Chatham County, NC

Legislation Details (With Text)

File #:	24-5309	**Version:** 1	
Type:	Policies and Procedures	**Status:**	Work Session
File created:	5/10/2024	**In control:**	Board of Commissioners
On agenda:	5/20/2024	**Final action:**	5/20/2024
Title:	Receive a presentation and vote to approve the Chatham County Language Access Plan		
Sponsors:			
Indexes:			
Code sections:			
Attachments:	1. Chatham County Language Access Plan		

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
5/20/2024	1	Board of Commissioners		

Receive a presentation and vote to approve the Chatham County Language Access Plan

Introduction & Background: Although we have been doing the work, to comply with the BIC grant received we should have a formal Language Access Plan in place.

Discussion & Analysis: What is Language Access: Language access means that people who don't speak English very well or at all, are able to use and benefit from a wide range of services. Furthermore, Chatham County believes that the access should also consider the range of abilities that individuals may have and attempt to reduce any barriers to accessing the information and services provided by the County.

Plan Purpose: Chatham County's Language Access Plan (LAP) is an action-oriented implementation plan to guide the County towards language justice. More specifically, the LAP will look to establish policies and procedures to ensure language access to County resources and services for LEP residents. These policies and procedures will apply to all County programs and services, unless otherwise indicated. Through consistent monitoring and updating of this LAP, the County will better serve and understand the needs of residents and improve the accessibility of services and resources. Further, the County will ensure it moves towards policies and procedures supporting the right of all residents to communicate with the County in the language and or manner they prefer (considering the access to those with visual or hearing impairments).

Why It is Important: Chatham County serves community members in a variety of ways that are important to day-to-day life. Communications that are accessible to the whole community will help Chatham County be more inclusive and welcoming to all that seek information or services.

How does this relate to the Comprehensive Plan: Creating a Language Access Plan (LAP) for Chatham County, North Carolina, involves several key components to ensure that individuals who have limited English proficiency (LEP) can access essential public services. Here's a structured outline to help develop a comprehensive LAP:

1. Needs Assessment
   - Demographic Analysis: Conduct a demographic survey to identify the primary languages spoken in Chatham County other than English. Utilize U.S. Census data and local resources to pinpoint LEP populations.
   Service Analysis: Review the interactions between LEP communities and county services to determine

where language services are most needed.

2. Policy Development
- Commitment Statement: Craft a statement that reflects Chatham County's commitment to providing equitable access to all residents, regardless of language barriers.
- Scope of Services: Define which services will be covered by the LAP, ensuring all critical public services are included, such as emergency services, health care, public safety, and education.

3. Implementation Strategies
- Translation Services: Establish a protocol for translating essential written documents into the primary languages identified in the needs assessment.
- Interpretation Services: Implement a system for providing competent interpreter services during all interactions with LEP individuals. This may include in-person, telephonic, or video interpretation.
- Staff Training: Develop training programs for staff to recognize and appropriately respond to LEP individuals, including how to access language assistance services.

4. Resource Allocation
- Budgeting: Allocate adequate funding to support the translation and interpretation services, training programs, and other resources needed to implement the LAP.
- Technology and Tools**: Invest in software and other tools that facilitate effective communication with LEP individuals, such as multilingual websites and translation apps.

5. Public Notification
- Outreach: Ensure that LEP individuals are aware of their rights to language assistance services. This includes notifications in multiple languages on websites, at county offices, and through community outreach. Chatham County understands the importance of working with trusted Community Messengers and will partner wit them to share notifications.
- Feedback System**: Establish a feedback mechanism for LEP individuals to report effectiveness and suggest improvements to the language services provided.

6. Monitoring and Evaluation
- Regular Review: Set up a regular review process of the LAP to assess its effectiveness and adjust as needed based on feedback and changing demographics.
- Compliance and Reporting: Monitor compliance with federal, state, and local laws regarding language access and report on LAP's progress and outcomes to stakeholders.

7. Partnership and Community Engagement
- Collaboration**: Work with local community organizations, schools, and businesses to enhance outreach to LEP communities and to continuously improve the LAP.
- Advocacy and Support**: Engage local leaders and advocates in promoting and supporting the implementation of the LAP.

By following these steps, Chatham County can develop a robust Language Access Plan that ensures all residents, regardless of their language abilities, have equal access to vital services. This plan not only meets legal obligations but also enhances community trust and integration.

Budgetary Impact: There is no additional Budgetary Impact as actions taken under this plan will utilize the funds received from the BIC grant.

Recommendation/Motion: Motion to approve the Chatham County Language Access Plan.