

The background of the page features a large, light blue watermark of the Seal of the State of New Jersey. The seal is circular with a rope-like border. The outer ring contains the text "SEAL OF THE STATE" at the top and "AUG. 26TH 18" at the bottom. The central figure is an eagle with wings spread, perched on a shield. The shield is divided into three sections: a top section with stars, a middle section with a plow, and a bottom section with a sheaf of wheat. A banner in the eagle's beak reads "SOVEREIGNTY, NATIONAL STATE". Below the eagle, the dates "1868" and "1818" are inscribed. The entire seal is rendered in a light blue, semi-transparent style.

Language Equity and Access Status Report

**The Governor's
Office of New
Americans**

7/1/2025

Summary

The document is an interim report on the implementation of the Language Access and Equity Act in Illinois, as of June 2025. In the first eleven months following the Act's passage, the Governor's Office of New Americans (ONA) has made substantial progress in:

- Establishing an infrastructure to implement the Act.
- Supporting state agencies in creating language access plans.
- Completing a Language Needs Assessment Report.

This report outlines the Act's requirements, the role of the Office of New Americans, and other key steps taken by ONA in the first year after passage of the Act.

Additional questions or inquiry can be directed to **GOV.NewAmericans@illinois.gov**.

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Background and Introduction

The Language Equity and Access Act (15 ILCS 56) (“the Act”) was passed by the Illinois General Assembly in June 2024 and signed into law by Governor JB Pritzker in August of that year. The purpose of the Act is “to ensure that all residents of the State have equal access to State services and, in particular, to remove language as a barrier for persons who have limited English proficiency (LEP) and who may, therefore, be excluded from equitable access to State information, programs, services, and activities.”

The Act requires the Governor’s Office of New Americans (ONA), in partnership with relevant agencies, to:

- Produce a report on the languages spoken in Illinois,
- Facilitate the creation of language access plans in State agencies, along with the development of standards to assess progress by the agencies,
- Establish requirements for interpretation and translation services,
- Set standards for adequate staffing of bilingual employees at State agencies,
- Incorporate language equity compliance provisions in State contracts, and
- Ensure that the State’s limited English population has adequate access to services related to declared situations of emergency, weather, health, or other crisis.

The Act requires that the Language Equity and Access Compliance Report be submitted to the Illinois General Assembly by December 31 of each year, beginning in 2026. This interim report describes the progress made during the first eleven months of plan implementation.

Implementing the Language Access and Equity Act

Per the Act, the Governor’s Office of New Americans (ONA) is responsible for leading statewide efforts in the implementation of the State’s language equity and access policy for limited English proficient persons and to ensure meaningful access to information, services, programs, and activities offered by State agencies for limited English proficient persons, including advancing and monitoring implementation and compliance with the Act. Over the past year, ONA has established an infrastructure to implement the Act, supported agencies in the preparation of language access plans, and ensured completion of the Language Needs Assessment Report as required by the Act.

Establishing Infrastructure for Implementation and Compliance

The Office of New Americans (ONA) identified 49 agencies, boards, and commissions that met the definition of “state agency” as outlined in the Act. Meeting the goals of the Act required the State to develop new infrastructure. This involved establishing a new framework addressing both the personnel needed to effectuate the Act and the active coordination of state agencies.

Implementation Infrastructure

- Relationships with existing State personnel were established for the purposes of initial implementation, new capacity is being contemplated, as necessary, and outside contractors were engaged.
 - ONA engaged all state agencies as defined in the Act to designate a Language Access Coordinator (LACs) in accordance with the Act. See **Appendix A** for a full list of Language Access Coordinators as of June 30th, 2025.
 - ONA contracted a nationally recognized consulting firm with specific experience in state-level language access planning. Among other tasks, the firm has begun evaluating current language access planning across agencies; advising ONA on the development of a monitoring framework for FY26; and providing tools, guidance, and training to build agencies' language access capacity.
 - Given the unique role of language access within the programs of the Illinois department of Human Services (IDHS), ONA consulted leadership from the IDHS Office of Hispanic and Latino Affairs to assist with coordination of language services across agencies.
 - ONA engaged the staff of Central Management Services (CMS) to advise on provisions of the Act related to bilingual staff and contracting. CMS is working to establish additional capacity within the CMS Diversity & Inclusion team to coordinate activities related to language access and bilingual hiring strategy.
 - ONA contracted the Great Cities Institute (GCI) at the University of Illinois Chicago to complete the Language Needs Assessment Report. The report includes robust data analysis by municipality, and even by Chicago Community Area.
 - In addition to the report, ONA worked with GCI to publish a complementary interactive data dashboard to drive more informed policy development and implementation. The dashboard includes county-by-county data alongside a statewide profile. See a chart of all related resources developed by GCI in **Appendix B**.

Creating Agency Language Access Plans

All Illinois state agencies have submitted draft language access plans to the Office of New Americans for review. These plans reflect updated language access planning guidance to ensure compliance with the Act.

Agency Coordination

- ONA established a framework to coordinate with agencies and provide support to achieve compliance with the Act. Key examples of the coordination that has taken place include:
 - ONA informed agency leadership of their responsibilities under the Act and provided expectations around personnel assignments. In discussions and communications, ONA promoted a shared vision of language access requirements, including the designation of a Language Access Coordinator (LAC). Each agency has designated an LAC, and ONA contacted LACs with information about their roles and duties.

- ONA finalized a standardized rubric for the language access plans to ensure consistent content across submissions. See the 2025 scoring rubric attached in **Appendix C**. The rubric assesses key components of the plans, including the treatment of documents, strategies for engaging limited English proficient (LEP) individuals, agencies' approaches to monitoring LEP services, complaint processes, and training and community outreach initiatives.
- The LACs were jointly convened in early 2025 in the first of ongoing quarterly meetings. Participants were introduced to expectations of the Act, the rubric was presented and explained, and LACs reviewed data and information on the numbers, demographic characteristics and trends involving LEP individuals in Illinois.
- Following the initial convening of the LACs, ONA has provided one-on-one and small group technical support sessions to address agency-specific needs.

Language Access Plans

Each agency's plan takes a different form, reflecting their distinct missions and the specific ways they interact with the public. Certain elements are common to most plans, such as:

- Lists of vital documents
- Procedures to:
 - Determine which languages should be provided with translated documents
 - Identify LEP persons and their preferred language
 - Identify a qualified interpreter
 - Arrange for telephone interpretation
 - Monitor language needs on an ongoing basis
 - Provide complaint mechanisms
 - Evaluate and update plans
- Contact information of Language Access Coordinator
- Description of public outreach strategy
- Information on staff training

Agencies were expected to submit a first draft plan to the Office of New Americans for evaluation and feedback by May 2nd, 2025. Currently, ONA is evaluating plans with support from a language access consulting firm that has experience in state-level language access evaluation and implementation.

Completing a Language Needs Assessment Report

The Great Cities Institute (GCI) of the University of Illinois Chicago was contracted to complete the Language Needs Assessment Report. GCI also created two additional products: an online version of the report and an interactive data dashboard that allows agencies and other users to explore languages spoken in individual counties in Illinois, as shown in **Figure 1**. A list of

resources developed by GCI can be found in **Appendix B**, with direct links and QR codes to access each resource.

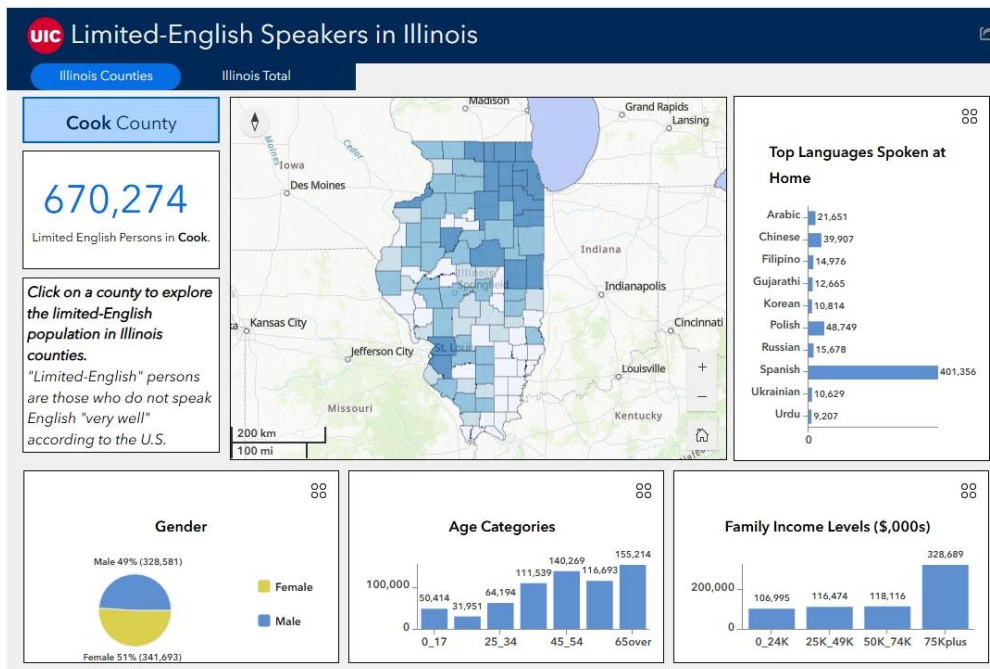


Figure 1 The Illinois Limited-English Speakers data dashboard and a QR code to access the dashboard directly.

Key findings of the Language Needs Assessment Report include the following:

A Quarter of Illinois Residents Speak a Language Other than English at Home

2.8 million persons or 24 percent of the entire Illinois population speaks a language other than English at home.

One Million Illinois Residents Have Limited English Proficiency

In Illinois, 1.0 million residents speak English less than "very well," and speak a language other than English at home. Both federal and state policies recognize that these individuals have a right to equitable access to government services, which includes information and communication in a language they understand.

Eleven languages have more than 10,000 limited-English speakers in Illinois, including:

Largest Language Groups and Largest Limited-English Language Groups in Illinois: 2018-2022

Largest Language Groups		Largest Limited-English Language Groups	
	# of Speakers		# of Speakers
Spanish	1,638,222	Spanish	616,760
Polish	169,308	Polish	73,843
Chinese*	106,399	Chinese*	51,494
Filipino, Tagalog	86,051	Filipino, Tagalog	23,198
Arabic	67,017	Arabic	20,342
Urdu	56,122	Korean	20,165
Gujarati	50,196	Gujarati	18,762
Hindi	47,274	Russian	17,649
Russian	44,211	Vietnamese	13,966
Korean	39,624	Urdu	13,893
French	36,728	Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Little Russian	11,817
German	32,110	French	8,995
Greek	27,158	Hindi	8,681
Italian	26,378	Italian	7,066
Vietnamese	24,675	Rumanian	6,865
Niger-Congo regions	24,340	Serbian	6,067
Telugu	22,742	Bulgarian	5,809
Ukrainian, Ruthenian, Little Russian	21,977	Greek	5,406
Romanian	20,206	Niger-Congo regions	5,397

Bulgarian	16,687	Japanese	5,211
Serbian	16,606	German	5,103
Malayalam	14,808	Lithuanian	4,985
Tamil	14,805	Malayalam	4,478
Lithuanian	13,626	Albanian	4,389
Japanese	13,271	Telugu	4,236
*"Chinese" includes responses of Chinese, Cantonese, Mandarin, Min and Yueh.			

There Can Be Great Language Diversity Within Geographic Areas

The predominant language other than English in many Illinois counties may be Spanish, but closer examination of the most common non-English languages shows that immigrants and migrants come to Illinois from many places. For example, in Champaign County the top language spoken in limited English households is Mandarin and in Macon County it is Tagalog. Additionally, in Cass and Knox counties the second language is French/Haitian/Cajun. In Madison County it's Tagalog. In Cook, DuPage and Kane counties the second language category is Slavic. In Boone County "other Asian Pacific Islander" is second to Spanish.

The Limited-English Population Is on the Rise

After years of decline, the number of Illinois residents who don't speak English very well is on the rise. In examining the ten-year period from 2014-2023, this population fell by 79,000 persons between 2014 and 2019. But since a low of 1.0 million in 2019, the most recent data, for year 2023, shows about 1,082,000 persons, for a gain of some 82,000.

Limited-English Persons Are Most Numerous in the Metro Chicago Area, but Are Found Throughout Illinois

A statewide map of persons who don't speak English very well shows that the largest numbers of such persons are in the metro Chicago area. Nevertheless, significant numbers of up to a thousand are located in townships across the state and are often located near metro areas such as St. Louis, Springfield, Champaign and Rock Island. There are also notable populations in relatively rural townships in counties such as Cass, Douglas or Union.

Next Steps

ONA is committed to working in partnership with agencies to advance language access efforts across State government. As New Americans and Limited-English Proficient individuals face challenges, barriers, and chilling effects in interacting with government, it is critically important to ensure that all individuals have meaningful access to state services in a way that is responsive to their language needs. Proactive and robust language access planning is a demonstration of the State of Illinois' commitment to not only advancing good, responsible, and equitable governance but in honoring the rights of the individuals that agencies serve.

During FY26 ONA will continue to advance implementation progress, including the following priority items:

- Establish a compliance and monitoring framework, including the collection of required data to produce the Language Equity and Access Compliance Report and submit to the General Assembly by December 31st, 2026.
- Complete a review and revision process of all Language Access Plans, with the goal of having all plans publicly accessible.
- Continue to provide technical assistance, uplift best practices, and generate guidance for language access coordinators, including those related to:
 - Data Collection
 - Translation Management
 - Interpretation Management
 - Bilingual Staffing

Appendix

Appendix A: List of Language Access Coordinators

List of Language Access Coordinators (LACs) as of June 30th, 2025.



STATE AGENCY	LAC	LAC CONTACT INFORMATION
Department on Aging	Jennifer Pamela Martinez Ruiz	Pamela.MartinezRuiz@illinois.gov
Department of Agriculture	Heather Boise	Heather.M.Boisie@Illinois.gov
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library	Christen Stanley	christen.stanley@illinois.gov
Bureau of Administrative Hearings	Daniel Lanterman	Daniel.Lanterman@illinois.gov
Capital Development Board	Jill Bohm	jill.a.bohm@illinois.gov
Department of Central Management Services	Daniel Lanterman	Daniel.Lanterman@illinois.gov
Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity	Teri Morris	Teri.Morris@Illinois.gov
Department of Children and Family Services	Lourdes M. Rodriguez & John Holtkamp	Lourdes.Rodriguez@illinois.gov & john.holtkamp@illinois.gov
Department of Early Childhood	Ann Whalen	ann.whalen2@illinois.gov
Department of Healthcare and Family Services	Derrick L. Davis, Sr.	Derrick.Davis@Illinois.gov
Department of Human Services	Ramon Ortiz	ramon.ortiz@illinois.gov
Department of Juvenile Justice	Jim Crowley	Jim.Crowley@illinois.gov

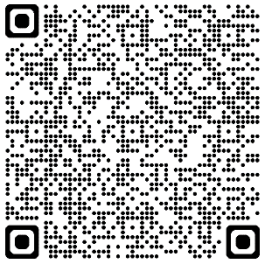
Department of Military Affairs	Amanda Hollinshead	amanda.hollinshead@illinois.gov
Department of Natural Resources	Jose Burgos	jose.burgos@illinois.gov
Department of Insurance	Matthew Goldie	Matthew.T.Goldie@Illinois.gov
Department of Information and Technology	Vickie Simpson	Vickie.Simpson@illinois.gov
Department of Revenue	Shelby Kaiser	shelby.kaiser@illinois.gov
Department of Transportation	Terry Glavin	Terrence.Glavin2@Illinois.gov
Department of Veterans Affairs	Jay Johnson Brittany Hawkins Andrew Sarros	Jay.Johnson2@illinois.gov & brittany.j.hawkins@illinois.gov & andrew.sarros2@illinois.gov)
Fire Marshall	Roberto Lopez	Roberto.C.Lopez@Illinois.gov
Guardianship and Advocacy Commission	Arlene Herron	Arlene.Herron2@Illinois.gov
Gaming Board	Alex Sobor	Alexandra.Sobor2@Illinois.gov
Governor's Office of Management and Budget	Jennifer Cavanaugh	Jennifer.Cavanaugh@illinois.gov
Illinois Board of Higher Education	Rachel Bolinger	bolinger@ibhe.org
Illinois Commerce Commission	Karen Rieken	karen.rieken@illinois.gov
Illinois Community College Board	Jeff Newell	jeff.newell@illinois.gov
Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority	Scott Riolute	scott.riolute@illinois.gov
Illinois Department of Employment Security	Anna D'Ascenzo	Anna.DAscenzo@illinois.gov

Illinois Department of Professional and Financial Regulation	Ann Erickson	ann.m.erickson@illinois.gov
Illinois Department of Human Rights	Deanne Medina	deanne.medina@illinois.gov
Illinois Department of Corrections	Michael Hershey	Michael.Hershey@Illinois.gov
Illinois Department of Labor	Elizabeth Guerrero	elizabeth.guerrero@Illinois.gov
Illinois Department of Public Health	Tiffani Saunders	tiffani.saunders@illinois.gov
Illinois Emergency Management Agency	Eileen Figueroa	eileen.figueroa2@illinois.gov
Illinois Environmental Protection Agency	Chris Pressnall	Chris.Pressnall@illinois.gov
Illinois Housing Development Authority	Dr. Tiffany Davis Vanessa Hill	tdavis@ihda.org vanhill@ihda.org
Human Rights Commission	David R Larson; Bonnie Kim	David.R.Larson@Illinois.gov
Illinois Labor Relations Board	Kimberly Stevens	Kimberly.Stevens@illinois.gov
Illinois Student Assistance Commission	Sam Nelson	Sam.Nelson@illinois.gov
Illinois State Board of Education	Diana Torres	dtorres@isbe.net
Illinois State Police	Mary Dowdy	mary.dowdy@illinois.gov
Liquor Control Commission	Patrick Schoeben	patrick.schoeben@illinois.gov
Illinois Lottery	Olivia Stewart	Olivia.stewart@illinois.gov
Pollution Control Board	Bruce Bennett	Bruce.Bennett@Illinois.gov

Prisoner Review Board	Nichole Damhoff	Nichole.Damhoff@Illinois.gov
Property Tax Appeal Board	Jamie Santini Michael O'Malley	Michael.OMalley@Illinois.gov, Jamie.Santini@Illinois.gov
Racing Board	Jackie Clisham	Jackie.Clisham@illinois.gov
Torture Inquiry and Relief Commission	Natanya Pope-Sohel	Natanya.PopeSohel@Illinois.gov
Worker's Compensation Commission	Whitney Martin	Whitney.Martin@Illinois.gov

Appendix B: Language Access Needs Assessment Report and Dashboard

RESOURCE	DESCRIPTION	QR CODE
Language Access Needs Assessment Report (PDF)	A PDF report that provides a comprehensive analysis of the Illinois LEP population including demographic analysis and language use data at the State, municipality, and Chicago Community Area level.	
Language Access Needs Assessment Report (Interactive Webpage)	A web page with the Language Access Needs Assessment Report information that includes more interactive features, such as charts and graphs.	

Illinois Limited-English Speakers Data Dashboard	An interactive dashboard that displays county and state level data on demographics and language use for Illinois' LEP population.	
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Appendix C: 2025 Language Access Plan Assessment Rubric

2025 LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

PURPOSE:

This rubric is an evaluative tool to assess language access plans and provide guidance and feedback to each state agency, including recommendations to ensure compliance with the Language Equity and Access Act (PA 103-0723).

The rubric is organized into five sections that outline performance metrics to assess the agency's progress in developing and executing its language access plan, as well as building its agency-wide capacity to provide language assistance services.

- Section I: Organizational Capacity
- Section II: Needs Assessment & Data-Driven Planning
- Section III: Language Access Service Delivery
- Section IV: Community Outreach and Public Services
- Section V: Monitoring and Evaluation

BACKGROUND:

According to the Language Equity and Access Act, the adequacy of a language access plan will be determined on an individualized assessment that incorporates the “four-factor analysis” – a federal best practice in language access assessment, including;

- 1) The number or proportion of persons with LEP who are served or encountered in the eligible service population of the State agency;
- 2) The frequency with which persons with LEP come in contact with the services, programs, or activities provided by the State agency;
- 3) The nature and importance of the services, programs, or activities provided by the State agency; and
- 4) The resources available to the State agency and the costs.

Additionally, the Language Equity and Access Act requires each agency to delineate how it will provide the

following:

- Competent, timely translation and interpretation services to persons with LEP who are seeking access to information, services, programs, or activities provided by the State agency;
- Vital document translation services for persons with LEP who are seeking access to information, services, programs, or activities provided by the State agency, including;
 - If there are more than 1,000 persons with LEP in the population of persons served by the State agency, or if persons with LEP comprise more than 5% of the population of persons served by the agency.
 - If there are fewer than 50 persons served by the State agency that reach the 5% threshold of the population served by the agency, the agency shall provide written notice in the primary language to the persons with LEP of the right to receive competent oral interpretation of those written materials free of cost.

Note: The first submitted 2025 plan is exempt from the requirement of an assessment of performance metrics for the previous state fiscal year.

RUBRIC EVALUATION INDICATORS

Evaluation Indicator	Description
I. Agency Capacity Building	Evaluates the infrastructure to support legally compliant and sustainable language assistance services.
II. Needs Assessment & Data-Driven Planning	Assesses the agency’s use of the four-factor analysis and data collected to identify the language needs of its service population.
III. Language Access Service Delivery	Evaluates the provision of language services.
IV. Community Outreach and Public Services	Evaluate how well the agency informs communities with LEP of their right to language assistance.
V. Monitoring and Evaluation	Evaluate the systems in place to monitor, evaluate, and improve its Language Access Plan.

LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN ASSESSMENT RUBRIC

Self -Assessment	
<i>Self-Assessment Completion and Application</i>	Yes/No
The agency has completed the self-assessment Survey.	
The self-assessment includes an overview of relevant data on interactions with LEP individuals, as well as information on the degree of public-facing interactions the agency has.	
The self-assessment tool correctly informs subsequent sections of the LAP.	
I. Agency Capacity Building	
<i>Budget</i>	
The plan’s level of detail suggests an allocated budget for language access implementation, including designated resources for staffing and language access services.	<i>Not Scored in 2025</i>
<i>Language Access Coordinator and Bilingual Staff</i>	
The plan identifies a Language Access Coordinator(s) (LAC) management staff, work group, committee, or other agency staff who will be responsible for creating, advising, and overseeing policy directives, data collection, and developing and modifying the language access plan. The contact information of LAC is clear and visible.	
The plan outlines the LAC’s role and responsibilities, including at least the following: (1) LAC will monitor the agency’s approach to providing services to LEP individuals, (2) LAC will monitor the plan’s performance, and (3) LAC will oversee the process for reviewing, and, if appropriate, modifying current language access plans, policies, and procedures, (4) LAC will update plan data and content every fiscal year.	

The plan outlines the roles and responsibilities of bilingual staff, including a straightforward process for certification, training, and compensation.	<i>Not Scored in 2025</i>
<i>Staff Training</i>	
The plan details a procedure for training new and existing employees.	
The plan outlines the frequency and scope of training for agency employees on language access policies and procedures, including at least the following: (1) training requirements by role, (2) a timeline for providing training and frequency, (3) content of the training.	

II. Language Access Needs Assessment	
<i>Four-Factor Analysis</i>	
Factor 1: The plan includes a comprehensive description of the number or proportion of persons with LEP who are served or encountered in the eligible service population.	
Factor 2: The plan details the frequency with which persons with LEP come in contact with the services, programs, or activities provided by the agency.	
Factor 3: The plan details the nature and importance of the services, programs or activities provided by the State agency, including the number and percentage of persons with LEP who use the service of their agency, listed by languages other than English.	
Factor 4: The plan details the resources available and the overall costs of providing language assistance services.	<i>Scored in other areas of the plan.</i>
<i>Data Collection</i>	

The plan details how to track data on encounters or the delivery of language assistance services by bilingual staff.	
The plan details how data on interpretation and translation vendor services, including the number and types of language services requested, is used to support monitoring and implementation efforts.	
The plan details the number of language access complaints filed and their status.	<i>Not Scored in 2025</i>

III. Language Access Service Delivery	
The plan details the protocol for staff to gather and record language preference information.	
<p>The plan outlines requirements for all tiers of vital documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline translation services are identified and provided for vital documents in mandated languages • A plan for oral interpretation or other translation strategies is identified for languages other than English. 	
The plan outlines the protocols to ensure competent and timely <i>interpretation services</i> and support, including a written plan for engaging with LEP individuals by phone or in person.	
The plan outlines the protocols to ensure competent and timely <i>translation services</i> and support, including a written plan for engaging with individuals with LEP by phone or in person.	
The plan details a step-by-step written plan for providing translation of written correspondence.	
The plan identifies the languages into which vital documents will be translated based on an assessment of the agency's service population.	
The plan outlines how vital documents are defined and identified for that agency and	<i>Not Scored in</i>

provides a comprehensive list of documents identified as vital, including all documents essential to the agency's function.	2025
The plan documents the website's visible translation capabilities and easily visible translation tools.	
The plan documents where translated vital documents are accessible on the agency website.	

IV. Community Outreach and Public Notice

The plan outlines how the agency does or will provide information to the public and to persons with LEP to communicate that language assistance services are available free of charge, what services are available, and how to access services.	
The plan outlines the languages in which notifications about language assistance services are provided, as well as where these notifications appear. For example, on signage, websites, translated documents, telephone tree options, kiosks, and through community-focused outreach.	
The plan outlines efforts to partner with or coordinate with other agencies and stakeholders to ensure consistent identification of LEP status, primary language, and similar information.	
The plan reflects an effort to conduct robust and effective outreach, including details a list of agency plans to conduct outreach and incorporate the needs of persons with LEP in the marketing strategy.	

V. Monitoring and Evaluation

The plan outlines a clear complaint procedure, including a step-by-step resolution process and a method to elevate unresolved complaints to the GOV.NewAmericans@illinois.gov inbox.	
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The plan outlines how the plan's performance will be monitored.	
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