

News Release

USDA CELEBRATES THE 24TH ANNIVERSARY OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 13166 ANNIVERSARY, CONTINUES IMPLEMENTING UPDATED LANGUAGE ACCESS PLAN

Part of Administration-wide effort to improve language access, equity

Yesterday, August 11, 2024, marked the 24th anniversary of Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency.” At its core, Executive Order 13166 acknowledges a fundamental principle: that the federal government must be able to understand and communicate with all people in the United States, including those with limited English proficiency, to keep our country and communities safe and prosperous.

Communication is critical to our mission. For over two decades, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has worked in partnership with the Department of Justice and stakeholders to eliminate language barriers to federal and federally-funded programs or services. Communicating with and understanding people with limited English proficiency is critical to enforcing the law, protecting the environment, providing housing or food assistance, promoting student achievement, ensuring public health, and upholding economic prosperity and justice. When government agencies provide, for example, translations of vital documents or offer an interpreter during important conversations or hearings, we enhance the effectiveness of federal and federally funded programs and services, ensuring they reach and benefit all intended communities.

USDA remains steadfast in its commitment to ensure that our programs, and the programs we fund, remain open to all, regardless of a person’s English proficiency. Together with over forty federal agencies that have revised or are revising their language access plans, we have prioritized learning about and implementing effective policies and procedures to eliminate language barriers to our programs or the programs we fund. The USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights leads the Department in eliminating barriers that prevent communities with limited proficiency in English from achieving meaningful access to USDA federally conducted and federally assisted programs and activities. The USDA Language Access Plan and Language Access Statement can be found online at: <https://www.usda.gov/oascr/languageaccess>. For more information, to report a language access program, or to request language access services, contact LanguageAccess@usda.gov.

In the coming year, USDA will continue to engage with our partners on the Federal Language Access Working Group (FedLAWG) led by the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division. As a member of the FedLAWG, USDA learns and shares information about conducting effective language access staff training; recruiting, assessing, hiring, and retaining multilingual staff; contracting for qualified translators and interpreters; and using technology to deliver accurate and reliable language assistance services. Through this unified approach USDA seeks to fulfill the promise of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 13166 in preventing discrimination and ensuring equal treatment under the law.