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**Nevada Department of Agriculture
Language Access Plan
November 2024**

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I. Purpose and Authority

The Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) is committed to meeting the requirements of Senate Bill (SB) 318 and Title VI to ensure all individuals can use our services, including those who may not be fluent in English, are deaf or hard of hearing, or are visually impaired.

The purpose of this document is to establish a plan and procedures for NDA staff to ensure all customers, including those who may have language barriers, are able to access and use NDA services. It's important for the Department to follow this plan to achieve our mission to “preserve, protect and promote Nevada agriculture.

II. General Information

The NDA serves the general public and its customers, including people who may have limited English skills, are deaf or hard of hearing, or are blind or visually impaired. The goal of the Department is to ensure everyone is able to use the services provided. This plan covers all NDA programs and services, such as:

- Public health and safety programs;
- Community and school nutrition programs to fight food insecurity; and, but not limited to,
- Programs needed for business licenses and operations.

The NDA Language Access Coordinator (*as of January 2025*):

VACANT, Public Information Officer

The coordinator will update the plan every year to ensure the NDA is providing access to all services to people with limited English skills, who are deaf or hard of hearing, or who are visually impaired with access to all services. The coordinator will also help staff use tools and resources to provide language services as needed.

For the purposes of this plan, the NDA will refer to individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) as individuals who don't speak English as their main language and/or may have trouble reading, writing, speaking or understanding English. Throughout the plan, “LEP” will be used to reference this larger group.

The use of the tools and resources outlined in this Language Access Plan is dependent upon the NDA receiving adequate funding to provide these services. This information is outlined under section **VI. Evaluation of and Recommendations for the NDA's Language Access Plan.**

III. Profile of the NDA's Customers

The public uses NDA services and gets information in different ways: in person, by phone, through paper documents or online (email, website, social media, etc.).

The NDA provides services through its five divisions:

- Division of Administrative Services
- Division of Animal Industry
- Division of Food and Nutrition
- Division of Measurement Standards

- Division of Plant Health and Compliance

Nevada Demographic Data

The following information comes from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2020 American Community Survey, which looked at households where English isn't the main language. The information below represents the percentage of households in Nevada that speak languages that are not English:

- Spanish – 19.2%
- Other Indo-European languages – 3.4%
- Asian and Pacific Island languages – 6.7%
- Other languages – 1.3%

NDA Self-Assessment

The NDA asked its five divisions to review the Department's language needs. There was not enough data available to determine whether the NDA's customer base is reflective of Nevada's demographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau (above). It was noted that Spanish is the second most common language after English, but more information is needed to fully understand the language needs of NDA customers.

Data Collection

The NDA is committed to tracking the preferred languages of customers, so we can provide them with timely and effective services.

Currently, the Department does not collect or track language needs. To address this, the NDA will begin requesting all customers complete the NDA's Customer Service Survey, which will gather information on their preferred language, if they are deaf or hard of hearing, if they are blind or visually impaired, and what their education level is, as required by Senate Bill 109.

Plain language

The NDA does not currently collect literacy information. However, the Department aims to provide all public information at a seventh grade reading level, including this plan. This helps ensure all documents and communications are clear, organized and easy to understand.

IV. NDA Language Access Services and Procedures

The NDA will use a variety of resources to help the public access services and programs. The department will use state-approved contractors to ensure all language service providers are qualified.

Verbal and sign language services

A. Contracted language access providers:

The NDA will hire a state-approved vendor to offer:

- Over-the-phone language interpretation;
- Video language interpretation and sign language; and
- Document translation.

Using a state-approved vendor ensures the department works with qualified service providers who provide a variety of languages.

B. Telephone relay services:

Individuals with hearing or speech disabilities can contact the NDA using a telecommunications relay service. This free service can be reached by dialing 711 through Relay Nevada. NDA staff can also use Relay Nevada to communicate with people who use a text telephone (TTY) or similar device.

Written language services

The NDA follows certain steps to identify important written information for its services and programs, including both paper and electronic communications. These steps help us identify important written communication between the NDA and customers, as well as communication aimed at the general public.

Vital documents identification procedure

The NDA will use the following considerations to decide if new or updated communications (including print, website, videos, news releases, forms and applications) should be translated into other languages. This depends on staff availability and budget, and the following three factors:

1. Number of individuals impacted: How many people with LEP are likely to use the program?
2. Importance of Program: How important is the program, activity or service to LEP individuals, especially if it's related to public safety, emergencies, accessing food or running a business in Nevada?
3. Resources and Costs: What resources are available and how much will it cost to provide interpretation or translation services?

NDA programs will carefully consider these three factors and the needs of LEP individuals to decide the best way to provide language assistance. All materials published on the NDA website should first meet ADA-compliance standards.

Community outreach and engagement

The NDA is committed to ensuring individuals know about and can use language services. The NDA will promote available language services in the community and notify people about these services at all key points of contact, including through partners. We will also provide resources to help our staff improve their cultural understanding and ability to work with diverse groups.

The NDA has engaged in the following outreach activities:

- News Releases: NDA news releases are sent to Spanish media outlets.
- Food Assistance Information: Important information about food assistance programs is shared through Spanish media outlets.
- Media Interviews: NDA experts periodically do interviews with Spanish media outlets. These interviews are conducted in English and then translated or dubbed in Spanish.
- ADA Compliance: All materials published on the NDA website are ADA-compliant.

Providing notice of language assistance services:

The NDA will create a list of resources with all language assistance options and available language services from approved contracted providers and other resources through the following methods:

- Website: Information will be posted on the NDA website at agri.nv.gov.

- Public areas: Language identification guides and language assistance service notices will be posted in public areas and lobbies of NDA offices.
- Public-facing staff: Staff who interact with the public will have access to language identification guides to inform LEP individuals about free language services.
- Public meetings: NDA rulemaking procedures and public meeting notifications will be updated to specify available language assistance services and how to access them.
- Events: Language identification guides will be posted at NDA-hosted events and activities that serve or engage minority or LEP individuals.

Cultural competency resources:

The NDA will provide the following resources to staff to improve their ability to work with diverse groups:

- Language access policies: Policies and procedures will be reviewed with new employees during onboarding.
- Training materials: Training materials and Standard Operating Procedures will be updated for staff who interact with the public (*to be completed by June 30, 2025*). Staff will annually complete Cultural Competency Training.
- Interpreter training: Training on how to work with interpreters to communicate with LEP and deaf or hard of hearing individuals via phone, video, or in-person, will be provided through contracted services (*to be completed by June 30, 2025, pending budget approval*).
- Plain language training: NDA communications staff will provide training on plain language principles (*to be completed by June 30, 2025, pending budget approval*).

V. Implementing the NDA's language access services

The NDA is dedicated to providing full access to our services and programs for people whose English is limited, those who are deaf, or hard of hearing. Staff must follow the procedures below to ensure everyone can use language services to access resources and information. The NDA is committed to 100% compliance with these procedures and will provide the necessary training to help staff understand their importance to the NDA's mission. Information on how to access language services will be available to all staff on the NDA SharePoint intranet.

Identifying customer language needs and preferred language

NDA staff must follow these steps to (1) meet the needs of all customers, (2) inform them about available language services, (3) determine their preferred language, and (4) record their language preferences for reference in future interactions with the NDA:

1. Initial contact: At the first point of contact, remember that not everyone speaks, or prefers to speak English.
2. Informing of language services: Tell individuals they have the right to receive information about NDA programs and services in their preferred language at no cost.
3. Language identification guide: Use the guide to help customers identify their preferred language.
4. Record the customer's language preferences.

Accessing appropriate verbal/sign language services

Staff will utilize professional interpreters to provide verbal interpretation or sign language services:

- Professional Interpreters: Staff can use professional, contracted phone or video interpreters. Depending on the mode of communication and preferred language, staff will use:
 - Phone Relay Services (711): For communicating with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
 - Video Interpretation: For customers who require sign language.
 - Phone/Video Interpretation: For other languages using NDA's contracted service provider.

Special notes for staff to consider when providing language services:

- Minors (children under 18 years of age) should not be used to interpret unless it's for identifying the preferred language or in life-threatening emergencies.
- Friends/Family: If an individual brings a friend or family member to interpret, ask them to help identify the preferred language. Explain NDA's policy on using credentialed interpreters and the process for connecting with one.

Accessing appropriate written language services

As noted in this plan, all documents and other written resources and communications identified as being "vital" will be translated. Staff should follow these steps to access qualified written language services. This applies to documents for broad distribution and communications between the NDA and individual customers.

1. Determining vital documents: If staff think a public-facing document might be "vital," they should work with the NDA Communications Team to confirm and get the document translated through contracted service providers.
2. Plain language review: Before making any document public or translating it, review it for plain language. This ensures documents are clear, organized and concise, using common words and short sentences. Staff should work with the Communications Team and the LAP coordinator for help with this review.
3. Case-by-case translations: Individual customer communications requiring translation will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Staff should discuss with their division administrator about using contracted service providers for written translation or oral interpreter services based on the information being shared.

Maintaining records of language access services provided to LEP individuals

Staff shall complete an NDA Language Access Services Report form and submit to the LAP coordinator following direct delivery of services to a customer. Staff shall also record in program specific databases the individual's primary language and/or preferred language access services, to the extent possible in the current systems capabilities.

Declared emergency/natural disaster

When there is a declared emergency or natural disaster, it's very important to communicate clearly with the public to prepare, respond and recover. The NDA wants to ensure that LEP individuals get important information quickly and clearly. This might involve translating information into key languages and offering other language services to ensure everyone gets the information they need.

Language Services Quality Assurance

The NDA is dedicated to ensuring all language service providers are skilled and reliable. To ensure quality, the NDA will work with state-approved vendors for language services. The LAP coordinator will gather feedback from staff and customers about these vendors to review their performance each year. If the feedback is negative, the NDA will reassess their contracts.

Staff Training

The NDA believes that providing good language services is crucial to its mission. To achieve this, the NDA will make sure its staff understand and follow language access policies and procedures. All NDA staff will receive training on the Language Access Plan (LAP) regardless of whether the staff member is providing interpretation services to the department.

- Annual review: Staff and contractors will review and acknowledge language access policies and procedures annually.
- New employee onboarding: New employees will learn about language access during their orientation.
- Position-specific training: Training for roles that interact with the public will include instructions on using language services. Each division will identify these positions and update training materials and standard operating procedures to include this information.
- Cultural competence and confidentiality training: Staff will receive training on how to effectively interact with customers from different cultural backgrounds and maintain confidentiality. The NDA will hire a vendor to provide this training annually.

VI. Evaluation of and recommendations for the NDA's language access plan

The NDA is committed to tracking how well the language access policies, procedures and resources are working. This ensures that the Language Access Plan (LAP) meets the needs of both the NDA and the people it serves. At least once a year, the NDA will review, assess and update the LAP as necessary.

Parties responsible for LAP maintenance:

The Language Access Plan Coordinator (as identified in section **II. General Information**) is responsible for the LAP and diversity and inclusion considerations in all communications to the public. The NDA is requesting a new staff position to fulfill these roles. The LAP Coordinator will oversee the following:

- Implementation of the LAP: Making sure the LAP is put into action effectively.
- Management of contract services: Overseeing services related to the LAP.
- Coordination with Human Resources: Ensuring cultural competency training for all staff.
- Tracking and reporting data: Collecting and reporting information related to the LAP and the needs of individuals with LEP, hard of hearing customers and visually impaired.
- Annual LAP review process: Conducting a detailed review of the LAP every year
- Reporting language access needs: Informing the NDA deputy director about language access needs to help with resource and funding requests and policy updates.

JOE LOMBARDO
Governor

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Criteria and methods for LAP evaluation:

The NDA will track the LAP's performance using the following criteria and methods:

- Customer access to information: Translating customer surveys into identified languages to collect feedback from customers.
- Tracking LEP participation/engagement in NDA programs: Collecting both numbers and detailed feedback on programs or resources communicated or distributed in identified languages.
- Staff ability to support LEP customers: Adding questions to the annual NDA Employee Survey to measure staff comfort in implementing language access policies, procedures and services.

Performance monitoring data

Since the NDA has not implemented the LAP yet, there is no previous data available on the criteria above. The LAP will be reviewed annually, and this section will be updated as data becomes available.

VII. Definitions

- **“Diversity & Inclusion Liaison”** - An assigned department staff person who makes sure customers understand and use the language services offered. This person also helps other staff members access resources to ensure access is available to all.
- **“In-language”** - Services provided in a language other than English, without using an interpreter. For example, someone who speaks more than one language may still be able to provide these services even if they are not a certified interpreter.
- **“Interpretation”** - Changing spoken or signed words from one language to another. For example, changing what someone says in American Sign Language into spoken English.
- **“Language access”** – Providing resources and services for individuals speak English without making them pay for it.
- **“Language services”** - Help provided by the Department for people who don’t speak English or are hard of hearing or visually impaired. This includes interpreting spoken words and translating written documents.
- **“Limited English proficiency (LEP)”** - People who don’t speak English as their main language and/or may have trouble reading, writing, speaking or understanding English.
- **“Meaningful access”** - Ensuring people who don’t speak English, are blind or visually impaired, or deaf or hard of hearing can use services and get help without delays or being denied.
- **“Plain language”** - Writing that is easy to understand, clear and well-organized.
- **“Telephonic interpretation”** - Interpreting spoken words over the phone.
- **“Translation”** - Changing written text from one language to another while keeping the same meaning.
- **“Vital document”** - Important documents and resources containing information needed to get government services or benefits. These include applications, complaint forms, notices about program rules or eligibility, and notices related to public safety.