



Legislation Text

File #: 24-068, **Version:** 1

Adopt the Language Access Plan and Authorize Receipt of a Grant

PURPOSE: To request that the Town Council adopt the Language Access Plan and authorize the Town Manager to amend the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with UNC-Chapel Hill and receive a \$25,000 grant from the Building Integrated Communities Program at the Institute for the Study of the Americas at UNC-Chapel Hill to fund the plan's first-year implementation.

DEPARTMENT: Communication & Engagement

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COUNCIL DIRECTION:

☒ Race/Equity ☐ Climate ☒ Comprehensive Plan ☐ Other

In 2020, the Town adopted the [Inclusive Carrboro Communications and Community Engagement Plan](https://townofcarrboro.org/DocumentCenter/View/10525/Inclusive-Carrboro-Communications-and-Community-Engagemen) [<https://townofcarrboro.org/DocumentCenter/View/10525/Inclusive-Carrboro-Communications-and-Community-Engagemen>](https://townofcarrboro.org/DocumentCenter/View/10525/Inclusive-Carrboro-Communications-and-Community-Engagemen), recognizing that effective communication between local government and residents is essential in building equitable community relationships, supporting public health and safety, and fostering civic participation. The Plan identifies the need for the Town to increase engagement with underrepresented communities, which include immigrant and refugee residents who moved to North Carolina to work, join families, and seek a better life. The Plan identifies the need to provide meaningful language access to Town information, services, meetings, and leadership opportunities for residents who have limited proficiency (LEP) in the English language.

In addition to the Inclusive Carrboro Communications and Community Engagement Plan, the Town has adopted the following plans and resolutions that also emphasize the need for language access:

- Carrboro Connects 2022-2042 Comprehensive Plan, adopted in June of 2022
- Race & Equity Action Plan: Weaving Equity into Town Governance, adopted in November of 2023
- Resolution in Support of Immigrant Communities (March 19, 2024)

(The REAL for the Language Access Plan is included as Attachment E. Note that recommendations provided are being addressed within the complete REAL.)

INFORMATION: To improve communication and engagement with immigrant and refugee residents, the Town of Carrboro has worked with the [Building Integrated Communities](https://migration.unc.edu/building-integrated-communities/) [<https://migration.unc.edu/building-integrated-communities/>](https://migration.unc.edu/building-integrated-communities/) Program (BIC) at the Institute for the Study of the Americas at UNC-Chapel Hill to identify strategies and policies for a Town of Carrboro Language Access Plan (Attachment A). This partnership, which includes residents and community-based organizations, including the [Refugee Community Partnership](https://www.refugeecommunitypartnership.org/) [<https://www.refugeecommunitypartnership.org/>](https://www.refugeecommunitypartnership.org/) (RCP), began in May 2023 and continues today.

The process for creating a language access plan builds on a 2023 language access capacity assessment of Town of Carrboro employees, demographic research to identify community languages and data on immigration, and extensive community engagement from 2017-2020 in surrounding Orange County that led to the [Chapel Hill Language Access Plan](#)

[<https://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showpublisheddocument/44433/637093323620030000>](https://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showpublisheddocument/44433/637093323620030000).

In Carrboro, a Town Staff BIC Team met monthly between May 2023 and March 2024 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 of Carrboro Language Access Plan. The Town Staff BIC Team represented the following departments: Communication & Engagement; Race and Equity; Housing & Community Services; Human Resources; and Economic Development.

Languages other than English

Carrboro residents speak many languages other than English. Around 15.6% of Carrboro residents speak a language other than English, with Spanish being the most spoken followed by Chinese, including Mandarin and Cantonese. Some of the top languages spoken by refugees in Carrboro are not explicitly specified by the Census Bureau to protect their privacy, but community partners, based on their work with community members in Carrboro, have reported that Karen, Burmese, and Arabic are commonly spoken.

Speakers of non-English languages demonstrate various levels of English-language proficiency. In total, around 6.5% of Carrboro residents speak English less than "very well," according to data from the U.S. Census. Given that Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Karen, Burmese, and Arabic are the languages that are most spoken and have higher proportions of individuals who report speaking English less than "very well", these are the languages that will appear in translated notices of available language services that are available to Town residents at no cost.

The Policies of the Language Access Plan (LAP) are as follows:

- The Town will offer translation and interpretation for its programs, activities, services, and resources free of charge.
- The Town will translate vital documents and emergency communications into the Town's identified community languages.
- The Town will support multilingual staff to provide in-language services or to interpret and translate as part of their job duties.
- The Town will provide interpretation and translation for meetings and one-on-one interactions on request.
- The Town commits to using competent, trained, and culturally sensitive translators and interpreters, including the use of qualified multilingual employees.
- The Town will notify individuals who prefer a language other than English of their right to language assistance services at no charge.
- The Town will provide periodic staff training and new employee orientation on its Language Access Plan.
- The Town will update its LAP periodically based on language service needs and resources.
- The Town will prepare an annual compliance report that documents language access services provided.
- Department liaisons will document usage and requests for language access services and prepare a

summary report of which services have been used, for which languages, and in what context.

- The Town will accept and respond to all language access complaints in community members' preferred languages.

Implementation of the Language Access Plan

The Language Access Plan outlines procedures to carry out the policies of the Language Access Plan. The Town will regularly review and refine the procedures and develop new procedures as needed to better serve community members who prefer to speak languages other than English and to support staff in providing language services.

Working closely with the Communications Team (with representation from all Town departments), Communication and Engagement staff will assist with fulfilling interpretation and translation requests, utilizing contracts with several language services providers who can provide both translation and interpretation services.

Costs of Providing Language Access

In May 2023, the Town of Carrboro was selected to participate in the Building Integrated Communities Program (BIC). As part of its successful grant application, the Town has benefited from a yearlong partnership to develop its Language Access Plan, as well as a \$6,000 grant received in September 2023 and another \$6,000 grant anticipated in spring 2024. In addition to these grant funds, BIC has identified Carrboro to receive an additional \$25,000 grant to be used to implement its Language Access Plan in its first year. The grant is contingent upon required adoption of the Language Access Plan. The UNC team will also need to approve the funding proposal and amend the Memorandum of Agreement (Attachment B) before funds are distributed. Also eligible for a \$25,000 grant is the Refugee Community Partnership (RCP), which has been serving the Town as a community partner in developing a language access and providing community outreach.

The Town and RCP are each preparing plans for use of grant funds from UNC-Chapel Hill. Town BIC Staff propose to use the grant funding toward first year implementation of the Language Access Plan and develop an annual budget for language access services based on its experiences in the first year.

FISCAL IMPACT: Assisting with the costs of the first year of implementation of the Language Access Plan, the Town of Carrboro is eligible to receive a \$25,000 grant from the UNC Building Integrated Communities Program.

RECOMMENDATION: It is recommended that the Town Council consider the resolution to adopt the Language Access Plan (Attachment C) and approve the attached resolution (Attachment D) to authorize the Town Manager to amend the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with UNC-Chapel Hill and receive a \$25,000 grant from the Building Integrated Communities Program at the Institute for the Study of the Americas at UNC-Chapel Hill to fund the first-year implementation of the Language Access Plan in Carrboro.