Providing Language Access
TIPS FOR LOCAL OFFICIALS

Did you know...

6.9 Million Californians have Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

68% are Spanish speakers followed by Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog and Korean.

The California Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination by agencies that receive state funds and requires them to provide equal access to benefits.

The Bilingual Services Act requires local agencies to provide language access services to limited English-proficient speakers. Providing language access in some circumstances may be the only way to facilitate public participation in California’s communities.

Tips for Providing Language Access Services

1. Connect language access efforts to the larger mission and goals of the local agency.

2. Develop policies that clarify your local agency’s responsibilities for providing bilingual services and ensure that local officials understand these policies, responsibilities and existing language access services and resources.

3. Partner with community-based organizations and ethnic media to better identify language access priorities, ensure accurate and culturally appropriate interpretation and translation and more fully assess the effectiveness of language access plans.

4. Translate print and online materials explaining services into languages spoken by a substantial number of LEP residents. Minimize the use of bureaucratic or legal jargon when creating all new documents.

5. Create web pages that are easy to navigate and use. Web pages may ease fears of immigrant residents who may not feel comfortable seeking services in person.

6. Encourage local departments to consider using California Multiple Award Schedules (CMAS) contracts to obtain bilingual services whenever cost-effective.

7. Use bilingual employees effectively and appropriately. Avoid assumptions about competence and willingness of bilingual staff to provide language services.

Resources to learn more:


Ten Ideas to Encourage Immigrant Engagement | www.ca-ilg.org/ten-ideas-immigrant-engagement

Increasing Outreach | www.ca-ilg.org/increasing-outreach