



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH GUIDANCE

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DEFINITIONS

Environmental Justice (EJ): Principles that all people have a right to be protected from environmental hazards and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthy environment regardless of race, color, national origin, income, or English language proficiency. Environmental justice is the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people and communities with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of energy, climate change, and environmental laws, regulations, and policies, and the equitable distribution of energy and environmental benefits and burdens.¹

Environmental Justice Population: A neighborhood that meet 1 or more of the following criteria: (i) the annual median household income is not more than 65 percent of the statewide annual median household income; (ii) minorities comprise 40 percent or more of the populations; (iii) 25 percent or more of the households lack English language proficiency; or (iv) minorities comprise 25 percent or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150 percent of the statewide annual median household income.

For neighborhoods that do not meet the above criteria, but a geographic portion of that neighborhood meets at least 1 criterion, the Secretary of EEA may designate that geographic portion as an environmental justice population upon the petition of at least 10 residents of the geographic portion of that neighborhood meeting any such criteria. Further, the Secretary may determine that a neighborhood, including any geographic portion thereof, shall not be designated an environmental justice population upon finding that: (a) the annual median household income of that neighborhood is greater than 125 percent of the statewide median household income; (b) a majority of persons age 25 and older in that neighborhood have a college education; (c) the neighborhood does not bear an unfair burden of environmental pollution; and (d) the neighborhood has more than limited access to natural resources, including open spaces and water resources, playgrounds and other constructed outdoor recreational facilities and venues.²

Environmental Justice Principles: Principles that support protection from environmental pollution and the ability to live in and enjoy a clean and healthy environment, regardless of race, color, income, class, handicap, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, ethnicity or ancestry, religious belief or English language proficiency, which includes: (i) the meaningful involvement of all people with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies, including climate change policies;

¹ The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (“EEA”), *Environmental Justice Policy of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs* (“EJ Policy” updated 2021) at 3 (2017, updated June 24, 2021) available at www.mass.gov/doc/environmental-justice-policy6242021-update/download.

² An Act Creating a Next Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy, (2021), Acts Chapter 8, Section 62

and (ii) the equitable distribution of energy and environmental benefits and environmental burdens.³

Interpretation: The act of listening, understanding, analyzing, and processing a spoken communication in one language (source language) and then faithfully⁴ orally rendering it into another spoken language (target language) while retaining the same meaning. For individuals with certain disabilities that affect communication, this can include understanding, analyzing, and processing a spoken or signed communication in the source language and faithfully conveying that information into a spoken, captioned, or signed target language while retaining that same meaning.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Persons: Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.⁵ LEP persons include individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Key Agency Action(s): Each agency should identify its key agency actions or activities based on its mission statement and its regulatory and statutory requirements. And any action based in whole or in part on significant decision-making processes including any destruction, damage or impairment of natural resources that is not insignificant, resulting from intentional or reasonably foreseeable causes.

Language Access: Providing LEP persons with meaningful access to the same services as English-speaking individuals.

Meaningful Access: Language assistance that results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the individual with LEP needing assistance to eliminate communication barriers, such as sign language interpretation, real-time captioning, or other accessible form of communication as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Meaningful access denotes access that is not significantly delayed, restricted, or inferior as compared to programs or services provided to LEP persons.

Meaningful Involvement: All neighborhoods have the right and opportunity to participate in energy, climate change, and environmental decision-making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, compliance and enforcement, and evaluation, and neighborhoods are enabled and administratively assisted to participate fully through education and training,

³ EJ Policy (updated 2021) at 4.

⁴ Interpreting accurately and completely without adding or taking away from the meaning.

⁵ Executive Office of Administration and Finance, Office of Access and Opportunity, *Language Access Policy and Implementation Guidelines 2* (March 20, 2015) available at www.mass.gov/doc/language-access-guidelines/download.

and are given transparency/accountability by government with regard to community input, and encouraged to develop environmental, energy, and climate change stewardship.⁶

Neighborhood: A census block group as defined by the United States Census Bureau, excluding people who live in college dormitories and people who are under formally authorized, supervised care or custody, including federal, state, or country prisons.⁷

Translation: The process of converting written text from a source language into an equivalent written text in a target language as fully and as accurately as possible while maintaining the style, tone, and intent of the text, and while considering differences of culture and dialect.

Vital Document: Vital documents are documents containing critical information on agency programs, activities, services, including residents' eligibility rights, available in English which may deny non-English speakers and LEP persons equitable and meaningful access. Vital documents may include information that is critical for accessing programs or activities, and include, but are not limited to: consent and complaint forms, online and paper applications for services, intake forms, notifications pertaining to eligibility of services, notifications pertaining to reduced or elimination of services, appeal notices, notices advising LEP persons of free language services, documents required by law, and notifications regarding the availability of language interpretation and assistance.

⁶ EJ Policy (updated 2021) at 3.

⁷ EJ Policy (updated 2021) at 4-5.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) meaningful Public Involvement Plan (“PIP”) that outlines frameworks for informing, consulting, and working with community members or groups that could be impacted by an agency at various stages of its decision-making processes to address community needs effectively. EEA is committed to enhancing and improving the accessibility of its programs, activities, and services for all residents including LEP persons, and ensuring meaningful engagement.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this PIP is to ensure meaningful access to services, programs, activities, and materials for all persons, regardless of race, color, national origin, ethnicity or ancestry, disability, class, income, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious belief, or English language proficiency.

This PIP will strive to provide a framework for agency staff to develop an effective PIP that engages all residents in the Commonwealth including designated EJ Populations and solicits meaningful public input on decision-making processes, recognizing the vital role of stakeholders in shaping our environmental policies.

III. POLICY AND APPLICABILITY

The PIP procedures outlined in this documentation are implemented consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, EPA’s Public Participation Guidance found at 71 F.R. 14207, 14210 (March 21, 2006), EEA’s 2017 EJ Policy (updated June 2021), Chapter 8 of the Acts of 2021: An Act Creating a Next-Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy, federal Executive Order 13166, Executive Order 526, and Executive Order 615 which include steps for effective public participation that is accessible to all persons without regard to race, age, color, national origin ethnicity or ancestry), disability, class, income, gender identity, sexual orientation, religious belief or English language proficiency.

IV. IDENTIFYING IMPACTED COMMUNITIES

The concept of public involvement requires thoughtful planning at the onset of any projects, policies, or decision-making processes. It is important to know how to identify the community to be impacted by your project, policy, or decision. Using the following practical supplemental tools and information will support the development of effective strategies to shape policies and engage with communities. Identifying federal grant resources is crucial, as these grants may

require specific datasets to shape certain programs or policies. Therefore, in addition to the state resources, federal resources for further guidance are included. Please note that the tools most applicable to Massachusetts are the MA EJ Screening tool, the MA DPH tool, and the Languages Spoken in Massachusetts tool.

[CJEST Tool \(Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool\)](#)

The Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool is an interactive map which uses datasets that display burdens in eight categories: climate change, energy, health, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce development. This mapping tool includes information at the national level including the District of Columbia and the U.S. Territories and can be used to determine disadvantaged⁸ communities based on thresholds set by the federal government. The methodology to define these thresholds for each category is explained at <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/methodology#3/33.37/-97.5>.

[EPA's EJ Screen Tool \(EJScreen: Environmental Justice and Mapping Tool\)](#)

The United States Environmental Protection Agency ("EPA") established the EJScreen mapping and screening tool using datasets at the national level to display environmental and socioeconomic information within a geographical area. The EJScreen highlights 13 environmental indicators: (1) Particulate matter 2.3 (PM 2.5); (2) Ozone; (3) Diesel particulate matter; (4) Air toxics cancer risk; (5) Air toxics respiratory hazard index; (6) Toxic releases to air; (7) Traffic proximity; (8) Lead paint; (9) Superfund proximity; (10) Risk management plan (RMP) facility proximity; (11) Hazardous waste proximity; (12) Underground storage tanks (UST); and (13) Wastewater discharge. And 7 socioeconomic indicators: (1) People of color; (2) Low income; (3) Unemployment rate; (4) Limited English speaking; (5) Less than high school education; (6) Under age 5; and (7) Over age 64. This tool is an excellent resource for supporting (i) educational programs; (ii) grant writing; (iii) community awareness efforts and (iv) other purposes (i.e., engagement, enforcement, etc.). The environmental and demographic dataset for a specific location can be measured up to other locations at the state, EPA region, or national level. Learn more about this tool at <https://www.epa.gov/ejscreen/how-does-epa-use-ejscreen>.

[MA Environmental Justice Populations Screening Tool](#)

The Massachusetts Environmental Justice Map Viewer is an interactive map developed by EEA which displays EJ block groups using data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2019 American Community Survey to identify EJ Populations. The EJ Map Viewer data highlights EJ Populations as described in the Climate Roadmap Act and is an easy tool to navigate and determine whether a community meets any of the EJ criteria. The latest environmental justice map is accessible at [Massachusetts 2020 Environmental Justice Populations \(arcgis.com\)](#).

⁸ "Communities are considered disadvantaged: [i]f they are in census tracts that meet the thresholds for at least one of the tool's categories of burden, or [if] they are on land within the boundaries of Federally Recognized Tribes." available at <https://screeningtool.geoplatform.gov/en/methodology#3/33.37/-97.5>.

Languages in Massachusetts Tool

The languages spoken map is a sub-section of EEA's EJ Map Viewer. This map displays census tracks data where at least 5 percent of the population speak English "less than very well". It also includes data from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education ("DESE"). The DESE data sets identify languages spoken in the homes of 1 percent or more of the public-school student population, which is used as supplemental information when identifying community demographics. The language map is accessible at [Languages spoken in Massachusetts \(arcgis.com\)](https://arcgis.com)

MA Department of Public Health Environmental Justice Tool

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health Environmental Justice tool is based on EEA's Environmental Justice Policy⁹ established in 2002 and updated in June 2021 to promote environmental justice. The data can also support the mapping of EJ Populations for enhanced outreach. [EJ Screening v3a active - 2023-09-20 - MHT \(mass.gov\)](#).

V. ASSESSING THE NEED FOR A PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN OR ENHANCED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Enhancing public participation is essential to ensure that project decisions positively impact residents' ability to enjoy a healthy environment and community. To achieve this, EEA is dedicated to identifying best practices for engaging with all Commonwealth residents and communities. By fostering collaboration and empowering residents, decisions can prioritize both environmental health and community well-being. The PIP will enhance transparency in decision-making processes. EEA remains committed to making decisions that meet community needs while safeguarding the environment.

EEA will implement the following steps to address the need for public involvement:

- EEA will implement its PIP with clearly defined purpose, goals, and objectives.
- EEA will identify relevant stakeholders, and consider community members, organizations, and affected parties. Understanding their perspectives and needs is essential for a successful PIP that will support decision-making during project planning.
- Once stakeholders are identified, EEA will focus on best practices to share clear information with the broader community. EEA is committed to providing access to information in both physical and digital formats. It is critical that the information shared is comprehensive and addresses questions of why, how, what, and the potential impact on the community. Just as critical is ensuring the information reaches stakeholders. EEA

⁹ [download \(mass.gov\)](#)

agencies, staff, and project proponents will work to ensure critical information reaches those most impacted.

- EEA will gather and manage stakeholder feedback before critical decisions are made. EEA is dedicated to reviewing the feedback provided. Once gathered, this input will be analyzed, prioritized, and aligned with the project's vision and goals. The integration of stakeholder feedback into decision-making processes and action plans will be evaluated. EEA's implementation of receiving feedback will be an iterative cycle, continuously revolving around reflection, dialogue, and practice, with a focus on learning and adaptation that extends beyond simple execution.

Identify and Develop a Community Engagement Strategy

Meaningful community engagement for key agency actions, activities, services and programs is a critical part of EEA. By actively involving community members, EEA increases trust, empowers community members, provides access to multiple perspectives and expertise, creates a culture of collaboration, and improves communication. A well-crafted community engagement strategy ensures that community needs are at the forefront of decision-making processes, leading to more effective and sustainable outcomes. Therefore, EEA plays a crucial role in identifying and committing to community engagement strategies. Through meaningful engagement EEA is fostering a sense of belonging and commitment among stakeholders, benefiting both communities across the Commonwealth and EEA.

Developing a strategy to support communities including LEP persons involves several key steps:

- **Actively listening:** EEA will participate in local events, meetings and workshops. This will allow EEA to remain attentive to the needs, concerns, and priorities of communities. Additionally, this will allow an understanding of the unique context each community has and provide the opportunity to initiate conversations with local stakeholders, such as community leaders, educators, business owners, or local organization representatives. Stakeholders can offer insights into the community's dynamics. EEA will determine the languages spoken within the community. EEA will consider offering information and resources in various languages to facilitate effective communication.
- EEA will acquaint itself with the cultural practices, traditions, and celebrations that are significant to the community. It is critical to honor and integrate these cultural aspects into the engagement strategies. EEA will develop a list of existing community resources. This includes gaining a comprehensive understanding of the services, programs, and facilities that are already in place within communities. By doing so, EEA can identify the strengths and gaps in our current infrastructure and tailor our initiatives accordingly. EEA will work in conjunction with these existing resources. Collaborating with local

resources will avoid redundant efforts and ensure EEA's initiatives are complementary rather than duplicative. This approach will not only maximize the impact of our work but also foster a sense of unity and shared purpose. EEA understands that residents often face a deluge of requests for engagement. This can lead to engagement fatigue, reducing the likelihood and ability of individuals to participate. To address this, EEA is committed to making every effort to coordinate with local communities. EEA's goal is to integrate public involvement into existing community events and resources. This approach not only streamlines engagement but also respects the time and energy of residents.

- Co-creation of goals to enhance ownership: EEA deeply values the unique contributions that each partner brings to our collaboration. These contributions range from funding and staff support to invaluable assets such as information, leadership skills, community knowledge, and local expertise. In our commitment to inclusivity, EEA adheres to the most current Language Access Plan (LAP). Translating documents and providing interpretation ensures active involvement from individuals of various linguistic backgrounds, fostering a diverse and inclusive dialogue. EEA understands the importance of valuing our stakeholders' time. To this end, EEA facilitates effective communication, ensuring that our interactions are both meaningful and efficient. Our vision extends beyond transient and transactional endeavors. EEA strives to develop enduring partnerships and build trust with communities and with that tackle wider social, economic, and environmental issues, creating a sustainable and equitable future for all.
- Stakeholder collaboration: EEA recognize that stakeholders are not just those who are affected by a project, but also those who have an interest in it and those who can influence its outcomes. EEA believes that close collaboration with community members impacted by a project leads to better outcomes. Their firsthand experience and unique perspectives enrich the understanding and inform decision-making process. Engaging internal stakeholders, such as colleagues, fellow agencies, and other departments, is equally important. This promotes alignment, efficient communication, and resource sharing, leading to improved project results. EEA value our external stakeholders, including other organizations, non-profits, and government bodies. Collaborating with these entities can significantly increase project effectiveness by bringing diverse expertise and resources to the table. By leveraging the skills, knowledge, and resources of all stakeholders, EEA can accelerate processes, identify and mitigate potential obstacles, and broaden participation.
- Effective communication for non-English speakers: EEA is committed to following the most current LAP. EEA understands the importance of making all materials accessible to

all, regardless of language barriers. To this end, EEA translates materials and provides interpretation into relevant languages. EEA works with professional translators or employs dependable translation tools to ensure accuracy and clarity. EEA also provides live interpretation services during events, meetings, or presentations to facilitate real-time understanding. EEA strives to utilize clear and simple language, avoiding jargon and complex terminology. EEA breaks down information into manageable segments and employ plain language in our written materials. This approach enhances comprehension and ensures that our content is accessible to all. To further aid understanding, EEA enhances our materials with visual aids such as diagrams and images. EEA structures the content used logically and offers it in alternative formats like braille or large print to cater to different needs. EEA also ensures any digital content is compatible with screen readers, making it accessible to visually impaired individuals. EEA is committed to including captions for video and audio materials and providing sign language interpretation. EEA ensures the physical spaces used are accessible to all, with virtual options being available for those residents who cannot join in-person activities.

VI. KEY ELEMENTS FOR CONDUCTING COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND BEST PRACTICES

Engaging with the community on a regular basis is crucial to understand their needs, as the approach can differ among various groups. For instance, digital platforms may resonate with a younger, tech-savvy demographic, while face-to-face interactions might be more effective for those less comfortable with technology. Partnering with local businesses or hosting educational workshops can showcase the dedication and commitment to the community. Define your outreach goals and conduct a needs assessment to pinpoint community needs, create a list of stakeholders, develop an outreach plan, establish a coalition, and start conversations with key community stakeholders.

Key Elements:

- Understanding the Importance of Community Outreach
- Continuous Nurturing and Consistent Involvement
- Diverse Outreach Techniques
- Partnerships and Value Addition
- Goal Setting
- Needs Assessment & Educational Workshops
- Stakeholder Identification
- Strategy Development
- Coalition & Capacity Building
- Message Crafting

Use of a Public Involvement Plan

EEA should use a PIP to gather diverse viewpoints from stakeholders for key agency actions, activities and/or programs. This approach is crucial for decision-making as it brings to light a variety of perspectives and concerns, ensuring equitable treatment, significant participation, and social inclusion for all. The PIP serves as a tool for the Secretariat to solicit public input, thereby promoting accountability and transparency throughout the process. It also conserves resources by assessing the most effective methods for public engagement.

The PIP strategy may differ among various communities. It should be used to identify proactive engagement tools that will enhance community involvement. For instance, in a community where digital literacy is high, online surveys or virtual town hall meetings might be effective. In contrast, in areas with lower digital access, traditional methods like public meetings or mail-in surveys might be more appropriate.

EEA must consistently strive to invoke a PIP in key agency actions or any decision-making processes. This could involve decisions about environmental or energy policies, environmental or energy projects, or initiatives that affect EJ Populations. By actively seeking public input, EEA can ensure that decisions are made in the best interest of the community and that all voices are heard. The PIP is not just a plan, but a commitment to open, inclusive, and transparent decision-making. It's a promise to listen, understand, and to the extent possible incorporate the views of the public in decisions that affect them. It's about building trust, fostering understanding, and creating better outcomes for everyone involved. EEA's commitment to implementing a PIP demonstrates its dedication to the environmental justice principles of meaningful engagement and equitable distribution.

Inform Stakeholders

EEA is dedicated to best practices for informing and engaging residents. Early engagement by involving community members from the outset to gather insights into their needs, preferences, and any barriers they face in participating is fundamental to any decision-making processes. EEA will actively engage in outreach programs and collaborate with individuals and organizations in the community that can aid in these efforts. The goal is to involve stakeholders through educational and community outreach initiatives. EEA acknowledges the significance of empowering communities and remains committed to active participation throughout the process.

- Maintain a record of all outreach activities.
- Identify relevant stakeholders and seek to understand their interests and concerns.
- Engage stakeholders through various methods, including in-person, hybrid, and remote meetings, workshops, surveys, public hearings, and online forums, among others.
- Treat stakeholder engagement as an ongoing process, not a one-time event.
- Help stakeholders to request data on the project's impacts and grant stakeholders' access to data regarding the project's impacts as allowable.

- Continuously improve engagement by incorporating stakeholder and community feedback.
- Present comprehensive information objectively, maintain transparency, disclose information promptly, communicate consistently throughout the initiative or project's duration. Encourage active participation in outreach and public engagement opportunities.
- Ensure outreach materials are accessible, culturally sensitive, and provide language access.

Consult with Stakeholders

In the process of conducting public listening sessions, EEA is dedicated to establishing a clear purpose for each session to guide the session's design and ensures alignment with its intended objectives. EEA, in partnership with other stakeholders, identifies any underrepresented groups to ensure their adequate representation in the listening session. EEA strives to create a welcoming environment by choosing locations for the listening sessions that are easily accessible to the public and comfortable for all attendees, such as public libraries, schools, or parks. EEA ensures that these locations are physically accessible to all participants. EEA follows the most updated Language Access Plan.


EEA, in partnership with the community, will develop relevant and clear questions. During this collaborative process, community members will have the opportunity to clarify the meaning of these questions and contribute their own.

EEA aims to garner significant responses that are in line with the listening session's objectives. Participants will be urged to appreciate the perspectives of others, cultivating an environment of mutual respect and understanding. EEA will record and scrutinize the feedback from the session to steer decision-making. After the session, EEA will contemplate the feedback to ascertain how it can be incorporated into the decision-making process. EEA will promote continuous involvement, fostering trust and a sense of ownership among stakeholders.

EEA's engagement with stakeholders extends beyond merely informing and consulting. The engagement plan must also include collaborating with and empowering stakeholders in a way that genuinely gives them a voice and a seat at the table. The role of EEA is significant and integral to this process. The following chart highlights the spectrum of public participation that should be implemented when determining the necessary level of participation in decision-making processes.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Identify Language Spoken by Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons:

EEA will adhere to the EEA's most updated Language Access Plan which guides the process by which the top languages spoken in the Commonwealth are identified for the interpretation of public meetings and translation of vital documents.

Additional languages should be accommodated upon request. To determine the extent and scope of language services needed, staff will consult the appropriate resources.

- The 2015 American Community Survey (as updated) is available via the [United States Census Bureau](#).
- Demographic data, available via public sources, on language ability indicating that individuals speak English "less than very well".
- EEA's [EJ Map Viewer](#) (state level).
- Community organizations, school systems, faith-based organizations, and other community-based organizations can often assist with identifying populations where additional outreach is needed.

Consult data available from the United States Census Bureau

Staff will utilize the Languages in Massachusetts tool to accurately identify and assess the translation and interpretation needs of the communities. This tool will help ensure that our communication efforts are inclusive and effective, providing accessible information and services to individuals with LEP. By leveraging this resource, EEA aims to enhance outreach and engagement efforts, ensuring that all community members can fully participate and benefit from the programs and initiatives.

Instructions for accessing US. Census [Bureau's American Community Survey](#) data are as follows:

- a. Go to the U.S. Census Bureau website at: <https://data.census.gov>.
- b. Enter code B16001 (for " Language Spoken at Home by Ability to Speak English for the Population 5 Years and Over") in the search box then enter.
- c. "Filter" is displayed on the left corner of the page. Click on "Topics." Then click on "Populations and People." Next, select "Language Spoken at Home."
- d. Go back to the Filter and click on "Geographies." Click on "County Subdivision." Then scroll down to select "Massachusetts."
- e. A list of all the counties will appear. Select the appropriate county.
- f. Next, select the appropriate city/town under the county subdivisions.
- g. Go back to the Filter and click on "Years." Select the latest year (currently 2022).
- h. Go to the toolbar under the search box and click on "Tables."
- i. A table will appear on the right side of the page showing the total population for the city or town with a detailed breakdown of the languages spoken by the residents and the number of residents who "speak English less than very well."
- j. To export the data as an excel document, click on the ellipsis under "More Tools" in the right corner and select "Excel."

Translation of Materials

When translating a document, staff must follow these steps, in addition to consulting EEA's most updated Language Access Plan:

- Identify which language(s) are needed for translation for the impacted community. Projects with statewide implications should have the above-referenced label inserted and translated.
- Translate vital documents into the top 5 languages or the most updated version of EEA's LAP. Vital documents are documents containing critical information on agency programs, activities, services, including residents' eligibility rights.
- Email a Word document version of the materials to be translated to the vendors listed on the State Contracted Vendors to request a quote. It is recommended that staff seek at least three (3) quotes from vendors on the statewide contract to assess which vendor provides the best rates and is able to meet the applicable deadline.
- The vendor contact information can be found on the [PRF75 Statewide Contract](#).

Interpretation Services (Virtual or In-person) at Public Meetings

EEA is committed to ensuring that community meetings, public hearings, events, and proceedings are accessible to everyone, regardless of language barriers. EEA will provide simultaneous interpretation services, which means interpreters will translate the spoken content in real-time, allowing non-English speakers to participate fully and seamlessly. EEA will provide virtual interpretation services for meetings with statewide implications in the top five languages spoken in the Commonwealth. For in-person public meetings, staff must assess the languages spoken by at least five percent of the population who identify as having limited English proficient within a mile radius of the project location or within a quarter-mile radius of a non-site-specific project. Additional languages should be provided as requested. Where applicable and possible, EEA will provide at least two public meetings, one in-person and one virtual.

Recognizing the importance of accuracy in interpretation, especially during lengthy (two hours or more) meetings, events, and proceedings, EEA will ensure that at least two interpreters are secured for each language provided. This approach allows for regular breaks, preventing errors that can arise from mental fatigue, and enhance the quality of interpretation.

EEA agency staff must provide interpreters with an adequate opportunity to review the materials prior to the live meetings, events, and proceedings. EEA recognizes that familiarity with the subject matter contributes significantly to the quality of interpretation. Therefore, EEA agency staff must ensure that interpreters receive all necessary materials in a timely manner, allowing them to prepare effectively for their crucial role.

Time and Location of Public Meetings

EEA is committed to fostering an inclusive environment where everyone can participate and contribute. To ensure this, public meetings will be scheduled at times convenient for neighborhood participants to ensure inclusion. Accessibility is recognized as key to inclusion, and every effort will be made to facilitate attendance. If the meeting is in person, the location should be accessible via public transportation, in a place familiar to community members and stakeholders, and must meet the American with Disabilities (ADA) requirements. When applicable, EEA should strive to provide refreshments as a gesture of respect for the residents' commitment and effort when seeking public input.

To the extent possible, EEA will ensure that the factors used to determine the time, place, location, duration, and security at public hearings and meetings are developed in consultation with community and applied in a nondiscriminatory manner (e.g., consideration of culturally relevant holidays and unique community needs). EEA must hold meetings during the day and in the evening to accommodate all residents of the Commonwealth. Meetings must be scheduled at times convenient for residents and stakeholders to participate.

Remote/Virtual Option Meetings

EEA understands not everyone can attend in-person meetings due to various reasons such as distance, time and transportation constraints, or health concerns. At the same time, many residents lack the technology or reliable internet connection to participate in virtual meetings. To that end, all meetings will offer both an in-person option and a virtual option. This allows participants to choose the method of attendance that is most convenient for them.

Hybrid meetings are highly recommended, where participants can attend either virtually or in-person. This approach combines the benefits of both formats, offering flexibility and ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to participate.

When holding a hybrid meeting or providing a virtual option, public notice of procedures will be provided. This includes information on how to access the meeting via telephone or virtually. Alternatives will be provided for residents who lack reliable internet access, ensuring that everyone can fully participate.

American with Disabilities (“ADA”) Accommodations

The purpose of meaningful access for effective communication for people with disabilities is to promote inclusivity and maximize access in addition to complying with federal non-discrimination statutes and ensuring that a person with vision, speech, language, hearing, or other disability can convey information to, communicate with, and receive information from the EEA. Auxiliary aids and services may be required in order to meaningfully communicate with people with disabilities. People with disabilities may require different auxiliary devices or assistive technology for language and communication access depending on their functional needs. EEA will consider reasonable modifications to its policies, practices, and procedures to ensure an equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities to participate in or benefit from all EEA programs and activities.

EEA will provide screen readers for people who are blind or low-vision as well as alternative text to describe images that screen readers cannot interpret. EEA will also provide ASL or CART services for people who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing. Requests for reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities should be directed to Secretariat Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Director, Secretariat ADA Coordinator, and Non-Discrimination Coordinator, Melixza Ensensyie, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, 100 Cambridge Street, Boston, MA 02114, at (617) 872-3270, Melixza.Esensyie2@mass.gov or [here](#).

Provide Timely Notices

Public notices and other key documents related to projects, or any decision-making processes should be available in the top five languages spoken in Massachusetts in addition to English or as prescribed by the most updated version of EEA’s Language Access Plan. EEA will follow the most updated LAP to confirm the protocol for invoking language access services when initiating a PIP. Communications should be visually appealing, with limited dense paragraphs, be in

accessible languages that reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the impacted community and free of jargon. Language utilized should be understandable to a lay person not familiar with the particular subject. To ensure adequate notice of public meetings, notices should be distributed at least 14 days prior to the meeting or as prescribed under applicable state and federal rules. EEA recommends as much advanced notice as possible, beyond the standard 14 days if practicable. Notices should be posted in high-traffic areas such as local non-profit and community organizations, local medical offices, schools, senior centers, bus stop shelters, and libraries in the affected communities. Furthermore, notices should provide instructions for registration, if required, how to make comments, and how to request language assistance services, including if any request should be submitted by a date certain before the event.

Comments Submission

The process of submitting comments can be daunting particularly for LEP persons and individuals not familiar with the industry, subject, or processes. To ensure equitable participation, EEA agency staff must provide notice that qualified interpreters/translators will be available to assist with interpretation/translation. In addition, EEA agency staff must develop guidance to the public on how to comment and meaningfully participate in agency decision-making. Submission process must include but not be limited to an opportunity for residents of the Commonwealth to provide written comments, oral comments during public input sessions, and residents may submit comments for consideration in any language.

Incorporate Feedback from Stakeholders

EEA is committed to ensuring all voices are heard during decision-making processes. EEA will track participants' feedback and will review and consider all relevant comments presented during the public engagement process. EEA agency staff will respond to comments to demonstrate how public input shaped the outcome. The responses must include a list of recommendations and comments received, including those recommendations which were not incorporated into the final decisions. Further, the responses will highlight how any significant recommendations on proposed projects or policies impacting environmental justice populations will be incorporated into the final decisions. EEA agency staff will ensure that responses to comments identify how community feedback was weighted in the final decision-making process and will be publicly available. EEA believes in the power of collective wisdom and is committed to providing responses to comments to advance and build transparency.

EEA and its agencies will review and consider all relevant comments presented during public engagement proceedings. EEA recognizes the importance of environmental justice and is particularly attentive to any significant comments on proposed projects impacting an environmental justice population. EEA understands that these communities often bear a disproportionate burden of environmental harm and risks. EEA is committed to incorporating these comments into its final decisions to the extent possible. The goal is for EEA to ensure that its decisions are not only environmentally sound but also equitable.

Statewide Publications

Any programs issuing advisory opinions, rulings, project approvals, or other decisions must make reasonable efforts to publish those opinions, rulings, project approvals, or other decisions, in a searchable format, including any translations made in accordance with the agency's LAP.

Maintain Relationships with Stakeholders

The relationships developed during a project or public engagement are vital. EEA will develop survey questions to gauge the sentiment of community participants. The information will be used to create a database capturing participants' main interests and concerns. EEA should make every effort possible to develop and maintain positive relationships with residents and community members most impacted by the issues. When relationships are not based on trust and true collaboration, meaningful engagement becomes unlikely.

Use of Information Repositories

An information repository is a central location in which a collection of documents relating to the project is maintained. An information repository should be easily accessible to the public. In addition to using normal governmental information repositories (website portal accessible to the public), EEA will consider the use of alternative information repositories in neighborhoods where EJ populations reside. A specific location for information repositories can be determined in consultation with the impacted community. Common locations include public libraries, town halls, community centers, houses of worship, cultural centers, public health centers where public access is convenient and photocopying equipment is available. The physical repository should be accessible during normal business hours and meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

Use of Alternative Media Outlets

In general, alternative media outlets are non-mainstream media platforms, including independent newspapers, community radio stations, social media channels, blogs, and others. The approach to community outreach is never a one-size-fits-all. It is essential to provide a range of outreach methods, such as social media, in-person meetings, email, or mailed announcements to the extent practicable, to ensure the message reaches a broader audience. In an effective outreach plan, the distribution of any notices to the public should involve alternative media platforms that are based on the cultural norms and practices of the community. EEA will develop a list of alternative information outlets as well as a list of cities and towns newsletters to be made available to EEA agencies seeking public comments and to project proponents who may be asked to publish public notices for projects that are in or may otherwise impact EJ populations. EEA will continually maintain these lists by adding new outlets, as needed, for newly identified EJ areas, keeping contact information up to date, and deleting outlets that are no longer in business or relevant for this purpose.

EEA will maintain a comprehensive list of statewide, regional, and local community-based organizations. This list will be regularly updated, and EEA staff will consult it to ensure a robust and effective community outreach plan.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN GUIDANCE

This PIP is a living document that will be reviewed and updated at least every two years to reflect changes in community needs and refine lessons learned, public input, and stakeholder feedback. This PIP demonstrates EEA's commitment to ensuring that all residents of Massachusetts can readily access information and resources and meaningfully participate in programs, services, and activities.

For staff, this PIP centralizes resources, training and outlines the standard of meaningful engagement. EEA's PIP strives to ensure meaningful and equitable involvement of all people through the implementation of the following guidelines:

- Consulting with stakeholders.
- Incorporating stakeholders' feedback where appropriate.
- Assessing the level of industry jargon used when engaging with constituents.
- Assisting with the procurement of language assistance services.
- Periodically or at least every two years reassessing and updating its PIP to reflect updated information on relevant LEP populations.
- Conducting meetings in locations accessible by public transportation and at a setting that is comfortable and familiar to the constituents.
- Using the proper channels for communicating with a targeted audience.
- Maintaining relationships made during the engagement and having regular checkpoints during each project phase.
- Establishing repositories where constituents can obtain information about a program, service, or activity.
- Partnering with local Community-Based Organizations.
- Ensuring materials are translated into the appropriate languages.

Staff Training

EEA will develop mandatory training to implement the processes outlined in the PIP document. EEA mandatory training will include but not be limited to, mapping tools, EJ Map Viewer, stakeholder outreach, community engagement, language access, cultural sensitivities, and requirements under civil rights laws. These trainings will be available for all Secretariat staff.

VIII. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

EEA will review, revise, publicize, and implement its PIP at least every two years or more frequently as needed. When appropriate EEA will assess in an ongoing basis whether a change in services, programs, or activities is necessary to ensure that all residents have continuous and equitable access. To ensure stakeholder participation in the revision and further development of its PIP, EEA will consult with community-based organizations that provide services to the populations it serves. Further, in conducting its review, EEA will consider assessing changes in:

- Availability of language access services in outreach
- Implementation of effective and meaningful community engagement
- Integration of public participation in key agency actions
- Public input's influence on decision-making
- Outcomes
- Level of partnership building with Community-Based Organizations
- Staff training on EJ principles

IX. COMPLAINTS

This PIP is a guideline. EEA will respond to public inquiries and complaints relating to the implementation of the PIP document with thorough investigations, implementation of necessary corrective actions, and communication with the complainant. Each agency staff using this framework model will identify appropriate personnel to respond to any environmental justice concerns or complaints.

For inquiries or to file a complaint regarding the implementation of this PIP, you may contact:

Jonathan Guzman
Director of Environmental Justice and Equity
Office of Environmental Justice and Equity
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114
Email: Jonathan.guzman@mass.gov

And

Caroline Lemoine
Deputy Director of Environmental Justice for External Affairs
Secretariat Language Access Coordinator
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Office of Environmental Justice and Equity

100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114
Email: caroline.lemoine2@mass.gov