

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources



I. Introduction

The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources (“MDAR”) has developed and prepared this Language Access Plan (“LAP”) outlining ongoing efforts to provide language services to Limited English Proficiency (“LEP”) constituents.

This plan also defines the actions our office is taking to ensure meaningful access to programs, services, activities, and materials for all LEP constituents.

MDAR will review and update this LAP as needed to ensure continued responsiveness to community needs.

MDAR serves a diverse population of various ages and linguistic origins. A LEP constituent is someone who does not speak, read, write, or understand the English language at a level that allows them to interact effectively with MDAR staff. A constituent maintains the right to self-identify as LEP.

I. Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to ensure meaningful access to services, programs, activities, and materials for all LEP constituents.

MDAR is committed to making services available to LEP persons as part of its mission. Based on this commitment, the department makes every attempt to assist LEP constituents in accessing our services.

This LAP does not create new services; rather it strives to eliminate barriers for LEP constituents accessing existing services and ensure that all staff can assist LEP constituents in accessing those resources. MDAR will provide quality language assistance to LEP constituents in a fair and timely manner, ensuring meaningful access to the agency’s services.

This LAP centralizes language access materials for staff and outlines the regular trainings for new hires to ensure that all staff can access the materials and services listed in the sections below.

The objectives of these Language Access Guidelines are to:

- a. Improve access to and quality of state services, programs and activities for non-English speakers and LEP constituents;
- b. Reduce any disparities and delays in the provision of services/programs to eligible LEP constituents and;
- c. Streamline ongoing training and resources for staff to increase effectiveness and ensure public satisfaction.

II. Policy

It is MDAR’s policy to provide meaningful access to programs and services to constituents who are limited in English proficiency.

III. Applicability

This policy applies to all divisions and programs within MDAR.

IV. Role

MDAR's mission is to cultivate a robust and equitable agricultural economy, promote a safe and resilient food system, and preserve a healthy environment for Massachusetts farmers, domestic animals, and consumers. MDAR is committed to working with and ensuring access for all communities in the Commonwealth.

V. Language Access Plan

This LAP shall be fully implemented, subject to the availability of requisite fiscal resources. It represents MDAR's commitment to ensuring that all residents of Massachusetts and those entitled to services can readily access information and resources from MDAR.

For staff, this plan centralizes resources, training, and the agency's multilingual content and publications, while outlining the minimum standard of access to the agency for LEP constituents.

a. Language Access Coordinator

MDAR's Language Access Coordinator ("LAC") will be responsible for the implementation and compliance with MDAR's Language Access Plan. Contact information for MDAR's Language Access Coordinator is provided below:

Olivia Palmer
857-278-4908
Olivia.Palmer@mass.gov

The role of the Language Access Coordinator includes the following:

- Conducting staff training.
- Assisting with the procurement of language assistance services.
- Periodically or at least every two years reassessing and updating LAP to reflect updated information on relevant LEP populations.
- Managing in-house Language Access Bank.
- Consulting with stakeholders.
- Participating in EEA's Language Access Working Group.

b. Language Resources

Translation: Means 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.

Interpretation: Means the act of listening, understanding, analyzing, and processing a spoken communication in one language (source language) and then faithfully 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.

i. Translating Publications

MDAR is committed to maintaining all its widely applicable publications in the following languages most spoken by MDAR's constituents: Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese (Simplified), Vietnamese, and Haitian Creole. When reaching out to specific communities in the Commonwealth, MDAR staff should ensure that these publications will be accessible in the languages prevalent in each community. Longer and more specific publications should be translated when there are accessibility concerns for the intended audience.

MDAR maintains a translation budget as part of its operating funds. Once a translation or interpretation request is received, MDAR ensures compliance with state procurement laws to obtain such services. This may include a request for quotes to language service vendors on statewide contract and then reviewing responses in accordance with procurement to select a vendor to ensure timely and quality service.

ii. Written Translations Guidelines

When translating a document, follow these steps:

1. Choose which language(s) are needed for translation. Keep in mind that broadly applicable flyers should be translated into Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese (Simplified), Vietnamese, and Haitian Creole.
2. Email MDAR's Language Access Coordinator, Olivia.Palmer@Mass.gov, to request the translation. Be sure to include how the request was received (if a request was made), whether it is a translation or interpretation need, what language(s) are needed, a timeline for the service, and a staff member for contact.
3. From there, MDAR's LAC will e-mail a Word document version of the publication to be translated to the translation company and request a quote and work with fiscal to ensure all procurement requirements are met.

iii. In-Person Interpreting

When requesting an interpreter for an in-person event, follow these steps:

1. Email MDAR's Language Access Coordinator, Olivia.Palmer@Mass.gov, to request the interpretation service. Be sure to include how the request was received (if a request was made), what language(s) are needed, a timeline for the service, and a staff member for contact.
2. MDAR's LAC will obtain at least 3 quotes from any of the vendors [on this list](#) (vendor list starts on page 11). MDAR will work with the constituent or staff member requesting the service, and the vendor, to ensure timely and quality service.

A Language Identification Flashcard is posted on our homepage website, and brought to events, for easy access. The card states "I speak" in 38 languages and can be used to identify the language spoken by LEP constituents accessing services provided by MDAR.

For language access requests related to a disability, medical condition, or need for a reasonable accommodation to access programming or services, please contact the agency ADA Coordinator.

Gabriella Knight, ADA & Diversity Manager

gabriella.knight@mass.gov

(857)-268-0629

IV. Correspondence

MDAR will work to include the text below in initial correspondence to constituents and as necessary thereafter.

<p>This document contains important information. Please have it translated immediately.</p> <p>В данном документе содержится важная информация. Вам необходимо срочно сделать перевод документа.</p> <p>Este documento contiene información importante. Por favor, consiga una traducción inmediatamente.</p> <p>تحتوي هذه الوثيقة على معلومات هامة. يرجى ترجمتها فوراً.</p> <p>Docikman sa gen enfòmasyon enpòtan. Tanpri fè yon moun tradwi l touswit.</p>	<p>Questo documento contiene informazioni importanti. La preghiamo di tradurlo immediatamente.</p> <p>Este documento contém informações importantes. Por favor, traduzi-lo imediatamente.</p> <p>此文件含有重要信息。請立即找人翻譯。</p> <p>본 문서에는 중요한 정보가 포함되어 있습니다. 본 문서를 즉시 번역하도록 하십시오.</p> <p>Tài liệu này có chứa thông tin quan trọng. Vui lòng dịch tài liệu này ngay.</p>	<p>ເອກະສານສະບັບນີ້ ບັນຈຸຂໍ້ມູນສຳຄັນ. ກະລຸນາເອົາເອກະສານສະບັບນີ້ໄປແປອອກຢ່າງບໍ່ລົ້ຊ້າ.</p> <p>ឯកសານນີ້ມີຂໍ້ມູນສຳຄັນ ຈຶ່ງຕ້ອງແປເປັນພາສາລາວ ກ່ອນທີ່ຈະຕໍ່ສູ້.</p> <p>Ce document contient des informations importantes. Veuillez le faire traduire au plus tôt.</p>
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V. Web Content

All Mass.gov webpages can be auto-translated under “Select Language” at the top of the screen. MDAR provides this text in a variety of languages for attachment to important forms or webpages:

Please note: all Mass.gov sites can be auto-translated under "Select Language" at the top of the screen. To request a document be translated into another language, please fill out the form below.

Por favor, tenga en cuenta que todos los sitios de Mass.gov pueden ser traducidos automáticamente en "Select Language" ("Seleccionar idioma") en la parte superior de la pantalla.

Observação: todos os sites Mass.gov podem ser traduzidos automaticamente em "Selecionar idioma" na parte superior da tela.

សូមចំណាំ៖ គេហទំព័រ Mass.gov ទាំងអស់ អាចត្រូវបានបកប្រែដោយស្វ័យប្រវត្តិនៅក្រោមកន្លែង "ជ្រើសរើសភាសា" នៅផ្នែកខាងលើបំផុតនៃអេក្រង់។

Pur favor sabe: tudu siti di Mass.gov pode ser auto-traduzidu na "Selesiona Língua" na parti supirior di ekran. Pur favor sabe: tudu siti di Mass.gov (inkluindu kel formuláriu li) pode ser auto-traduzidu na "Selesiona Língua" na parti supirior di ekran.

Veillez noter que tous les sites Mass.gov peuvent être traduits automatiquement en cliquant sur « Sélectionner la langue » en haut de l'écran.

Vui lòng lưu ý: tất cả các trang Mass.gov đều có thể được dịch tự động ở mục "Chọn Ngôn Ngữ" ở trên cùng của màn hình.

Tanpri sonje: tout sit Mass.gov yo ka tradui otomatikman anba "Chwazi Lang" ki anlè ekran an.

Обратите внимание: все веб-сайты Mass.gov могут быть автоматически переведены на другой язык в разделе Select Language (Выберите язык) в верхней части экрана.

请注意：所有 Mass.gov 站点内容 均可自动翻译，请在页面顶部点击“选择语种 (Select Language)”。

Important PDFs attached to MDAR's webpages will be translated into the top 10 languages. If constituents would like to request a document be translated into a language of their choosing, they may do so by filling out [this form](#).

VI. Multilingual Staff at MDAR

MDAR is committed to hiring and retaining multilingual staff for all positions, especially for public facing staff and on the agency's hotlines.

VII. Over-the-Phone Language Services

While the preference is to provide direct service to LEP constituents in their primary language, MDAR staff also have access to an over-the-phone language service that includes over 380+ languages. Step-by-step instructions on how to use the over-the-phone language services, including ASL, are included below in the section on hotlines and general phone lines.

IV. Interpretation for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing at MDAR Events

MDAR must provide interpretation for the deaf and hard of hearing when requested. The organization hosting the event might request that our office provide interpretation when scheduling and confirming the event. When registering attendees for our office presentation/event, MDAR provides an option for attendees to request American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation for the deaf and hard of hearing.

Zoom, PowerPoint, and Teams presentations include a feature to enable captions. We encourage use of this tool, as well as providing interpretation services.

Review these [First Time Use Instructions](#) from the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH) to familiarize yourself with the different kinds of interpretation that could be requested.

If ASL interpretation is requested, follow the steps below to request an ASL interpreter. Requests should be made at least two weeks or more in advance of the event. If the services are no longer needed or the event is cancelled, you should provide notice to MCDHH at least three days before the scheduled date to avoid fees.

Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (MCDHH)

Interpreters should be requested from the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The process for requesting interpretation is laid out on the Commission's website, linked above.

Request ASL for the date and time in question.

Most events will require two ASL Interpreters.

It is possible that the requested interpreters will be from multiple organizations. If this is the case, you should make time prior to the event for the interpreters to connect.

For language access requests related to a disability, medical condition, or need for a reasonable accommodation to access programming or services, please contact the agency ADA Coordinator.

Gabriella Knight, ADA & Diversity Manager

gabriella.knight@mass.gov

(857)-268-0629

c. Staff Training

The LAP will be:

- a. Posted internally for all employees.
- b. Incorporated into the orientation for new employees.
- c. Presented to management, so they are fully aware of and understand the LAP, in order to reinforce the plan's importance and ensure its implementation by staff.
- d. Presented to MDAR staff having contact with the public, so such staff is trained to work effectively with LEP constituents and telephone interpreters.

VI. Monitoring

MDAR's Language Access Coordinator shall attend quarterly meetings hosted by the Executive Office of Energy and Environment Affairs' designated Secretariat Language Access Coordinator to assess the implementation of this Plan.

MDAR will review and update its LAP at least every two years or more frequently, as needed.

The review assesses:

- a. Whether there have been any significant changes in the composition or language needs of the population served;
- b. Whether the staff knows and understands the LAP document, and is comfortable using the services described within;
- c. Whether additional documents require translation;
- d. Identification of any issues or problems related to serving LEP persons which may have emerged during the past year; and
- e. Identification of any recommended actions to provide more responsive and effective language services (e.g., adding documents to be translated, creating, or expanding partnerships with community organizations, or changing staffing priorities).

Monitoring the effectiveness of a Language Access Plan may include:

- a. Analyzing current and previous data on language assistance usage, including languages served;
- b. Surveying staff on how often they use language assistance services, if they believe there should be changes to the services provided or the providers used, and if they believe that the language assistance services in place are meeting the needs of the LEP communities in their service area; and
- c. Monitoring feedback from community-based organizations, legal services and other stakeholders about the agency's effectiveness and performance in ensuring meaningful access for LEP individuals.

In the development of the 2023 LAP, MDAR conducted the following stakeholder engagement activities:

- i. Conducted a survey of community-based organizations that provide services to LEP constituents to collect data on language needs and current barriers. The findings of this survey are below.
- ii. Offered the opportunity for constituents to provide verbal feedback on a draft version of the LAP, as well as any additional language services they suggest MDAR provide.

Based on this stakeholder feedback, MDAR was able to devise the following information:

A. Aside from the top languages identified as most commonly spoken in the Commonwealth, the following languages were found to be important in the agriculture-sector specifically. These languages include: Twi, Haitian Creole, Gujarati, French, Khmer, Pashto, Vietnamese, Karen, Swahili, Arabic, Loa, Kinyarwanda, Russian, Mandarin, and the Algonquin dialect.

B. Stakeholders also identified the following information as important in providing useful language services:

- a. Adequate funding for language service purposes.
- b. Collaboration with community organizations and stakeholders to understand and facilitate outreach.
- c. Dedicated time and resources to ensure culturally competent staff.