



## OFFICE OF LONG-TERM RESILIENCY

# LANGUAGE ACCESS AND ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

Version 2.3

September 23, 2022

[Biwo Rezilyans Alontèm aksè Lang ak Plan Aksebilite an kreyòl ayisyen](#)

[Oficina de Resiliencia a Largo Plazo Plan de Acceso al Idioma y la Accesibilidad en español](#)

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity's (the Department) Office of Long-Term Resiliency Language Access Plan (LAP) explains the actions the Office of Long-Term Resiliency will take to ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 13166 and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-issued Final Guidance 72 FR 2732 related to disaster recovery programs and services. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 13166 and HUD's 72 FR 2732 require that recipients of federal financial assistance must take reasonable actions to ensure meaningful access to their activities, programs and services for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and visual or auditory impairment.

The Department is responsible for administering Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) and Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) funds throughout areas of Florida, which were either designated as most impacted and distressed by HUD or areas determined by the Department as most impacted and distressed (MID). This LAP outlines how the Department plans to ensure that LEP individuals have meaningful access to its Office of Long-Term Resiliency programs and services. The LAP describes (1) the four-factor analysis the Department conducted to identify the needs of LEP individuals throughout the 61 counties served by Disaster Recovery programs and (2) the accompanying protocols, training and outreach efforts the Department will develop and implement in order to ensure LEP individuals can access Disaster Recovery and Mitigation assistance.

## 2.0 LEGAL AUTHORITY

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides that no person 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." Likewise, Section 109 of the Housing and Community Development Act provides that no individual shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity because of national origin. Executive Order 13166 requires recipients to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP individuals to avoid denying benefits as a result of national origin.

## 3.0 LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT INDIVIDUALS

LEP is defined as individuals who have a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English and may require language assistance to have adequate access to services and programs. Examples of populations will include LEP individuals who are served by the Department and its providers including, but are not limited to, persons seeking housing rehabilitation, reconstruction, or replacement due to damages sustained from all past, present and future disasters.

### 3.1 THE DEPARTMENT'S COMMITMENT TO LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY INDIVIDUALS

The Department is fully committed to making services and information available to LEP individuals through the provision of free interpretation services upon request. Furthermore, where a significant number or proportion of the eligible service population requires services or information in a language that is not English, the Department is committed to providing vital program information in that language.

Oral language services (interpretation) will come in the form of appropriate "in-language" communication, a qualified bilingual staff member communicating directly in an LEP individual's language and/or contracted

interpreter services. Written language access services will come in the form of a written translation provided by Department translators or a Department-approved translation contractor.

## 3.2 ENSURING MEANINGFUL ACCESS TO LEP INDIVIDUALS

In accordance with HUD guidelines, the Department has conducted a four-factor analysis to determine the reasonable steps it must take to ensure meaningful access to LEP individuals:

### FACTOR ONE:

The Department has determined the number or proportion of LEP individuals eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the Office of Long-Term Resiliency programs.

Based on the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2015 American Community Survey, the Department has identified Spanish and French Creole as the primary languages spoken by LEP individuals residing in Florida.

Language/Language Proficiency	Estimate	Margin of Error
<b>Total:</b>	<b>18,564,715</b>	<b>+/-634</b>
Speaks only English	13,346,251	+/-16,314
<b>Spanish or Spanish Creole:</b>	<b>3,849,991</b>	<b>+/-11,761</b>
Speaks English “very well”	2,184,602	+/-11,392
Speaks English “less than very well”	1,665,389	+/-11,156
<b>French Creole:</b>	<b>386,481</b>	<b>+/-8,856</b>
Speaks English “very well”	209,593	+/-5,268
Speaks English “less than very well”	176,888	+/-5,191

Spanish or Spanish Creole LEP individuals account for approximately 9 percent of the individuals residing in Florida. French Creole LEP individuals account for approximately 1 percent of the individuals residing in Florida. The majority of French Creole LEP individuals reside in Hurricane Hermine/Matthew or Hurricane Irma MID areas. No other individual LEP languages account for more than 0.2 percent of the individuals residing in Florida.<sup>1</sup>

### FACTOR TWO:

The Department has determined the frequency with which LEP individuals encounter Office of Long-Term Resiliency programs. Due to the unique demographic make-up of Florida, the Department recognizes that different areas may have different language needs.

In addition to voluntary equal opportunity demographic information, the Department collects the primary language preference of each Department customer if the customer agrees to provide the information. Throughout the action plan adoption process in Hurricane Hermine/Matthew as well as Hurricane Irma’s MID areas, the Department received requests for communications in Spanish and French Creole, but not in any additional LEP languages. In Hurricane Michael and Hurricane Sally’s MID areas, the Department received requests for communications in Spanish, but not in any additional LEP languages.

Based on a review of the state-wide census results and the language preference data the Department collected in the Hurricane Hermine/Matthew and Hurricane Irma’s MID areas, the Department has determined that Spanish

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<sup>1</sup> The Department has determined that Haitian Creole is the primary language encountered, which falls under the French Creole umbrella.

and French Creole are the two significant languages spoken by individuals who will need access to Office of Long-Term Resiliency's programs and services in Hurricane Hermine/Matthew and Hurricane Irma's MID areas. However, based on review of census results and the language preference data the Department collected in the Hurricane Michael and Hurricane Sally MID areas, the Department has determined that Spanish is the only significant language spoken by individuals who will need access to Office of Long-Term Resiliency's programs and services in the Hurricane Michael and Hurricane Sally MID areas.

The Department will continue to monitor its interactions with LEP individuals and will implement additional translation and interpretation services, as necessary, to appropriately ensure program access for LEP individuals.

### **FACTOR THREE:**

The Department has determined the importance to provide language accessibility to Office of Long-Term Resiliency program activities and services so that LEP individuals are informed and able to participate.

The Department is committed to providing vital Office of Long-Term Resiliency program information to LEP individuals in the language they can understand. Vital information is information, whether written, oral or electronic, that is necessary for an individual to understand how to obtain any aid, benefit, service, training or information that is required by law. Examples include applications, complaint forms, notices of rights and responsibilities, notices advising LEP individuals of free language assistance, rulebooks or notices that require a response from the recipient, applicant or participant.

The Office of Long-Term Resiliency is committed to reviewing each of its programs to identify vital information and taking steps to ensure that information is available to LEP individuals.

### **FACTOR FOUR:**

The Department has taken steps to provide adequate interpretation and translation services to LEP individuals in accordance with its budget, these steps include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The Department has procured a contract for translation and interpretation services. Department representatives that may have oral interactions with LEP individuals have been trained to identify a customer's need for translation services and to provide the service free of charge in a timely manner. No individual is required to provide their own interpreter.
2. The Department has taken reasonable steps to publicize the availability of free interpretation services. The Department has posted notice of these services on its website and will post notice of these services in every Rebuild Florida Center.
3. The Department includes an "Interpretive and Translation Services" link on every Disaster Recovery webpage, informing customers that free interpretation services are available upon request in at least 15 different languages.
4. The Department will ensure vital documents are translated in order to provide language accessibility. Upon request, the Department will consider requests to translate vital documents into additional languages.
5. The Department has distributed "Language Communication" or "I Speak" cards to Rebuild Florida Centers. These resources will assist Department representatives to quickly identify the need for translation services, so the Department can provide direct services to these customers.
6. The Department employs bilingual staff to assist LEP individuals.
7. The Department has designated a language access coordinator to review this LAP and ensure LEP individuals have meaningful access to the services offered through the Office of Long-Term Resiliency programs. The language access coordinator is:

Leah Langston

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity

Division of Community Development

107 E. Madison Street

Tallahassee, FL 32399

(850) 717-8411

[Leah.Langston@DEO.MyFlorida.com](mailto:Leah.Langston@DEO.MyFlorida.com)

8. The Department will monitor which registrants and applicants are identified as LEP to ensure future interactions with these individuals are handled appropriately.

## 4.0 ENSURING MEANINGFUL ACCESS TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The Department is committed to making its website, Rebuild Florida Centers, and other forms of communication accessible to all users. To make the site more accessible, we include features designed to improve accessibility for users with disabilities. The Department's Office of Long-Term Resiliency has included easily available links to accessibility services on its website. The Department's website features embedded technology to provide accessibility to the visually impaired which is compatible with most screen readers. Major reports and other publications that are on the website are in formats compatible with common assistive technologies. Alternative formats may be made available upon request.

Auxiliary aids and services are also available upon request to Individuals with disabilities. All telephone numbers on OLTR documents and web pages may be reached by persons using TTY/TTD equipment via the Florida Relay Service at 711.

OLTR welcomes comments on how to improve the site's accessibility for users with disabilities. If an individual who uses assistive technology is unable to access the information due to the current format of OLTR material, they may contact OLTR's Communication Manager for further assistance.

## 5.0 STAFF TRAINING

The Department has ensured that staff who serve customers or members of the public are knowledgeable of the contents of this LAP. The Department provides mandatory training on LEP policies and procedures for staff who may potentially interact or communicate with LEP individuals, managers, and certain staff during the performance of web-based duties.

## 6.0 MONITORING AND UPDATES

The Language Access Coordinator will review and update this LAP periodically. LEP training will be conducted periodically as a refresher for staff. The Department managers have established a process for reviewing oral interactions with LEP individuals for compliance with this LAP. The Language Access Coordinator will coordinate with Department managers to review oral interactions with LEP individuals for use in its periodic review of this LAP.