For further information and more detailed guidance, visit https://www.lep.gov.
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

In the United States, there is an ever-growing population of individuals whose primary language is not English. The Federal Government and entities receiving Federal financial assistance must take reasonable steps to ensure that LEP persons have meaningful access to the programs, services, and information those entities provide. This will require Federal agencies and private-sector organizations alike to think "outside the box" for creative solutions to address the needs of those individuals.

Who Is a Limited English Proficient Person?

Persons who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English are considered LEP. These individuals may be entitled to language assistance with respect to a particular type of service, benefit, or activity provided by the Federal Government or private-sector recipients of Federal financial assistance.

Who Must Comply and Who Can Be Found in Violation?

All programs and operations of entities that receive Federal financial assistance (both federally conducted and federally assisted programs) must comply. Recipients of Federal financial assistance have an obligation to reduce language barriers that can preclude meaningful access by LEP persons to important Government services. Recipients of Federal financial assistance that failed to provide language assistance may file a complaint of discrimination pursuant to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Recipient Obligations

Four-Factor Analysis

Recipients of Federal financial assistance have an obligation to reduce language barriers that can preclude meaningful access by LEP persons to important Government services. The starting point for determining whether there has been a denial of meaningful access is an individualized assessment that balances the following four factors:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the program or grantee/recipient;
2. The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program;
3. The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the program to people's lives; and
4. The resources available to the grantee/recipient and costs.

Elements of an Effective LEP Policy

- Identify LEP persons who need language assistance.
- Identify ways in which language assistance will be provided.
- Train staff.
- Provide notice to LEP persons.
- Monitor and update LEP policy.

Recipient and the Federal Government

Executive Order 13166:

Improving Access to Persons with Limited English Proficiency

This order was issued on August 11, 2000, directing Federal agencies to do the following:

- Publish guidance on how their recipients can provide access to LEP persons.
- Break down language barriers by implementing consistent standards of language assistance across Federal agencies and amongst all recipients of Federal financial assistance.
- Improve the language accessibility of federally conducted programs and activities.

Legal Authority

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

“No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” 42 U.S.C. 2000d

In the case of Lau v. Nichols (1974), 414 U.S. 563, the United States Supreme Court found that national origin discrimination encompasses discrimination based on a person’s limited or complete inability to speak, read, write, or understand English, where English is not that person’s native language.

Language Assistance Services

- Oral interpretation services
- Bilingual staff
- Telephone interpreter lines
- Written language services
- Community volunteers

Filing a Complaint Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as Amended

Any LEP person who believes he/she has been denied meaningful access to a NASA recipient’s program or activity as a result of the recipient's failure to provide language assistance may file a complaint of discrimination against any person who has made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation or proceeding under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

What To Include In Your Complaint

Any person wishing to file a complaint should submit in writing the following information:

- Your name and address (a telephone number where you can be reached during business hours is helpful, but not required);
- A general description of the person(s) or class of persons injured by the alleged failure to provide language services (names of the injured persons are not required);
- The name and location of the recipient of NASA financial assistance that failed to provide language assistance;
- A description of the alleged failure to provide language assistance in sufficient detail to enable the ODEO to understand what occurred.

Retaliation Is Illegal

It should be noted that NASA recipients may not retaliate against any person who has made a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation or proceeding under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended.

Where To Send Your Request for Language Assistance

Any person with LEP wishing to participate in a NASA-conducted program and/or activity who needs other-than-English language assistance may request such language services in writing, by telephone, personally, or through a personal interpreter. It is recommended that the request be made prior to the beginning of the NASA-conducted program and/or activity in order to ensure that the language services requested can be provided in an efficient and timely manner. In order to ensure that NASA will be able to comply with your request, please give the Agency as much notice as possible. Language assistance services are free of charge.

Where To Send Your Complaint

Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity

300 E Street SW
6th Floor
Washington, DC 20546

Complaints Hotline: 866-654-1440
Telephone: 202-358-2167
TDD: 202-358-3748
Fax: 202-358-3336
E-mail: assistedprogramcomplaint@nasa.gov or lep@nasa.gov

Seeking Meaningful Access to NASA-Conducted Programs and/or Activities

Any person with LEP wishing to participate in a NASA-conducted program and/or activity who needs other-than-English language assistance may request such language services in writing, by telephone, personally, or through a personal interpreter. It is recommended that the request be made prior to the beginning of the NASA-conducted program and/or activity in order to ensure that the language services requested can be provided in an efficient and timely manner. In order to ensure that NASA will be able to comply with your request, please give the Agency as much notice as possible. Language assistance services are free of charge.