

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.

 **INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT**SM
Promoting Good Government at the Local Level

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:

Language Access Laws and Legal Issues A Local Official's Guide | www.ca-ilg.org/language-access-laws-and-legal-issues

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

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

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