

Alachua County
Recovery Plan

American Rescue Plan

State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds

Language Access

Executive Summary

In response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Federal government has provided Alachua County funding through the American Rescue Plan – State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. One Category of response is Public Health – Other COVID-19 Public Health Expenses (including Communications, Enforcement, Isolation/Quarantine) (1.8). Building the Language Access Infrastructure of Alachua County Services for Limited English Proficient Speakers (LEP): *An Equity Response to Disparities Experienced During COVID*

Racial equity intersects issues of race, economic class, nationality, literacy, and language. To achieve greater equity and inclusion, the County needs to acknowledge and commit to responding to the linguistical and literacy diversity of its residents, especially those identified as limited English proficient speakers (LEP). The COVID-19 pandemic revealed inequities in information and services to non-English speakers, resulting in negative health outcomes and economic disenfranchisement. These issues have been exacerbated by historic disparities impacting immigrants, refugees, Puerto Rican monolingual-Spanish speaking neighbors, and lower-literate community members in the County.

There are approximately 37,700 speakers of languages other than English who reside in Alachua County (14% of the population). In the County, 11% of the population is foreign-born, the largest percentage being from Asia, followed by Latin America, Europe, and Africa. Race, gender, ethnicity, and income are issues that intersect and collectively impact community members' lived experiences. This indicates that many foreign-born individuals are people of color who are positioned to experience racial and linguistic discrimination simultaneously, while also experiencing bias due to potential issues related to documentation. Additionally, it is notable that there are more than 5,000 foreign students at the University of Florida and Santa Fe College combined (2018 figures). Of these, 4,000 were graduate students, many with children and spouses who are LEP speakers.

While many programs funded by ARPA will specifically target disproportionately impacted communities, underserved and hardest-hit communities will continue to face significant barriers in learning about potential relief as a result of multiple issues such as language and communication challenges including speakers of other languages, disabilities, and the intersection of these issues within families and communities. Formal immigration status, country of birth, and potential lack of official documentation also may limit qualifications for programs and increase fear and reluctance.

Uses of Funds

The County intends to support, elevate, and amplify the needs of communities whose primary language is other than English and residents that are unable to see or hear. One overriding goal is to make sure these communities are aware of how ARPA funds and ARPA programs are being handled within the County.

Establishment of an Immigrant Liaison Position to coordinate programming that expands the inclusion of immigrant/refugee community members and builds equity in access to County services and initiatives. The liaison position will be housed in the Office of Equity and will serve

the County to assure that inequities are diminished in serving this diverse limited English-speaking community. This individual would lead Alachua County in developing the following:

A) Development and implementation of a Language Access Plan to be responsive to the 1964 Civil Rights Act Title VI and Executive Order 13166 requiring entities receiving federal financial assistance to provide meaningful access to programs and services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The primary goal is effective communication with LEP individuals and the plan will outline the County's commitment, policy directives, and procedures to further the goal. A Language Access Assessment and Planning Tool provided by the Department of Justice is a valuable resource that can assist the County in developing a broader, more comprehensive plan beyond the current LEP Plan.

B) Training of all County employees on:

- 1) the 1964 Civil Rights Act Title VI, Executive Order 13166, and the Language Access Plan.
- 2) the existence of the County's LanguageLine contract and other translation/interpretation service provider options.
- 3) training to assure that all employees seamlessly utilize the County's language access options and serve non-English speakers equitably.

C) Translation of Vital County-driven Information about programs in its existing mediums (i.e. emergency health response, children and cultural activities, ordinance changes, etc.). This will increase equity in access to and engagement with an emergency (Hurricanes/storms, pandemics, etc.) and other services. Modes of communication to be impacted include:

- County websites, social media, and emergency notification systems

D) Funding of an Immigrant Neighbor Guide, developed by community organizations serving immigrants to explain systems, protocols, and rights to services, language access as well as their responsibilities as neighbors. This promotes community responsibility, inclusion, and safety. To be printed in multiple languages (NOT only made available as an App or pdf), but this guide will also address issues related to:

- Emergencies, pandemics, hurricanes
- Law enforcement interaction – Community ID, reporting hate crimes
- Accessing Community ID
- Using County Services, accessing schools, parks, libraries, and social services
- Immigrant/Refugee rights and responsibilities in this community
- Encourage community engagement and community programming

E) County signage in multiple languages to reduce barriers to accessing services, attending events, and locating County offices and structures (i.e. vaccination sites, food distribution locations).

- boost immigrant/refugee confidence as being acknowledged within the community
- present the County as a first-class and international community

Promoting equitable outcomes

Data that follows supports the need to respond to tens of thousands of County residents who speak languages other than English. Data comes from the [US Census](#), [World Population Review.com](#), School Board of Alachua County, and the Rural Women’s Health Project (RWHP):

- 37,719 speakers of languages other than English who reside in Alachua County (14% of the population)
- 7.5% Spanish speakers (ages 18-64)
- 4% speak Asian or Pacific Island languages
- According to the [School Board of Alachua County](#), there are 800 non-English speaking children (ELL) in Alachua schools, 80+ families in migrant education with monolingual Spanish or indigenous speaking parents, and 80 Spanish-speaking out of school youth served by Migrant Education
- The Combined Communications Center received 397 requests for the language line between September 2020 and April 2021. The majority were Spanish speakers followed by Mandarin, Vietnamese, and Tagalog.

The local Salir Adelante survey of Latinas found that the leading barriers for Latinx immigrant women accessing health-protective services included: **immigration stressors, access to health resources**, and employment. Participants identified insurance status, **English proficiency, and discrimination** as barriers to health and social services. (Source: RWHP, Salir Adelante, 2020)

Estimated Budget

	FY2023	FY2024	FY2025
Immigrant Liaison – 1 FTE	\$100k	\$100k	\$100k
Translation of Vital Documents County Websites/Social Media Posts	\$200k	\$150k	\$150k
Telephone/Video Interpreting Services	\$ 10k	\$ 10k	\$ 10k
Development and Outreach related to Neighborhood Guide	\$ 30k	\$ --	\$ --
Costs associated with County-wide Training	\$ 10k	\$ --	\$ --
Signage (rough estimate based on 52 County buildings/parks)	\$ 5k	\$ --	\$ --
Total:	\$355k	\$260k	\$260k

Total estimated budget for the project: **\$875,000**

Goals and Measures

A). Establishment of Immigrant Liaison position in SEEDS Office to oversee language access initiatives and develop immigrant community engagement strategies.

Measure:

Competent Immigrant Liaison hired; Initial work plan and assessment developed.

Add numerical data to measures and goals, for example, what percentage of Spanish speakers would be able to access xxx on behalf of Alachua County.

B). Development and implementation of a comprehensive Language Access Plan in various languages that are disseminated to the public via traditional and non-traditional mechanisms.

Measure:

(i) Language Access Plan in multiple languages/disseminated to immigrant communities.

(ii) Number of contacts requiring language interpreting or document translation services.

(iii) We expect this to impact approximately 5000 individuals in Alachua County

C). Training of County employees on language access plans and service providers.

Measure:

(i) 25% of employees trained in Year 1, 50% in Year2, 100 % by year three

(ii) Track the number of complaints regarding language access issues that Alachua County individuals share with County Staff

D). Translation of vital County-driven Information on County websites, social media, and emergency notification systems.

Measure:

(i) Assessment of vital content to be translated.

(ii) Create Workplan and execute a timeline

(iii) Create and execute a social media plan.

E). Creation of a community-driven Immigrant Neighbor Guide.

Measure

- (i) Printed guide available for disseminated to immigrant communities.
- (ii) Number of calls for access to services listed in the Guide.
- (iii) Document current involvement of persons who are blind/low vision/ Spanish speaking in County Activities
- (iv) Increase the involvement of persons who are blind/low vision/Spanish by 25% in year 1

F). Signage of County buildings/parks in multiple languages

Measure:

- (i) 50% of signs translated in year 1,
- (ii) 100% by Year 3.