

Improving Access to Public Websites and Digital Services for Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons



Limited English Proficiency Committee
Title VI Interagency Working Group
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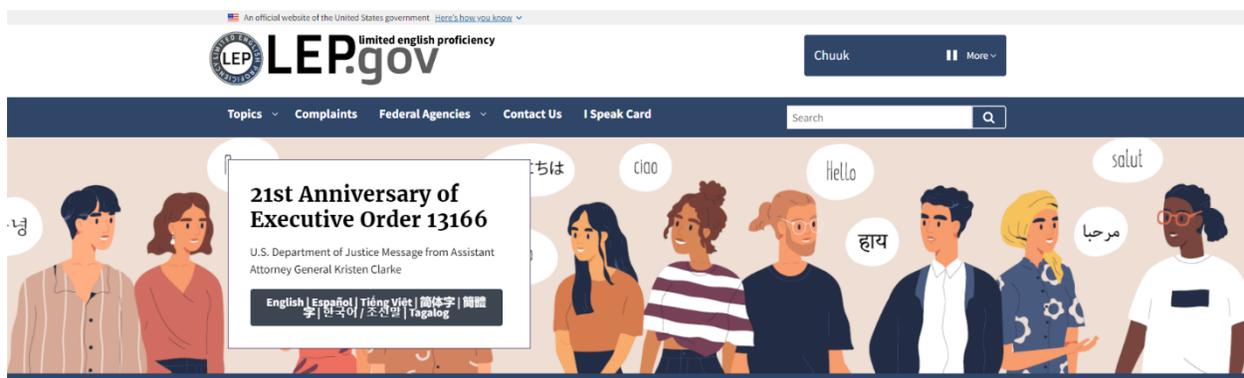
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Introduction

Many entities – government agencies, nonprofits, and businesses – use websites and digital services to provide information and services to the public, to accept applications, and to manage accounts. Individuals with Limited English proficiency (LEP) access these websites and digital services.

Digital services involve the electronic delivery of information, including data and content, across multiple platforms or devices, such as text, audio, video, mobile applications, and graphics that are transmitted for viewing over the internet. This includes social media (YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, etc.), websites, and applications that enable users to create and share information and content or to participate in social networking. Vital information¹ displayed on these platforms or devices should be accessible to persons with LEP in frequently encountered languages.

The LEP Committee of the Federal Title VI Interagency Working Group gathered these ideas, resources, and examples to help anyone seeking to improve language access to their websites and digital services.



It is important to make vital digital information accessible to LEP persons

- Is there vital information, including vital documents, on your public websites and digital services that should be accessible to LEP persons? If so, what are the most frequently encountered languages of LEP persons who use this information?
- Are you confident that your translated web content is accurate and that LEP users can find and use it?
- Do your websites and digital services support accessible communication between your agency or business and members of the public, including those who are LEP?

Signs of possible trouble regarding your websites and digital services

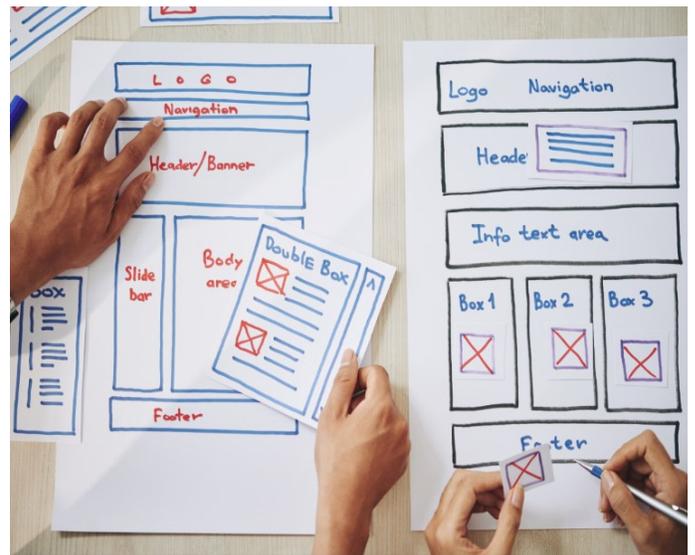
- Some digital content is translated, but the directions to navigate to it are in English only.
- The websites and/or digital services format are not mobile friendly.

- The websites use an automated machine translation service rather than a qualified human translator to translate web and digital services content.
- Voicemail menu options on customer service lines are not accessible to LEP persons.

Best Practices for Developing Multilingual Websites and Digital Services

In addition to deciding what content should be translated into which languages, there are a number of web design issues to keep in mind so that translated content can reach the intended audience. For example:

- Do websites or digital services contain multilingual tagline noticesⁱⁱ informing LEP persons of the availability of language assistance services (interpreters and translated materials) and how to request them if needed to understand the information on these platforms?
- Does translated content contain links that lead to other content that is not translated? If so, placing a translated notice indicating that the link leads to English content will reduce confusion. The notice (or at least the website or digital service) should notify the LEP public about how they may request a translation or interpreter assistance to understand the linked English-only content or document.
- Do websites and digital services contain telephone numbers to use for additional information or assistance? If so, can an LEP person obtain the information or interpreter assistance in their own language using these numbers? For example, do telephone voicemail menus offer language options other than English? Does the person answering the customer service line have access to qualified interpreters?
- If only certain portions (or certain documents) of websites or digital services are translated, how can you inform LEP persons that information is available in other languages and where to find it?
- Do websites or digital services contain vital information within footers and disclaimers that should be made accessible to LEP persons?
- Do websites or digital system contain news, Twitter, RSS, or any other feed contact tools? If so, consider ways to provide that information in other languages.



For explanations and many more design considerations:

- Join the [Multilingual Community of Practice](#) (A group of federal, state, and local government content managers working to expand and improve digital content in languages other than English)
- [Top 10 Best Practices for Multilingual Websites](#), DigitalGov
- [Designing for Translation](#), DigitalGov, 2018
- [Search, Buscar, Поиск, جستجو, Cari: Creating a Good, Multilingual Search Experience](#), DigitalGov, 2015
- [Multilingual Digital Content](#), DigitalGov, 2014
- [Accessibility of State and Local Government Websites to People with Disabilities](#)
- [COVID-19/Coronavirus Information-Multilingual](#)
- [What You Should Know About COVID-19 and the ADA, the Rehabilitation Act, and Other EEO Laws](#)

Multilingual Content Signals

Effective design strategies to attract and keep LEP visitors on websites:

- Prominently display multilingual content on your homepage. LEP website visitors are more likely to stay on websites with content in frequently encountered languages other than English or a widely recognized icon representing translated content. Language selectors can be placed on the upper right navigation bar of each page or otherwise featured. Language selectors should be written in the particular language to which they apply.
- Translations and navigation functions in non-English languages should meet [W3C web accessibility standards](#) to ensure equal access and equally effective communication for LEP persons with disabilities.

- Post hyperlinks that lead to language-specific landing pages with translated content in one or more non-English languages. These hyperlinks direct LEP visitors to the section of the website where information is available in their preferred language. Ensure search capabilities are available when using translated terms for programs and services.



Machine Translation

Machine translation applications or software convert written text from one language to another without the involvement of a qualified human translator. They can reduce the accuracy of posted information when read in translated form. Machine translation may not “see” tables, images that contain text, menu items, and headers as content that requires translation. In addition, since the machine-translated content is not on the website, the content cannot be found by placing non-English terms in a search engine.

If the entity utilizes machine translation software, the entity should have a human translator proofread all content containing vital information before posting it to ensure the accuracy of the translated information. Website content that is translated and checked by qualified human translators is more likely to be accurate and locatable by LEP users.ⁱⁱⁱ

Other resources:

- [Lost in Translation](#), GSA Digital.Gov, 2012 Machine Translation
- [Machine Translation: Ensuring Meaningful Access for Limited English Proficient Individuals](#), Webinar, U.S. Department of Labor, 2014
- [Evaluating the Usefulness of Translation Technologies for Emergency Response Communication: A Scenario-Based Study](#), Turner AM, Choi YK, Dew K, Tsai MT, Bosold AL, Wu S, Smith D, Meischke H, JMIR Public Health Surveill 2019;5(1):e111171.

Usability Testing

Usability testing is a process where LEP users test a website or digital service for ease of use. During a typical usability test session, LEP participants will try to complete specific tasks while observers watch, listen, and take notes. The goal of usability testing is to collect data, identify features or components that are useful to LEP audiences, and identify any usability problems that need to be addressed to improve access for LEP users.

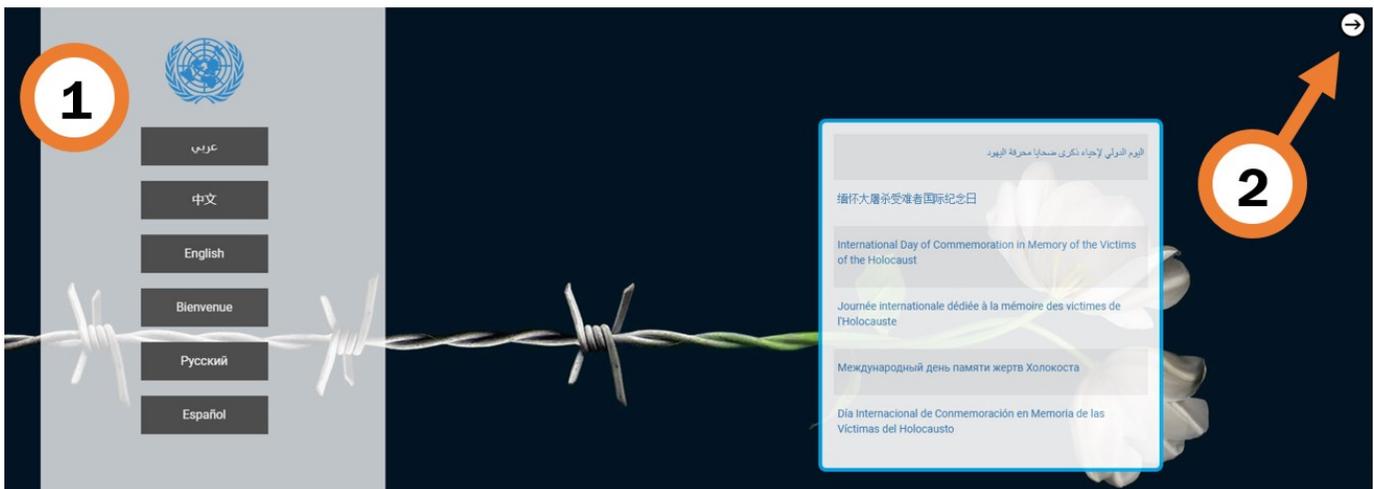
Guides that offer general frameworks and approaches for running a usability test include:

- 18F Methods: [Usability Testing](#), [Prototyping](#)
- Usability.gov: [Usability Testing](#), [Running a Usability Test](#)
- Digital.gov: [Usability Testing](#) (Video), [Government Usability Case Studies](#)

Examples of Website Design Features to Support Multilingual Content

Improving website language access involves translating more content into more languages. To ensure the value of the translated content for LEP users and agencies, it is important to use web design features that effectively present non-English content. Here are twelve examples.

Example 1: Language Selector Welcome Page at [UN.org](https://www.un.org/)



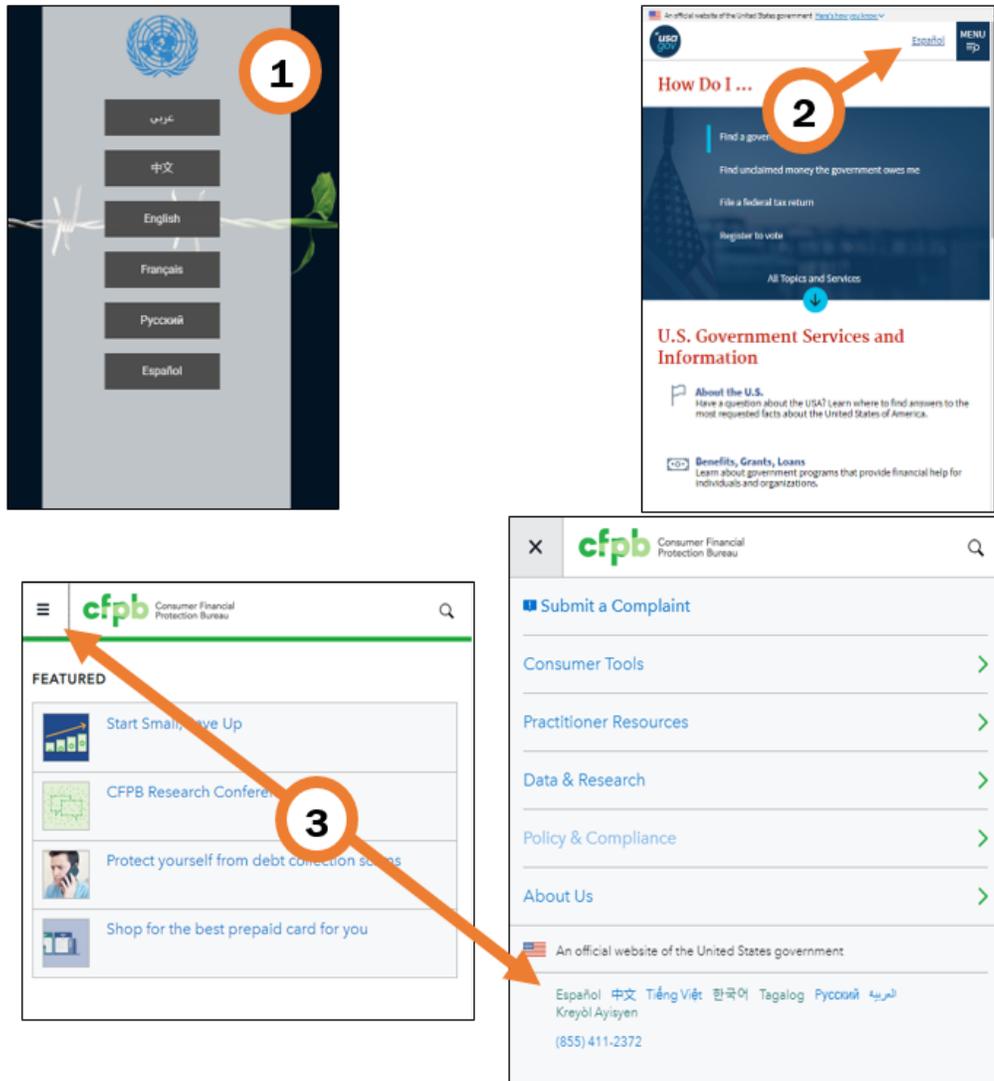
Tips and Features:

1. Multilingual content on websites may be difficult to find for people who do not read English. This site does a great job of announcing the availability of multilingual content that all visitors will see as soon as the home page loads. They may select one of six languages up front from a box on an otherwise textless page, giving visitors that read any

of the languages a similar user experience. When the cursor hovers over the name of the language, its text changes to read “Welcome” in-language.

2. The simple arrow in the corner opens up featured headlines or a second language selector in each of the six available languages. *Note: Not all languages are written or read the same way. Here, the site properly displays Arabic text by aligning it to the right.*

Example 2: Mobile-Friendly Language Selectors at UN.org, USA.gov, and CFPB.gov



Tips and Features:

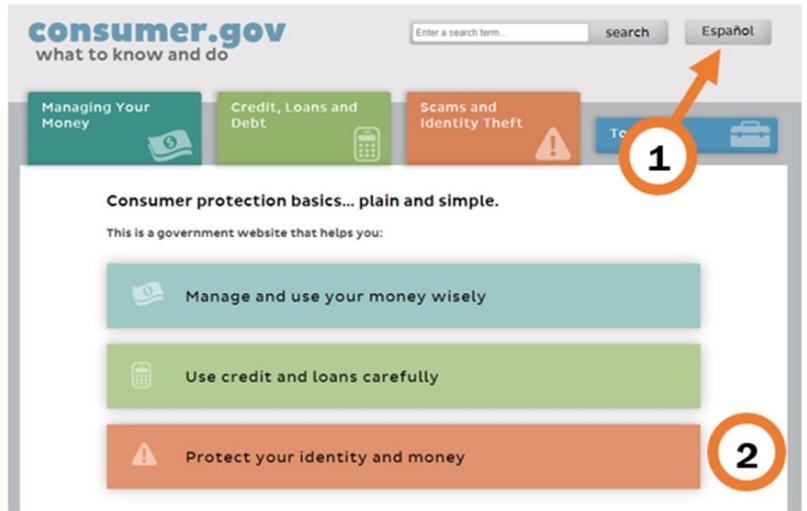
1. The mobile version of the UN.org website retains the same feel by using the welcome page as a full screen language selector.
2. The USA.gov website keeps a language button in the header, even in the mobile version.
3. The CFPB.gov website keeps its language selector, but it moves to the bottom of the mobile page menu and there is no non-English content visible on the mobile homepage.

Example 3: Clean Appearance, Ease of Navigation, and Mirror Website at [Consumer.gov](https://www.consumer.gov)

English Language Page

Tips and Features:

1. The language button allows users to easily switch between English and Spanish content.
2. Using a streamlined design with plain language not only makes translating the content cheaper and easier, but it also makes the entire website more accessible in both languages.



Spanish Mirror Page

Tips and Features:

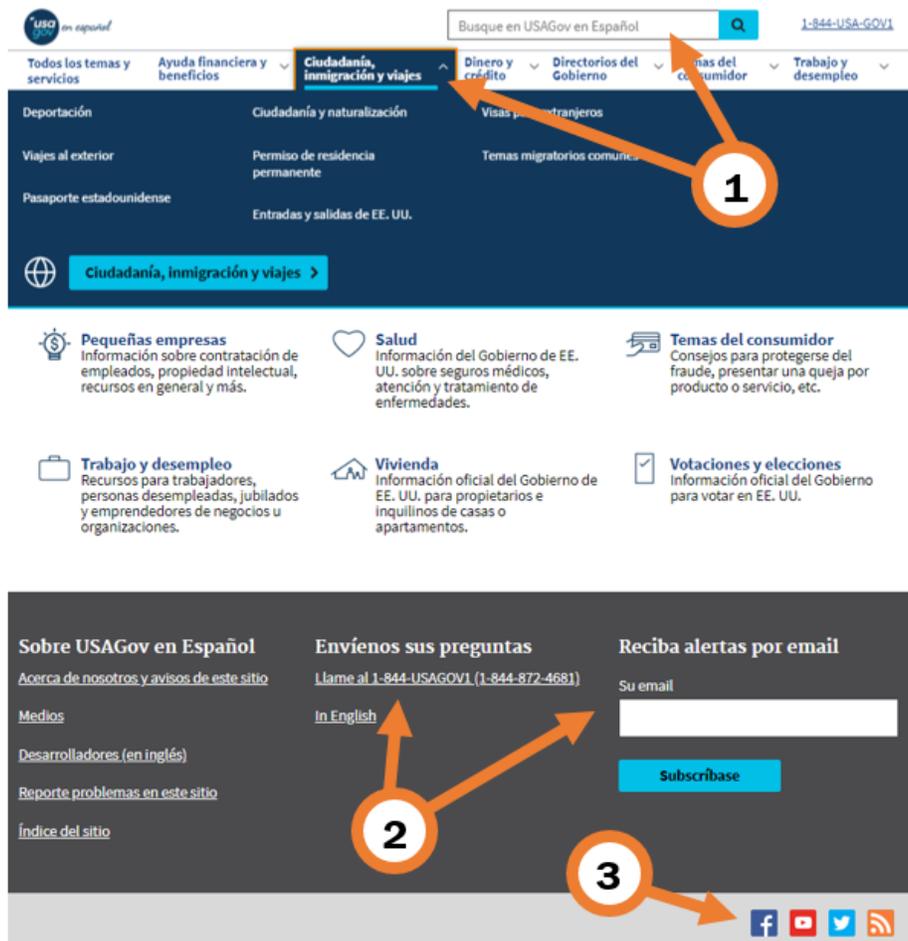
1. Providing an in-language search function allows users to access all of the translated content on your website, even if your page is difficult to navigate. *Tip: Websites that use machine translation only translate content after the user identifies their preferred language, so the translated content is not visible to the search engine, and it may not appear in search results. If you would like to draw web traffic from people who use non-English search engines to browse the internet, then use an in-language search function.*



2. Having your logo and other images translated to match the page content allows users to fully access the content and keeps branding intact.
3. Translating navigation directions and minimizing text by using universal symbols and basic colors helps direct LEP visitors to the digital information they need. Using fewer words also cuts down on translation costs. *Tip: To cut translation costs, think about how your website can make use of universal signs and symbols and reduce on wordy content to improve navigation for all users.*
4. Mirroring the English-language website ensures that the content reaches all visitors in the same way.

Example 4: Links to External In-Language Content, In-Language Navigation, and Outreach Opportunities at [USA.gov/Espanol](https://www.usa.gov/espanol)

Spanish Language Mirror:



Tips and Features:

1. Translated dropdown menus and search bars mirror the English page, allowing users to navigate in Spanish.
2. Subscription service also serves Spanish-language visitors, providing the agency with in-language outreach and engagement opportunities.
3. The site links to in-language social media accounts. *Tip: If your page includes links to content that is not translated, include simple translated taglines to alert LEP visitors that the linked content is in English and explain to them how to obtain the information in other languages (e.g., by linking back to those directions on the site).*

Social Media Comparison:



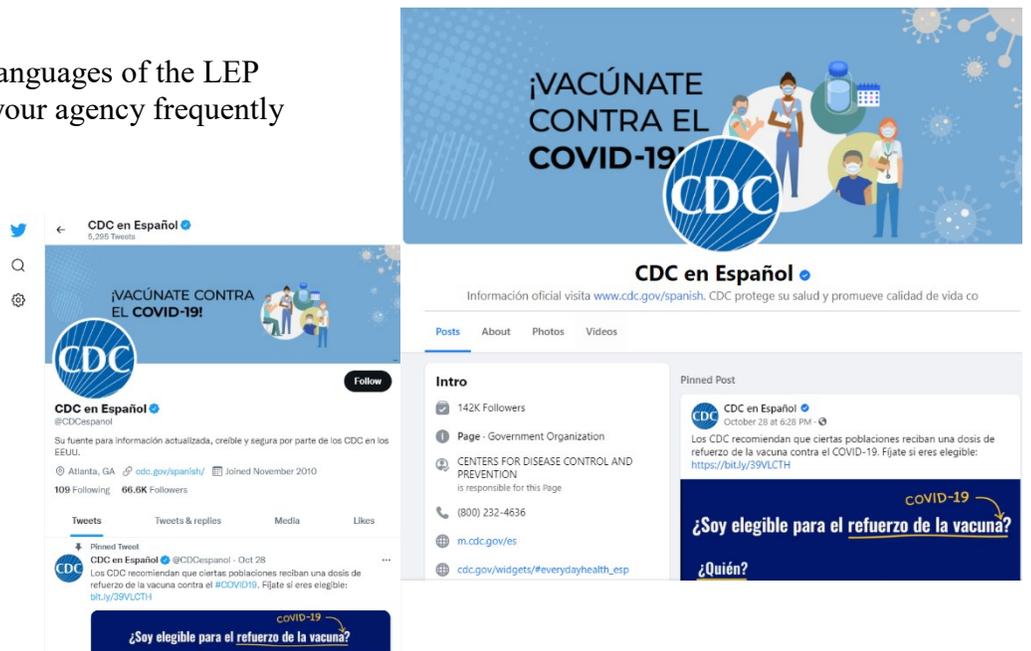
Tips and Features:

1. Connecting to translated social media accounts allows users to access unique in-language content and provides the agency with in-language outreach and engagement opportunities.
2. Website localization provides targeted content for a language specific audience. *Website localization is the process of adapting a website linguistically and culturally to serve a target audience. Typically, website localization involves tailoring the content to the needs of the target audience rather than providing an identical mirror site.*

Example 5: Social Media Accounts In-Language, CDC en Español, [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#)

Tips and Features:

1. Create content in languages of the LEP communities that your agency frequently encounters.
2. Engage bilingual employees who are public affairs specialists to assist in developing and managing the content on the Agency's social media pages.



Example 6: Carousel-style Language Selector on Landing Page at [USCIS.gov/es](https://uscis.gov/es)



Tips and Features:

1. A multilingual carousel feature can inform an LEP visitor that there are resources in a language that they can read. As the graphic shows, the Spanish words “Recursos Multilingües” appear for about 3 seconds, then appear in French, Chinese, Vietnamese, and other languages before cycling back to Spanish.
2. The mirror site provides information in a clear and organized way, using concise category headings. There is also an in-language chat function right on the front page, inviting users to “Ask Emma” if they need help. *Tip: If you provide phone numbers and chat features on your non-English webpages, be certain that the agency response will be in the matching non-English language or include a label that it will be in English and inform LEP visitors about how to obtain the information in a language they understand.*

Example 7: Language Selector in Page Header, Language Assistance Statement at [CFPB.gov](https://www.consumerfinance.gov)



Tips and Features:

1. Providing prominently located language selectors in native script with a prominently displayed phone number for immediate help (as shown above) helps to guide LEP visitors to translated content.
2. Providing translated content in native script will help LEP visitors who are searching for web content in their language. *Tip: If this content is only available using machine translation tools, it will not appear in an in-language search engine. It is good practice to label native script in English as well, as shown here, so that people looking for translated content to share with others are able to find and identify it.*

Example 8: Targeted Web Address, Web Localization, and Ease of Navigation at ready.gov and listo.gov

English Language Page:



Spanish Localized Page:



Tips and Features:

1. The English language page is in plain language with colorful, engaging graphics.
2. The Spanish language page has an appropriate Spanish domain name and prioritizes headlines based on the intended audience.

Example 9: Web Localization, Vibrant Design, and Fillable Forms at jobcorps.gov/es

Tips and Features:

1. Use plain language with colorful, engaging graphics on your site as shown above. The minimal text and concise headlines make the page readily accessible in-language and easier to translate.
2. Provide easily accessible translated forms that allows users to fill out and submit them in Spanish.
3. Translate dropdown menus and other interactive elements on translated websites to make the website engaging to LEP visitors.



Estoy evitando esta información para mí.
 Estoy evitando esta información para mi hijo/a y he confirmado su interés en aplicar a Job Corps.
 Estoy evitando esta información para otra persona con quien soy guardián legal y he confirmado su interés en aplicar a Job Corps.
 Soy mayor de 18 años quien está interesado en el sitio de una persona joven que he confirmado su interés en aplicar a Job Corps.
 Soy empleado en una oficina local del desarrollo de la fuerza laboral que está refinando mi posible candidato para Job Corps.

PERSONAL

Nombre * Inicial del Segundo Nombre

Apellido *

Fecha de nacimiento *

País de Nacimiento

Sexo *

DIRECCIÓN

Dirección *
 Dirección línea 1 (requerida)
 Dirección línea 2 (opcional)

Ciudad * Estado * Código Postal *

SOBRE EL SOLICITANTE

¿Qué área de carrera le interesa más en este momento? *

Manufactura Avanzada
 Reparación Automotriz y de Maquinaria
Construcción
 Finanzas y Negocios
 Cuidado de Salud
 Seguridad Nacional
 Hospitalidad
 Tecnología de la Información
 Recursos Renovables y Energía
 Transportación
 No estoy seguro / Desconocido

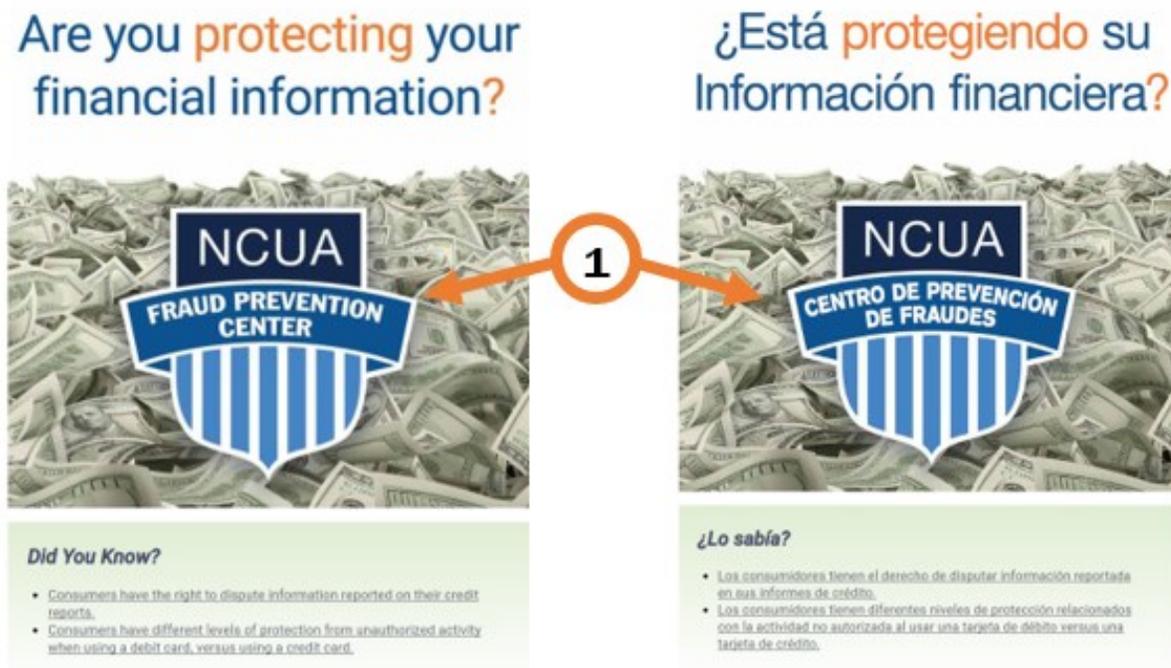
ESTADO DE EMPLEO

¿Está trabajando actualmente? *

Sí
 No

Example 10: Translated Logos and Notices When Leaving Translated Content at espanol.mycreditunion.gov/consumer-assistance-center

Translated Logos:



Translated Departure Warning:

Tips and Features:

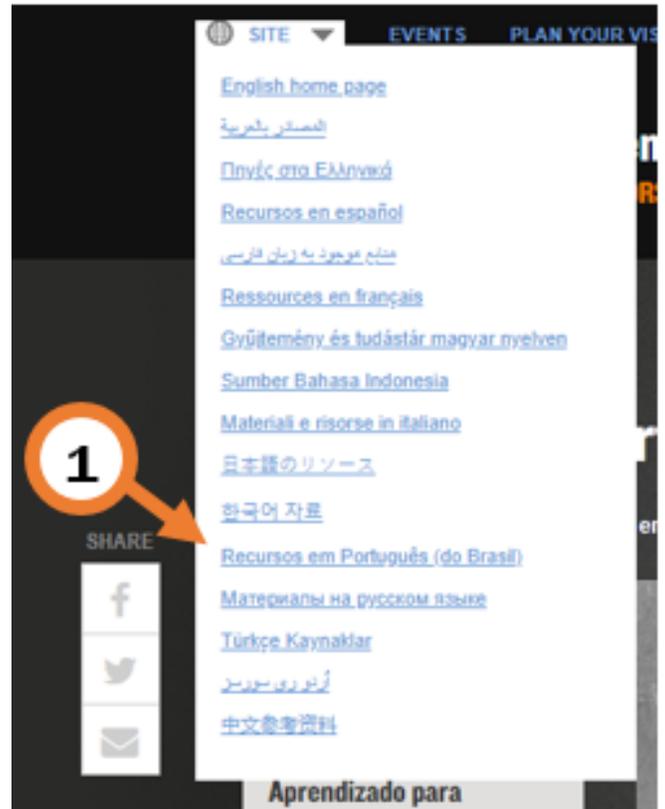
1. For seals and symbols or other graphics that incorporate English text, consider whether the text can be translated into the target language. In the seal above, for example, the agency translated the name of the office running the website to clarify the purpose of the office. Translating the agency acronym, however, may confuse an LEP visitor if they can already identify the agency by its English acronym (e.g., FBI).
2. When directing visitors off the page, consider alerting the visitor with a pop-up notification as this website does. Here, you have to agree to “continue in English” before you will be directed off the Spanish language webpage. *Tip: Content managers can also add such notice in parentheses, for example, writing “(en inglés)” after a hyperlink on a Spanish language page tells a reader that the linked content is in English, not Spanish.*



Example 11: Identifying Dialect for Translated Content at ushmm.org

Tips and Features:

1. Identifying the dialect, done here in this drop-down language menu, will help avoid misunderstandings and steer readers to the most appropriate content. Doing so may also help your organization communicate accurately with a target audience. For example, if your organization caters to a community that speaks Sudanese Arabic, you may want to have a Sudanese Arabic translator perform your translation using that dialect.
2. The Portuguese content here is identified as Brazilian, rather than Continental, Portuguese. It is important to distinguish between the two variations of Portuguese because they have significant differences. *Tip: Most languages have regional variations, but some variations can significantly impact reading comprehension. Talk to a linguist to find out more about the languages in which your digital information will be translated so that you can avoid miscommunications with LEP person as you develop non-English web content.*



Example 12: Prominently Displayed Languages on the [WIC PreScreening Tool page](#), Lead to Translated Eligibility Screening Tools

USDA United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service

English

USDA | FNS | FNS WIC | WIC Works | WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program | WIC State Agencies

WIC PreScreening Tool

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

The WIC PreScreening Tool assists applicants in determining whether or not they are potentially eligible to receive WIC benefits. **This PreScreening Tool is not an application for WIC benefits.** To apply for WIC benefits, you must make an appointment at a WIC local agency in the State or area where you live.

The WIC PreScreening Tool takes approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Check to see if you may be eligible for WIC benefits

Get started

English | Español | 中文 | 한국어 | русский | Somali | Việt | العربية | Kreól Ayisyen

USA.gov | Accessibility Statement | Privacy Policy | Non-Discrimination | Information Quality | FOIA | White House

WIC Since 1974
The Foundation of Healthy Families
WPS 3.3.11, June 2021

Tips and Features:

1. Translate prescreening tools to ensure easy navigation for LEP access to vital programs and activities.
2. Utilize translated video tutorials that demonstrate for LEP users what information or steps are required as they navigate the prescreening tool.
3. Utilize translated questionnaires that allow LEP users to submit information in multiple languages.

Feedback

We hope you found this information helpful. Please let us know if you have any feedback by directing your email to the attention of the LEP Committee at LEP@usdoj.gov.

ⁱ For example, 29 C.F.R. § 38.4(tt), a U.S. Department of Labor regulations implementing the Workforce Investment Opportunities Act's nondiscrimination provision, which is based on Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, defines "vital information" as "information, whether written, oral or electronic, that is necessary for an individual to understand how to obtain any aid, benefit, service, and/or training; necessary for an individual to obtain any aid, benefit, service, and/or training; or required by law..." Available at <https://go.usa.gov/xewjV>.

ⁱⁱ Taglines are short statements written in English and frequently encountered non-English languages that notify individuals with LEP about the availability of qualified, competent language assistance free of charge.

ⁱⁱⁱ Use of disclaimers regarding the accuracy of machine translations does not relieve the recipient of its responsibility to provide translated information that is accurate, reliable, and culturally appropriate. See Lost in Translation, GSA Digital.gov, 2012, <https://go.usa.gov/xeyVZ>.