



## **Administrative Regulations**

### **Office of the Mayor**

**Title:** LANGUAGE ACCESS POLICY

**A.R. Number:** 5.24 **Effective Date:** 7/1/2023 **Page:** 1 of 5

**Supersedes:** N/A **A.R.:** N/A **DATED:** N/A

#### **I. PURPOSE**

The City of Richmond is committed to making services and programs accessible to all people it serves, including those with limited English proficiency (LEP). Language barriers can prevent people from fully participating in civic and public life. Enabling people to use their own language when it is feasible helps them access public services, increases opportunities for residents to communicate with their local leaders and public service providers, and ensures the flow of information between public agencies and residents that is vital to building and strengthening communities.<sup>1</sup>

This policy ensures compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance; Executive Order (E.O.) 13166, which requires that programs receiving federal financial assistance to take reasonable steps to ensure that LEP speakers have meaningful access to their programs and activities; E.O. 13166 implementation guidance issued by the U.S. Department of Justice; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; and other federal, state, and local applicable laws.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that Richmond's residents and stakeholders with LEP have meaningful access to services, programs, and activities offered by the city. The city's language access initiatives improve the quality of life of Richmond's immigrant and refugee populations by providing increased access to city and community-based services and resources and opportunities for education and civic participation.

#### **II. POLICY**

This policy will apply to departments, programs, and services provided by the City of Richmond.

The city is committed to delivering services to all residents regardless of their language of preference or English proficiency. The Department of Human Services' Office of Immigrant and Refugee Engagement (OIRE) oversees the city's language access initiatives that help city residents overcome linguistic barriers and increase language access to critical resources. OIRE establishes and coordinates the citywide implementation of the city's Language Access Plan (LAP).

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<sup>1</sup> From the Institute for Local Government's publication, "Language Access Laws and Legal Issues: A Local Official's Guide": [https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/language\\_access\\_guide\\_formatted\\_9-27-11\\_2.pdf](https://www.ca-ilg.org/sites/main/files/file-attachments/language_access_guide_formatted_9-27-11_2.pdf)



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Each department shall provide its own bilingual or multilingual services to ensure meaningful access to its programs by individuals with LEP. Departments will also work with OIRE to identify target languages, assess their language access needs, and execute a plan for addressing any unmet needs or barriers to greater language access. Departments shall carry out their language access strategy in accordance with the city's LAP and OIRE guidance.

### **III. PROCEDURE**

#### **A. Target Languages**

1. OIRE will analyze the demographics of LEP populations to determine target languages to help departments prioritize language access services. OIRE shall maintain updated information regarding the city's demographics and language access needs.
2. Departments shall work with OIRE to determine the populations that use or encounter their programs and develop and execute strategies to better serve those populations through expanded language access.

#### **B. Language Access Plan**

OIRE shall promulgate a citywide LAP and make it publicly available. Department-specific language access plans and strategies shall be developed and shall support goals and strategies of the citywide LAP.

#### **C. Language Access Liaisons**

Each department head or designee will assign a language access liaison to be responsible for the department's language access implementation and coordination. Each appointing authority/department head is required to notify OIRE of the designated individual and provide updates if the assigned individual changes.

#### **D. Multilingual Accessibility of City Services, Tools, and Materials**

The city shall expand language access to its tools and materials based on population usage and needs and in accordance with the city's LAP, OIRE guidance, and this policy. Expanded language access strategies may include offering web translation tools, translated city products, publications, and materials, and use of plain language principles to promote ease of translation where needed.



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1. Departments and OIRE shall coordinate to offer translation of vital documents to ensure meaningful access to city programs and services.
2. OIRE shall work with departments to provide methods for individuals with LEP to request interpretation services when interacting with departments and city services.
3. City employees may apply for designation as a bilingual employee and receive a language differential pay pursuant to city policy.
4. Departments, in conjunction with OIRE, shall provide a process through which residents and stakeholders may make new or additional language access requests.

#### **IV. RESPONSIBILITY**

**Department Heads** – Department heads are responsible for determining their department’s language access needs based on the populations served and services rendered and executing language access strategies according to the citywide Language Access Plan, policies, and guidance.

**Human Services’ Office of Immigrant and Refugee Engagement (OIRE)** – OIRE is responsible for improving residents’ access to services and helping residents overcome linguistic barriers by helping departments expand language access. OIRE is responsible for analyzing the city’s demographics and maintaining updated information regarding the city’s populations and language access needs and for establishing and implementing the citywide Language Access Plan.

**Language Access Liaison** – An individual designated by each department to work with OIRE to be responsible for the department’s language access implementation and coordination.

#### **V. DEFINITION**

**Language Access Plan (LAP)** – A citywide strategy for providing meaningful access by individuals with limited English proficiency to the programs and activities administered by the city. The plan improves access to programs and activities by individuals with LEP and implements a system by which individuals with LEP can meaningfully access city’s services. The Language Access Plan is developed in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 13166, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and applicable federal, state, and local laws and guidance.

**Limited English Proficiency (LEP)** – When an individual does not speak English as their primary language and/or has a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.



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**Plain Language** – Plain language (also called plain writing or plain English) is communication the audience can understand the first time they read or hear it. It is clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience.

**Vital Document** – A document is considered vital if it contains information that is critical for obtaining federal services and/or benefits or is required by law. It is crucial to ensure that written materials routinely provided in English also are provided in regularly encountered languages other than English. It is important to ensure that vital documents are translated into the non-English language of each regularly encountered LEP group eligible to be served or likely to be affected by any program or activity. Vital documents may include, but are not limited to:

- Documents that must be provided by law;
- Notices regarding the availability of free language access services for individuals with LEP;
- Outreach or informational material, the lack of which may effectively deny an individual with LEP meaningful access to a city program, service, or activity;
- Notice of denial, loss, or decrease in benefits or services; and
- Forms, notices, or written material related to an individual's rights, requirements, or responsibilities regarding city services, such as filing a discrimination complaint against the city or protesting an agency decision.



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**VI. REGULATION UPDATE**

Modifications to this policy shall be the responsibility of the Department of Human Resources under the advisement of the Chief Administrative Officer.

**Approval**

  
CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

  
MAYOR