

Appendix E

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE PLAN

SCAG's Language Assistance Plan for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Populations

SCAG is the largest metropolitan planning organization in the nation, representing six counties—Imperial, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and Ventura—and 191 cities. The SCAG region covers 38,000 square miles and includes a population of nearly 19 million people, just under half of the total state population.

As a recipient of federal funds, SCAG follows federal guidance concerning recipients' responsibilities to limited English proficient (LEP) persons. Individuals for whom English is not their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English are recognized as LEP. SCAG's Language Assistance Plan for LEP populations is intended to guide the agency in the provision of meaningful access to its services, programs and activities by LEP persons. The plan considers the languages that are spoken in the region, which documents will be translated by the agency, special outreach methods, accommodations for oral language assistance, staff training and how SCAG will evaluate and improve its services to LEP persons.

In developing transportation plans, SCAG has employed numerous approaches to engage and seek input from traditionally underserved populations. This plan informs tactics outlined in SCAG's Public Participation Plan to engage the public in regional planning efforts. A full copy of the Public Participation Plan is included herein as **Appendix D** and can be found on SCAG's website at: <https://scag.ca.gov/community-participation-public-participation-plan>

Four-Factor Analysis of Language Assistance Measures

SCAG is required to ensure meaningful access to the benefits, services, and information regarding our programs and activities to individuals who are limited English proficient. SCAG has consulted the U.S. Department of Transportation's LEP Guidance and performed a four-factor analysis of LEP populations in the region and the agency's level of interaction to determine the appropriate mix of services to offer. The four factors consider the following:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the SCAG's programs.
2. The frequency with which LEP persons come in contact with SCAG's programs, activities or services.
3. The nature and importance of the program, activity or service provided by SCAG to people's lives.
4. The resources available to the recipient for LEP outreach, as well as the costs associated with that outreach.

LEP Populations in the Region

To identify LEP populations in the region, SCAG looked to latest the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS)¹ using the criteria, "Language Spoken at Home, by Ability to Speak English, for Populations 5 Years and Older." In reviewing the ACS data, SCAG has made the assumption that any individual who indicated they do not speak English "very well" would be classified as LEP. Out of a total population of 17,722,747 persons (ages 5 years and older) in the SCAG region, approximately 19.5%, or 3,641,410 persons, were identified as LEP.

Spanish-speakers constituted the largest LEP group: 2,456,217 persons, or 13.1% of individuals in the SCAG region indicated that they did not speak English very well. Other large LEP populations in the region include Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean speakers. The following table provides additional information, including LEP populations that meet the DOJ's safe harbor threshold of 1,000 persons of the total LEP population eligible to be served.

Overall, the region's LEP population has been gradually decreasing since 2000, when the decennial Census indicated that 3,752,830 persons, or 24.6% of the total population ages 5 years and older who did not speak English very well. The share of LEP individuals decreased to 22% over the 2011-2015 period and has remained under 20% since 2021.

¹ Note: The 2024 1-year ACS data (Table B16001) is used with the exception of Imperial and Ventura counties. For Imperial County, data on LEP is unavailable for 1-year ACS and 5-year ACS estimates after 2015. The shares of English speaking only and Spanish speaking people from the 2011-2015 ACS 5-year estimates were included in this analysis. The rest of the language categories for Imperial County accounted for 1.7% in the 2011-2015 ACS 5-year sample and were not included in this analysis due to change in the surveyed categories. For Ventura County, LEP estimates come from the 2022 1-year ACS, which is the latest data available at the time of the analysis.

LEP Populations in the SCAG Region

LANGUAGE	TOTAL LEP PERSONS	% OF SCAG REGION LEP POPULATION	% OF TOTAL SCAG POPULATION
Spanish	2,456,217	67.45%	13.14%
Chinese (Incl. Mandarin, Cantonese)	321,576	8.83%	1.72%
Vietnamese	182,556	5.01%	0.98%
Korean	140,922	3.87%	0.75%
Tagalog (Incl. Filipino)	114,465	3.14%	0.61%
Armenian	92,673	2.54%	0.50%
Persian (Incl. Farsi, Dari)	49,360	1.36%	0.26%
Arabic	39,718	1.09%	0.21%
Russian	33,080	0.91%	0.18%
Japanese	26,294	0.72%	0.14%
Thai, Lao, Or Other Tai-Kadai Languages	19,660	0.54%	0.11%
Khmer	18,070	0.50%	0.10%
Ilocano, Samoan, Hawaiian, Or Other Austronesian Languages	16,722	0.46%	0.09%
Hindi	11,091	0.30%	0.06%
Other And Unspecified Languages	11,479	0.32%	0.06%
Other Languages Of Asia	9,870	0.27%	0.05%
Other Indo-European Languages	6,555	0.18%	0.04%
French (Incl. Cajun)	7,632	0.21%	0.04%
Bengali	7,931	0.22%	0.04%
Urdu	8,222	0.23%	0.04%
Amharic, Somali, Or Other Afro-Asiatic Languages	6,917	0.19%	0.04%
Nepali, Marathi, Or Other Indic Languages	6,697	0.18%	0.04%
Ukrainian Or Other Slavic Languages	6,846	0.19%	0.04%
Portuguese	5,933	0.16%	0.03%
Punjabi	6,163	0.17%	0.03%
Gujarati	6,215	0.17%	0.03%

LANGUAGE	TOTAL LEP PERSONS	% OF SCAG REGION LEP POPULATION	% OF TOTAL SCAG POPULATION
Yoruba, Twi, Igbo, Or Other Languages Of Western Africa	3,803	0.10%	0.02%
Hebrew	3,261	0.09%	0.02%
German	3,009	0.08%	0.02%
Italian	3,159	0.09%	0.02%
Polish	2,822	0.08%	0.02%
Serbo-Croatian	1,812	0.05%	0.01%
Swahili Or Other Languages Of Central, Eastern, And Southern Africa	1,510	0.04%	0.01%
Telugu	1,135	0.03%	0.01%
Greek	1,913	0.05%	0.01%
Malayalam, Kannada, Or Other Dravidian Languages	1,814	0.05%	0.01%
Tamil	1,730	0.05%	0.01%
Hmong	871	0.02%	0.00%
Haitian	638	0.02%	0.00%
Yiddish, Pennsylvania Dutch Or Other West Germanic Languages	528	0.01%	0.00%
Other Native Languages Of North America	407	0.01%	0.00%
Navajo	134	0.00%	0.00%
Total	3,641,410	100%	19.5%

Frequency of Interaction

In the past, SCAG's LEP Program focused on four major activities, which included:

- Providing interpreters available at meetings and workshops, with 72-hour advance notice for requests
- Translating selected documents into Spanish, Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese and making these documents available for download on the agency's website
- Working with specialty outreach consultants to engage with the LEP and minority communities for the development of the Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy
- Distributing notices of availability and press releases to print, radio and broadcast media serving in-language preferred communities

To better assess its LEP program, the agency continues to monitor staff's frequency of interaction with LEP communities, including when SCAG receives phone calls from non-English speakers, and when language interpretation at public meetings is requested.

SCAG has primarily relied on contracted translation and interpretation services to meet its LEP obligations. Bilingual staff may program supplemental assistance on a voluntary basis when available, particularly for routine information requests or to bridge immediate communication needs.. In instances where language assistance was required during the reporting period, bilingual staff were able to support non-English speakers and visiting delegations. However, staff language assistance is intended to complement, not replace, SCAG's contracted language service resources and is not a formal requirement of employees' positions..

In conducting outreach for past cycles of the Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy, SCAG translated several key documents and made them available on the agency website.

The Importance of SCAG's Programs to LEP Populations

As the metropolitan planning organization for the region, SCAG represents six counties, including 191 cities and nearly 19 million residents. The agency develops long-range regional transportation plans, as well as sustainable communities strategies, growth forecast components, regional transportation improvement programs, regional housing needs allocations, and a portion of the South Coast Air Quality management plans. SCAG does not implement projects, so the agency works with partners at the County Transportation Commissions and local jurisdictions to develop plans in a "bottom-up" process. The agency follows this process to provide local and county jurisdictions with a greater voice in determining their priorities.

SCAG's planning activities have the potential to impact every person in the region and SCAG seeks to provide reasonable opportunities for interested parties to comment or provide input on these activities. SCAG evaluates the planning activity at hand, whether it be a planning study or a demonstration project, and assesses the appropriate level of public engagement . SCAG's Public Participation Plan communication tactic toolbox includes strategies that can also be used to engage LEP populations.

Resources for LEP Outreach

As listed in the Language Assistance Plan portion of this document, SCAG translates vital documents, makes available interpreters or translation services at public meetings upon request, and distributes information to ethnic media. Outside of its main headquarters in downtown Los Angeles, SCAG maintains regional offices in other parts of the region, including: Imperial County, Orange County, the Inland Empire (Riverside and San Bernardino counties), and Ventura County. These offices are each staffed by a liaison who who works in the field to connect with member cities and other area agencies. They play an important role in SCAG's overall public outreach efforts by working with local agencies to identify stakeholder groups who should be engaged in regional planning.

In addition to SCAG staff resources, budget is allocated each year to contracts with outside consultants to provide translation services.

Conclusion

Given the size and diversity of the SCAG region, SCAG's frequency and type of interaction with LEP persons, and the resources available, SCAG determined that the agency prioritizes access to information and translation of vital documents in the four most frequently spoken languages in the region other than English—which are Spanish, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese. Provided that it has the resources to do so, SCAG will also, upon request, translate documents and provide interpretation services in other languages upon request.

SCAG's Language Assistance for LEP Populations

Based on the results of the four-factor analysis, SCAG has prepared a Language Assistance Plan, utilizing a broad range of tools to engage LEP populations and provide staff procedures for providing assistance.

Translation of Vital and Non-Vital Documents

To achieve compliance with U.S. DOT guidelines, SCAG has taken into consideration the Safe Harbor Provision of the FTA Title VI Circular (4702.1B) in developing its policy on translating documents:

"DOT has adopted DOJ's Safe Harbor Provision, which outlines circumstances that can provide a "safe harbor" for recipients regarding translation of written materials for LEP populations. The Safe Harbor Provision stipulates that, if a recipient provides written translation of vital documents for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes five percent (5%) or 1,000 persons, whichever is less, of the total population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected or encountered, then such action will be considered strong evidence of compliance with the recipient's written translation obligations. Translation of non-vital documents, if needed, can be provided orally. If there are fewer than 50 persons in a language group that reaches the five percent (5%) trigger, the recipient is not required to translate vital written materials but should provide written notice in the primary language of the LEP language group of the right to receive competent oral interpretation of those written materials, free of cost."

SCAG's four-factor analysis reveals more than 30 languages that are spoken by more than 1,000 LEP persons in the SCAG six-county region. Spanish-speaking LEP persons are the largest group, representing 67.43% of the total LEP population, followed by Chinese (8.7%), Vietnamese (4.92%), Korean (4.39%), Tagalog (3.16%) and Armenian (2.36%). There is no other language that exceeds two percent of the LEP population share.

Upon review of the four-factor analysis, SCAG determined that the agency will translate documents considered "vital" into the four most frequently spoken languages other than English—Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean. These vital documents include:

- Notices of availability
- Public hearing/meeting notices with information on free language assistance services
- Title VI complaint form
- Notice of a person's rights under Title VI

The Agency will determine, on a case-by-case basis, the effectiveness and appropriateness to translate other non-vital documents – such as long-range plans (in their entirety), executive summaries of plans or fact sheets, as well as flyers and announcements into Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese or Korean. Where possible, SCAG will provide translated information directing to available translation resources in all languages encompassing more than 1% of the SCAG region's LEP population.

With regard to translating vital and non-vital documents into other languages, SCAG is committed to providing reasonable access to all individuals and complying with the DOT's Safe Harbor Provision. Subject to available resources, SCAG will provide translations of the agency's vital—and non-vital documents on a case-by-case basis—by request. Requests can be made by emailing contact@scag.ca.gov or through our online public participation form: <https://scag.ca.gov/contact-us>

Interpreting and Oral Language Assistance

SCAG will provide language interpretation at its public meetings and workshops with, at minimum, a 72-hour advance notice. Requests can be made by emailing contact@scag.ca.gov or through our online public participation form: <https://scag.ca.gov/contact-us>

SCAG relies on a contracted firm to meet most of its interpreting and translation needs. To support these projects, SCAG may enlist the help of bilingual staff for quality control purposes. These staff members are fluent in English and Spanish, Chinese, or Korean, , and are well versed in planning terminology and concepts.

SCAG's contracted translation service maintains a roster of certified and/or qualified interpreters who are utilized on an as-needed basis. Interpreters will need to assess the reading level of the audience and speak to the target

language group's vocabulary, phrases and/or dialects. Interpreters and translation services must also demonstrate proficiency in both English and the other language, as well as accurately communicate specialized terms or concepts in regional planning. Interpreters are provided meeting materials in advance to assist them in preparing for this specialized terminology and material.

Outreach and Media Engagement

When engaging the public on its long-range plans and programs, SCAG has used media outlets to spread information—and this applies to LEP populations as well. SCAG sends press releases and public meeting announcements to local ethnic media, including notices for public hearing in Chinese, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese language newspapers serving the region, when possible.

As outlined in the Public Participation Plan, SCAG will outreach to local organizations to engage those who are traditionally uninvolved or under-involved in the planning process, including rural and economically disadvantaged LEP populations. SCAG will provide in-language group presentations upon request towards this effort. Group in-language presentations may be requested by emailing contact@scag.ca.gov or through our online public participation form: <https://scag.ca.gov/contact-us>

Use of Bilingual Staff

All front-line SCAG staff are provided with the LEP Plan and educated on procedures and services available. To assist in identifying LEP individuals who need language assistance, SCAG will utilize the U.S. Census Bureau's "I

Speak" language identification list. The list translates "Mark this box if you read or speak [language name]" into 38 different languages and will be an effective tool at SCAG's reception desk, public meeting rooms and regional offices.

As mentioned previously, SCAG primarily relies on contracted interpretation and translation service providers to support its Limited English Proficiency (LEP) efforts. In addition, a group of bilingual staff may volunteer to provide supplemental language assistance on an ad hoc basis when available and appropriate. During regular and special board meetings, SCAG first seeks to address interpretation needs through its contracted language service resources. When immediate assistance is needed or as a supplemental measure, bilingual staff volunteers may assist with language interpretation during public comment and other meeting activities. For public hearings and workshops required by law, bilingual staff who elect to provide support are briefed on presentation content and provided access to relevant reference materials to facilitate communication. Bilingual staff participation is voluntary and is intended to complement, rather than replace, SCAG's contracted language access resources.

Finally, the bilingual staff is provided information on the following topics

- Understanding the Title VI LEP responsibilities
- What language assistance services SCAG offers
- Frequently used planning terms and their translated equivalents
- Use of LEP "I Speak Cards"
- How to access a staff interpreter
- Documentation of language assistance requests
- How to handle a complaint

Monitoring and Evaluating the Plan

Ensuring fair and equal access to information is a priority for SCAG. SCAG will institute a formal procedure to document the frequency with which LEP persons who encounter agency staff, programs, or download translated documents available on the website, in addition to the nature of the interaction (i.e. an information request, request to translate new documents, etc.).

SCAG will assess and evaluate its Language Assistance Plan as required. This will allow the agency to determine if there are sufficient resources (such as staff, technology, and funding) to meet potential needs in advance of planned public outreach activities.