



REE LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

FOR USE BY USDA REE MISSION AREA

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction/Civil Rights Statement | 2 |
| 1. Policy | 2 |
| 2. Purpose..... | 3 |
| 3. Scope..... | 3 |
| 4. Roles and Responsibilities | 4 |
| 5. Language Access Processes..... | 7 |
| A. Identification of Communities with LEP and their Interaction with USDA | |
| B. Outreach and Engagement with LEP Communities | |
| C. Notification of the Availability of Language Assistance Services | |
| D. Identification of Individuals with LEP | |
| E. Provision of Language Assistance Services | |
| F. Multilingual Digital Content | |
| G. Procurement | |
| H. Quality Assurance and Control | |
| I. Language Access Procedures | |
| J. Staff Training | |
| K. Hiring Practices and Multilingual Staff | |
| 6. Allocation of Resources | 20 |
| 7. Self-Assessment and Monitoring..... | 20 |
| A. Data Collection and Reporting | |
| B. Tri-Annual Self-Assessment | |
| 8. Federally Assisted Activities | 21 |
| 9. Definitions..... | 22 |

INTRODUCTION/CIVIL RIGHTS STATEMENT

The Research, Education and Economics (REE) mission area is dedicated to the creation of a safe, sustainable, competitive American food and fiber system, to promote strong, healthy communities, families, and youth through integrated research, analysis, and education.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

This Language Access Plan (LAP or Plan) sets forth the standards, principles, and guidelines that USDA REE agencies will use to provide and improve meaningful access for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons in REE agencies operations, services, activities, and programs. For more information, resources, and guidelines, see USDA's Language Access Plan, <https://usda.gov/oascr/languageaccess> (Nov. 9, 2023).

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

1. POLICY

Timely and accurate communication with the public is essential to the mission of the USDA—to serve all people in the United States by providing effective, innovative, science-based policy leadership in agriculture, food and nutrition, natural resource protection and management, rural development, and related issues with a commitment to delivering equitable and climate-smart opportunities that inspire and help America thrive. The Department is committed to strengthening its services and programs by ensuring that individuals with LEP receive meaningful access to USDA's federally conducted and federally assisted programs and activities in accordance with Executive Orders 13166, 13985, 14031 and 14091.

Therefore, it is policy of the REE mission area that all REE programs and staff must take reasonable steps to plan for and provide individuals with LEP timely, accurate, and effective communications within all programs or activities conducted by REE agencies—and must work to ensure that providers of REE-assisted programs are complying with their corresponding obligations. These policies are based on the principle that it is the Department’s responsibility, and not that of an individual seeking services, to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to all Department programs and activities and to foster equity for individuals who interact, or may interact, with the Department over the phone, in writing, in person, or via electronic methods.

2. PURPOSE

USDA requires its mission areas, agencies, and staff offices develop a language access plan to ensure individuals with LEP have meaningful access to its programs and activities. This REE Mission Area LAP sets standards, operating principles, and guidelines to:

- Improve access to REE Mission Area programs and services by individuals with LEP by coordinating implementation of language access services.
- Consult with stakeholders and individuals with LEP regarding REE Mission Area programs and activities.
- Provide the public effective notice of the availability of free language assistance services and how to request these services from REE Mission Area.
- Provide members of the public with LEP effective interpretation services.
- Translate vital documents and information into frequently encountered languages.
- Ensure REE Mission Area employees understand the importance of providing language access services as a means of effective customer service.
- Provide REE Mission Area employees with the knowledge and resources necessary to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access for individuals with LEP.
- Institutionalize the identification of barriers and gaps in services for individuals with LEP who access REE Mission Area programs and activities.
- Monitor the effectiveness of this plan and periodically revise and improve the plan and related services.

3. SCOPE

The REE Language Access Plan (REE LAP) applies to all programs and activities conducted by REE, including REE’s oversight, monitoring, and provision of technical assistance to any entity that receives, directly or indirectly, financial assistance from REE (which the USDA LAP refers to as “providers of USDA-supported programs and activities”). It guides both public-facing and administrative activities, as REE delivers federally conducted and federally assisted services, programs, activities, and information.

The Plan improves the internal management of, and language access strategy for, all REE programs and activities. It does not intend to create new core services or requirements, but instead intends to eliminate or reduce, to the maximum extent practicable, LEP as a barrier to accessing REE's programs and activities. This REE Language Access Plan is not intended to, and does not create, any new right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable by law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

USDA's REE Mission Area is charged with creating a safe, sustainable, and competitive U.S. food and fiber system, as well as building strong communities, families, and youth through integrated research, analysis, and education. The REE Mission Area consists of the following agencies:

- The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), which provides leadership and funding for programs that advance agriculture-related sciences.
- The Agricultural Research Service (ARS), USDA's principal in-house research agency.
- The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), which provides objective, important and accurate statistical information and services to farmers, ranchers, agribusinesses, and public officials.
- The Economic Research Service (ERS), USDA's principal social science research agency.

The REE Mission Area also includes the Office of the Chief Scientist, which provides strategic coordination of the science informing USDA and the federal government's decisions, policies and regulations that impact all aspects of U.S. food and agriculture and related landscapes and communities.

The Administrators and Directors of ARS, NASS, ERS, NIFA and OCS will:

- Set the tone and direction and provide leadership and oversight for this REE Language Access Plan throughout their agency or office.
- Delegate coordination, implementation, and monitoring of the Language Access Plan throughout their agency or office.
- Hold their agency leaders accountable for ensuring implementation of this plan across REE to support an equitable and inclusive operational and programmatic environment.

A. REE Senior Leadership

REE senior leadership— e.g., Senior Executive Service, Program Directors, Division Directors, Regional Administrators, Regional Program Directors, Civil Rights Directors—will proactively promote meaningful access for individuals with LEP and direct REE personnel under their supervision to take necessary steps to comply with the REE Language Access Plan.

B. REE Senior Accountable Official

REE has designated the Acting REE Chief Operating Officer as the senior accountable official responsible for language access. In that role, the REE Chief Operating Officer will:

- Ensure, in coordination with the USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights that REE has a Language Access Plan, and that the REE LAP is consistent with Executive Order 13166; USDA Departmental Regulation (DR) 4330-005, Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Persons with Limited English Proficiency in Programs and Activities Conducted by USDA (June 4, 2013); USDA Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding the Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Persons With Limited English Proficiency, 79 Fed. Reg. 70771-70784 (Nov. 28, 2014) (USDA LEP Guidance); and the USDA Language Access Plan (Nov. 9, 2023). E.O. 13166 and the Title VI LEP requirements based on the Department of Justice’s (DOJ’s) policy guidance document entitled, “Enforcement of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964— National Origin Discrimination Against Persons with Limited English Proficiency” (Federal Register, August 16, 2000, Vol. 65, No. 159), hereinafter, “DOJ’s Policy Guidance Document.”
- Ensure that the REE LAP is maintained, reviewed, and updated as needed, in accordance with the USDA LAP.
- Designate a REE Language Access Coordinator (REE LAC).
- Serve and/or designate at least one REE representative—who may be the REE LAC—to serve on the USDA Language Access Coordinating Committee (LACC).
- Maintain coordination with the REE Civil Rights Offices

In addition, the REE Senior Accountable Official or their designee(s) (who may include the REE Language Access Coordinator) will:

- Establish an enterprise approach to implement, coordinate, and monitor the REE Language Access Plan and language access efforts, across REE to support an equitable and inclusive operational and programmatic environment.
- Collaborate with leadership in REE divisions, offices, and program areas at the national and regional levels to implement, coordinate and monitor this plan and to align REE agencies’ policies and programs with language access best practices in accordance with the USDA LAP, including by identifying and addressing any gaps in language assistance services for individuals with LEP.

C. REE Language Access Coordinator

In addition to any role(s) designated by the REE Chief Operating Officer, the REE Language Access Coordinator will:

- Develop appropriate expertise and familiarity with federal and Departmental law, regulation, and guidance, and with best and promising practices across the Department and the federal government.
- Coordinate within REE and consult as appropriate with the USDA LAC.

- Assist REE agencies with identifying qualified multilingual personnel to serve as interpreters and translators to be included in an interpreter/translator database.
- Assist REE agencies with identifying interpreter and translator qualifications and professional standards for multilingual personnel.
- Assist with drafting progress reports regarding implementation of the REE Language Access Plan for REE Senior Leadership.
- Develop a method for sharing language access information with REE personnel through an appropriate REE digital platform.
- Provide technical assistance to REE as needed regarding the language assistance services needs of individuals with LEP accessing REE programs and activities, including REE program websites and digital services, outreach strategies, program evaluation tools, and more.
- Lead REE with respect to conducting outreach and engagement with communities with LEP, and entities that represent their interests, including consulting with communities with LEP about the development and implementation of applicable REE programs and activities, funding opportunities, and regulations.
- Lead REE with respect to the collection and reporting of language access data.
- Research and report on the need for a Language Access Advisory Workgroup composed of REE personnel for REE Senior Leadership’s consideration.
- Convene and coordinate the various working groups identified in this REE LAP, including, for example, in part B (to develop an LEP Outreach Plan), part 11 (part F (to conduct a thorough review of all digital content, and part 7.B (self-assessment process).
- Quarterly consultation by LAC with REE CR staff, and tracking and resolution of complaints upon receipt.

D. REE Business Center (ARS-Administrative and Financial Management)

The REE Business Center (ARS-Administrative and Financial Management) will take an action to expand the NIFA Language Access Contract to support all REE agencies, and/or will create a new contract that will support all the REE mission area. REE will work to have this contract in place no later than September 2024 (sooner if possible) and REE agencies will be able access it like the other enterprise contracts that we support for the mission area.

E. REE Agencies Communications Teams and Offices of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights

REE agencies’ Communications Teams will work in tandem with their Offices of Equal Opportunity and Civil Rights to:

- Model appropriate language accessibility for the REE agency communications, including plain language standards, Section 508 compliance, and notifying the public of the availability of free language assistance.
- Ensure appropriate translation of REE agency communications such as press releases and statements that target areas where English is not the primary language, when requested.
- Maintain and host language access information and resources on REE agency websites.

F. REE Staff

REE mission area staff who interact with individuals with LEP will:

- Familiarize themselves with Executive Orders 13166, 13985, 14091, this Plan, and REE's language access plan, and fulfill all applicable training requirements.
- Familiarize themselves with the standards for effective and accessible communication.
- Take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to Department programs or services to individuals with LEP.
- Be prepared to effectively use language assistance services when they encounter or have reason to believe that they may encounter individuals with LEP while fulfilling the REE's mission, or upon request by a person with LEP who wishes to access REE programs or activities.

G. USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR)

OASCR provides oversight of all Language Access/LEP program functions within USDA; its role is fully described in the USDA Language Access Plan.

H. USDA Language Access Coordinator (USDA LAC)

The USDA Language Access Coordinator (USDA LAC) sits in OASCR and is responsible for developing the Department-wide initiative on language access. The USDA LAC's role is fully described in the USDA Language Access Plan and includes providing guidance and technical assistance for USDA agencies and offices, as appropriate, on their ongoing language access needs.

I. USDA Language Access Coordinating Committee (USDA LACC)

The USDA Language Access Coordinating Committee is led by the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights or senior designee, with the collaboration of the Department's Senior Designee for Equity under Executive Order 14091 and is composed of representatives from both public-facing USDA agencies and offices, and administrative offices. Its role is fully described in the USDA Language Access Plan. It includes at least one REE mission area designee.

5. LANGUAGE ACCESS PROCESSES

A. Identification of Communities with LEP and their Interaction with USDA

Until the USDA LAC identifies the top languages for USDA, REE mission area will consider the top languages for REE to be: Spanish, Chinese (including the spoken languages of Mandarin and Cantonese and the written languages of Simplified and Traditional Chinese), Vietnamese, Korean, and Tagalog (including Filipino). These languages are based on our most recent NIFA experience and will be revised as needed. Also, REE has identified additional top languages which include Russian; Arabic; French Creole; Portuguese; French; and Polish, according to the

most recent U.S. Census Bureau data available through its American Community Survey (ACS). REE observes that, according to the ACS data, the vast majority of the LEP population across the U.S. speak Spanish, and Spanish-speaking individuals are the only LEP population which equals or exceeds 5% of the U.S. population.

REE mission area staff do not normally encounter LEP individuals in most routine operations. However, the REE mission area has assessed language access needs among certain community and program stakeholders, and in certain event participants. To date, all such LEP stakeholders' and event participants' communication needs are in Spanish, and the majority are from Puerto Rico.

Also, while REE mission area staff do not normally encounter LEP individuals, the funding recipients of one of its agencies, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), do. NIFA's federally funded recipients, which administer agricultural research, educational, and extension programs across the nation, encounter LEP individuals more frequently. NIFA's funding recipients most frequently encounter LEP individuals when administering agricultural extension programs designed to reach farmers, ranchers, communities, youth, and families throughout the nation. Through technical assistance and civil rights compliance reviews conducted by its Equal Opportunity Staff, NIFA provides oversight to its recipients to help them assess the proportion of LEP persons within their service population to ensure LEP individuals, who benefit from NIFA-funded programs, have meaningful access to federally funded programs.

Once the USDA LAC identifies USDA's top languages, the REE LAC will supplement this Department-wide determination by identifying any additional top languages spoken by the communities REE serves or may serve. At least every three years, the REE LAC will work across REE to reassess the top languages spoken by individuals with LEP, based on REE constituency and/or geographic region, using language access data collected by REE, language access data collected from recipient agencies that administer REE mission area-assisted programs and activities, or additional tools and resources identified in the USDA LAP. The REE LAP contract will be modified to add any additional language requirements if identified.

B. Outreach and Engagement with LEP Communities

Effective outreach and engagement with communities with LEP, and entities that represent their interests, is critical to language access planning efforts to increase access to REE programs and activities for these communities and to receive regular feedback on the implementation of the REE Language Access Plan or language assistance services. For tips, see Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, *Ten Tips For Conducting Effective Community Outreach* (2015), available at <https://www.justice.gov/archives/crt/fcs/newsletter/Winter-2015/10Tips>.

The REE mission area will, by three months after the effective date of this LAP, convene appropriate staff (including at least one member of the group with expertise in needs and activities in Puerto Rico) to develop and issue an LEP Outreach Plan. Once issued, the plan will be reviewed by the same group, at least annually. It will cover:

- **Relationship building:** Establishing and maintaining relationships with a variety of entities representing the interests of individuals with LEP, and of communities who have traditionally been marginalized because of their limited ability to speak English.
- **Outreach:** Communicating clearly through written, video and/or audio means about the nature, scope, and availability of language assistance services and how to request them.
- **Community participation:** Increasing efforts to encourage participation from local communities in, for example, REE mission area consultations, focus groups, and/or listening sessions, with the goal of learning about their concerns, needs, and perspectives.
- **Event accessibility:** Taking reasonable steps to ensure that community outreach events involving individuals with LEP are designed to provide meaningful access, where individuals with LEP can participate, receive information, and provide input in their primary language(s) at such events.
- **Information dissemination:** Collaborating with USDA’s Office of Communications to create and maintain lists of non-English press to disseminate information about REE mission area programs and activities, and otherwise disseminating information about REE mission area programs and activities in non-English languages.
- **Message amplification:** Reaching out and partnering with stakeholders to amplify REE communications to specific communities that may include individuals with LEP.
- **Feedback mechanism:** Establishing formal and easily accessible mechanisms to receive feedback about the quality of REE language assistance services.

C. Notification of the Availability of Language Assistance Services

When language assistance services are not readily available, or when an individual does not know that language assistance services are free and available, individuals with LEP are less likely to participate in or benefit from REE programs and activities. As a result, many individuals with LEP may not seek out REE benefits, programs, information, and services; may not offer or receive crucial information that would help determine entitlement or eligibility for benefits; and may be unable to file complaints.

REE will take reasonable steps to provide public notification of how to obtain free language assistance services and how to offer feedback or make complaints about the availability of such services. This information will be offered in different mediums (for example, printed and electronic material, social media, radio, etc.) in consultation with program, outreach, public affairs personnel as well as impacted communities. It should be offered in the top language(s) spoken by individuals with LEP (under part A, above), and more if appropriate based on REE’s four-factor analysis (see part E, below).

In public-facing materials, REE programs are encouraged to include multilingual taglines to allow individuals, including those who do not speak the top identified languages, to be informed about the availability of language assistance services. As in DR 4300-003, *Equal Opportunity Public Notification Policy* (Oct. 17, 2019), available at <https://www.usda.gov/directives/dr-4300-003>, space availability may be considered in developing the appropriate tagline and notice. See FNS, *Assistance Tagline Translations*, at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cr/assistance-tagline-translations>. Another sample tagline is available at lep.gov/translation. Using QR codes is

encouraged and considered an optimal practice to facilitate access to these notifications and other digital content. A resource for using QR codes is available at <https://digital.gov/resources/introduction-to-qr-codes/>.

Each REE agency will post this LAP and any additional policies on their agency websites at, and also at <https://usda.gov/oascr/languageaccess>. In addition, REE agencies will post notices informing LEP individuals of their right to free oral language assistance services in frequently encountered languages. This may include, for example, visible signage in REE public spaces announcing the availability of language assistance services, and translated promotional material (flyers, registration forms, etc.) with information about the availability of interpreting services during the event by request.

D. Identification of Individuals with LEP

Individuals with LEP do not speak English as their primary language and have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. Many individuals with LEP are in the process of learning English and may read, write, speak, or understand some English, but not proficiently. These individuals may be competent in English for certain types of communication (e.g., speaking or understanding), but still have LEP for other purposes (e.g., reading or writing).

At the first point of contact with a person with LEP, REE mission area personnel should determine the language used by the individual and their language assistance needs. If the individual with LEP does not self-identify, personnel may call the appropriate telephonic interpretation service provider to identify the language spoken. If a REE mission area employee has a face-to-face interaction, the employee may use the USDA “*I Speak Statements*” language identification card or promptly contact the telephonic interpretation service provider to identify the language spoken and to obtain interpreter services. Asking the individual about their specific community can also help to identify the language spoken.

REE mission area staff should not make assumptions about an individual’s primary language based on race, color, or national origin. In addition, having a strong accent is not necessarily an indicator that language access services are needed.

E. Provision of Language Assistance Services

The obligation to provide meaningful language access is fact-dependent and required steps are generally evaluated using a four-factor analysis:

- (1) the number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by a program;
- (2) the frequency with which LEP individuals come into contact with the program;
- (3) the nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the recipient to its beneficiaries; and
- (4) the resources available and the costs of language access services.

The REE mission area will work to proactively provide language access services (for example, in-advance translation of vital documents) for any language spoken by more than 5% of the eligible population; what languages this includes will depend on the region of the office in question.

By three months after the effective date of this LAP, the REE mission area will have put in place appropriate contracts or other methods for provision of language access services, including:

- Live interpretation services using qualified interpreters, accessible via phone, web-based platform, and in-person.
- Written translation of documents, including webpages.

i. Interpretation Services

Public-facing REE agency offices should be prepared to provide real-time qualified interpreters free of charge either in-person, over-the-phone, or through video remote technology to communicate with individuals with LEP. REE agency staff or contractors should utilize the mode of interpreting that is most appropriate for the situation: consecutive, simultaneous, or sight-translation.¹ This includes preparation for communication with individuals with LEP who also have communications disabilities. All REE agencies' remote services—such as hotlines or virtual meetings—should offer effective oral language assistance, for example, by offering multilingual options on automated phone systems, and by notifying members of the public attending virtual meetings of the availability of video interpretation services.

The REE mission area will have a contract vehicle in place to help with providing these services when requested.

ii. Translation Services

A vital document is paper or electronic written information and material that contains content critical for accessing a program or activity. The *USDA LEP Guidance* states,

Whether or not a document (or the information it solicits) is 'vital' may depend upon the importance of the program or activity, information, encounter, service, or benefit involved, and the consequence to the individual with LEP if the information in question is not provided accurately or in a timely manner.

Vital documents include, but are not limited to, paper and online applications, consent forms, eligibility determination notices, free language assistance notices, outreach materials, response-required documents, and more. Vital information may also involve specific communications regarding a case or matter between an individual and a REE agency.

¹ For more information on the different modes of interpreting and when they are used, see District of Columbia Office of Human Rights, *Reference Guide: Types of Interpretation*, available at https://ohr.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ohr/publication/attachments/Ref%20guide_Types%20of%20interpretation.pdf. Information to help staff work effectively with telephone interpreters can be found at *TIPS for Working with Telephone Interpreters*, https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/media/document/2020-03/TIPS_Telephone_Interpreters_0.pdf.

As allowed by available resources, REE agencies should translate vital documents for the general public into REE’s top languages, and consider translating into other languages as appropriate based on the application of the four-factor test, given program objectives, constituencies, and/or geographic regions. Accordingly, by three months after the effective date of this plan, REE will put in place a process to:

- Review its existing documents, to identify which of them are “vital” and if so, whether under the four-factor test, what languages (if any) they should be affirmatively translated into prior to any request.
- Review new documents as they are generated, to identify which of them are “vital” and if so, what languages (if any), they should be affirmatively translated into prior to any request.
- Review any request for translation of a particular document.
- Provide for the use of qualified interpreters for oral translations for individuals with LEP who request access to vital documents but are not literate.

Recognizing that translating vital documents can be costly and time-intensive, the REE agency staff conducting these reviews will seek stakeholder input in determining which documents should be prioritized for translation.

Plain Language

Plain language writing assists both native English speakers and those whose English proficiency is somewhat limited. REE is committed to improving its services by writing in plain language, and will ensure information is clear, understandable, and useful (See *Plain Writing | USDA*). When communicating with the public, REE agencies will use plain language in any new or substantially revised document that:

- Provides information about any of our services and benefits;
- Is needed to obtain any of our benefits or services; or
- Explains how to comply with a requirement that we administer or enforce.

iii. Interpretation and Translation Technology

Government agencies are increasingly relying on machine translation software to convert written text on website and online automated services from one language to another. However, machine translation can be inaccurate. See <https://www.lep.gov/translation>. Accordingly, USDA’s Language Access Plan discourages machine translation without human review when the information communicated is vital to a person’s rights or benefits, when accuracy is essential, or when the source materials use non-literal language (e.g., slang, metaphors, agency-specific vocabulary such as program names), have unclear grammar or structure, contain abbreviations or acronyms, or are complicated, technical, or wordy.

If a REE agency is considering using emerging technologies for translation or interpretation applications through third-party services, direct government procurement, or modifying existing services, staff must consult with the USDA LAC, and must consider the following:

- Accuracy of translation and interpretation;
- Accuracy of domain-specific translation and interpretation (e.g., specific USDA policies);
- Speed to incorporate corrections to production systems;
- Ability to share and learn from previous translation/interpretation work;
- Cost per supported end-user;
- Required training and enabling technologies;
- Ability to capture feedback from customers on the level of quality of translation/interpretation;
- Security and privacy;
- Records retention and records management; and
- Origins of source data utilized for machine-generated and computer-assisted applications.

iv. Direct In-Language Services

In addition to interpretation, language access can also be provided by direct in-language communication—monolingual communication in a language other than English between multilingual staff and a person with LEP. Absent exigent circumstances, REE agency staff who have not been formally assessed for their multilingual skills are discouraged from providing direct services in-language. Unqualified staff could provide incorrect information, introduce conflicts of interest or other ethical concerns, or experience other potentially negative consequences for the Department and/or the individual with LEP. Staff are free to use multilingual skills for general greetings in a foreign language and basic communication for the purposes of language identification.

v. Other Requirements When Communicating with Individuals with LEP

Some individuals with LEP face additional communication challenges. For example, individuals with LEP may have a hearing, visual, or speech disability that makes effective communication difficult. REE agency staff should be mindful of REE’s responsibility, and the responsibility of state agencies, local agencies, and program operators administering REE agency programs and activities, to ensure equally effective communication under federal disability rights laws in its programs and activities.² In such cases, REE agencies must utilize alternative communication methods, including assistive technologies and other appropriate auxiliary aids and services, such as sign language interpreters, real-time computer-aided transcription services; written materials; exchange of written notes; telephone handset amplifiers; assistive listening devices; assistive listening systems; telephones compatible with hearing aids; closed caption decoders; open and closed captioning, including real-time captioning, videophones, and captioned telephones.

² See Enforcement of Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap in Programs or Activities Conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture, 7 C.F.R. § 15e.160; Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap in Programs or Activities Receiving Federal Financial Assistance, 7 C.F.R. Part 15b; Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability in State and Local Government Services, 28 C.F.R. § 35.160; Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Disability by Public Accommodations and in Commercial Facilities, 28 C.F.R. § 36.303.

REE mission area will ensure that contracted services for interpretation and translation will include alternative communication methods, and that REE staff work with the contracted vendor to ensure that LEP individuals with disabilities have equitable access to REE programs and activities.

F. Multilingual Digital Content

REE agencies are committed to taking reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to individuals with LEP to digital content we produce, including multilingual and accessible content on public websites and electronic documents containing information about:

- REE agencies' jurisdiction and mission;
- Contact information, including how to communicate with the REE agencies;
- How to file complaints (including forms and instructions to fill out those forms);
- Press releases and important announcements impacting communities with LEP;
- Education materials for individuals or communities about relevant programs; and
- How to access free language assistance services.

By three months after the effective date of this plan, REE's LAC will coordinate appropriate staff to conduct a thorough initial review of all digital content—including websites, services, and voicemail menus—to identify if their vital information is accessible to individuals with LEP. This review should catalog content in top languages and pinpoint areas for improvement. Consistent with U.S. Web Design System guidance, this assessment and resulting improvements should pursue the “consistent placement, interface, and behavior of the language selection component [that] allows users to easily find and access content in the language the user is most comfortable in,”³ and should utilize other appropriate federal resources as guidance.⁴ Websites should include the ability for users to request translations of the page and/or related documents, and to offer feedback about the quality of REE language assistance services. A similar review should be repeated as needed—but at least every year.

³ U.S. Web Design System, USWDS, *Language Selector*, available at <https://designsystem.digital.gov/components/language-selector/>.

⁴ For further resources on Multilingual Digital Content, see LEP.Gov, *Improving Access to Public Websites and Digital Services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons* (2021), available at https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/media/document/2021-12/2021_12_07_Website_Language_Access_Guide_508.pdf; General Services Administration, *Language Connections: Tips to Create, Maintain, and Present Non-English Digital Content* (2022), available at <https://digital.gov/event/2022/02/24/language-connections-tips-to-create-maintain-and-present-non-english-digital-content/>, *10 Tips to Create, Maintain, and Present Non-English Digital Content* (2022), available at <https://digital.gov/2022/05/23/10-tips-to-create-maintain-and-present-non-english-digital-content-a-qa-with-michael-mule/>, *Top 10 Best Practices for Multilingual Websites* (2022), available at <https://digital.gov/resources/top-10-best-practices-for-multilingual-websites/?dg>. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau may also be a resource for multilingual user testing to ensure individuals with LEP have meaningful access to USDA web content. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, *Strengthening information accessibility for consumers with limited English proficiency* (2023), available at <https://www.consumerfinance.gov/about-us/blog/strengthening-information-accessibility-for-consumers-limited-english-proficiency/>.

All digital content must also comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which requires federal agencies to ensure that their electronic and information technology, including websites, electronic documents, and software applications, are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

REE will continue to leverage the REE 508 Coordinator along with the agency liaisons to ensure 508 compliance across various communication and digital platforms.

G. Procurement

For language access services obtained via procurement actions, staff working on those procurements will work closely with the REE LAC and may consult with the USDA LAC to help identify resource-sharing possibilities and learn about currently available USDA language assistance services.

Staff are encouraged to pursue resource-sharing and cost-saving initiatives across the Department for language assistance services, and to consider using local vendors familiar with the culture and language dialect of particular areas.

For any such procurement, REE mission area's procurement office, Acquisition and Procurement Division (APD), will ensure that any Requests for Proposals or contract specify REE mission area needs and vendor responsibilities to include quality control and assurance procedures, assign liability, and contain dispute resolution provisions. At a minimum, contracts for language assistance services should include:

- **Civil rights:** Civil rights assurance clauses;
- **Qualified linguists:** Methods for ensuring that interpreters and translators are fluent in both English and the relevant language and qualified for the particular type of services needed (e.g., to interpret or translate communication that is formal, casual, specialized, or regional, as needed); minimum scores for interpretation performance and the option for certification, though not mandatory;
- **Confidentiality/ethics:** Required knowledge of professional ethics and privacy regulations relevant to interpretation services; mechanisms to ensure confidentiality and avoid conflicts of interest;
- **Capacity:** Ability to meet the REE mission area's demand for interpreters, and for translation, including the delivery of translations in editable electronic or other required formats; acceptable emergency response time; reasonable scheduling of qualified interpreters; on-time service delivery; rapid rates of connection to interpreters via telephone, video, or electronically;
- **Project management/data collection:** Requirements for tracking usage, in order to satisfy the self-assessment and monitoring requirements of part seven below;
- **Reasonable cancellation fees;** and
- **Effective complaint resolution:** Effective complaint resolution when translation or interpretation errors occur.

The government-wide Language Services Procurement Committee’s Foreign Language Services Ordering Guide includes additional information regarding ensuring quality and accuracy in purchasing language assistance services. See Language Services Procurement Committee, Interagency Working Group on Limited English Proficiency, *Foreign Language Services Ordering Guide* (Jul. 2020), available at https://www.gsa.gov/cdnstatic/Foreign_Language_Services_%281%29.pdf.

H. Quality Assurance and Control

REE agencies will use only qualified interpreters with demonstrated proficiency in both English and the other language, and knowledge in both cultures. Quality and accuracy are equally critical for interpretation and translation. But, as the *USDA LEP Guidance* states, “[T]he skill of translating is very different from the skill of interpreting, and a person who is a competent interpreter may or may not be competent to translate.”

i. *Ensuring the Competence of Interpreters and Translators*

REE agencies will take reasonable steps to ensure that qualified multilingual staff or contracted personnel who serve as translators, interpreters, or who communicate “in-language” with individuals with LEP are competent to do so and have the resources necessary to meet the Department’s requirements. Use of individuals who are not competent could result in a breach of confidentiality, a conflict of interest, or inaccurate, impartial, or incorrect interpretation, and is discouraged. Staff or contracted personnel should not provide interpretive or translation services unless they are able to:

- Demonstrate proficiency in and ability to communicate information accurately in both English and the other language. REE agencies will not utilize multilingual personnel, volunteers, or interns to provide interpretation or to translate vital documents unless the REE agency determines that the employee, volunteer, or intern is competent to interpret/translate. REE agencies may use outside resources to determine the competence of multilingual personnel. For example, the Interagency Language Roundtable offers skill level descriptions at <https://www.govtilr.org/Skills/AdoptedILRTranslationGuidelines.htm>.
- Accurately interpret or translate materials using appropriate terminology particular to the REE agency’s programs or activities and using a degree of sophistication appropriate for the audience (for example, at an appropriate reading level).
- Use the appropriate mode of interpreting (e.g., consecutive, simultaneous, or sight translation).
- Understand and follow Department and other applicable confidentiality, impartiality, and ethical rules in compliance with Department expectations.
- Understand and maintain the role and observe professional standards for interpreters, translators, or multilingual staff.
- Where applicable, understand the appropriate use of current technologies for providing language assistance, including the proper review and use of machine translation.

The REE-wide contract will ensure the competence of interpreters and translators and ensure interpreters are qualified and demonstrate proficiency in both English and the language(s) to be interpreted.

Competence can often be achieved by use of certified interpreters or translators, but certification or accreditation may not always be possible or necessary. For those languages in which no formal accreditation currently exists, a particular level of membership in a professional translation association can provide some indicator of professionalism.

Staff should be mindful of the professional responsibility and ethical implications of relying on multilingual internal staff to provide language assistance services in select cases. If a REE agency decides to consider using employees whose job duties do not already include the provision of spoken language assistance services to provide such services, REE staff should consult with the REE LAC to obtain resources for language testing, language assessment processes, and REE agency-specific qualification requirements.

ii. Steps to Assist in Provision of Effective Services

In addition to ensuring that interpreters and translators are competent, the following are guidelines for provision of effective language access services:

- Staff should be aware of potential interpreter fatigue and the possibility that such fatigue can result in errors and should consider strategies to address interpreter fatigue for longer proceedings, where possible, including frequent breaks for the interpreter or the use of multiple interpreters.
- Qualified interpreters and translators must remain alert to the linguistic and cultural characteristics of both languages involved in the language services. REE mission area terms are specialized and a part of the USDA “culture.” Language services must be linguistically correct, textually coherent, and conceptually meaningful in relation to the USDA domain/culture, while considering the cultural perspective of the target population.
- The REE mission area will develop and maintain a list of common phrasing and REE mission area culturally specific terms that can be provided to contracted translators and interpreters, so that they can prepare prior to an engagement.
- REE mission area will develop methods for testing the readability of translated materials. REE mission area agencies could utilize its stakeholders, such as representatives from state or local governments that administer REE mission area programs and activities, advocacy agencies, immigrant-serving organizations, and community-based organizations, to test readability of translated materials. If REE mission area program participants are used to vet translated materials, do so with caution to ensure participants understand that their eligibility for REE mission area programs is not affected by their participation in the vetting process. Additionally, because REE mission area participants are not qualified translators, any revisions to REE mission area materials must be made by qualified translators after receiving input from the vetting process.
- For both oral and written language assistance services, REE mission area will establish feedback methods by which individuals with LEP can provide feedback or make complaints about the quality of the services and will promptly respond to such contacts.

One such method will be that translated documents include a description of how to provide feedback or make a complaint.

I. Language Access Procedures

While individuals with LEP have the right to refuse language assistance services, staff are encouraged in these situations to reiterate the Department's policy to ensure meaningful access and provide services at no cost. Such refusal will be referred to agency's Civil Rights Office in writing within 2 business days. As possible, REE staff will collect information on the language when service is refused to assist in evaluating contractor efficacy.

When arranging or requesting interpreting language assistance services, the REE mission area Civil Rights Offices should make every effort to ascertain that the interpreter matches the language and/or language variant that the individual(s) with LEP uses and that they can understand each other fully.

Absent exigent circumstances, Department staff should avoid using the following individuals to provide language assistance services:

- Staff who are not qualified;
- Family members (especially minor children). Use of minor children as interpreters shall be avoided in all but the most exigent situations. Absent exigent circumstances, use of adult family members as interpreters shall be allowed only if the individual with LEP is offered a qualified interpreter and declines that interpreter, in writing;
- Neighbors;
- Friends; and
- Acquaintances or bystanders.

Staff should also be mindful of asking community-based organizations or other volunteers to provide free language assistance services. Such individuals may not have the necessary skills, qualifications, or knowledge of rules of professional responsibility to provide accurate, impartial, and confidential interpreting. This may also unduly burden an organization's staff and resources, and it may constitute a gift under government ethics rules and/or a violation of the Anti-Deficiency Act, 31 U.S.C. §1342.⁵ Staff should consult the USDA ethics office on a case-by-case basis regarding any volunteer provision of language assistance services.

J. Staff Training

Department staff (including contractors who perform customer-facing roles) need to know how to provide language assistance services. So that policies and procedures can be effective, REE mission area will ensure that appropriate new and existing staff and contractors periodically

⁵ The Anti-Deficiency Act states: "An officer or employee of the United States Government or of the District of Columbia government may not accept voluntary services for either government or employ personal services exceeding that authorized by law except for emergencies involving the safety of human life or the protection of property." 31 U.S.C. § 1342. A full description is located on www.govinfo.gov.

receive language access and effective communication training relevant to their job duties. Language access training needs are part of assessing professional development requirements for all staff. The REE mission area will host a mission specific staff training at least every 3 years.

The training will cover the following topics per staff and relevant contractors:

- Identification of individuals with LEP and specific language needs;
- Legal requirements relating to language access for individuals with LEP;
- USDA and the REE mission area language access policies and plans, including how, where, and when to access interpretation and/or translation services, and how to record and track the use of language assistance services;
- Use of plain language;
- Best practices for providing meaningful language assistance to individuals with LEP;
- Best practices for working with interpreters in person, over the telephone, or via video remote platforms;
- Best practices for working with translators;
- Interpreter ethics; and
- Cultural competency.

Fuller training will be developed by three months after the effective date of this REE LAP. In the meantime, REE agencies will deliver to all public-facing staff a basic briefing on language access obligations and procedures for delivering interpretation and/or translation services and tracking the use of language assistance services.

K. Hiring Practices and Multilingual Staff

The REE mission area values the multilingual skills of its employees, including both staff whose job descriptions include provision of direct in-language communication and language assistance, and staff who volunteer to use their assessed language skills on behalf of the Department. REE will rely heavily on contractors to perform language assistance duties. Qualified multilingual staff can help the REE mission area to meet Title VI and Executive Order 13166 requirements for federally conducted and federally assisted programs and activities. They can also help REE's recipients of federal financial assistance to meet Title VI requirements to ensure meaningful access to LEP persons.

When making decisions about hiring or utilizing multilingual staff, REE agencies in collaboration with their Human Resources Offices will:

- Assess the extent to which non-English language proficiency in particular languages is necessary or desired for particular positions or to fulfill REE's mission.⁶

⁶ Consider reviewing *Before You Hire – Ask Yourself: “What are my Project’s Language Needs?”*, available at https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/media/document/2020-03/TIPS_Before_You_Hire.pdf or *TIPS on Building an Effective Staff Language Service Program*, available at https://www.lep.gov/sites/lep/files/media/document/2020-03/TIPS_Effective_Language_Program.pdf.

- Consider modifying job descriptions, postings and pay rates for roles that interact with individuals with LEP to include language proficiency as a position requirement informed by assessment of the REE agency's language needs.
- Collaborate with USDA OHRM with respect to standard classification language that can be appended to existing position descriptions to aid in hiring positions with language requirements.

The REE LAC will track the composition of existing and newly qualified multilingual staff by non-English languages spoken and level of oral and written proficiency. Maintaining an inventory of qualified multilingual staff can be useful for resource-sharing initiatives within and among offices. Managers should consider the amount of time an employee has spent providing language assistance services when assessing workload and productivity.

In addition, REE LAC will consult with the USDA Office of the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer (OCDIO) with respect to promising and best practices targeting outreach and recruitment and use of the OCDIO Inclusive Hiring Toolkit, and appropriate data collection relating to these positions and hires.

6. ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES

Informed by the four-factor analysis, by three months after the effective date of this LAP, the REE mission area will consider and document the appropriate resources needed for language access planning, outreach, and assistance services based on the range of interactions the REE mission area has with individuals with LEP. As permitted by resource availability, the REE mission area will aim to allocate resources in proportion to the level of current and projected interaction that the REE mission area programs have, or may have, with individuals with LEP, including any projected expansion of language assistance services.

7. SELF-ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING

A. Data Collection and Reporting

The USDA LAP requires REE agencies to report certain language access data to the USDA LAC semi-annually, and additional data annually. This data is required to be provided electronically to the USDA LAC. The semi-annual and annual requests may be revised by the LAC, but until such revision, the request is listed in the USDA LAP's Appendix B.

By three months after the effective date of this LAP, the REE LAC will, in consultation with appropriate REE offices and staff, develop a method for recording and tracking the data needed, including all languages spoken and all language assistance services provided at the point of contact with individuals with LEP. Any personal identifiable information (PII) collected during any stage of this data collection, tracking, and reporting, must be kept confidential and accessible only to authorized personnel. The REE LAC will evaluate this data and report the data to REE leadership and to the USDA LAC, as required.

REE agencies will also encourage state agencies, local agencies, and program operators that administer REE agency-assisted programs and activities to assess the effectiveness of their language access plans by including language-specific data fields within online applications and capturing language assistance services provided in certification and other case management information systems.

The REE Mission Area agencies will conduct an annual comprehensive assessment consistent with the REE LAP to help ensure that language access services are effectively meeting the needs of LEP individuals and are compliant with federal guidelines. REE's LAP will be reassessed every three years to ensure that the scope and nature of language assistance services provided reflect updated information on the LEP populations most frequently encountered, and their language assistance needs. As part of the assessment, the REE mission area will regularly monitor and track LEP interpretation and translation requests received to evaluate whether the LAP is continuing to meet the needs of LEP populations. The REE mission area will also review and assess the adequacy of language services provided and continue to assess its documents and information to identify any items that require advance translation.

B. Tri-Annual Self-Assessment

The USDA LAP also requires REE agencies to conduct a self-assessment of its language access needs and services and to share that self-assessment with the USDA LAC and the LACC. The first such self-assessment is due within two years of the effective date of the USDA LAP, unless the USDA LAC sets an earlier date; subsequent self-assessments are due every three years. The topics of the self-assessment are set out in Part C.12 of the USDA LAP, as is the requirement that for each topic, REE agencies shall consider whether there is a need or opportunity to improve current policy, implementation, and resources, and whether there is a need or opportunity for any change to the REE Language Access Plan.

The self-assessment process will be led by the REE LAC, in collaboration with appropriate REE offices and staff. The REE LAC will lead an effort to incorporate the USDA LAP with the DOJ planning tool into this process.

8. FEDERALLY ASSISTED ACTIVITIES

REE agencies are not responsible for providing language assistance services on behalf of entities delivering REE-assisted programs and activities. However, for REE agency programs that provide federal support to state and local governments and other entities, whether through funding, in-kind assistance, training, detail of personnel, or other assistance, REE agencies will work to ensure appropriate language access in those programs, including by:

- Including assurances of nondiscrimination in all federal-state agreements and contracts.
- Reviewing and potentially updating assurance of nondiscrimination language periodically.
- Notifying recipients of their obligations through training sessions and surveys to determine future training needs.

- Providing technical assistance during compliance reviews, evaluations, and resolution processes.
- Recommending recipients to develop or adopt a language access policy, plan, and procedures.
- Detailing minimum compliance requirements, such as designating a language access coordinator and assessing obligations.

9. DEFINITIONS

- Agency.** A major program organizational unit of the Department with delegated authorities to deliver programs, activities, benefits, and services.
- Agency Heads.** Departmental Under Secretaries, Deputy Under Secretaries, Directors, Chiefs, and Administrators within the Office of the Secretary who receive delegated authority under 7 C.F.R. Agency Heads report to and receive their delegated authorities from Under or Assistant Secretaries as prescribed in 7 C.F.R.
- Agency and office, or agency/office.** All USDA units—including mission areas, agencies, and staff offices—that provide programs, activities, or communication with the public.
- Direct in-language services.** Monolingual communication in a language other than English between multilingual staff and a person with LEP (e.g., Korean to Korean).
- Equity.** The consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.⁷
- Federally conducted programs and activities.** Program services, benefits, resources, or information delivered directly to the public by USDA. This means that the agency staff directly interacts with the intended beneficiaries (program users and communities) and the agency is responsible to implement a language access plan to serve the intended beneficiaries.
- Federally assisted (or federally supported) programs and activities.** Programs and activities provided by a non-federal entity that receives Federal financial assistance. This means that the recipients of federal funding (sometimes referred to as the providers of the program) directly interact with the intended beneficiaries (program users and communities) and those recipients/providers are responsible to provide meaningful access

⁷ Executive Order 14091, *Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*, 88 Fed. Reg. 35, 10825 (Feb. 16, 2023), available at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2023-02-22/pdf/2023-03779.pdf>.

to LEP persons. The USDA agency or office that distributes the Federal financial assistance provides oversight, monitoring, and technical assistance to those recipients to comply with LEP requirements.

- h. **Federal financial assistance.** Grants and loans of Federal funds; the grant or donation of Federal property and interests in property; the detail of Federal personnel; the sale and lease of, and the permission to use Federal property or any interest in such property or the furnishing of services without consideration, or at a consideration which is reduced for the purpose of assisting the recipient; and any Federal agreement, arrangement, or other contract which has as one of its purposes the provision of assistance.
- i. **Interpretation.** The process by which the spoken word is used—generally in real-time—when transferring meaning between languages.
- j. **Language Assistance Services.** Oral and written language services used to provide individuals with LEP meaningful access to, and an equal opportunity to participate fully in, the services, activities, and other programs administered by the Department.
- k. **Meaningful access.** Access that is not significantly restricted, delayed, or inferior as compared to programs or activities provided to English-proficient individuals. Language assistance offers meaningful access if it delivers accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the individual with LEP needing assistance.
- l. **Persons (or individuals or communities) with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).** Persons who do not speak English as their primary language and have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English are limited English proficient, or LEP. This includes individuals who may be competent in English for certain types of communication but have limited proficiency in English in other areas (reading or writing).
- m. **Primary language.** The language in which an individual most effectively communicates when interacting with the Department. An individual’s primary language may be a language variant.
- n. **Program or activity.** The term “program or activity” and the term “program” mean all the operations of the Department. For the purposes of this Plan, the definition of “program or activity” is identical to that used under the regulations implementing Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: “[A] federally conducted program or activity is, in simple terms, anything a Federal agency does. Aside from employment, there are two major categories of federally conducted programs or activities covered by the regulation: those involving public contact as part of ongoing agency operations and those directly administered by the department for program beneficiaries and participants.
- o. **Qualified multilingual staff.** An employee who has proficiency in English and the ability to read, write, or speak in at least one other language at the proficiency level required by the agency/office.

- p. **Qualified translator.** An in-house or contracted translator who has been professionally trained and/or demonstrated competence to translate through national certification or comparable testing and is authorized to do so by contract with the Department or by approval of an agency/office. Qualified translators must also demonstrate knowledge of professional standards, and adherence to the corresponding professional code of ethics, as well as familiarity with required USDA terminology.
- q. **Qualified interpreter.** An in-house or contracted interpreter who has been professionally trained and/or demonstrated competence to interpret through court certification, the State Department, or comparable testing and is authorized to do so by contract with the Department or by approval of an agency/office. Qualified interpreters must also demonstrate knowledge of professional standards, and adherence to the corresponding professional code of ethics, as well as familiarity with required USDA terminology.
- r. **Quality assurance.** The process to ensure accuracy, consistency, quality, and reliability of language assistance services.
- s. **Secretary.** The Secretary of Agriculture or any officer or employee of the Department whom the Secretary has heretofore delegated, or whom the Secretary may hereafter delegate, the authority to act in his stead.
- t. **Sight translation.** Oral or signed rendering of written text into spoken or signed language by an interpreter without change in meaning based on a visual review of the original text or document.
- u. **Tagline.** A short notice in non-English languages informing the general public that a document (e.g., notices of language assistance services, notices of rights, forms, correspondence, etc.) or electronic media (e.g., website, announcement via email, etc.) contains vital information and explaining how to request the document or electronic media provided in other languages.⁸
- v. **Transcreation.** A translation-related activity that combines translation, cultural adaptation and (re-)creation of text to adapt or re-create a message in a different language while making sure the new text is suitable, relevant and useful for the intended local audience and application.
- w. **Translation.** The process of converting written text from a source language into an equivalent written text in a target language as fully and accurately as possible while maintaining the style, tone, and intent of the text, while considering differences of culture and dialect.⁹

⁸ LEP.gov, *Federal Agency Translated Taglines*, available at <https://www.lep.gov/translation#toc-taglines>.

⁹ American Translators Association, *Translator vs. Interpreter: What's the difference?*, available at <https://www.atanet.org/client-assistance/translator-vs-interpreter/>.

- x. **Vital document.** Paper or electronic written material that contains information that is critical for accessing an agency/office's programs or activities or is required by law. Translation of vital documents is required if requested. For more information, see C.8.c.