOIA also supports immigrant communities by sharing relevant information with City agencies. MOIA looks to expand and deepen MOIA's collaboration with organizations serving newer or underserved communities and organizes multilingual community forums to engage residents.

## **VII. Outreach and public awareness of language access services**

MOIA recognizes the need to proactively inform members of the public on the City's obligation to provide language access. In the "Notification of Free Language Services" section above, we described the ways in which MOIA informs LEP individuals and other stakeholders about free language services, including through signage and presentations to community groups about language access. One of the core components of MOIA's work is its collaboration and partnership with and outreach to community organizations. Through these partnerships and outreach, MOIA works to inform partners about our commitment to language access and build channels so that they can provide feedback about language needs in the communities they serve and across the City.

## **VIII. Language Access complaints**

MOIA seeks to be a trusted broker of information that affects immigrant communities, including individuals with limited English proficiency. To that end, MOIA respects and appreciates feedback about its own communications and engagement practices and strives to eliminate the gaps in language access to its information and services.



Members of the public can contact MOIA through multiple channels to make a complaint or request additional language services. MOIA has bilingual staff and telephonic interpretation to support direct contact. This work is coordinated by MOIA’s Constituent Services Team.

- **By mail:** 253 Broadway, 14th FL, New York, NY 10007
- **Email:** [askmoia@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:askmoia@cityhall.nyc.gov)
- **Website contact page:** <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/immigrants/contact/contact.page>
- **Telephone** (with interpretation available): (212) 788-7654

Any member of the public can also call 311 to make a complaint about language access at MOIA. 311 forwards a record of the complaint to MOIA’s Constituent Services team, which will respond to the individual and determine a course of action. The Language Access Coordinator receives a copy of all 311 Language Access Complaints and tracks the complaints. This data will be reported as part of the annual update to City Council.

**IX. Implementation plan logistics**

The Executive Director for Interagency Initiatives and Language Access, in conjunction with the Language Access Manager, oversee the fulfillment of the MOIA Language Access Implementation Plan. The ED and Language Access Manager collaborate with members of the Senior Team and MOIA staff to ensure that MOIA continues to build out and reevaluate its language access infrastructure.

Language access goal	Milestones	Responsible staff	Deadline
<b>Provide language services</b>			
Ensure MOIA staff have access to high quality translations and interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage contracts with three vendors for four types of language services (translation, third party review, interpretation, in-person interpretation)</li> <li>• Utilize computer-assisted translation software to develop translation memory, and to promote consistency and quality of translations</li> <li>• Track service provision</li> <li>• Engage with clients and vendors to resolve issues</li> </ul>	MOIA’s Language Services Team	Ongoing



Ensure accessibility of MOIA's website by working with DOITT and vendor to translate website into 10 different languages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Translate content into 10 languages</li> <li>• Conduct quality assurance review</li> <li>• Launch website into 10 languages</li> </ul>	MOIA's Language Services Team	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter, CY 2019
<b>Staff Training</b>			
Ensure staff are aware of City's language access laws, MOIA's language access policies, resources available and the ways to request translation and interpretation services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct staff training</li> </ul>	MOIA's Language Services Team	3 <sup>rd</sup> quarter, CY 2020
<b>Raise public awareness about free language services</b>			
Inform immigrant communities about City's language access laws and complaint process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing through outreach presentations and partnerships with local organizations and non-profits</li> </ul>	MOIA's Outreach and Organizing Team	Ongoing
Develop language access symbol to inform communities about language services and City's commitment to language access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finalize symbol and add to MOIA collateral</li> </ul>	MOIA's Language Access Coordinator	4 <sup>th</sup> quarter, CY 2019