EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

Revision Effective July 2026

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY MISSION STATEMENTS

The **Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs** (EEA) seeks to protect, preserve, and enhance the Commonwealth's environmental resources while ensuring a clean energy future for the state's residents. Through the stewardship of open space, protection of environmental resources, and enhancement of clean energy, EEA works tirelessly to make Massachusetts a wonderful place to live, work, and raise a family.

The **Massachusetts Office of Coastal Zone Management** (CZM) mission is to balance the impact of human activities with the protection of coastal and marine resources through planning, public involvement, education, research, and sound resource management.

The **Massachusetts Environmental Police** (MEP) protect the environment and natural resources of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through enforcement, education, and public outreach.

The **Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act** (MEPA) conducts reviews of environmental impacts of projects that require "Agency Action," such as permits, land transfers, or financial assistance, by state agencies and certain municipal authorities. The intent of the MEPA review process is to provide meaningful opportunities for public review of potential environmental impacts before Agency Action is taken on the project.

The **Massachusetts Office of Technical Assistance** (OTA) is a non-regulatory agency that provides free and confidential technical assistance to Massachusetts manufacturers and businesses on toxics use reduction, pollution prevention, and resource conservation.

DEFINITIONS

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

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

Meaningful Access: Language assistance that results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to individuals with LEP who need 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; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; and Section 13 of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act Amendments of 1972 (collectively as the "federal non-discrimination statutes"). Meaningful access denotes access that is not significantly delayed, restricted, or inferior as compared to programs or activities provided to individuals with English proficiency.

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 individuals with limited English proficiency 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 individuals with LEP of free language services, documents required by law, and notifications regarding the availability of language interpretation and assistance.

Translation: The process of converting written text from a source language into 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: The act of listening, understanding, analyzing, and processing a spoken communication in one language (source language) and then faithfully[1] 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.

[1] Interpreting accurately and completely without adding or taking away from the meaning.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) is committed to improving the accessibility of its programs, activities and services for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). EEA has prepared this Language Access Plan (LAP or "plan") to reduce barriers and ensure LEP populations have meaningful access to services, programs, and activities. EEA will review and update this LAP at least every two years to ensure it continues to be responsive to community needs and in compliance with Executive Order 615 and all other applicable state and federal laws.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to ensure equitable and meaningful access to all EEA programs, activities, and services, for individuals with LEP at no direct cost to them. EEA is committed to making services available to individuals with LEP as part of its mission. EEA will work with each of its agencies, each of which is developing its own LAP, to ensure Secretariat-wide compliance with Executive Order 615, which require LAPs for each agency.

The objectives of EEA's LAP are to (i) improve quality and access when it comes to state programs, activities, and services for individuals with LEP; (ii) reduce disparities and delays, if any, in the provision of state programs, activities, and services to eligible individuals with LEP; and (iii) increase agency effectiveness and public satisfaction. Adherence to this LAP will promote compliance with federal non-discrimination statutes (e.g. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) and guidance against national origin discrimination, Executive Order 526, and Executive Order 615.

III. EQUITY ACCESS STANDARD

LEP individuals contacting EEA by phone, in person, or via video shall be offered professional interpretation services as promptly as possible, and generally within a reasonable time frame comparable to services provided in English.

Staff must utilize approved over-the-phone or video interpretation services without delay.

Written responses to LEP individuals shall be provided within the same service timelines as responses to English-speaking constituents. Translated written materials shall be clear, accurate, and culturally appropriate.

LEP individuals shall not experience burdens, delays, or reduced quality of service due to language barriers.

IV. POLICY AND APPLICABILITY

It is EEA's policy to provide equitable and meaningful access to state programs, activities, and services to individuals with LEP. This policy applies to all offices and departments within EEA, including but not limited to the Office of Coastal Zone Management, Office of Law Enforcement and Environmental Police, Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office, and Office of Technical Assistance.

EEA's LEP services will be guided by four factors of analysis: (1) the number of LEP individuals who could be affected by a program, activity, or service (2) the frequency that LEP individuals come in contact with the program, activity or service (3) the nature and importance of the program, activity or service to people's lives, or (4) resources available to EEA.

V. LANGUAGE ACCESS RESOURCES

State Contracted Vendors

EEA contracts with multiple state vendors to provide translation and interpretation services for the Office of the Secretary and any of its departments. The list of vendors on the PRF88 (Foreign Language Interpretation and Translation Services) that EEA has awarded includes but is not limited to (i) Fox Translation Services; (ii) Language Bridge, LLC; (iii) Language Connections Inc.; (iv) The ESL & TOEFL Associates, LLC; (v) International Translation Company; (vi) Lionbridge Technologies LLC; and (vii) Baystate Interpreters, Inc.

Reduce Costs

EEA will standardize documents, where applicable, to reduce cost and translation needs. EEA will also engage in information sharing by Secretariat Language Access Coordinator as well as centralize interpreter or translator services to achieve cost advantages (procuring the service of a vendor for an extended period as opposed to project by project). Further, EEA will use language identification cards (or "I Speak Cards") to determine the language(s) spoken by individuals with LEP who access its programs, activities, and services.

Correspondence

EEA will use this generic label for documents providing awareness on programs, services, or activities. EEA will make language services available in the top five languages spoken in the Commonwealth, and other languages as requested. This generic label could also be included in correspondence or printed and electronic materials to assess additional languages needed.

Es dokumentu ten informason inportanti. Pur favor, manda traduzi-l imidiatamenti.

В данном документе содержится важная информация. Вам необходимо срочно сделать перевод документа.

Este documento contiene información importante. Por favor, consiga una traducción inmediatamente.

تحتوي هذه الوثيقة على معلومات هامة. يُرجى ترجمتها فورًا.

Dokiman sa gen enfômasyon enpôtan. Tanpri fè yon moun tradwi l touswit.

Questo documento contiene informazioni importanti. La preghiamo di tradurio inmediatamente.

Este documento contém informações importantes. Por favor, traduzi-lo imediatamente.

此文件含有重要信息。

请立即找人翻译。

본 문서에는 중요한 정보가 포함되어 있습니다. 본 문서를 즉시 번역하도록 하십시오.

Tài liệu này có chứa thông tin quan trọng. Vui lòng dịch tài liệu này ngay.

ເອກະສານສະບັບນີ້ບັນຈຂໍ້ ມູນອັນສຳຄັນ. ກະລຸ

ນາເອົາເອກະສານສະບັບນີ້ໄປແປເປອອກ ຢ່າງບ່ລ ຊ້ຳ.

ឯក ន ន រ ូ ត ន ដ ំ ស ់ ។

ស ូ ម ប ក ប រ ប ង ា ន ់ ។

Ce document contient des informations importantes. Veuillez le faire traduire au plus tôt.

Written Translation Guidelines

When translating a document, staff must follow these steps:

- 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. For details on how to identify languages, refer to the section “Protocol for Requesting Languages Services”.
- Documentation for translations should be free of industry or technical jargon and in plain English.
- Translate vital documents of interest for individuals with LEP into the top five languages. Vital documents are documents that contain critical information on agency programs, activities, and services, including residents’ eligibility rights.
- Staff must submit the Requesting Language Resources form and complete all required fields. Upon submission, the Secretariat Language Access Coordinator (LAC) will follow up via email to confirm receipt of the request.
- After the Secretariat LAC submits the request to the vendor, staff are responsible for coordinating directly with the vendor as needed, including providing any additional information and responding to questions to ensure timely and accurate completion of services.
- Any request for interpretation and translation services must be submitted using the Requesting Language Resources Form. Once the form has been completed and transmitted, staff should also notify the Secretariat LAC via email to ensure timely processing and coordination of services.

Interpretation for Live Event Services

EEA shall provide for simultaneous oral interpretation of live meetings, events, and proceedings (including community engagement meetings and public hearings) by qualified interpreters. EEA will also provide interpretation services for other programs and activities, as deemed appropriate, and in additional requested languages, provided that such services enable individuals with LEP to meaningfully participate in those meetings, events, programs, and activities. EEA staff will ensure that for lengthy live meetings, events, and proceedings, at least two interpreters per language will be booked to allow breaks; this is intended to prevent errors caused by mental fatigue. EEA will provide adequate opportunity for the interpreters to review the materials prior to the live meetings, events, or public proceedings.

ASL Services

EEA shall provide American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation services upon request. Any requests for ASL should be made at least two weeks prior to the date of service through the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and no less than two days prior to the date of service unless the request is an emergency. Please note that after a request is filled, cancellation can be made no more than two business days before the date of service to avoid being billed for the service. The process for requesting an ASL interpreter or CART provider can be found in the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs Ensuring Meaningful Access for Persons with Disabilities Policy.

CART Services

Any person who identifies as "Oral Deaf" will use verbal communication or Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART. CART is a verbatim translation of the spoken word into written text. Requests for CART services should be made at least two weeks prior to the date of service through the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing and no less than two days prior to the date of service unless the request is an emergency. EEA does not require staff to seek prior approval before submitting a request to procure a CART or captioning interpreter. After a request has been filled, cancellation can be made no more than two business days before the date of service to avoid service fees. The process for requesting an ASL interpreter or CART provider can be found in the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs Ensuring Meaningful Access for Persons with Disabilities Policy.

Meaningful Access for People with Disabilities

The purpose of meaningful access for effective communication for people with disabilities is to promote compliance with federal non-discrimination statutes and ensure 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 provide screen readers for people who are blind or low vision as well as alternative text to describe images that screen readers cannot interpret and provide written information in Braille. 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 Esenyie, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, 100 Cambridge Street, Boston, MA 02114, at (617) 872-3270, Melixza.Esenyie2@mass.gov or here: Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs Ensuring Meaningful Access for Persons with Disabilities Policy.

ADA and Section 508 Compliance

EEA is committed to ensuring that its digital content and online services are accessible to all individuals, including those with disabilities. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act applies to all services, programs, and activities provided by state and local governments, including those offered online and through mobile applications. In alignment with Title II and the Commonwealth's Enterprise Digital Accessibility Policy, EEA's digital content, including websites, electronic documents, multimedia, and social media, must meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) version 2.1 Level A and Level AA as the minimum technical standard for accessibility. Additionally, electronic documents and communications must adhere to guidance and testing requirements as directed in the Commonwealth's Enterprise Digital Accessibility Policy.

The Enterprise Digital Accessibility Policy requires that EEA ensure employees complete required and role-specific digital accessibility trainings, and that accessibility be incorporated into project planning requirements for application development. EEA's digital accessibility obligations extend to third-party vendors as well: web and mobile applications, web content, and supplemental instructional or documentation materials provided through a vendor or contracted third party must also comply with WCAG version 2.1 Levels A and AA. EEA will incorporate accessibility requirements into procurements and contracts accordingly.

For the purposes of this policy, "accessibility" means that a person with a disability is afforded the opportunity to acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same services as a person without a disability, in an equally effective and integrated manner, with substantially equivalent ease of use and with the same level of security and privacy. EEA will work

in accordance with the Commonwealth's Accessibility Center for Consulting, Education and Support Services (ACCESS) and the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTSS) to ensure ongoing compliance and continuous improvement of EEA's digital assets.

Protocol for Providing Language Services

EEA staff must identify the top five languages spoken in the Commonwealth for interpretation of public meetings and translation of vital documents. If interpretation and translation are needed for a public meeting on a statewide initiative or project, vital documents should be translated, and meetings interpreted into the top five languages spoken by individuals with LEP in the Commonwealth using data from the "Languages Spoken in Massachusetts" map.

For outreach and engagement related to programs, activities, services or projects with statewide implications, EEA must provide language access services and translated materials in the top five most commonly spoken languages, as identified by the most recent available data on the "Languages Spoken in Massachusetts" map, in addition to any other languages requested or otherwise determined to be necessary to ensure meaningful access.

For outreach and engagement for site-specific programs, activities, services or projects, EEA must provide language access services and translated materials in the language(s) predominantly spoken within the geographic area by five percent or more of the population, up to a maximum of five languages. Any additional languages requested or otherwise determined to be necessary to ensure meaningful access should be provided. Each office or division within EEA must identify the geographic area of impact in accordance with the regulations it is subject to. In the absence of such regulations, the geographic area shall be determined using the following standard methodology: (i) a radius of five miles shall be applied for projects with air-related impacts, and (ii) a radius of one mile must be applied for projects with other environmental impacts.

EEA requires that written materials and notices for site-specific projects be distributed within the designated geographic area, such as municipal office buildings, public libraries, senior centers, and houses of worship. Distribution shall occur at locations reasonably accessible to the affected community to ensure meaningful access to information regarding the project.

Staff must consult the following list of resources, as applicable, in determining the scope of language services required:

- EEA's "Languages Spoken in Massachusetts" map;
- Municipalities, community organizations, school systems, medical offices, faith-based organizations, or other community-based organizations that may be able to assist with identifying populations where additional outreach is needed; and
- Any other demographic data, available via public sources, on language ability indicating that individuals speak English "less than very well."

EEA agencies and offices can opt to send to OEJE, for review and approval, a list or category of public meetings where interpretation should only be available upon request. Certain types of

meetings may be exempted from automatically providing language interpretation, if language access resources are limited or residents will not be affected in a particular way. Final list of exempted meetings or category of meetings is subject to OEJE's approval.

Competence of Interpreters

EEA staff must obtain at least three quotes from the vendors as noted above to assess the best rates and deadline requirements. To ensure reliable service, it is best practice to inquire about the vendor's area of specialization (i.e., field or industry) and the qualifications of interpreters to provide simultaneous oral interpretation for live meetings, events, and proceedings. An interpreter must demonstrate proficiency in and ability to communicate information in both English and the other language, and to be proficient in the appropriate mode of interpreting (i.e., consecutive, simultaneous, or ASL). It is also crucial that the interpreter is knowledgeable in both languages of any specialized terms or concepts distinct to the program, activity, or service and of any distinguishing vocabulary or phraseology used by the affected individuals with LEP. Furthermore, interpreters must (i) understand and follow confidentiality and impartiality rules to the same extent as EEA staff and, to the extent their position requires, and (ii) understand and adhere to their roles as interpreters without deviating into a role as legal advisor, engineer, community expert, or another role.

Requesting Translation of Documents

EEA staff should take the steps outlined above to ensure meaningful access to programs, activities, or services by individuals with LEP. EEA staff must ensure that translation of vital documents for public meetings is accessible at least 14 days prior to the public event, if feasible, to ensure that the information reaches the targeted audience in a timely manner to allow for meaningful community participation.

VI. USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TOOLS FOR LANGUAGE ACCESS

EEA currently does not use AI or other digital services for its document translation needs. However, EEA is open to thoughtfully exploring how AI-driven solutions might support our efforts to broaden language accessibility and complement human expertise. Any use of AI tools in the future will be guided by our commitment to accuracy and the needs of the Commonwealth residents we serve.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION

This LAP shall be fully implemented, subject to available resources, reflecting the EEA's commitment to ensuring that all Massachusetts residents have equitable access to information and resources and can meaningfully participate in programs and activities.

For staff, this plan centralizes resources and training and outlines the standard of meaningful access for individuals with LEP. EEA's LAP strives to ensure meaningful and equitable involvement of all people through the implementation of the following guidelines:

Secretariat Language Access Coordinator

The Secretariat Language Access Coordinator, Caroline Lemoine, Deputy Director of Environmental Justice, at (857) 378-1703 or caroline.lemoine2@mass.gov, is responsible for implementing this plan and ensuring it is compliant. The responsibilities of the EEA Language Access Coordinator include:

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

Action Steps

The Secretariat Language Access Coordinator will develop language access training for personnel whose responsibility is to arrange language access services for their respective program, division, or office. The Secretariat Language Access Working Group will assist with the development of training components and provide appropriate recommendations.

Reasonable steps will be taken to ensure that appropriate staff receive proper training relative to the LAP, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 615, and internal processes for requesting language access services. Trainings may include, but are not limited to:

- Working effectively with individuals with LEP and over-the-phone interpreters;
- Cultural Competency
- Effective and Meaningful Public Participation;
- Protocols for accessing resources necessary for language access; and
- Implementation of LAP.

The LAP will be:

- Posted internally for all employees;
- Incorporated into the orientation for new employees;
- Presented to management so they are fully aware of and understand the LAP, to reinforce the plan's importance and ensure its implementation by staff; and
- Presented to EEA staff who have contact with the public so that such staff is trained to work effectively with individuals with LEP and over-the-phone interpreters.

Language Service Needs Assessment

The Secretariat Language Access Coordinator will develop a needs assessment. The needs assessment will:

- Identify and characterize the nature and importance of the various programs, activities, and services provided by the agency to help determine the priorities for providing services to ensure access for individuals with LEP;
- Data will be collected from the American Community Survey (ACS), the "Languages Spoken in Massachusetts" map or through consultation with community stakeholders to determine the language makeup of the population served by EEA and consider whether the data indicates that any particular language groups are not being served or are being under-represented; and
- Identify all points of contact between the agency and the public and all potential language or language-related barriers to services and programs.

The Secretariat Language Access Coordinator will facilitate bi-monthly meetings with the Language Access Working Group to disseminate information and share lessons learned and best practices to implement EEA's LAP.

VIII. WEBSITE CONTENTS

Website Content

EEA website content will be periodically reviewed and modified so that vital information is translated into the top five languages as identified above in Language Service Needs Assessment.

Social Media Platforms

EEA will utilize its social media platforms to provide translated vital information and increase messaging to populations with LEP. EEA will disseminate information using its Office of Environmental Justice and Equity monthly newsletter and EEA's X (formally known as Twitter) page to share important information.

Vital Documents Translation

Vital documents contain critical information on agency programs, activities, and services, including residents' eligibility rights, that are available in English but may deny non-English speakers and individuals with limited English proficiency equitable and meaningful access. Vital documents may contain information that is critical for accessing programs or activities, including but 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 individuals with LEP of free language services, documents required by law, and notifications regarding the availability of language interpretation and assistance. When necessary, EEA will provide financial support for agencies to provide professional and culturally competent translations of vital documents.

IX. MONITORING AND REVIEW OF THE LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

EEA will review, revise, publicize, and implement its plan at least every two years, and, where appropriate, on an ongoing basis, will assess whether a change in services, programs, or activities is necessary to ensure that non-English speakers and individuals with LEP have continuous and equitable access. To ensure stakeholder participation in the plan's revision and further development, EEA will consult with community-based organizations that provide services to the populations it serves. EEA will also provide a survey after the provision of language assistance services to collect feedback on the accuracy and quality of the language assistance services provided. Further, in conducting its review, EEA will consider assessing:

- Any significant changes in the demographics or language needs of LEP populations within the service area or population affected or encountered by the agency;
- Availability of resources;
- Processes for staff requesting assistance for interpretation and translation needs;
- Processes for training staff on the implementation of this plan;
- Whether the existing plan is meeting the needs of LEP populations; and
- Types of activities or services provided to LEP populations.

The designated Secretariat Language Access Coordinator will monitor the effectiveness of this plan and that of each of the agencies under EEA's purview including any affiliated agency. The Secretariat Language Access Coordinator will facilitate a quarterly meeting with all EEA agencies' Language Access Coordinators to assess the implementation of each plan.

X. COMPLAINTS

EEA continuously strives to improve the development and implementation of EEA's LAP. EEA responds to public inquiries and complaints with thorough investigations, implementation of necessary corrective actions, and feedback and communication with the complainant. If you believe that you have been discriminated against with respect to an EEA program or activity, you may contact the Non-Discrimination Coordinator identified below or visit our website to learn how and where to file a complaint of discrimination.

By electronic mail:
Melixza.Esenyie2@mass.gov

By regular mail, hand delivery or overnight delivery service:

Melixza G. Esenyie
Non-Discrimination Coordinator
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Boston, MA 02114

For any questions relating to this LAP, you may contact EEA Language Access Coordinator:

Caroline Lemoine
Deputy Director of Environmental Justice for External Affairs
Secretariat Language Access Coordinator
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114
Email: caroline.lemoine2@mass.gov

Any issues with the implementation of this plan, or any complaint concerning its application, may be submitted to the Governor's Office of Access and Opportunity at Eduardo.morenomendez@mass.gov or govcommunityaffairs@mass.gov for review and appropriate action.