



Racial Equity Assessment Lens (REAL)

NAME OF INITIATIVE PROGRAM/PROJECT: [Language Access Plan](#)

Department: [Communications and Engagement](#)

ORIGIN AND DESCRIPTION

[The Town of Carrboro announced its partnership with the Building Integrated Communities \(BIC\) initiative at the UNC-Chapel Hill Institute for the Study of the Americas in May 2023, following submission of a successful grant application.](#)

[From 2023-2024, the Town of Carrboro worked with the BIC Program at the Institute for the Study of the Americas at UNC-Chapel Hill and with local residents and community-based organizations, including the Refugee Community Partnership \(RCP\), to identify strategies and policies. This process builds on a 2023 language assessment of Town employees and extensive community engagement from 2017-2020 in surrounding Orange County that led to the Chapel Hill Language Access Plan. Carrboro's Building Integrated Communities \(Carrboro BIC\) team met monthly between May 2023 and May 2024 \(this date hasn't happened yet\) to discuss language access best practices, identify community priorities for language access services, analyze demographic data and information on the Town's existing language access capacity, and to decide on priorities for the Town's Language Access Plan.](#)

[The Town of Carrboro recognizes that its residents speak a variety of languages. As part of the Town's commitment to effectively communicate with all members of the public, it is working to reduce the communication gap for residents who speak a language other than English through its Language Access Plan \(LAP\). The Town aims to better serve the community and advance language access efforts that make the Town a more welcoming and inclusive place for all.](#)

[The LAP also serves as a tool to ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits recipients of federal financial assistance, including a local government and its departments, from discriminating based on race, color, or national origin in the provision of any program or activity. The federal government interprets discrimination based upon national origin to include failure to ensure LEP individuals can effectively participate in, or benefit from, federally assisted programs. Through the LAP, the Town is conveying its commitment to supporting its residents' language access rights by setting policies and procedures in place that will help them engage and participate in local government.](#)

What is the specific desired result statement –

[We will improve community engagement and other opportunities by respecting and accepting the use of languages other than English in civic discourse and encouraging residents to access services and participate in local issues using their preferred language.](#)

BENEFITTING INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS

- [1. Even though government services are available to everyone, the language barrier can deter individuals from seeking assistance, participating in community offerings and feeling a sense of belonging in the community in which they live. The result is unequal access to government](#)

services, with a significant population receiving mediocre services — or none at all. A Language Access Plan will help provide more equitable services. When someone inquires about government services, they receive adequate language support from the start, no matter what language they speak.

2. The LAP will help staff understand their roles and responsibilities with respect to overcoming language barriers for LEP individuals. The plan is a management document that outlines how the Town has or will define language assistance tasks, set deadlines and priorities, assign responsibility, and allocate the resources necessary to come into or maintain compliance with language access requirements.

BURDENED INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS

1. There are no known negative impacts of the LAP to communities of color. There may be a negative impact to those languages other than the top 3 languages.
2. Town Employees – training, creating effective systems and costs.

Type	Potential Unintended Consequence	Mitigation Strategies to Prevent Consequences and Advance Racial Equity
SOCIAL Consider native and long-term residents, rural residents, transit, trust in government, education, etc.	The following list an intended consequence, and the negative impact of barriers to language access Reports have shown that language access in government correlates to <u>improvement in faith to the law</u> and government. By “deepening relationships between public officials, the communities they represent, and the voters who elect them, effective language assistance efforts increase faith and trust in government.” Increased involvement will support our democracy and society.	Providing language access for Town programs and services through the Town’s Language Access Plan.
ECONOMIC Consider wages, competition, tourism, unemployment, small businesses, etc.	The lack of meaningful language access can serve as a significant barrier to accessing and maintaining housing. For example, tenants may not understand the terms of their lease or house rules that apply, or may face a subsidy termination hearing without access to an interpreter. Housing providers may also refuse to rent to or otherwise discriminate against LEP applicants or tenants due to the languages they speak.	Providing language access for Town programs and services through the Town’s Language Access Plan.

HEALTH Consider impacts on pollution, health access, existing health disparities, etc.	Language and associated health literacy are powerful social determinants of health. Studies during the COVID-19 pandemic have demonstrated that language access was associated with clinical outcomes, resulting in certain language groups suffering from increased morbidity and mortality.	Providing language access for Town programs and services through the Town's Language Access Plan.
ENVIRONMENT Consider impacts on pollution, natural resources, transit, etc.	The dissemination of accurate and timely climate information is crucial for raising awareness and facilitating informed decision-making. However, a significant obstacle persists: the language barrier. The reliance on dominant languages for the distribution of climate and environmental information poses challenges for accessibility, understanding, and participation, ultimately affecting global efforts to combat climate change.	Providing language access for Town programs and services through the Town's Language Access Plan.
OTHER Consider how a resident might interact with this measure "start to finish." Think through the best- and worst-case scenarios		

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Include an acronym guide somewhere in the language access plan.
2. The REAL may present an opportunity to acknowledge and be transparent while maintaining the high-level in the LAP. For example, on pages 4 and 5, when mentioning the rollout for community members and organizations, an extra couple of sentences could add some detail that acknowledges "...the Town has applied for \$25,000 for plan implementation. Strategies and procedures, while not specifically programmed, have been a regular part of the discussion and include tools such as..."
3. For pp. 5 & 6 (benefits/burdens/unintended consequences – there are a lot of great impacts identified across these sections. Some of the identified impacts may be better suited shifted around – for example, the unintended consequence for the "economic" category has language that could be parsed out into a benefit and a burden, and the associated unintended consequence may be "...that HOAs, property management companies, property owners and other similar stakeholders may not immediately uptake the tool," or "...that the tools are not easy to find on the primarily English or google-translated webpage" etc.
4. Add resources for the community to utilize. This could be in the document or also could be shared through the C&E web page. It was also suggested that the resources include english classes (in case this is something that the person would like to pursue), although the main focus is serving people in the language in which they speak.
5. I thought that this lens was really well written and reflected the data that was included in the Language Access Plan and appendices.

6. Include in the information/plan that grant funding will come in phases as well as from other partnerships. If it is not possible to give a timeline for training of staff, would it be possible to indicate which phase of the grant would include this item? This could also apply to other important items in the Language Access Plan.