



Limited English Language Proficiency (LEP)

Approved 01.18.18

PURPOSE: To establish Western Oklahoma Workforce Board's (WOWDB) policy for Limited English Language Proficiency (LEP) to comply with Oklahoma Workforce Development Issuance (OWDI) #17-2017.

BACKGROUND: The nondiscrimination and equal opportunity provisions found in Section 188 of WIOA and 29 CFR Part 38 prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, transgender status, and gender identity), national origin (including LEP), age, disability, or political affiliation or belief, or, for beneficiaries, applicants, and participants only, on the basis of citizenship status or participation in a WIOA Title I-financially assisted program or activity.

National origin discrimination now includes LEP under 29 CFR Section 38.9 and specifically states that in providing any aid, benefit, service, or training under a WIOA title I-financially assisted program or activity, a recipient must not, directly or through contractual, licensing, or other arrangements, discriminate on the basis of national origin, including LEP. Additionally, 29 CFR Section 38.41 added "LEP and preferred language" to the list of categories of information each recipient must record about each applicant, registrant, eligible applicant/registrant, participant, and terminee.

DEFINITIONS:

- **Babel Notice:** a short notice included in a document or electronic medium (e.g. web site, application, "app" email) in multiple languages informing the reader that the communication contains vital information, and explaining how to access language services to have the contents of the communication provided in other languages (29 CFR Section 38.4(i)).
- **Employment-related training:** training that allows or enables an individual to obtain skills, abilities and/or knowledge that are designed to lead to employment (29 CFR Section 38.4(t)).
- **Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individual:** an individual whose primary language for communication is not English and who has a limited ability to read, speak, write, and/or understand English. An LEP individual may be competent in English for certain types of communication (e.g., speaking or understanding), but still be LEP for other purposes (e.g., reading or writing) (29 CFR Section 38.4(hh)).
- **Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan:** A written language access plan which assists in ensuring that LEP individuals have meaningful access to WIOA title I-financially assisted programs and activities (29 CFR Section 38.9 Appendix).
- **Meaningful Access:** Language assistance that results in accurate, timely, and effective communication at no cost to the LEP individual. For LEP individuals, meaningful access denotes access that is not significantly restricted, delayed, or inferior as compared to programs or activities provided to English proficient individuals.
- **Primary language:** An individual's primary language is the language in which an individual most effectively communicates, as identified by the individual.

POLICY:

Reasonable Steps to Ensure Meaningful Access for LEP Individuals

WOWDB is required to take reasonable steps to ensure that LEP individuals have meaningful access to their programs and activities. Reasonable steps (29 CFR Section 38.9(b)(1)) may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Conducting an assessment of an LEP individual to determine their language assistance needs.
- Providing oral interpretation or written translation of both hard-copy and electronic materials, in the appropriate non-English languages, to LEP individuals.
- Conducting outreach to LEP communities to improve service delivery in needed languages.

Furthermore, WOWDB will ensure that every program delivery method, whether it be in person, electronic, or by phone, conveys in the appropriate language how an LEP individual may effectively learn about, participate in, and/or access any aid, benefit, service, or training available to them. It should also be noted that as new methods for the delivery of information or assistance are developed, WOWDB will take reasonable steps to ensure that LEP individuals remain able to learn about, participate in, and/or access any aid, benefit, service, or training available to them (29 CFR Section 38.9(c)).

Language Assistance Services

Language assistance generally comes in two forms: oral interpretation or written translation. WOWDB will ensure that above all, these services are free of charge and provided in a timely manner. An LEP individual must be given adequate notice about the existence of interpretation and translation services and that they are available free of charge. For LEP individuals who enter an Oklahoma Works (One-Stop) Center, language assistance services must be timely, and with adequate notice, where feasible. Language assistance will be considered timely when it is provided at a place and time that ensures equal access and avoids the delay or denial of any aid, benefit, service, or training (29 CFR Section 38.9(d) and (e)).

Interpreter Services

WOWDB will not require an LEP individual to provide their own interpreter. Furthermore, WOWDB will not rely on an LEP individual's minor child or adult family or friend to interpret or facilitate communication, except for the following circumstances:

- In emergency situations while awaiting a qualified interpreter;
- When the information conveyed is of minimal importance to the services to be provided; or
- When an LEP individual specifically requests that an accompanying adult provide language assistance and they agree to provide assistance to the individual. If WOWDB permits an accompanying adult to serve as an interpreter for an LEP individual, it must make and retain a record of the LEP individual's decision to use their own interpreter.

Finally, where precise, complete, and accurate interpretations or translation of information and/or testimony are critical for adjudicatory or legal reasons, WOWDB can still provide their own, independent interpreter, even if an LEP individual wants to use their own interpreter as well. This also applies in cases where the competency of the interpreter requested by the LEP individual is not established. (29 CFR Section 38.9(f))

Concerning Vital Information

For languages spoken by a significant portion of the population eligible to be served or likely to be encountered, WOWDB must translate vital information in written materials into these languages. These translations must in turn be readily available upon request in hard copy or electronically. Written training materials, offered or used within employment-related training programs (see definitions section), are excluded from these translation requirements. However, in all cases, WOWDB must take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access for LEP individuals.

For languages not spoken by a significant portion of the population eligible to be served or likely to be encountered, WOWDB must take reasonable steps to meet the particularized language needs of LEP individuals who seek to learn about, participate in, and/or access the aid, benefit, service or training that is available to them. Vital information may be conveyed orally if not translated.

WOWDB must also be sure to include a Babel Notice, indicating that language assistance is available in all communications of vital information. This includes letters or decisions in hardcopy or electronic formats. (29 CFR Section 38.9(g))

Finally, to the extent otherwise required by 29 CFR Part 38, once a recipient becomes aware of the non-English preferred language of an LEP beneficiary, participant, or applicant for aid, benefit, service, or training, the recipient must convey vital information in that language. (29 CFR Section 38.9(h))

Developing a Written LEP Plan

In order to ensure that reasonable steps are taken to allow meaningful access for LEP individuals, WOWDB will develop a written LEP plan. By implementing a LEP plan, WOWDB is more likely to fulfill their obligation of taking reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to programs and activities by LEP individuals.

Furthermore, developing and implementing an LEP plan has many benefits, including providing Local Area staff with a roadmap for establishing and documenting compliance with nondiscrimination obligations and ensuring that LEP individuals receive the necessary assistance to participate in the programs and activities of a Local Area.

When developing an LEP plan, Local Area staff should address the following elements as they provide a clear framework that will ensure meaningful access to LEP individuals:

- The process SOCWB will use to determine the language needs of individuals who may or may seek to participate in programs and activities (self-assessment or needs - assessment) that receive financial assistance under WIOA title I.
- The results of assessment (e.g., identifying the LEP populations to be served by the Local Area).
- Timelines for implementing the LEP plan.
- All language services to be provided to LEP individuals.
- The manner in which LEP individuals will be advised of available services.
- Steps LEP individuals should take to request language assistance.
- The manner in which Local Area staff will provide language assistance services.

- What steps must be taken to implement the LEP plan (e.g., creating or modifying policy documents, employee manuals, employee training material, posters, web sites, outreach material, contracts, and electronic and information technologies, applications, or adaptations).
- The manner in which Local Area staff will be trained.
- Steps the Local Area will take to ensure quality control, including monitoring implementation, establishing a complaint process, timely addressing complaints, and obtaining feedback from stakeholders and employees.
- The manner in which the Local Area will document the provision of language services.
- The schedule for revising the LEP plan.
- The individual(s) assigned to oversee implementation of the LEP plan (e.g., LEP Coordinator or Program Manager).
- Allocation of resources to implement the LEP plan.

It should be noted that the elements of a successful LEP plan are not fixed and must be tailored to the Local Area's specific programs and activities. Over time, LEP plans will need to be revised to reflect the following:

- New recommendations and government guidance.
- Changes in the Local Area's operations as well as the experiences and lessons learned.
- Changing demographics.
- Stakeholder and beneficiary feedback.

(29 CFR Section 38.9 Appendix)

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND NONDISCRIMINATION: All providers must comply with WIOA's Equal Opportunity and Nondiscrimination provisions which prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, childbirth, and related medical conditions, transgender status, and gender identity), national origin (including limited English proficiency), age, disability, political affiliation or belief, or, for beneficiaries, applicants, and participants only, on the basis of citizenship status or participation in a WIOA Title-I financially assisted program or activity.

ACTION REQUIRED: WOWDB will disseminate the Limited English Language Proficiency Policy to all WOWDB contractors. All Contractors will be responsible for following this policy.

POLICY ADDITIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS: The WOWDB Staff is authorized to issue additional instructions, guidance, forms, etc., to further implement the requirements of this policy. The WOWDB Executive Director/Staff is further authorized to make needed and necessary compliance changes to this policy as the need arises due to changes in state interpretation or guidance. Periodic changes should be necessary to continually improve the systems. The WOWDB Executive Director/Staff is further authorized to approve any service provider procedures that are needed in order to implement this policy locally. It will not be necessary to have Board approval of Service Provider procedures as WOWDB Executive Director/Staff will approve procedures as necessary and appropriate. Service Providers are cautioned to always be aware of and have a thorough knowledge of current state guidelines that may be issued along with required forms and procedures.