# 2. Introduction

# This chapter includes:

- How to use this plan
- The LEP population in Minneapolis
- Legal mandates for LEP services
- Current (2004) levels of city LEP services

#### How to use this plan

This plan is intended for department managers and supervisors, and for staff who interact directly or indirectly with LEP individuals in Minneapolis. LEP legal requirements may also apply to subcontractors and vendors who do business with the city. LEP community members and advocates can refer to this plan to learn about the city's commitment to equal access.

The plan does several things:

- explains the legal mandate behind LEP planning (2: Introduction);
- defines key concepts in LEP service (3: What Is LEP Service?);
- lays out general guidelines that are minimum expectations for all city services and departments (4-7: Notice and Identification, Interpreting and Translation, Staffing and Training);
- sets a timetable and assigns responsibility for implementation; and describes how the plan will be monitored and updated (7: Carrying Out the Plan); and
- lists key resources (8: Resources and References).

A separate workbook (*Department Templates for LEP Services*, online at CityTalk) provides self-assessment tools and templates for city departments to create their own, department-specific plans, timetables and budgets.

### The LEP population in Minneapolis

Minnesota and its largest city, Minneapolis, have become increasingly diverse over the past several decades. Immigrants have contributed greatly to the city's economic, cultural and linguistic diversity. In 2002 alone, 13,522 legal immigrants arrived in the state from 160 countries. This constituted the largest number of new arrivals since 1992 and an increase of 2,000 from the previous year. For most of these new arrivals, English is not their primary language.

One key way to track the proliferation of languages spoken in the state is to ask school children what language they speak at home. The Minnesota State Department of Education reports that over 75 languages are now represented in Minnesota's public schools. The number of children speaking languages other than English increased from 8,173 in 1996 to 13,959 in 2002 – or a 71% jump in just six years. In 2003, 31% of public school children reported speaking a language other than English in their homes, according to the Minnesota Department of Education.

Immigration status is not a completely reliable marker for English as a second language, since many immigrants speak fluent English. Further, immigration figures based on the US Census are often outdated or incomplete. But immigration figures do provide a partial picture of the growing linguistic diversity of our city. In 1990, 6% of Minneapolis residents were foreign born. This increased to 14.5% by 2000 – an increase of 142%.

Languages spoken by Minneapolis school children at home, 2003-2004	
English	30,191
Spanish	4,928
Hmong	4,071
Somali	1,693
Laotian	361
Oromo	251
Vietnamese	128
Cambodian	103
Other	588
Total	42,357

The majority came from Latin America, with Minneapolis's

Hispanic population increasing by 269% during the decade and surpassing St. Paul as the Minnesota city with the largest Hispanic population. Minneapolis continues to have the second largest population of Asian-born immigrants in the state, with 31% of its new arrivals from there. Nearly one fourth of new arrivals came from Africa; the majority of them were from Somalia. Somalis constituted the single largest ethnic group arriving in Minnesota, with 1,588 individuals reported in 2002.

Minneapolis residents' countries of origin		
Mexico	13,393	
East Africa (mostly Somalia)	7,484	
Laos (both Lao and Hmong)	5,770	
Vietnam	2,348	
Ethiopia	1,968	
Ecuador	1,922	
Thailand (mostly non-citizens born in refugee camps)	1,909	
Korea	1,414	
India	1,300	
China	1,103	

At left are the main countries of origin of Minneapolis residents in 2000 (based on census figures, in which immigrants are often significantly underrepresented).

The vast majority of new arrivals have settled in Minnesota's metropolitan areas, where they can more readily reunite with family members and reconnect with others from their homeland; find jobs and pursue economic opportunities; and receive assistance from both public and private support systems. Contrary to often-

expressed public opinion, immigrants do not disproportionately use state and city resources. The *StarTribune* (April 18, 2004) reported that the average immigrant contributes \$1,800 more in taxes each year than s/he receives in government services and benefits. For economic reasons alone, new Minnesotans with limited English proficiency are entitled to equal benefits and services.

## **Legal mandates for LEP services**

There is also a compelling legal argument for LEP services. The city of Minneapolis and its departments are required by federal and state law to plan for and provide meaningful access to services for city residents with limited English.

According to an opinion from the Minneapolis City Attorney's office, "Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the implementing federal regulations require city departments receiving federal financial assistance to provide meaningful access to their programs and activities for LEP persons. Failure to provide meaningful access could result in a loss of federal funding. Private individuals could bring a civil action alleging intentional discrimination in the denial of services based upon their protected class status... Nearly every city department receives some sort of federal financial assistance." (See the full text of Assistant City Attorney Susan Trammel's interpretation of legal mandates from the US Department of Justice in Section 8, Print resources, b.)

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related federal regulations, state law and municipal ordinances apply to all city departments and contracted vendors.

#### **Current (2004) levels of city LEP services**

In order to get a baseline picture of what the city is already doing to provide LEP service, representatives from each of the city's charter departments were interviewed in March and April 2004 by consultants.

The purpose of these interviews was to determine:

- Which key business lines are used by LEP individuals.
- Which departments are collecting data on LEP resident usage of their services.
- What resources and tools are being used to communicate with LEP individuals.
- If any departmental-level policies are in place related to serving LEP individuals.
- Department recommendations on how services could be made more user-friendly

for LEP individuals.

The information collected and summarized in this report was used to focus the efforts of the LEP Work Team during the planning process and to inform the development of the citywide and departmental LEP plans.

The report provided a snapshot of some, but not all city departments' approaches to LEP service in early 2004. It was not an evaluation of the quality or comprehensiveness of city services, nor is it a comprehensive list of all city services or all strategies that the city is currently using to address the communication needs of its LEP residents. The full report "Services Offered In Minneapolis City Departments For People With Limited English Proficiency" is reprinted in Section 8, Print Resources, Part a.

Among the key findings of the report, completed April, 2004:

- Each of the city departments surveyed is involved some way in serving LEP individuals, either directly or through the services they provide to intermediaries.
- Very little is being done to track or monitor the utilization of city services based on the language of clients.
- Several city departments have already made laudable efforts to ensure quality services to the city's LEP community, particularly through their use of interpreters and translated documents. However, much more needs to be done to ensure meaningful access to services.
- Except for the Minneapolis Police and Fire Departments, there appear to be no significant written or formal departmental policies specific to serving LEP individuals.