



# TITLE VI/NONDISCRIMINATION ANNUAL WORK PLAN & ACCOMPLISHMENTS For Calendar Year 2020

County of Hidalgo, Texas

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# INTRODUCTION

The County of Hidalgo (County), as a recipient of Federal financial assistance and under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes, assures that no person shall on the grounds of race, religion (where the primary objective of the financial assistance is to provide employment per 42 U.S.C. §2000d-3), color, national origin, sex, age, or disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination or retaliation in any federally or non-federally funded program or activity administered by the County of Hidalgo.

On or about April 16, 2019, the Hidalgo County Commissioners Court approved the current version of its Title VI/Nondiscrimination Policy, known as the Hidalgo County Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan. A full copy is available on the Hidalgo County website, [hidalgocounty.us/TitleVI](https://hidalgocounty.us/TitleVI)

This Title VI/Nondiscrimination Annual Work Plan & Accomplishment Report documents Hidalgo County's Title VI Program accomplishments for the reporting period of January 1, 2020 – December 31, 2020 (the reporting period) and goals for Calendar Year 2021. During this reporting period, the global spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) generated unprecedented delays and disruptions to the business processes of the County. This in turn presented challenges to accomplish the established goals for the Calendar Year 2020. As such, the County exhibited a good-faith effort to complete this report while using its authority to take necessary actions to protect the health, safety, and welfare of its constituents and County employees.

This report is prepared in accordance with 23 CFR 200.9 and the Federal Highway Administration's Title VI/Nondiscrimination Program.

# TITLE VI NONDISCRIMINATION COMPONENT

*This section contains the County's Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan updates that are not included in other sections of this report.*

## **Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan Improvements**

There were no modifications to the Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan during the reporting period.

## **State Desk Audit**

The County did not receive any desk audits requests during the reporting period.

# PROGRAM MONITORING

*This section describes the internal and external program monitoring accomplishments for the reporting period and the goals for Calendar Year 2021.*

## **Title VI Reviews Conducted During Reporting Period**

The County conducts annual reviews of any data received regarding the Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan to monitor for continuous compliance. During the reporting period, The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) requested the County to submit a response to its Subrecipient Compliance Assessment Tool (SCAT) survey to evaluate and monitor compliance with Title VI requirements. Title VI SCAT results for the reporting period indicated the County “demonstrated substantial Title VI compliance.” (See EXHIBIT “A”).

For the reporting period, the County successfully procured vendors to offer language assistance services for LEP persons to ensure they have timely access to all County programs and activities.

The language assistance services available to all County Offices/Departments include:

- Language Line Services, Inc. – An over-the-phone translation service with instant access to professional interpreters in 240 languages and available 24/7 from any phone or device, using a County Office/Department access code.
- South Texas Interpreter for the Deaf, L.L.C. – An on-site sign language interpreting service. Interpreters can be schedule to be on-site with a 24-hour advance notice.

## **Dissemination of Title VI Information**

During the reporting period, the Title VI Coordinator sent a memorandum to all County Offices/Departments with instructions on how to use the language assistance services available (See EXHIBIT “B”). The memorandum included information on how to access interpreter services through Language Line Services, Inc. and South Texas Interpreters for the Deaf, L.L.C.

Additionally, all County Offices/Departments received a memorandum on the first quarter of 2021 requesting submission of documentation required to complete this annual plan and accomplishment report. (See EXHIBIT “C”).

The County also provided new employees with Title VI and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan information.

In-person training efforts were restricted due to COVID-19 guidelines in place during the reporting period. However, digital training materials continued to be available on-demand by contacting the Title VI Coordinator.

### **Title VI Results of Reviews Conducted During Reporting Period**

An internal review of requested information provided by responsive County Offices/Departments indicated compliance with Title VI Plan requirements.

### **Calendar Year 2021 Goals**

The County’s goals for the 2021 Calendar Year included:

1. Continue working with all County Offices/Departments to ensure compliance with the County’s Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan.
2. Continue providing all new employees with information regarding Title VI and the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan during the New Employee Orientation.
3. Continue conducting annual reviews of any data received regarding the Title VI/ Nondiscrimination Plan to monitor for compliance.
4. Research additional/alternative Title VI compliance methods.

# LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP)

Throughout the reporting period, the County continued to obtain LEP related information from County Offices/Departments for use in its annual report and to identify and address the needs of the community.

For the reporting period, the following County Departments submitted reports related to LEP encounters:

- County Commissioner Precinct 3
- Constable Precinct 2
- Elections Department
- Facilities Management
- Fire Marshall's Office
- Human Resources
- Law Library
- Sheriff's Office
- Urban County
- WIC Program

County Offices/Departments also submitted employee language logs identifying employees who possessed language skills other than English and who were willing to assist with LEP related requests.

During the reporting period, South Texas Interpreter for the Deaf, L.L.C. provided sign language interpreting services on four (4) occasions.

County Offices/Departments LEP annual reports indicated the following:

- The most frequently requested language was Spanish.
- The LEP service most frequently used was verbal translation.
- The most frequent method rendered was through voluntary interpretation by employees within each department.
- There were no LEP complaints received for this reporting period.

- There were thirty-one (31) documents translated by request.
- The Elections Department translated sixty-three (63) social media posts and implemented Spanish language signage across all polling locations.

Hidalgo County Offices/Departments also reported that the majority of verbal LEP encounters occurred in Spanish and were addressed internally by Spanish-speaking employees. Due to the significant frequency and volume of these verbal encounters, it was difficult for County Offices/Departments to document each of these encounters.

### **Calendar Year 2021 Goals**

The County's LEP Plan goals for the 2021 Calendar Year included:

1. Continue to remind all County Offices/Departments to document Title VI related information and to report it accordingly.
2. Continue to provide Title VI and LEP training to County Offices/Departments.

# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The County of Hidalgo addressed environmental justice issues and outreach efforts of general and grant-funded programs through County Offices/Departments that provided social services to disproportionate families or minority populations through Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs), rental assistance, housing repairs, and food vouchers.

The County continued to strive in ensuring compliance with all federal requirements including but not limited to compliance with Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan. The County gathered data to establish demographic characteristics and trends. The data assisted in identifying and engaging traditionally underserved populations, including those covered under existing Environmental Justice policies, as well as populations with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).

Public involvement efforts for County projects/programs were coordinated through the respective County Offices/Departments. County Offices/Departments also gathered and included reports and other relevant information in making Environmental Justice evaluations. They also conducted demographic surveys and collected public meeting comment forms to comply with the County's Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan and to ensure public participation was considered during the development and implementation of County projects.

Departments utilized the Environmental Justice Report Form to report compliance or to indicate "Not applicable".

## Calendar Year 2021 Goals

The County's Environmental Justice goals for the 2021 Calendar Year included:

1. Continue to work with Offices/Departments to determine if reporting assistance is needed.
2. Review the Environmental Justice and the Public Participation Plan sections in the County's Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan and update as needed.

# TITLE VI TRAINING SUMMARY

*This section provides an overview of training activities conducted by the County of Hidalgo's Title VI Coordinator during the reporting period.*

## **Training provided by the County of Hidalgo**

The County provided training material regarding language assistance services.

The County continued to provide new employees with Title VI/ Nondiscrimination Plan training.

Guidance continued to be available at the Department of Human Resources for Title VI Department Liaisons.

## **Training attended by the County of Hidalgo**

Attendance by County personnel at outside Title VI training is unavailable or unknown.

## **Calendar Year 2021 Goals**

Title VI training goals for the 2021 Calendar Year included:

1. Development and implementation of Title VI related training for County Offices/Departments.

# TITLE VI COMPLAINTS SUMMARY

The County of Hidalgo did not receive any internal or external discrimination complaints related to Title VI for this reporting period.

# COMMISSIONER’S COURT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The County of Hidalgo, as a recipient of Federal financial assistance and under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statues, ensures that no person shall on the grounds of race, religion (where the primary objective of the financial assistance is to employ according to 42 U.S.C. §2000d-3), color, national origin, sex, age, or disability be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination or retaliation in any federally or non-federally funded program or activity administered by the County of Hidalgo.

This annual report was adopted by the County of Hidalgo Commissioner’s Court on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2023.

## Hidalgo County Commissioners’ Court

\_\_\_\_\_  
Richard F. Cortez, Hidalgo County Judge

\_\_\_\_\_  
David L. Fuentes  
Commissioner, Precinct 1

\_\_\_\_\_  
Eduardo “Eddie” Cantu  
Commissioner, Precinct 2

\_\_\_\_\_  
Everardo “Ever” Villarreal  
Commissioner, Precinct 3

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ellie Torres  
Commissioner, Precinct 4

# EXHIBIT "A"

6/11/2020

Title VI Compliance Assessment Tool

[A - Z Site Index](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Español](#)

[Driver](#) | [Business](#) | [Government](#) | [Inside TxDOT](#) | [Careers](#)

## Title VI Compliance Assessment Tool

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Thank you for your feedback.

**Your Compliance Assessment result is**

Green

**Your agency has demonstrated substantial Title VI compliance.**

LPA's with a green/satisfactory status will not be required to complete another assessment until the end of a 36-month period. LPA's will receive letters indicating a Satisfactory status, an explanation of the process and a schedule with technical assistance training dates.

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125 East 11th Street • Austin, Texas 78701

# EXHIBIT "B"



## Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

**Richard F. Cortez**  
*County Judge*

**David L. Fuentes**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 1*

**Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 2*

**Joe M. Flores**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 3*

**Ellie Torres**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 4*

## Executive Office

**Valde Guerra**  
*Executive Officer*

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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** All Hidalgo County Elected Officials, Department Heads,  
Title VI Liaisons

**From:** Valde Guerra, Hidalgo County Executive Officer

**Date:** April 27, 2020

**Subject:** Language Assistance Services to comply with Title VI LEP Plan

As stated in the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Policy Statement of the Hidalgo County Title VI Non-discrimination Plan, it is the policy of the County of Hidalgo to provide timely meaningful access for LEP persons to all County programs and activities. Language assistance services shall be provided to persons with LEP whenever a person with LEP requests language assistance services. The LEP Plan defines a LEP individual as a person who does not speak English as his or her primary language and who has a limited ability to speak, read, write, or understand English.

Although various Departments/Offices have reported there were relatively very few if any cases of LEP encounters (other than Spanish Language) in Hidalgo County, we are committed to provide the opportunity for meaningful access to LEP persons.

Per the adopted Title VI Non-Discrimination and Limited English Proficiency Plan, the following resources are now available to accommodate LEP persons:

- 1) Language Line Services, Inc.** - Over-the-Phone Interpretive services, with instant access to professional interpreters in 240 languages, 24/7, from any phone or device, using your own department/office access code. (The department's access code will be emailed to your department Liaison separately).

Please note, your respective Department/Office is to continue with the appropriate in-house Spanish language translation measures that it currently implements or contact the Human Resources Department before utilizing this service for Spanish translation needs.

### To access an interpreter over the phone:

- Dial: **1-866-874-3972**
- Enter our Client ID Number: **506905**
- Press 1 for Spanish or press 2 for all other languages (at the prompt, state the name of the language you need)
- Please input your 3-digit program code (your access code will be sent out individually on a separate email to Department Liaisons).

\*Attached is a printable Quick Reference Guide with steps on how to access an interpreter over the phone.



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*County Judge*

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*Commissioner, Precinct 4*

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Below is also a link designed specifically for Language Line Services, Inc., clients with some useful materials. There are various guides on best practices for accessing an interpreter, downloadable Language ID posters, and how to access their online reporting tool, [MyLanguageLine](https://www.language-line.com):

<https://www.language-line.com/client-support-center>

2) **South Texas Interpreters for the Deaf, LLC.** - On-site Sign language interpreting services. If you all need to schedule an interpreter, the agency requires:

- That it be at least **24hrs in advance notice**.
- You can give them a call Monday-Friday 8:00am-5:00pm and an interpreter will get scheduled to go to your location.
- If you have any specific questions you need answered, you may contact **Jovonne Delgado** at **(956) 971-8000** and she can answer them for you.

\* Attached is a rate sheet with some reference information.

I want to encourage all Department Liaisons to take advantage of these services available to you to continue to ensure Title VI compliance.

Valde Guerra,  
Title VI Coordinator

# EXHIBIT "C"



## Hidalgo County Commissioners Court

**Richard F. Cortez**  
*County Judge*

**David L. Fuentes**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 1*

**Eduardo "Eddie" Cantu**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 2*

**Everardo Villarreal**  
*Commissioner, Precinct 3*

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## MEMORANDUM

Date: Tuesday, February 23, 2021  
To: Elected Officials  
From: Valde Guerra, County Executive Officer  
Subject: Title VI Annual Report

Greetings,

Once again it is time to submit Hidalgo County's annual comprehensive Title VI report to the State of Texas. Please be reminded, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibits a County Program or activity from excluding, denying or otherwise discriminating against an individual on the basis of race, color, or national origin, or other subsequently expanded protected category as indicated in the County's Title VI Plan.

Attached to this Memo you will find the forms that need to be completed if you have reportable information for FY 2020. **Please submit your documentation via email to [Titlevi@co.hidalgo.tx.us](mailto:Titlevi@co.hidalgo.tx.us) no later than Friday, March 5, 2021.**

You may find the County's Title VI information available at:  
<https://www.hidalgocounty.us/2071/Title-VINondiscrimination-Plan>.

If you have any questions or would like to review the Title VI training previously shared with all departments please submit your requests via email to [Titlevi@co.hidalgo.tx.us](mailto:Titlevi@co.hidalgo.tx.us) and we will reach out to you for assistance.