



TITLE VI/NONDISCRIMINATION ANNUAL WORK PLAN & ACCOMPLISHMENTS For Calendar Year 2022

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 County's Title VI/Nondiscrimination Policy, known as the Hidalgo County Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan. On or about August 22, 2023, the Hidalgo County Commissioners Court approved an updated version of the County's Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan. A full copy of the current plan is available on the Hidalgo County website, hidalgocounty.us/TitleVI. For questions about past plans please contact the Department of Human Resources.

This Title VI/Nondiscrimination Annual Work Plan & Accomplishment Report documents Hidalgo County's Title VI Program accomplishments for the reporting period of January 1, 2022 – December 31, 2022 (the reporting period) and goals for Calendar Year 2023. During this reporting period, COVID-19 continued to present some challenges to accomplish the established goals for the Calendar Year 2022; nevertheless, the County exhibited a good-faith effort to complete this report.

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 2023.

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) did not request the County to submit a response to its Subrecipient Compliance Assessment Tool (SCAT) survey to evaluate and monitor compliance with Title VI requirements. For the reporting period, the County continued 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 scheduled to be on-site with a 24-hour advance notice.

Dissemination of Title VI Information

During the reporting period, guidance continued to be available through the Department of Human Resources to all County Departments/Offices on how to use language assistance services available.

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

In-person training efforts of current County employees continued to be 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

The County Human Resources Department reviewed data received from County Departments/Offices for compliance and to discern needs. Information gathered resulted in goals for next year. There were no internal policy/plan reviews for this reporting period.

Calendar Year 2023 Goals

The County's goals for the 2023 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. Restart in-person Title VI training of Department/Office liaisons and other individuals to return and advise their respective Department/Office of the same.
4. Continue conducting annual reviews of any data received regarding the Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan to monitor for compliance and develop annual reports.
5. Research additional/alternative Title VI compliance methods.
6. Conduct an internal review of the County's current Title VI policy/plan for any potential updates/modifications.

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:

- Domestic Relations Office
- Elections Department
- Human Resources Department
- Justice of Peace Precinct 2, Place 1
- Law Library
- Precinct 4
- Purchasing Department
- Urban County Program
- WIC Office

As in previous years, 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 to document each of these encounters; however, there is no indication that these encounters were not addressed. Additionally, there is no report that the County's contracted interpretation services were utilize for any other language during the reporting period. Although the COVID-19 epidemic led to the county altering its normal course of business, the County continued to address LEP encounters accordingly. There were no LEP related complaints reported during this time.

Calendar Year 2023 Goals

The County's LEP Plan goals for the 2023 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.
3. Provide all County Offices/Departments with resources available for LEP encounters.
4. Continue to work with County Offices/Departments towards tracking all LEP encounters.
5. Continue to promote the County's LEP resources to our constituents.

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. Applicable County Offices/Departments are responsible for gathering applicable data to make Environmental Justice evaluations.

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.

County Offices/Departments 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 2023 Goals

The County's Environmental Justice goals for the 2023 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.
3. Continue to provide educational materials to County Offices/Departments.
4. Continue to promote the importance of Environmental Justice reporting to County Offices/Departments.

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

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

Digital training materials continued to be available through the Title VI Coordinator's office.

Training attended by the County of Hidalgo

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

Calendar Year 2023 Goals

Title VI training goals for the 2023 Calendar Year included:

1. Development and implementation of revised Title VI training for newly hired county employees.
2. Development and implementation of revised Title VI training for County Offices/Department Title VI Liaisons.
3. Development and implementation of revised Title VI training for existing county employees to be administered by the Human Resources Department as needed.

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 _____, 2024.

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