



# LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

## FY 2014



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## INTRODUCTION

Houston Public Library (HPL) is a dynamic organization that serves the seventh largest service population in the country. Houston metropolitan area is currently one of the fastest growing areas in the nation. With 2.1 million residents, Houston is also recognized as one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse cities in the country.

According to the 2006-2010 American Community Survey, 45% of Houston residents over the age of 5 speak a language other than English at home and 24% speak English “less than well”. Adults and children with limited abilities to read write or speak English, are considered to be *Limited English Proficient* (LEP). Consequently, most are likely to face educational and economic barriers. To more effectively meet the needs of LEP populations, HPL has adopted a *Four Factor Analysis* model.

## SCOPE OF SERVICES

Houston Public Library is a vital member of a dynamic and diverse local, national and global community. Our mission is to link people to the world.

The HPL system has a large public-facing footprint, with 44 service locations and 500 staff members. Public service locations include a large Central Library, 3 Special Collection Libraries, 4 Regional Libraries, 31 Neighborhood Libraries, 4 Express Libraries, a satellite library located at the Children’s Museum of Houston, plus the HPL Mobile Express. Together they’re open to the public an average of 1,476 hrs per week.

In fiscal year 2013 HPL maintained 1,907 public access computers, held 3.8 million items, and received 6.8 million visitors, either in person or on-line. Additionally, HPL answered 738,704 reference questions, conducted 16,159 programs, attracting 240,711 participants, and circulated more than 6.3 million books, magazines, and electronic resources.

## KEY DEFINITIONS

**Essential Public Information:** As per the Executive Order, “Essential Public Information” is any information developed or used by the department and deemed vital for purposes of public safety, public health, and economic development. This term is used interchangeably with the term “vital documents.”

**Executive Order 1-17:** This is a policy directive signed by the Mayor that mandates all City Departments to establish policies for providing information about City services, programs, and activities to residents and visitors with limited English language proficiency (LEP)

**Interpretation & Translation:** Taken verbatim from the US Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) 2012 Language Access plan, which is available at [http://www.lep.gov/guidance/040312\\_crcl-dhs-language-access-plan.pdf](http://www.lep.gov/guidance/040312_crcl-dhs-language-access-plan.pdf).

“Interpretation involves *oral* communication. Translation involves *written* communication. Interpretation involves the immediate communication of meaning from one language into another. An interpreter conveys meaning orally; as a result, interpretation requires skills different from those needed for translation. Interpreting is a complex task that combines several abilities beyond language competence in order to enable delivery of an effective professional interpretation in a given setting. From the standpoint of the user, a successful interpretation is one that faithfully and accurately conveys the meaning of the source language orally, reflecting the style, register, and cultural context of the source message, without omissions, additions, or embellishments on the part of the interpreter. Professional interpreters are subject to specific codes of conduct and should be trained in interpretive skills, ethics, and subject-matter language. DHS Components/agencies utilizing the services of interpreters should request information about certification, assessments taken, qualifications, experience, and training. Interpreters may be physically present, or, in appropriate circumstances, may appear via video conferencing or telephonically. When videoconferencing or telephonic interpretation are used, options include connecting directly to a specific professional interpreter with known qualifications, or using a company that provides telephonic interpretation services and has in place quality control and privacy safeguards. If bilingual staff is asked to interpret or translate, staff should be qualified to do so. Assessment of ability, training on interpreter ethics and standards, and clear policies, as noted below, that delineate appropriate use of bilingual staff, or contract interpreters and translators, will help ensure quality and effective use of resources.”

**iSpeak Cards:** These are cards that can be used to help an LEP individual obtain interpretive services. LEP's are instructed to go online to find their language and print them. They can insert their name on the blank line on both the English and the non-English language statements. They then cut along the border lines, place back-to-back with adhesive (glue or paste), and laminate the card. They can keep these cards in their wallet to be used to help them get interpretive services when needed. You can access iSpeak cards at many online resources, including:

<http://www.cdss.ca.gov/civilrights/PG584.htm>

**iSpeak Houston:** This is the Mayor's designee for all language access activities in the City of Houston. It is a part of Department of Neighborhoods and oversees the City of Houston Language Access Task Force and liaisons with the City Departments through the Language Access Coordinators, who serve as members of the task force. In addition to serving as the hub for all language access activities, iSpeak Houston offers language access technical support and services to the City of Houston staff.

**Language Access Coordinator:** These individuals are responsible for devising and ensuring that the City department they represent is in compliance with the Mayor's Executive order 1-17, and that their department adheres to its language access policy directives, plan, and procedures to provide meaningful access to LEP persons. They also represent their department on the City of Houston Language Access Task Force.

**Language Line/Telephone interpreting:** This is a service that connects human interpreters via telephone to individuals who wish to speak to each other but do not share a common language. The telephone interpreter converts the spoken language from one language to another, enabling listeners and speakers to understand each other. Interpretation over the telephone most often takes place in consecutive mode, which means that the interpreter waits until the speaker finishes an utterance before rendering the interpretation into the other language. Telephone interpreting is one modality or delivery mechanism for providing interpreting services. Other forms of delivering interpreting services include in-person interpreting and video interpreting for the deaf and hard of hearing. For the City of Houston, the service can be accessed through the 3-11 service help line at no cost to constituents. Departments that utilize the service line, however, will be assessed a fee for utilizing the service. Fees are charged by the minute, and fees per language may differ.

**Limited English Proficient (LEP):** For the purposes of this plan and the activities to be undertaken in its execution, an LEP individual is someone who is not able to speak, read, write or understand the English language at a level that allows him/her to interact effectively with Department staff. Individuals maintain the right to self-identify as a LEP person and should not in any circumstances be expected to pay for translation or interpretation services in order to effectively communicate with the Department.

## LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES - CURRENT

HPL provides services, programs, and access to materials that reflect the diverse languages and cultures throughout Houston. These services include:

- Staff with multi-lingual skills to assist customers with their information needs in languages other than English including Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Hindi.
- World languages materials in 20 ethnic languages.
- Electronic materials and links to various online resources.
- Programs that assist immigrant populations in adapting to life in the United States, such as Citizenship classes and English as a Second Language classes.
- Multi-cultural programming to celebrate native cultures for specific communities, and system-wide if appropriate.
- Computers with Microsoft Office applications to create documents & spreadsheets in multiple languages.

## TRANSLATION OF ESSENTIAL PUBLIC INFORMATION & VITAL DOCUMENTS

HPL used **Four Factor Analysis** to identify *Limited English Proficient* (LEP) populations and determine the level of need for language services.

### **Factor 1: The number or proportion of LEP persons in the service area of HPL.**

According to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey, 24% of Houston's population over the age of 5 speaks English "less than well". Based on the survey results, HPL has

identified five languages to be included in document translation. Below is a breakdown of five targeted languages and the numbers of LEP individuals within each category.

<b>Native Language</b>	<b># of LEP individuals</b>
Spanish	397,429
Chinese	13,521
Vietnamese	21,584
Arabic	3,324
Urdu	2783

\*The number of LEP individuals is potentially greater when considering similar populations in suburban communities may also seek our services.

**Factor 2: The frequency with which LEP persons visit various HPL locations.**

While there is very limited data available on HPL’s actual number of LEP contacts, discussions with staff provide solid insights into which communities are currently using our services. The anecdotal evidence indicates the greatest demand for LEP services come from the Spanish speaking community. To a much lesser degree, Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic and Urdu language services are also in demand.

**Factor 3: The nature and kind of programs or activities LEP customers use.**

HPL has consistently high demand for programs that assist immigrant populations, such as Citizenship classes and English as a Second Language classes. Circulation for books in foreign languages, and multi-cultural programming are other services where there is high interest. Demand for these language services mirror the proportions as indicated in factors 1 & 2.

**Factor 4: The in-house resources available and overall costs for LEP services.**

In FY14, HPL budgeted 12.2% of the total materials budget in the amount of \$595,000 on world language books, materials and electronic resources as a means to serve the LEP communities. In addition, multilingual staff members address most language

assistance needs, be they over-the- phone or in-person. HPL staff in the Communications Division also provides limited document translation services. HPL will continue the current protocol for translation & interpretation until a city-wide vendor is available.

## LANGUAGE ACCESS SERVICES & ESSENTIAL DOCUMENTS TRANSLATION CRITERIA

This section covers how HPL will determine what information is vital or essential as per the Executive Order 1-17, so Houstonians regardless of their proficiency level in English will have access to essential public information about library programs, services and activities.

Houston Public Library's mission is to link people to the world. The HPL library card serves as the link to a full complement of essential services. Many of our customers visit the library to use computers, databases, attend programs, and check out materials. Because a library card is required for our most popular services, such as computer use and materials check out, the *Library Card Application* is a top priority for translation. Closely related is *Know About Your Library Card*, a vital document that can help increase LEP customer use of library services. Similarly the *Location Guide*, *Rules of Library Use*, and the *World Languages Brochure* provide essential information about library resources that LEP customers may use.

Below are the documents to be translated, in order of priority.

1. Library Card Application
2. Know about your library card
3. Rules of Library Use
4. Location Guide
5. World Languages Brochure

## IMPLEMENTING TRANSLATION OF DOCUMENTS

In order to translate essential documents outlined above, HPL will use City's approved vendor for translation/interpretation services. All documents approved for translation will be made available in print and on HPL's website for easy access. Based on the feedback and usage statistics, the list of essential/vital documents will be revised on as needed basis to ensure customers are getting the information most needed.

## INTERPRETATION SERVICES

HPL has a large public facing foot print and regularly provides assistance to customers in-person and over the telephone, via chat services and email. HPL will provide interpretation services for LEP individuals by following the City's Administrative Procedure for handling LEP individuals. Please refer to the Appendix for a copy of the Administrative Policy & Procedure for handling LEP individuals.

## MONITORING, EVALUATION & DOCUMENTATION OF PROGRAM

In order to continue providing effective services for LEP clients, HPL will monitor its progress and adjust this LAP as necessary. As a part of the reporting process, the LAP will be reviewed annually and updated, if needed. The review will assess:

- Whether there have been any significant changes in the composition or language needs of LEP populations.
- Any issues or problems related to serving LEP persons which may have emerged during the past year.
- Identification of any recommended actions to provide more responsive & effective language services.

HPL will collect and analyze data to help assess the effectiveness of the LAP. To that end, HPL will track the following data.

- Expenditures for foreign language materials, electronic resources and translation services.
- Number of documents translated and distributed.
- Usage statistics of 3-1-1 Language Line, visits to LEP centered HPL website pages, and circulation of targeted World Language collections.
- Attendance at LEP focused classes and multi-cultural programming.
- Customer comments and suggestions relating to LEP community services.

## REPORTING REQUIREMENTS & EMPLOYEE TRAINING

The **Library Department** understands that reporting requirements and employee training will be facilitated through the Mayor's designee, the Office of International Communities. These items (will be/have been) provided separately to the department based staff and personnel.

The training module includes information on:

- Accessing translation and over-the-phone interpretation services from the translation and Interpretation Unit.
- Obtaining translated signs for posting and Language Identification Cards for LEP's to use to identify their primary language.

### Staff Training

Per the Executive order:

- All employees who routinely have direct, substantive interaction with the public (front-line employees) shall be trained in language access policies and procedures that shall include protocols for assisting LEP populations. Training shall be provided by the Mayor's designee.
- The Department will comply with all training requirements.

Per the Executive Order:

- The Language Access Coordinator shall report plan progress, assessments and recommendations periodically to Library Director and the Mayor's designee.
- The Mayor's Designee will establish a reporting format, report submission interval and provide technical assistance to Departments.
- The Mayor's Designee will work with the Coordinators to develop protocols used to measure the progress by the Department, as well as by feedback from the public constituencies with LEP served by the City Department.
- Front- line employees with substantial interactions with LEP populations shall be trained in language access policies & procedures, including protocols for assisting LEP populations. Training shall be provided by the Mayor's designee.

**DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE**

Name	Contact Info	Signature	Date
<b>Director:</b> <b>Dr. Rhea B. Lawson</b>	Houston Public Library 500 McKinney Houston, TX 77002 832-393-1300		2/6/14
<b>Language Access Coordinator:</b> <b>Shammi Gill</b>	Houston Public Library 500 McKinney Houston, TX 77002 832-393-1511		2/6/14

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**I Speak Spanish.**

**I need assistance and have the right to receive assistance in my spoken language. Please provide me with an interpreter and note my spoken language in your permanent records. Thank you.**

District law requires that agencies provide you with information and assistance in your language for free. If you do not receive help in your language, please call the DC Office of Human Rights at (202) 727-4559 and press 0.



**Hablo español.**

**Necesito ayuda y tengo el derecho de recibirla en mi idioma. Por favor provéame un intérprete y anote mi preferencia de idioma en mi expediente. Gracias.**

La ley de distrito establece que las agencias deben brindar la información necesaria y ofrecer la asistencia correspondiente en su idioma en forma gratuita. Si no recibe ayuda en su idioma, comuníquese con la Oficina de Derechos Humanos del DC al teléfono 202-727-4559 y presione 0.





**CITY OF HOUSTON**

**Executive Order**

**Subject: Language Access**

E.O. No: **1-17**  
 Effective Date: **July 31, 2013**

**1. AUTHORITY**

1.1 Article VI, Section 7a, City Charter of the City of Houston.

**2. PURPOSE**

2.1 Establish policies for providing information about City services, programs and activities to residents and visitors with limited English language proficiency (LEP).

**3. OBJECTIVES**

- 3.1 Houston is an international city of commerce, culture, trade, travel, and tourism. Over 100 different languages are spoken in Houston's neighborhoods. All Houston residents and visitors, regardless of their proficiency level in English, should have access to essential public information about City programs, services and activities.
- 3.2 While continuous efforts shall be maintained by implementing and expounding on a department's language access protocols, it is understood that this multiphase process shall be enacted and improved upon over an extended period of time.

**4. SCOPE**

4.1 This policy applies to all City departments.

**5. DEFINITIONS:**

*Essential Public Information* - Any information developed or used by the department and deemed vital for purposes of public safety, public health and economic development.

**6. RESPONSIBILITIES**

6.1 All City departments that provide services directly to the public shall designate a Language Access Coordinator (Coordinator) within 60-days of this Executive Order to effect the creation and execution of the department's Language Access policy and implementation plan. The Coordinators will serve as their department's liaison, and they will work regularly with the Mayor's language access designee.

Approved:

Date Approved:

07/31/2013

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- 6.2 The Mayor's Office Language Access Designee shall be the Office of International Communities, which shall assist in the provision of language services to the public and will provide technical assistance to City departments in providing such services

7. POLICY

- 7.1 When feasible, the City shall begin implementing essential public information for a minimum of the top 5 commonly-used languages utilized by the City's culturally diverse population. The City will depend on a variety of relevant sources (example: US Census) to determine the commonly-used languages. The information will be available via effective communications channels, including but not limited to the City's website at <http://www.houstontx.gov/>.
- 7.2 All City departments that provide services directly to the public shall provide information about LEP services by developing and implementing department or agency-specific language access plans shall be submitted to the Mayor's Office within six months of the issuance of this Executive Order.
- 7.3 Each department will receive, from the Mayor's language access designee, technical assistance and resources to assist in the development and implementation of their language access plan.
- 7.4 City employees who routinely have direct, substantive interaction with the public (front-line employees) shall be trained in language access policies and procedures that shall include protocols for assisting LEP populations. Training shall be provided by the Mayor's designee.
- 7.5 Reporting
- 7.5.1 All Coordinators shall report plan progress, assessments and recommendations periodically to department heads and the Mayor's designee.
- 7.5.2 The Mayor's Designee will establish a reporting format, report submission interval and technical assistance to departments. Reporting logistics should be established within 6 months of this Executive Order.
- 7.5.3 The Mayor's Designee will work with the Coordinators to develop protocols used to measure the progress by the department, as well as by feedback from the public constituencies with limited English proficiency served by the City department.

Subject: Language Access

E.O. No.: 1-17

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