

NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENTAL LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN (DLAP)

PART A: PUBLIC-FACING SECTION

Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County: Language Access Plan
Effective Dates: July 1, 2025- June 30, 2026

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SECTION 1: OVERVIEW & CONTEXT

1. Department Mission

Inspiring wonder, discovery, and responsibility for our natural and cultural worlds.

The Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County (NHMLAC) is committed to accessibility, including language access, and prioritizes equitable communication and engagement through multiple languages. The Museum's programming, exhibitions, and community engagement efforts incorporate language access as a means of advancing our mission. Accessibility helps to remove barriers and fosters access to participation in the Museum's exhibitions and programs.

2. Department Priority Languages

Through demographic analysis of our visitors and the broader Los Angeles County, NHMLAC has identified English, Spanish, and American Sign Language (ASL), with additional language support in Korean and Mandarin as our priority languages.

SECTION 2: DEPARTMENT'S LANGUAGE ACCESS POLICY

3. General Policy Statement

Language Access Plan for the Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County

In order to ensure accessibility for all visitors, the Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County is committed to implementing a comprehensive Language Access Plan. This plan aims to provide clear guidelines and resources to facilitate communication and engagement for individuals with Languages Other Than English (LOTE) and those who are deaf or hard of hearing. By fostering an environment where language barriers are minimized, NHMLAC seeks to enrich the museum experience for every guest. Language access assistance can be delivered to our guests and visitors via requests through our Guest Experience team, the Museum's call center, or via our information email at info@nhm.org.

4. **Scope of Policy**

Key Components of the Language Access Plan

1. **Multilingual Staff and Volunteers:** NHMLAC aims to recruit and train a team of multilingual staff and volunteers proficient in languages commonly spoken by visitors, including but not limited to Spanish, Mandarin, Korean, and American Sign Language (ASL). These individuals would be available throughout the museum to assist visitors with language-specific needs.

2. **Translated Materials:** Essential museum materials, including visitor guides, maps, onsite promotions, wayfinding, and safety instructions, will be translated bilingually in English and Spanish. All new exhibition content is translated, and there is an active effort to translate legacy exhibition labels.

3. **Language-Specific Tours and Programs:** When requested by visitors, NHMLAC will strive to offer tours and/or educational programs conducted in various languages to accommodate diverse language needs. Existing virtual tours of the Dinosaur Hall are currently available on the Museum's website in six languages, including Spanish, Korean, Mandarin, Eastern and Western Armenian, and ASL. These existing tours highlight in-depth insights into the museum's collections and scientific discoveries.

4. **Interpreter Services:** To facilitate effective communication during programs, NHMLAC will provide on-site ASL interpreting services for a Museum visit. Visitors can request ASL interpreter services in advance through the museum's website two weeks in advance of their visit.

5. Technology Solutions: The museum will invest in technology-driven solutions such as real-time translation devices and multilingual audio guides to enhance accessibility for non-English speaking visitors. These tools will be designed to deliver accurate interpretations of exhibit content and educational programs. The Museum also follows Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to continuously improve the accessibility of our digital marketing platforms, including website and social media.

6. Community Outreach and Feedback: NHMLAC will actively engage with local communities to gather feedback on the effectiveness of the Language Access Plan. Community input will be used to continually improve language services and ensure that the museum remains responsive to the needs of its varied visitor base.

7. Cultural Competency Training: All museum staff will undergo training on cultural competency and effective communication strategies when interacting with visitors from varied cultural backgrounds. This training will emphasize sensitivity to cultural nuances and respect.

8. Accessibility Statements and Resources: NHMLAC will display accessibility statements and information on language services on its website, at museum entrances, and within visitor guides. This visibility will empower visitors to make informed decisions about their museum experience.

By implementing these initiatives, NHMLAC reaffirms its commitment to fostering a welcoming environment where all visitors can explore and appreciate the wonders of our natural and cultural worlds. The Language Access Plan not only aligns with the museum's strategic goal of being a Museum of, for, and with Los Angeles, and demonstrates its dedication to accessibility in public cultural institutions.

Through ongoing evaluation and adaptation, NHMLAC will continue to refine its Language Access Plan to meet the evolving needs of its audience, ensuring that language barriers are no obstacle to the transformative power of science, nature, and exploration.

SECTION 3: KEY TERMS & DEFINITIONS

- **Languages Other Than English (LOTE):** Refers to individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

- **Language Access:** The provision of language services and resources that facilitate meaningful access to programs, activities, and information for individuals with limited English proficiency.
- **Language Access Plan (LAP):** A formal document or strategy outlining how an organization or entity will provide language services to LOTE individuals to ensure they have access to services and information.
- **Qualified Interpreter:** A person who is able to interpret effectively, accurately, and impartially, both receptively and expressively, using any necessary specialized vocabulary.
- **Translation:** The process of converting written text from one language into another while maintaining the original meaning, context, and style.
- **Language Services:** Includes interpretation (oral translation) and translation (written translation), as well as other aids or services necessary to ensure effective communication between LOTE individuals and service providers.
- **Cultural Competence:** The ability of organizations and individuals to effectively interact with people from different cultures, taking into consideration their cultural beliefs, values, practices, language, and needs.
- **Language Assistance:** The provision of language services, such as interpretation and translation, to facilitate communication between LOTE individuals and service providers.
- **Language Access Complaint Procedures:** The process established by an organization for LOTE individuals to file complaints related to language access issues, ensuring that such complaints are addressed promptly and effectively.

These terms and definitions are crucial for developing, implementing, and maintaining effective language access plans that promote access to services for all individuals, regardless of their language proficiency.

SECTION 4: PROCEDURES

This section is intended to set expectations with the public about the level of language assistance they might expect and the types of language assistance they may encounter.

Identifying Preferred Languages

Procedure:

- Upon initial contact with an individual requiring LOTE access, staff members are trained to identify the individual's preferred language.
- The identification process includes asking the individual directly about their preferred language or dialect.

- Museum staff and volunteers are also encouraged to wear “I speak” badges on their uniform to help guests identify them as fluent in another language.
- Guests may also reach out to the Museum via the Call Center or info@nhm.org email ahead of their visit to request language access support for their Museum visit.
- Once a guest-facing staff member identifies a language access need, they document that request in a log for supervisorial review.

Training:

The NHMLAC Spanish Style Guide is essential for supporting the museum's IDEA initiatives by ensuring all communications are inclusive and accessible. By providing clear guidelines for translating content into Spanish, the guide helps break down language barriers and fosters a welcoming environment for Spanish-speaking visitors. It promotes consistency and accuracy in translations, enhances the visitor experience, and aligns with NHMLAC's commitment to equity and inclusivity. This guide is a vital tool in creating a culturally competent and inclusive institution, reflecting the diverse community it serves. In an effort to continuously improve our offerings, we have established a task force to review and refine the Spanish Style Guide.

Vital documents:

Our Department has identified the following documents as vital for Limited English Proficient speakers enrolling or staying enrolled in County programs, services, or benefits:

- Application forms for enrollment in programs or benefits.
- Notices of rights and responsibilities related to programs or benefits.
- Instructions for completing forms and understanding program requirements.
- Any other document critical for understanding eligibility, rights, or responsibilities related to County services.

Policy on Untrained Interpreters: (if one already exists)

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles does not currently have a policy on untrained interpreters.

Section 5: Notification of Language Assistance

NHMLAC will display accessibility statements and information on language services on its website, at museum entrances, and within visitor guides. Language assistance is communicated at all major points of contact where guests may interact with staff including; the Museum websites, Call Center, and Ticketing booths. During large scale public events, we will also provide event signs and programming in English and Spanish and will also provide ASL interpretation services.

Section 6: Monitoring Language Assistance Effectiveness

Evaluation of Language Assistance

NHMLAC is committed to providing inclusive and accessible experiences for all visitors. On an individual basis, we strive to provide our visitors with the following:

- Over the Phone Interpretation Services
- Video Remote Interpretation Services
- Document Translation Services
- In Person Sign Language Interpretation Services
- In Person Oral Interpretation Services
- Miscellaneous Services: Captioning, subtitling, transcription, and voice-over services.

Additionally, we have utilized simultaneous translation services at events, where interpreters provide live translation into headsets available for checkout. This service is new to the institution and we will track metrics on its usage in future fiscal years.

Complaint Process

NHMLAC welcomes guests to email or call to submit questions, requests or complaints about their visit. Our Guest Relations team works cross departmentally to address emails and calls that come through those channels. Acknowledgement of and response to complaints will occur within 10 business days.

Section 7: Training

NHMLAC Staff will have access to the Museum's DLAP through the Museum's Intranet site and via the Human Resources department. In addition, our guest-facing staff will be trained on the Museum's DLAP policy during their onboarding process.

Section 8: Community Outreach & Engagement

Through our ongoing work of Community Engagement, NHMLAC will actively engage with local communities to gather feedback on the effectiveness of the Language Access

Plan. Since 2018, NHMLAC has partnered with a number of community-based organizations, or "Community Partners," which are engaged in active communication, listening, collaboration, and co-creation. Community Partners have committed to working with the Community Engagement team in a meaningful way to build a better community together. Many of these organizations are in close proximity to our museum and embedded in grassroots work to improve the lives of the communities they serve. Community input is used to continually improve language services and ensure that the museum remains responsive to the needs of its diverse visitor base.

PART B: REFERENCE SECTION (For Internal Use)

Section 9: Demographic Analysis & Determination of Priority Languages

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County does not currently have any regulations that govern language access for our visitors. We currently capture information about our priority languages and guests who identify as LOTE through our onsite guest engagement staff. The Museum also works closely with our Community Partners across the County to establish additional language access needs for programs and initiatives. Additionally, the Museum conducts regular evaluations of visitors' experience which may include information about language access needs.

Section 10: Bilingual Staff Policy

The Natural History Museum does not currently have a bilingual staff policy. Guest-facing Museum staff who self identify as being bilingual can elect to wear a badge to identify their additional languages and may support interpretation with guests who request their support.

Section 11: Vendors and Their Qualifications

NHMLAC tracks a list of vendors used for language access. These vendors are referred by Community Partners and/or Marketing and Communications colleagues across the museum field.