

CERTIFICATION QUICK START GUIDE

Language Access

For each Standard you are seeking certification in, you'll be given a questionnaire specific to that Standard to fill out. Most questionnaires will also request that you upload nonconfidential materials, such as examples of reports you have published or your standard operating procedures documents. This guide has tips to keep in mind when preparing for and filling out the Language Access questionnaire so that your office has a more seamless experience.

The Standard

Your election office understands your voters' language needs and prioritizes their preferred languages, dialects, and communication modes. To achieve this standard:

- You use trusted data, information, and community relationships to identify your voters' language access needs.
- You develop a plan that includes procedures for translation, interpretation, usability testing, and language resources.
- You use qualified translators who are familiar with local dialects to provide translation and interpretation services.
- Your website, voter education materials, and media outreach are easily available in formats that meet your voters' language needs.

Glossary

We've tried to keep jargon to a minimum, but some is unavoidable. Since many offices use different terminology, here are some terms used in the standard or questionnaire that may be unfamiliar or you may use in a different way:

- **Section 203:** The Voting Rights Act (VRA) sets requirements for language assistance in elections for certain language groups. This includes when more than 5% of voting age citizens are limited-English proficient or more than 10,000 voting age citizens are limited-English proficient. Determinations are made based on Census data.

Who to include

You will get more out of the certification process and be able to complete the questionnaire more quickly if you involve the right staff in the process. Here are some suggestions for who to include for this standard:

- Staff who coordinate translation processes
- Staff who support external partnerships with community organizations
- Staff who manage and conduct ballot management processes
- Staff who handle multilingual communications
- Staff who coordinate voter registration processes

Materials requested

The questionnaire will request the following materials:

- Materials used to determine language access needs (e.g., census data, local surveys)
- Language access plan
- Election website link
- Voter education materials (e.g., mailers, flyers)
- Non-English media outreach materials (e.g., radio ads, social media videos)
- Translation services examples

You may not have documents with these titles or you may have reasons that you don't use some of these types of materials. In those cases, you can provide other documents that you use in these processes, or provide explanations for what you do instead.

Please provide only the versions or portions of these (or similar) documents that would be subject to public records requests in your jurisdiction. Do not provide any confidential documents or information. We encourage you to consult with your local counsel if you have questions about whether a document can be shared.

Example questions

Here are some examples of questions found in the certification questionnaire, to give you an idea of what you will be asked about:

- Please provide the most common 2-4 languages/dialects that your voters use. Do your voters prefer spoken, written, and/or visual materials in these languages and dialects?
- Please describe the community relationships you use to determine the language access needs of your voters.
 - What methods do you use to build/reinforce community relationships? This might look like listening sessions, surveys, and/or mock elections. Please respond in 3-5 sentences.
- Does your office use any translation services, such as Language Line or Voiance?
 - If so, please list the services and what your office uses them for, such as creating voter education materials and media outreach.
 - If not, please explain why not.

Resources addressing this standard

If you are looking for ways to improve your processes in this area before applying for certification or to implement feedback you received about how to meet the standard, these publicly available, nonpartisan resources may help.

- [Planning language access](#): A workbook that contains nonpartisan resources and tools that help in the delivery of language access where and when voters need it.
- [Hiring a language access coordinator](#): A quick guide that helps navigate the process of hiring one of the most critical contributors to a department's language access plan.
- [Best Practices for Unwritten Languages](#): A public resource designed to assist election officials with providing language assistance to voters who require oral assistance in their minority language.

Using or reviewing these resources is not required for your office to be certified: certification is based on achieving the standard, not on using specific materials. These nonpartisan resources are provided for informational and educational purposes only.

Certification program information

For information on the certification program as a whole, as well as general advice on how to get the most out of the certification process, consult these resources:

- Our [guide](#) to the certification process
- [FAQs](#) about the Alliance certification program
- Go to [CertifyExcellence.org](https://www.certifyexcellence.org) to apply