



OFFICE OF LONG-TERM RESILIENCY

LANGUAGE ACCESS AND ACCESSIBILITY PLAN

Version 2.4

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Biwo Rezilyans Alontèm aksè Lang ak Plan Aksebilite an kreyòl ayisyen

Oficina de Resiliencia a Largo Plazo Plan de Aceso al Idioma y la Accesibilidad en español

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Florida Department of Commerce’s (FloridaCommerce) Office of Long-Term Resiliency (OLTR) Language Access Plan (LAP) explains the actions the Office of Long-Term Resiliency will take to ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 13166 and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)-issued Final Guidance 72 FR 2732 related to disaster recovery programs and services. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 13166 and HUD’s 72 FR 2732 require that recipients of federal financial assistance must take reasonable actions to ensure meaningful access to their activities, programs and services for individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) and visual or auditory impairment.

FloridaCommerce is responsible for administering Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) and Mitigation (CDBG-MIT) funds throughout areas of Florida, which were either designated as most impacted and distressed (MID) by HUD or areas determined by FloridaCommerce as most impacted and distressed. The LAP outlines how FloridaCommerce plans to ensure that LEP individuals have meaningful access to its OLTR programs and services. The LAP describes (1) the four-factor analysis FloridaCommerce conducted to identify the needs of LEP individuals throughout the counties served by Disaster Recovery programs and (2) the accompanying protocols, training and outreach efforts FloridaCommerce will develop and implement in order to ensure LEP individuals can access Disaster Recovery and Mitigation assistance.

2.0 LEGAL AUTHORITY

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides that no person shall, “on the grounds of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” Likewise, Section 109 of the Housing and Community Development Act provides that no individual shall be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity because of national origin. Executive Order 13166 requires recipients to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP individuals to avoid denying benefits as a result of national origin.

3.0 LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT INDIVIDUALS

LEP is defined as individuals who have a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English and may require language assistance to have adequate access to services and programs. Examples of populations will include LEP individuals who are served by FloridaCommerce and its providers including, but are not limited to, persons seeking housing rehabilitation, reconstruction, or replacement due to damages sustained from all past, present, and future disasters.

3.1 THE DEPARTMENT’S COMMITMENT TO LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY INDIVIDUALS

FloridaCommerce is fully committed to making services and information available to LEP individuals through the provision of free interpretation services upon request. Furthermore, where a significant number or proportion of the eligible service population requires services or information in a language that is not English, FloridaCommerce is committed to providing vital program information in that language. FloridaCommerce has taken the proactive step to ensure all vital documents for impacted citizens are translated into Spanish regardless of disaster or geographic location within the state.

Oral language services (interpretation) will come in the form of appropriate “in-language” communication, a qualified bilingual staff member communicating directly in an LEP individual’s language and/or contracted interpreter services. Written language access services will come in the form of a written translation provided by FloridaCommerce translators or a FloridaCommerce-approved translation contractor.

3.2 ENSURING MEANINGFUL ACCESS TO LEP INDIVIDUALS

In accordance with HUD guidelines, FloridaCommerce has conducted a four-factor analysis to determine the reasonable steps it must take to ensure meaningful access to LEP individuals:

FACTOR ONE:

FloridaCommerce has determined the number or proportion of LEP individuals eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the Office of Long-Term Resiliency programs.

Based on the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2022 American Community Survey, FloridaCommerce has identified Spanish and French Creole as the primary languages spoken by LEP individuals residing in Florida.

Language/Language Proficiency	Estimate	Margin of Error
Total population 5 years and over:	21,143,473	+/-3,679
English only	14,758,852	+/-44,936
Spanish:	4,687,222	+/-25,960
Speaks English “less than very well”	2,029,340	+/-28,238
Haitian Creole:	503,533	+/-31,326
Speaks English “less than very well”	169,690	+/-4,120

County	Estimate Speak English Less than ‘Very Well’	Percent Speak English Less than ‘Very Well’	Percent of Total Population that Speak English less than ‘Very Well’ by major languages		
			Spanish	French, Haitian, or Cajun	Russian, Polish, or Slavic
Alachua	10,024	3.94%	1.57%	0.18%	0.08
Baker	105	0.39%	0.31%	0.03%	-
Bay	4,974	2.94%	1.54%	0.01%	0.12%
Bradford	173	0.66%	0.32%	0.17%	-
Brevard	18,424	3.25%	1.73%	0.25%	0.07%
Broward	287,565	15.72%	10.43%	2.60%	0.34%
Calhoun	384	2.54%	2.34%	-	-
Charlotte	6,083	3.37%	1.75%	0.48%	0.42%
Citrus	2,628	1.84%	1.06%	0.13%	0.21%
Clay	7,449	3.66%	2.56%	0.13%	0.02%
Collier	51,327	14.15%	11.08%	1.53%	0.24%
Columbia	1,211	1.86%	1.34%	0.12%	-

Office of Long-Term Resiliency Language Access and Accessibility Plan

DeSoto	5,264	13.65%	12.98%	0.19%	-
Dixie	207	1.29%	0.99%	-	0.27
Duval	51,716	5.85%	2.89%	0.26%	0.40%
Escambia	8,396	2.82%	1.15%	0.07%	0.11%
Flagler	7,402	6.83%	2.47%	0.26%	1.77%
Franklin	182	1.59%	1.36%	-	-
Gadsden	1,804	4.19%	3.96%	0.01%	-
Gilchrist	497	2.87%	2.52%	-	0.13%
Glades	1,620	12.13%	11.28%	0.37%	0.24
Gulf	231	1.59%	1.14%	0.06%	0.14%
Hamilton	547	3.97%	3.02%	0.75%	-
Hardee	3,620	14.37%	14.07%	-	-
Hendry	8,995	23.46%	22.56%	0.11%	0.05%
Hernando	5,829	3.20%	2.35%	0.14%	0.13%
Highlands	6,893	6.90%	6.30%	0.08%	0.02
Hillsborough	154,300	11.32%	9.18%	0.29%	0.11%
Holmes	267	1.44%	0.95%	0.08%	-
Indian River	7,296	4.85%	3.22%	0.53%	0.11%
Jackson	797	1.77%	1.56%	0.03%	-
Jefferson	288	2.11%	1.16%	0.05%	-
Lafayette	593	7.21%	6.32%	-	-
Lake	15,952	4.71%	3.74%	0.27%	0.05%
Lee	69,265	9.60%	7.90%	0.57%	0.17%
Leon	6,849	2.47%	1.09%	0.14%	0.09%
Levy	1,134	2.91%	2.31%	0.07%	0.04
Liberty	114	1.42%	1.26%	0.11%	-
Madison	319	1.80%	1.15%	0.04%	-
Manatee	24,526	6.53%	4.74%	0.26%	0.29%
Marion	14,466	4.23%	3.67%	0.14%	0.08%
Martin	8,246	5.36%	4.17%	0.40%	0.16%
Miami Dade	880,399	34.55%	31.60%	1.82%	0.18%
Monroe	7,470	10.42%	8.39%	0.64%	0.50%
Nassau	1,457	1.79%	1.39%	0.03%	0.03%
Okaloosa	6,879	3.55%	1.95%	0.04%	0.12%
Okeechobee	3,536	9.04%	8.78%	0.08%	-
Orange	185,475	14.37%	10.27%	1.36%	0.13%
Osceola	67,354	19.76%	17.52%	0.73%	0.21%
Palm Beach	186,878	13.29%	8.24%	2.72%	0.32%
Pasco	22,787	4.45%	2.81%	0.11%	0.15%
Pinellas	46,711	5.03%	2.39%	0.15%	0.52%
Polk	54,227	8.16%	6.60%	0.76%	0.06%

Office of Long-Term Resiliency Language Access and Accessibility Plan

Putnam	3,197	4.60%	3.99%	-	-
St. Johns	6,012	2.48%	1%	0.12%	0.18%
St Lucy	21,841	7.17%	4.97%	1.01%	0.08%
Santa Rosa	3,124	1.84%	0.93%	0.10%	0.09%
Sarasota	20,527	4.97%	2.85%	0.21%	0.17%
Seminole	30,262	6.84%	4.79%	0.14%	0.14%
Sumter	2,607	2.04%	1.50%	0.08%	0.01%
Suwanee	1,154	2.73%	2.59%	0.04%	-
Taylor	532	2.57%	1.74%	0.22%	-
Union	120	0.83%	0.72%	-	-
Volusia	18,334	3.52%	2.36%	0.09%	0.11%
Wakulla	413	1.32%	1.05%	0.12%	-
Walton	1,439	2.14%	1.40%	0.06%	0.08%
Washington	415	1.39%	0.97%	-	0.21%

Spanish LEP individuals account for approximately 9.5 percent of the individuals residing in Florida. Haitian Creole LEP individuals account for approximately 0.8 percent of the individuals residing in Florida. The majority of Haitian Creole LEP individuals reside in Hurricane Hermine/Matthew or Hurricane Irma MID areas. No other individual LEP languages account for more than 0.2 percent of the individuals residing in Florida.

FACTOR TWO:

FloridaCommerce has determined the frequency with which LEP individuals encounter OLTR programs. Due to the unique demographic make-up of Florida, FloridaCommerce recognizes that different areas may have different language needs.

In addition to voluntary equal opportunity demographic information, FloridaCommerce collects the primary language preference of each FloridaCommerce customer if the customer agrees to provide the information. Throughout the action plan adoption process in Hurricane Hermine/Matthew as well as Hurricane Irma’s MID areas, FloridaCommerce received requests for communications in Spanish and Haitian Creole, but not in any additional LEP languages. In the Hurricane Michael, Hurricane Sally, and Hurricane Ian MID areas, FloridaCommerce received requests for communications in Spanish, but not in any additional LEP languages.

Based on a review of the state-wide census results and the language preference data FloridaCommerce collected in the Hurricane Hermine/Matthew and Hurricane Irma’s MID areas, FloridaCommerce has determined that Spanish and Haitian Creole are the two significant languages spoken by individuals who will need access to OLTR’s programs and services in Hurricane Hermine/Matthew and Hurricane Irma’s MID areas. However, based on review of census results and the language preference data FloridaCommerce collected in the Hurricane Michael, Hurricane Sally, and Hurricane Ian MID areas, FloridaCommerce has determined that Spanish is the only significant language spoken by individuals who will need access to OLTR’s programs and services in the Hurricane Michael, Hurricane Sally, and Hurricane Ian MID areas.

FloridaCommerce will continue to monitor its interactions with LEP individuals and will implement additional translation and interpretation services, as necessary, to appropriately ensure program access for LEP individuals.

FACTOR THREE:

FloridaCommerce has determined the importance to provide language accessibility to OLTR program activities and services so that LEP individuals are informed and able to participate.

FloridaCommerce is committed to providing vital Office of Long-Term Resiliency program information to LEP individuals in the language they can understand. Vital information is information, whether written, oral or electronic, that is necessary for an individual to understand how to obtain any aid, benefit, service, training or information that is required by law. Examples include applications, complaint forms, notices of rights and responsibilities, notices advising LEP individuals of free language assistance, rulebooks or notices that require a response from the recipient, applicant or participant.

OLTR is committed to reviewing each of its programs to identify vital information and taking steps to ensure that information is available to LEP individuals.

FACTOR FOUR:

FloridaCommerce has taken steps to provide adequate interpretation and translation services to LEP individuals in accordance with its budget, these steps include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. FloridaCommerce has procured a contract for translation and interpretation services. FloridaCommerce representatives that may have oral interactions with LEP individuals have been trained to identify a customer's need for translation services and to provide the service free of charge in a timely manner. No individual is required to provide their own interpreter.
2. FloridaCommerce has taken reasonable steps to publicize the availability of free interpretation services. FloridaCommerce has posted notice of these services on its website and will post notice of these services in every Rebuild Florida Center.
3. FloridaCommerce includes an "Interpretive and Translation Services" link on every Disaster Recovery webpage, informing customers that free interpretation services are available upon request in at least 15 different languages.
4. FloridaCommerce will ensure vital documents are translated in order to provide language accessibility. Upon request, FloridaCommerce will consider requests to translate vital documents into additional languages.
5. FloridaCommerce has distributed "Language Communication" or "I Speak" cards to Rebuild Florida Centers. These resources will assist FloridaCommerce representatives to quickly identify the need for translation services, so FloridaCommerce can provide direct services to these customers.
6. FloridaCommerce employs bilingual staff to assist LEP individuals.
7. FloridaCommerce has designated a language access coordinator to review this LAP and ensure LEP individuals have meaningful access to the services offered through the Office of Long-Term Resiliency programs. The language access coordinator is:

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8. FloridaCommerce will monitor which registrants and applicants are identified as LEP to ensure future interactions with these individuals are handled appropriately.

4.0 ENSURING MEANINGFUL ACCESS TO INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

FloridaCommerce is committed to making its website, Rebuild Florida Centers, and other forms of communication accessible to all users. To make the site more accessible, we include features designed to improve accessibility for users with disabilities. FloridaCommerce's Office of Long-Term Resiliency has included easily available links to accessibility services on its website. FloridaCommerce's website features embedded technology to provide accessibility to the visually impaired which is compatible with most screen readers. Major reports and other publications that are on the website are in formats compatible with common assistive technologies. Alternative formats may be made available upon request.

Auxiliary aids and services are also available upon request to Individuals with disabilities. All telephone numbers on OLTR documents and web pages may be reached by persons using TTY/TTD equipment via the Florida Relay Service at 711.

OLTR welcomes comments on how to improve the site's accessibility for users with disabilities. If an individual who uses assistive technology is unable to access the information due to the current format of OLTR material, they may contact OLTR's Communication Manager for further assistance.

5.0 STAFF TRAINING

FloridaCommerce has ensured that staff who serve customers or members of the public are knowledgeable of the contents of this LAP. FloridaCommerce provides mandatory training on LEP policies and procedures for staff who may potentially interact or communicate with LEP individuals, managers, and certain staff during the performance of web-based duties.

6.0 MONITORING AND UPDATES

The Language Access Coordinator will review and update this LAP periodically. LEP training will be conducted periodically as a refresher for staff. FloridaCommerce managers have established a process for reviewing oral interactions with LEP individuals for compliance with this LAP. The Language Access Coordinator will coordinate with FloridaCommerce managers to review oral interactions with LEP individuals for use in its periodic review of this LAP.