

IV. Who Is a Limited English Proficient Individual?

Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English can be limited English proficient, or LEP, entitled to language assistance with respect to a particular type of service, benefit, or encounter.

Examples of populations likely to include LEP persons who are encountered and/or served by NASA recipients and should be considered when planning language services include, but are not limited to:

- Students enrolled in NASA-funded science, mathematics, and technology enrichment activities.
- Parents or family members of the above.
- Individuals participating in NASA program orientations and visiting exhibits at NASA Visitor centers where the programs and activities are funded and conducted by a NASA financial assistance recipient.

V. How Does a Recipient Determine the Extent of Its Obligation To Provide LEP Services?

Recipients are required to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons. While designed to be a flexible and fact-dependent standard, the starting point is an individualized assessment that balances the following four factors: (1) The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by the program or grantee; (2) the frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program; (3) the nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the program to people's lives; and (4) the resources available to the grantee/recipient and costs. As indicated above, the intent of this guidance is to suggest a balance that ensures meaningful access by LEP persons to critical services while not imposing undue burdens on small business, small local governments, or small nonprofits.

After applying the above four-factor analysis, a recipient may conclude that different language assistance measures are sufficient for the different types of programs or activities in which it engages. For instance, some of a recipient's activities will be more important than others and/or have greater impact on or contact with LEP persons, and thus may require more in the way of language assistance. The flexibility that recipients have in addressing the needs of the LEP

populations they serve does not diminish, and should not be used to minimize, the obligation that those needs be addressed. NASA recipients should apply the following four factors to the various kinds of contacts that they have with the public to assess language needs and decide what reasonable steps they should take to ensure meaningful access for LEP persons.

(1) The Number or Proportion of LEP Persons Served or Encountered in the Eligible Service Population

One factor in determining what language services recipients should provide is the number or proportion of LEP persons from a particular language group served or encountered in the eligible service population. The greater the number or proportion of these LEP persons, the more likely language services are needed. Ordinarily, persons eligible to be served, or likely to be directly affected, by a recipient's program or activity are those who are served or encountered in the eligible service population. This population will be program-specific, and includes persons who are in the geographic area that has been approved by a Federal grant agency as the recipient's service area. However, where, for instance, a school district receiving NASA financial assistance serves a large LEP population, the appropriate service area is most likely the school district, and not the entire State. Where no service area has previously been approved, the relevant service area may be that which is approved by State or local authorities or designated by the recipient, provided that these designations do not themselves discriminatorily exclude certain populations. When considering the number or proportion of LEP individuals in a service area, recipients should consider LEP parent(s) when their English-proficient or LEP minor children and dependents are potential or actual participants or beneficiaries of NASA-funded programs and activities.

Recipients should first examine their prior experiences with LEP encounters and determine the breadth and scope of language services that were needed. In conducting this analysis, it is important to include language minority populations that are eligible for their programs or activities but may be underserved because of existing language barriers. Other data should be consulted to refine or validate a recipient's prior experience, including the latest census data for the area served, data from school systems and from community organizations, and data

from state and local governments.⁶ Community agencies, school systems, and others can often assist in identifying populations for whom outreach is needed and who would benefit from the recipients' programs and activities were language services provided.

(2) The Frequency With Which LEP Individuals Come in Contact With the Program

Recipients should assess, as accurately as possible, the frequency with which they have or should have contact with an LEP individual from different language groups seeking assistance. The more frequent the contact with a particular language group, the more likely that enhanced language services in that language are needed. The steps that are reasonable for a recipient that serves an LEP person on a one-time basis will be very different than those expected from a recipient that serves LEP persons daily. It is also advisable to consider the frequency of different types of language contacts. For example, frequent contacts with Spanish-speaking people who are LEP may require certain assistance in Spanish. Less frequent contact with different language groups may suggest a different and less intensified solution. If an LEP individual accesses a program or service on a daily basis, a recipient has greater duties than if the same individual's program or activity contact is unpredictable or infrequent. But even recipients that serve LEP persons on an unpredictable or infrequent basis should use this balancing analysis to determine what to do if an LEP individual seeks services under the program in question. This plan need not be intricate. It may be as simple as being prepared to use one of the commercially-available telephonic interpretation services to obtain immediate interpreter services. In applying this standard, recipients should take care to consider whether appropriate outreach to LEP persons could increase the frequency of contact with LEP language groups.

⁶ The focus of the analysis is on lack of English proficiency, not the ability to speak more than one language. Note that demographic data may indicate the more frequently spoken language other than English and the percentage of people who speak that language or understand English less than well. Some of the most commonly spoken languages other than English may be spoken by people who are also overwhelming proficient in English. Thus, they may not be languages spoken more frequently by limited English proficient individuals. When using demographics data, it is important to focus in on the languages spoken by those who are not proficient in English.