

**TOP TIPS FROM RESPONSES TO THE
SURVEY OF LANGUAGE ACCESS STRATEGIES
USED BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**

**Federally Conducted Committee
Federal Interagency Working Group on Limited English Proficiency
September 3, 2008**

**TOP TIPS FROM RESPONSES TO THE
SURVEY OF LANGUAGE ACCESS STRATEGIES
USED BY FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**

1. STRONG LANGUAGE ACCESS COORDINATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY:

- **Appoint an agency limited English proficiency (LEP) Coordinator or, in large agencies, a working group of individuals from different components to monitor/update the agency's response to LEP needs.**
- **Monitor agency compliance by ensuring staff cooperation and accountability.**
- **Conduct regular trainings on LEP access: All staff should be aware of your agency's LEP Plan, especially those who encounter the public.**

2. EFFECTIVE NEEDS ASSESSMENT:

- **Survey client constituencies and chart their needs by tracking LEP encounters, conducting focus groups with client constituencies/stakeholders, and obtaining customer feedback via surveys or other methods.**
- **Use the information obtained from client constituencies to target language access efforts to priority services and locations.**

3. RELIABLE ACCESS TO DISASTER AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS INFO:

- **Disaster and emergency preparedness should always be a priority focus for language access efforts.**

4. EFFICIENT RESOURCE UTILIZATION:

- **Share resources within and across agencies, e.g., by forming regional and interagency partnerships.**
- **Utilize bilingual employees effectively and appropriately: Avoid assumptions about competence and willingness of bilingual staff to provide language services. Once you have identified competent and willing bilingual staff, ensure that they are strategically posted.**
- **Leverage community-based organizations for interpretation and translation assistance, provided that quality control procedures are utilized.**

5. MEANINGFUL ACCESS TO WEB-BASED INFORMATION:

- Non-English web pages should be a priority, not an afterthought: Make them easy to locate and navigate.
- Non-English language web pages should serve as a “one-stop shop” for agency information.
- Web pages should be available in, at a minimum, Spanish and other top languages.
- Do not use or offer web-based translation services. Translations through such services have been found to be unacceptably inaccurate.

6. CONSISTENT ENFORCEMENT OF QUALITY CONTROL STANDARDS:

- Follow the suggestions above related to ensuring competence of bilingual staff, interpreters, and translators; accuracy of web-based information and translations in non-English languages; and reliance on customer feedback.
- Avoid ad hoc approaches when faced with LEP encounters by ensuring staff familiarity with your LEP plan, as discussed.
- Reliance on an LEP individual’s family and/or friends for interpretation and translation, whether on an ad hoc basis or as part of your agency’s general language assistance strategy, is inappropriate. Generally, family and friends should not be used for language assistance, except in certain emergency situations while awaiting a qualified interpreter, or where the information sought to be conveyed is of minimal importance to the LEP person.

7. VALUING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS:

- Enlist the cooperation of community and ethnic organizations for interpretation and translation assistance, e.g., to review translations and non-English web pages for accuracy and tone, as long as quality control measures are used.
- Community organizations can help federal agencies to determine their language access priorities by identifying the services and information most frequently accessed or “in demand” by various language communities.

- Community organizations can help agencies assess the effectiveness of their language access plan by providing honest feedback.
- Community organizations can be a source of “good publicity” for agency language access efforts by informing LEP community members of agency services and the manner in which your agency is striving to meet LEP needs.

8. EFFECTIVE MARKETING OF LANGUAGE ACCESS PROGRAMS:

- In order to access your services, LEP individuals must know about them: Market language access programs to target communities.
- Attend seminars, symposia, and community health fairs, and inform ethnic media and culturally diverse media outlets of your agency’s commitment to language access.

9. CREATIVE APPROACHES TO BUDGET AND FUNDING:

- Charting LEP encounters provides “hard data” in support of requests for LEP resources, including hiring of bilingual personnel, obtaining funding for interpretation/translation, etc.
- Tie LEP efforts to the mission of the larger agency to enable budgeting for LEP access when it falls in line with mission-critical objectives (such as national security or emergency preparedness).

10. INVOLVEMENT IN THE FEDERALLY CONDUCTED COMMITTEE AND OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE FEDERAL INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP ON LEP:

- Your suggestions and input go a long way: The Federally Conducted Committee will continue to update this document as you identify promising strategies utilized by federal agencies successfully providing language assistance. Contact the Federally Conducted Committee by calling the Civil Rights Division’s Coordination and Review Section at (202) 307-2222.