



Puget Sound Regional Council

Language Assistance Plan

Introduction

The Puget Sound Regional Council develops policies and coordinates decisions about regional growth, transportation, and economic development planning within King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish counties. PSRC is composed of over 80 county, city, port, transit, tribal, and state agencies serving the region.

Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English can be limited English proficient, or "LEP." Language for LEP individuals can be a barrier to accessing important benefits or services, understanding and exercising important rights, complying with applicable responsibilities, or understanding other information provided by federally funded programs and activities.

PSRC takes reasonable steps to ensure that all persons have meaningful access to its programs, services, and information, at no cost. PSRC is developing a Language Implementation Plan for Limited English Proficiency persons as part of its Title VI Plan. This plan is specifically aimed at individuals who have a limited ability to read, write, speak or understand English, referred to as limited English proficient (LEP).

An LEP Plan starts with an assessment to identify LEP individuals who need language assistance. Implementation includes the development of language assistance methods, notification to LEP individuals, and monitoring of the plan.

In addition to the Language Implementation Plan for Limited English Proficiency, PSRC also uses a Public Participation Plan, a Title VI Plan for civil rights, and Environmental Justice analyses on its plans and programs. Find out more at www.psrc.org or from the Information Center at 206-464- 7532.

Federal Laws and Policies Guiding Limited English Proficiency Plans

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act provides that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance (refer to 23 CFR 200.9 and 49 CFR 21). The Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 broadened the scope of Title VI coverage by expanding the definition of the terms "programs or activities" to include all programs or activities of Federal Aid recipients, subrecipients, and contractors, whether such programs and activities are federally assisted or not (Public Law 100259 [S. 557] March 22, 1988).

Executive Order 13166: Improving Access to Service for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, clarified the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with regards to accessibility of federal programs and services to persons who are not proficient in the English language. This executive order stated that individuals who do not speak, read, write, or understand English well are entitled to language assistance under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 with respect to a particular type of service, benefit, or encounter.

Determination of Need

PSRC is required to ensure meaningful access to the benefits, services, and information regarding our programs and activities to individuals who are limited English proficient. PSRC has consulted the USDOT’s LEP Guidance and performed a four-factor analysis of LEP populations in the region and the agency’s level of interaction to determine the appropriate mix of services to offer. The four factors are:

1. The number and proportion of LEP persons served or encountered in the eligible service population.
2. The frequency with which LEP persons come into contact with PSRC programs, activities, or services.
3. The importance to LEP persons of PSRC’s program, activities, and services.
4. The resources available to PSRC and overall cost to provide LEP assistance.

Factor 1: Number and proportion of LEP persons in the service area

PSRC looked at American Community Survey data for people who speak English “less than very well” as Limited English Proficient persons. Table 1 shows the ability to speak English, for persons five years of age and older, by number and percentage. It shows that 8.5% of persons five years of age and older have limited English proficiency.

Table 1: Limited English Proficiency: 2019

	Central Puget Sound Region
Population 5 years and over	3,996,800
Speak English only	3,051,500
Speak a language at home other than English	945,300
Speak English “very well”	604,700
Speak English less than “very well”	340,600
% with LEP	8.5%

Source: American Community Survey, 2019 1-Year Estimates

Table 2 shows LEP population for languages spoken at home. For people who have limited English proficiency or speak English less than “very well,” the largest number speak Spanish. There are 84,000 Spanish speakers with limited English proficiency, more than double the number of any other language. Given the predominance shown in Table 2, Spanish is the language most likely to be requested with 84,000 Spanish speakers in the region unable to speak English well.

'Language spoken at home' is a write-in response in the American Community Survey. Some respondents answer with 'Chinese' rather than a specific dialect. The category

'Chinese' includes several dialects, the most commonly spoken in the region being Mandarin.

Table 2: LEP Population by Language Spoken at Home: 2019

	Total LEP Population	% PSRC LEP Population	% Total PSRC Population
Spanish	84,000	24.7%	2.1%
Chinese	31,400	9.2%	0.8%
Vietnamese	28,900	8.5%	0.7%
Korean	22,700	6.7%	0.6%
Tagalog	16,300	4.8%	0.4%
Mandarin	15,200	4.5%	0.4%
Russian	11,500	3.4%	0.3%

Source: American Community Survey, 2019 1-Year

Factor 2: Frequency of LEP populations’ contact with programs, activities, services.

Since 1999, PSRC has placed special emphasis on including Title VI and Environmental Justice populations in its outreach efforts. In addition to diversifying its mailing lists, PSRC has conducted targeted outreach, including holding work sessions, focus groups, and interviews with people of color and people with low income. These conversations provide insight into the needs and concerns of residents who too often have limited participation in regional government and decision making. PSRC, with the assistance of consultants, has provided translation services for interviews with individuals with LEP. Throughout its planning processes, PSRC regularly updates its mailing lists to include community groups and organizations representing the traditionally underserved, who may include LEP persons.

To better assess its LEP program, the agency continues to monitor staff’s frequency of interaction with LEP communities, including when PSRC receives phone calls from non-English speakers, and when language interpretation at public meetings is requested.

Factor 3: Importance to LEP population of programs, services, activities.

PSRC works with the central Puget Sound counties (King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish), cities and towns, ports, tribes, transit agencies, and the state to develop policies and make decisions about long- term regional issues on land use, transportation, and the economy. PSRC does not provide any direct projects or services to the population of the central Puget Sound region.

PSRC does distribute funds through several transportation programs, including funds for those with special transportation needs, who may include LEP persons. The development of both the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Regional Transportation Plan (MTP) includes a Title VI/Environmental Justice analysis to determine impacts of these programs on the traditionally underserved. All funds PSRC distributes to eligible recipients must be consistent with adopted regional plans, the approval and adoption process of which are guided by PSRC’s Public Participation Plan and all other applicable laws and regulations. Furthermore, PSRC requires project sponsors receiving federal

funds through PSRC to certify annually that they are meeting all federal, state, and local requirements in their operations. So, while not a direct service provider, PSRC ensures that its plans, policies, and programs comply with the law, and are inclusive and beneficial to those who live in the central Puget Sound region.

PSRC's planning activities have the potential to impact every person in the region and PSRC seeks to provide reasonable opportunities for interested parties to comment or provide input on these activities. PSRC evaluates the particular planning activity at hand, whether it be a planning study or a demonstration project and assesses what level of public engagement would be the most effective.

Factor 4: Resources available to PSRC and overall cost to provide LEP assistance.

PSRC remains committed to providing translation services to people who request them and will seek creative, low-cost measures to assist LEP individuals and show the agency's willingness to provide translation services when needed, particularly when PSRC is engaged in Title VI or Environmental Justice outreach as part of its major plan updates. PSRC will continue to monitor all requests for translation services and flexibly respond to such requests as they occur.

PSRC contracts with a telephone translation provider to expand its language offerings to over 200 choices, though Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog and Vietnamese are advertised on the website, news releases, and agenda packets. PSRC also has a web translation widget with over 200 languages to help visitors to the site translate website content instantly. PSRC also makes available interpreters or translation services at public meetings upon request.

Conclusion

Given the size and diversity of the Central Puget Sound region, PSRC's frequency and type of interaction with LEP persons, and the resources available, PSRC determined that the agency will prioritize access to information and translation of vital documents in the six most frequently most frequently spoken languages other than English by LEP persons – Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Tagalog, Mandarin, and Russian. Vital documents have been previously translated into additional languages based on historic data analyses. These additional translations continue to be made available online. PSRC will also, upon request, translate documents and provide interpretation services in other languages.

Language Assistance Measures

PSRC uses Language Assistance Measures to provide meaningful, early and continuous opportunities for all interested Puget Sound residents to participate in the dialogue that informs key decisions, regardless of language barriers. These include:

Staff

PSRC has a diverse staff that includes native speakers of other languages as well as staff with other language skills. Staff are asked periodically about their language expertise and availability. A number of staff have agreed to be on call for assistance when immediate

language needs arise. PSRC will call for professional language assistance once this intermediary step occurs. These language skills are present among existing staff:

- Cantonese
- Czech
- French
- German
- Japanese
- Korean
- Mandarin
- Russian
- Spanish
- Vietnamese

Online Translation

PSRC uses Google Translate tools for its website. This tool prompts anyone looking at PSRC's website from a computer that is not set to English that the translation tool is available. Google offers about 90 languages. PSRC also has its vital documents translated and available online at <https://www.psrc.org/contact-center/language-assistance>.

Reception

PSRC's reception staff keeps an *I Speak* card at the front desk. The *I Speak* card is a printout of a number of languages, which a non-English speaking person can point to and identify their language. Reception then can seek translation help for that person in their language. Reception then can seek translation help from staff who speak that language or via the contracted telephone translator.

Visualization Techniques

Visualization techniques are one way to communicate with LEP or low-literacy persons. PSRC uses visualization techniques such as maps, charts, graphs, illustrations, infographics, presentations and videos at all types of meetings and in all types of print materials to explain concepts behind actions and decision-making.

PSRC may also use handouts and posters to display visual information. PSRC's boardrooms are equipped with computers, projectors, and sound systems for displaying visual and audio information.

Notification Techniques

PSRC regularly notifies community groups and the media when there are opportunities for public comment or new information is available. This includes notifying community based organizations that support LEP groups as well as non-English media sources. PSRC's website, publications, and news releases include a notification of the public's rights under Title VI and include notification of the availability of translation services:

العربية | Arabic, 中文 | Chinese, Deutsch | German, Français | French, 한국어 | Korean, Русский | Russian, Español | Spanish, Tagalog, Tiếng việt | Vietnamese, visit <https://www.psrc.org/contact-center/language-assistance>.

Agendas

The agendas for all PSRC board meetings include instruction on how to get materials in alternative formats. The notification reads:

Sign language, and communication material in alternative formats, can be arranged given sufficient notice by calling 206-464-7090, TTY Relay 711.

العربية | Arabic, 中文 | Chinese, Deutsch | German, Français | French, 한국어 | Korean, Русский | Russian, Español | Spanish, Tagalog, Tiếng Việt | Vietnamese, visit <https://www.psrc.org/contact-center/language-assistance>.

Accessibility for Sight and Hearing Impaired

PSRC maintains an accessible website and uses the TTY Relay. All PSRC meetings are conducted in facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities and to people who rely on public transit. In 2018, PSRC's website and online documents underwent an accessibility audit. PSRC staff continue to develop accessible documents and reports.

Focus Groups

PSRC, often with the help of consulting firms, has convened targeted outreach sessions, such as lunch sessions or focus group meetings, with residents and community leaders that represent Title VI, Environmental Justice, and Limited English Proficient populations. These meetings are an effective way to increase participation from communities PSRC may not have come into contact with previously, including LEP individuals. These meetings include translation services if needed by participating individuals if it is recommended by community leaders or is requested in advance.

Surveys

PSRC regularly conducts surveys to hear from residents of the region. These surveys are usually translated into multiple languages and made available in various formats. Surveys are often followed by targeted interviews to gain additional information from different demographic groups, including LEP populations.

Vital Documents

To achieve compliance with U.S. DOT guidelines, PSRC has taken into consideration the Safe Harbor Provision of the FTA Title VI Circular (4702.1B) in developing its policy on translating documents:

DOT has adopted DOJ's Safe Harbor Provision, which outlines circumstances that can provide a "safe harbor" for recipients regarding translation of written materials for LEP populations. The Safe Harbor Provision stipulates that if a recipient provides written translation of vital documents for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes five percent (5%) or 1,000 persons, whichever is less, of the total population of persons eligible to be served or likely to be affected or encountered, then such action will be considered strong evidence of compliance with the recipient's written translation obligations. Translation of non-vital documents, if needed, can be provided orally. If there are fewer than 50 persons in a language

group that reaches the five percent (5%) trigger, the recipient is not required to translate vital written materials but should provide written notice in the primary language of the LEP language group of the right to receive competent oral interpretation of those written materials, free of cost.

See FTAC 4202.1B, Chapter III, 9C.

PSRC's four-factor analysis reveals more than 18 languages that are spoken by more than 1,000 LEP persons in the PSRC four-county region. Spanish-speaking LEP persons are the largest group, representing 24.7% of the total LEP population, followed by Chinese (9.2%), Vietnamese (8.5%), Korean (6.7%), Tagalog (4.8%), Mandarin (4.5%) and Russian (3.4%). Upon review of the four-factor analysis, PSRC determined that the agency will translate documents considered "vital" into the six most frequently spoken languages other than English – Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, Tagalog, Mandarin, and Russian. See: <https://www.psrc.org/contact-center/language-assistance>. PSRC's "Vital Documents" include:

- American Disabilities Act (ADA) Commitment
- American Disabilities Act (ADA) Grievance Procedure
- Title VI Notice
- Title VI Complaint Form and Procedures

With regard to translating vital and non-vital documents into other languages, PSRC is committed to providing reasonable access to all individuals and complying with the DOT's Safe Harbor Provision. PSRC will provide translations of the agency's vital – and non-vital documents on a case-by-case basis – by request. Requests can be made by emailing LanguageHelp@psrc.org. Vital documents have been previously translated into additional languages based on historic data analyses. These additional translations continue to be made available online.

In addition to these regularly used measures, PSRC also uses additional outreach techniques that may include LEP populations during major planning processes:

Engagement with Community Members

PSRC conducts targeted outreach, such as work sessions, focus groups, and interviews with people of color, people with low incomes, including interviews in languages other than English. These conversations provide insight into the needs and concerns of residents. PSRC, with the assistance of consultants, provides translation services for interviews with individuals with LEP.

Partnering with Community Based Organizations

PSRC continues to work with Community Based Organizations to expand outreach. Since many of these organizations provide services for people with LEP, these partnerships often include providing additional translations based on need.

Monitoring and Updating of the LEP Plan

Ensuring fair and equal access to information remains a priority for PSRC. PSRC will monitor requests for translations and adjust practices to meet demand and will periodically update this plan as needed to reflect changes.

